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'PREMATURE PETITION'

Vande Mataram advisory not a 'threat to conform': SC

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The Transgender Bill, a flawed fix

The Bill deepens conflation of gender identities and ignores core crises

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INDIAN OPEN GOLF

Bhatia and Molinari head a strong field

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Iran dismisses U.S. bid to end conflict, sets its own terms

Halting aggression, reparations, and 'sovereignty' over Strait of Hormuz part of Tehran's terms; U.S. offers sanctions relief for reopening the Strait

Stanly Johny

Iran on Wednesday dismissed a U.S. proposal to end the war and set out its own terms for peace, even as it continued trading fire with Israel.

The U.S. proposal offered a ceasefire and sanctions relief in return for the Islamic Republic abandoning its nuclear programme and reopening the Strait of Hormuz.

Iran, according to state-run Press TV, has laid down five conditions to end the war, which the U.S. and Israel launched on February 28 with the assassination of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and several other leaders. Tehran is seeking: "a complete halt to aggression and assassinations"; "concrete mechanisms" to prevent future attacks; payment of war damages and reparations; an end to fighting on "all fronts"; and recognition of its "exercise of sovereignty" over the Strait of Hormuz, which it calls its "natural and legal right".

"Iran will end the war when it decides to do so and when its own conditions are met," a senior security official said, according to Press TV. The official, who is not named in the report, said Washington has put forward proposals through various diplomatic channels that are "excessive" and "disconnected from reality" on the battlefield.

U.S. President Donald Trump, who had backed off from his threat to attack Iran's power infrastructure claiming that Washington and Tehran were in talks, said on Tuesday that Iran had given him "a very big present worth a tremendous amount of money", adding that "we are dealing with the right people". "I think we're going to end [the war]," Mr. Trump said without elaborating on the "present".

Iran's Khatam al-Anbiya Central Headquarters on Wednesday dismissed reports about talks, adding that the U.S. is calling its "defeat" an agreement.

On alert: Security forces and first responders at a site struck by a projectile on the outskirts of Tel Aviv in Israel during the war. AFP

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Centre defends stand as Opposition raises 'Pak. role' in West Asia

Sobhana K. Nair
Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI

Parrying the questions raised by the Opposition regarding the reported central role played by Pakistan in mediating between the U.S. and Iran, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar on Wednesday termed the neighbouring country a "*dalal*" and said that it had been playing this role since 1981.

He was addressing an all-party meeting chaired by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on the recent developments in West Asia and their impact on India. Union Petroleum Minister Hardeep Puri also assured the gathering that India continued to maintain a strategic petroleum reserve of 74 days. While the country was not facing any imminent energy crisis, he noted that the supply cycle for Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) had extended from 20 days to 45 days. This, he said, should stabilise soon.

Responding to criticism over India's "silence", Mr. Jaishankar asserted that with nearly one crore Indians living in West Asian countries, it was crucial for India's strategic and economic interests to maintain a balanced position.

S. Jaishankar

India, he said, remained in a unique position, able to communicate with all sides.

Citing Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent talks with Iranian authorities, he said two Indian ships had been allowed to sail through the Strait of Hormuz, while 18 others still in the region would soon set sail for Indian shores. He said that the U.S. continued to be India's biggest trading partner, while Israel was a key technological partner.

The External Affairs Minister also said that the U.S. sanctions on India had a long history and that previous administrations in Washington had deployed them in past. While the Opposition "shamed" the government, he said that India's import of Russian oil never completely stopped.

CONTINUED ON » PAGE 10

NEARBY

Do not impose amendments on transgenders: CM

CHENNAI
Chief Minister M.K. Stalin has said the amendments to the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, should not be imposed on the community. » PAGE 6

SDPI, MJK, MPP get one seat each in DMK alliance

CHENNAI
The Social Democratic Party of India, the Manithaneya Jananayaga Katchi, and the Mukkulathor Puli Padai have been allocated one seat each in the DMK-led alliance for the coming polls. » PAGE 6

CMRL begins tunnelling from Thiruvanmiyur

CHENNAI
Chennai Metro Rail's tunnelling work from Thiruvanmiyur to Indira Nagar for the ongoing phase-II project has begun and the machine has drilled nearly 100 metres. » PAGE 5

METROPLUS » 4 PAGES

Govt. revamps UDAN scheme with changes in subsidy

Jagriti Chandra
NEW DELHI

In a significant policy shift, the Centre has extended the subsidy period for airlines on select Tier-2 and Tier-3 routes from three to five years, after a large share of those routes fell into disuse. The shift comes under the modified UDAN scheme, approved by the Union Cabinet on Wednesday with a total outlay of ₹28,840 crore.

The subsidy will also shift from a levy embedded in airfares to direct funding from the exchequer.

CONTINUED ON » PAGE 10

India raises clean-energy ambition with 60% non-fossil fuel power goal by 2035

Jacob Koshy
NEW DELHI

Updating its climate goals, India has pledged that by 2035, 60% of its installed electric capacity will comprise non-fossil sources. It also aims to reduce by 47% the intensity of emissions per unit of GDP from 2005 level and to increase its carbon sink to 3.5 billion tonnes – 4 billion tonnes.

These targets make up its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), which are to be communicated to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

"We will easily achieve these goals... [with] the speed with which we are expanding our non-fossil sources," Union Information Technology Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said at a briefing on Wednesday following a Cabinet meeting.

As a signatory to the Paris Agreement, India was required to issue an updated NDC in 2025, which spells out its voluntary actions towards transitioning away from fossil fuel and improving energy-efficiency measures.

At the 30th edition of the Conference of Parties in Belem, Brazil, in November last year, Environment Minister Bhupendra Yadav said that India would announce the NDC by the "year-end".

India's current NDC, officially conveyed to the United Nations in August 2022, commits to the following by 2030: having 50% of its installed electric power from non-fossil sources; reducing the intensity of emissions per unit of GDP by 44%; and increasing its carbon sink to at least 2.5 billion tonnes to 3 billion tonnes of CO2 equivalent.

CONTINUED ON » PAGE 10

AIADMK releases its first list of candidates; no major surprises

T. Ramakrishnan
CHENNAI

The All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) on Wednesday announced its first list of 23 candidates, which included party general secretary Edappadi K. Palaniswami.

The Dravidian major, which is to contest in 169 Assembly constituencies, has given up four seats, including Avanashi – represented by former Speaker of the Assembly and the party's prominent face of the Scheduled Castes (SC) P. Dhanapal – to accommodate its allies.

At a media briefing in the presence of leaders of National Democratic Alliance (NDA) constituents,

Edappadi K. Palaniswami

Mr. Palaniswami, who will contest from Edappadi for the fifth successive time, made public the details of 64 constituencies assigned to the AIADMK's allies, including 27 seats for the Bharatiya Janata Party.

The AIADMK re-nominated a total of 16 former Ministers, also members of the outgoing Assembly. While there were hardly any surprises in the choice of names, the list did not have any women or SC candidates.

Of the 23 candidates, the Mukkulathor community accounted for eight persons, Kongu Vellala Gounders five and Vanniyars four.

Barring three candidates – Virudhunagar (West) district secretary K.T. Rajenthra Bhalaji from Sivakasi; Villupuram district secretary C.Ve. Shanmugam from Mailam, and 'Agri' S.S. Krishnamurthy from Kalasapakkam – 20 were re-nominated from their old constituencies.

CONTINUED ON » PAGE 6

INBRIEF

Police Commissioner holds grievance redressal meet

The Greater Chennai Police Commissioner A. Arun on Wednesday held the public grievance redress camp at the Commissioner's Office. He received 23 petitions from the public, and instructed police officials to take swift action. He directed police officers to promptly receive complaints from the public, conduct quick inquiries, and take necessary action. Deputy Commissioner of Police, Administration, G. Subbulakshmi, was also present at the camp, said a press release.

Unauthorised hoardings in city attract fine of ₹1.25 lakh

The Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) has removed unauthorised advertisement hoardings in Sholinganallur, Kodambakkam, Adyar, and Teynampet zones, a release said. A total fine of ₹1.25 lakh was imposed, with ₹25,000 levied on each violator. The unauthorised hoardings and banners violated provisions under the Tamil Nadu Urban Local Bodies Rules, 2023. The civic body warned that repeated violations would attract penalties of up to ₹1 lakh, the release further said. The GCC has mandated that all advertisement boards be installed only after obtaining a licence through its online portal, and undergoing scrutiny by a single-window committee. The public can report violations by contacting helpline 1913. The Corporation said details of licensed hoardings were available on its website.

Text & Context and Science

Weekday features on *The Hindu* epaper (epaper.thehindu.com) carries explainers, special articles and quizzes. In the latest issue (March 26, Thursday), the following articles are available:

- What is at stake at the WTO's MC14? **newsth.live/wtoconference**
- West Asia war: how finding oil changed the Persian Gulf's ecology **newsth.live/oilecology**

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.

Lack of civic amenities irks residents as urbanisation takes toll on constituency

Nearly half of Thiruporur constituency's electorate live along a 30-km stretch of highly urbanised 'vertical villages'; the past decade saw urbanisation leading to a strain on its resources; lack of piped water supply, inadequate schemes for farmers, and poor road infrastructure are some key issues

CONSTITUENCY WATCH

Saptarshi Bhattacharjee
CHENNAI

It has a sizeable coastal belt stretching over 30 km, a large expanse of reserved forest areas, a few industrial parks, several well-known higher education institutions, and a substantial stretch of agricultural land spread over two revenue blocks. Yet, nearly half of its electorate reside along a 30-km stretch of highly urbanised 'vertical villages'. The Thiruporur Assembly constituency – situated south of Chennai on the iconic IT Corridor along the Old Mahabalipuram Road (OMR) – in Chengalpattu district, is indeed a study in dichotomy.

The expansion of Chennai's IT Corridor over the past couple of decades has resulted in the mushrooming of large multi-storeyed apartments, extending well into the villages on either side of the road.

Nearly 45% of its 2,89,401 voters live in the 100-odd high-rise residential complexes in Navalur, Padur, Siruseri, Pudupakkam, Mambakkam, Kelambakkam, and other adjoining village panchayat areas. As demand for housing grew, these extended areas gradually came to be dotted with 'sheltered communities', with IT employees from within Chennai city limits moving there for affordability.

"The rental rates have nearly doubled in the past decade," said K. Sivaraman, an advocate whose family has been residing in the temple town for generations. The surge in population has resulted in a strain on resources. "These urbanised areas do not have piped water supply. Each family shells out about ₹4,000-₹5,000 a month for maintenance costs, a large part of it going towards procuring tanker water," he added.

In villages, including Illalur, Thaiyur, and Kolathur, many farmers have leased out their farm wells to private water supply agencies for extraction since returns from agriculture have been on the wane, he said. "The government hasn't done much to improve the lot of the farmers; most of the government schemes haven't reached them," said Mr. Sivaraman, who is also an AIADMK functionary.

Vertical villages

The village panchayats also lacked the resources to invest in underground sewage treatment facility for the highly urbanised OMR stretch. The area had plenty of problems related to road infrastructure, street-lighting, and security. In came the Federation of OMR Residents Association (FOMRRA), born about a decade ago much out of necessity to address these day-to-day problems in innovative and sustainable ways, says Harsha Koda, design entrepreneur and co-founder of FOMRRA.

An experiment with collecting rain water in large underground sumps to be used by residents soon caught on, with about 20 apartment buildings implementing the system. The reliance on tanker supply eased a bit, but was not enough.

With the membership of over a hundred high-rise apartments in Thiruporur constituency, FOMRRA soon became a strong pressure group asking questions of government agencies. "We have about 1.3 lakh voters living in these 'vertical villages' within Thiruporur constituency. This is a cosmopolitan crowd where the conventional 'freebies' or caste equations do not work," Mr. Koda said.

Political party representatives require to balance their manifestos to accommodate the demands of both these worlds, says Prabha Koda, coordinator of FOMRRA.

So, how does it influence the issues in other parts of the constituency? Ms. Koda says that a large number of people residing near the high-rise apartments eke out a living offering services to the residents of these apartments, from tanker water supply to housekeeping, plumbing, and electrical jobs. "The benefits will definitely flow to them as well, because the demands for basic amenities such as water and sanitation are the same," she adds.

In Thiruporur town, traffic snarls are common most days. The Kandaswamy Temple witnesses a surge of devotees, especially on auspicious days, and parking and other infrastructure often get clogged, says Mr. Sivaraman.

A four-kilometre stretch of road connects Thiruporur to Nemmeli, a fishing hamlet on the East Coast Road. The road is barely motorable as it has been dug up for laying water pipelines. The fishermen in Nemmeli face a very different set of problems. Fish catch, they say, is dwindling every passing day. "We go out to sea everyday but many days we return empty handed," said P. Murthy, while tending to his net. "The desalination plant next door has affected the catch," he says.

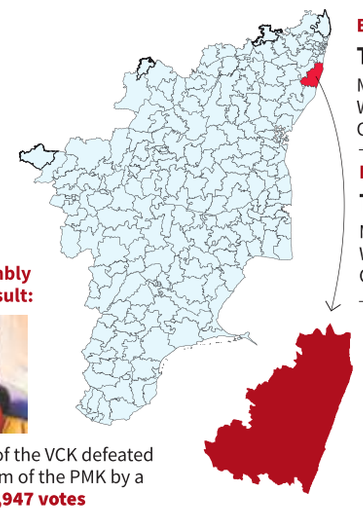
The fishermen had a message to the political parties: "We do not want anything for free. If at all, kindly make education and healthcare free, and then watch the country progress."

The AIADMK had a strong presence in the coastal belt since MGR's times, but the electorate has now fragmented with relatively newer players such as the Naam Tamilar Katchi garnering votes, Mr. Rajaram said, adding that the advent of actor Vijay-led Tamilaga Vetri Kazhagam has had an appeal among the youth.

In the rest of the constituency, caste equations are quite well laid out: while it has a sizeable Vanniyar population, the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes also make up a considerable proportion of the population. It was a reserved constituency between 1977 and 2006. However, the urbanised part of the constituency could upset caste equations.

Thiruporur

Thiruporur is a constituency with a diverse demographic. It also includes a long coastal belt, reserve forests, an old temple-town, a large expanse of agricultural lands, and several big high-rise apartments housing IT employees



Electors before SIR:
Total: 3,12,939
Men : 1,53,425
Women : 1,59,458
Others : 56

Electors after SIR:
Total: 2,89,401
Men : 1,40,991
Women : 1,48,359
Others : 51

KEY ISSUES

- Some of the high-rise apartments lack basic amenities such as piped water supply and proper road facilities
- Lack of underground sewage network and solid waste management facilities
- With returns from agriculture falling, farmers in several villages have leased out their wells to water supply agencies who supply water to the high-rise apartments through tankers
- Fishermen in Nemmeli and other areas along the coast have been complaining of reduced catch ever since the desalination plants began operations

2021 Assembly election result:

S.S. Balaji of the VCK defeated K. Arumugam of the PMK by a margin of **1,947 votes**

Number of polling stations
369

Sorry state: The polluted Thangal Lake along Nemmili Link Road in Thiruporur constituency. R. RAGU

SRM Global Hospitals performs dual surgery on pregnant woman

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

A team of doctors at the SRM Global Hospitals performed dual surgery on a pregnant woman and delivered the baby, saving the mother from permanent paralysis.

Addressing the media on Wednesday, Yogesh Kumar, Senior Consultant (Spine Care) of the SRM Global hospitals, said the 32-week pregnant patient, who had multiple health complications, had developed a severe spinal condition.

The condition, diagnosed as Cauda Equina Syndrome, left her unable to walk and resulted in loss of bowel and bladder control.

The medical team first delivered the baby safely through an emergency Caesarean section. They then quickly followed it up with a complex spine surgery to relieve critical nerve compression and prevent permanent paralysis.

Post-surgery, the mother regained her ability to walk.

The team of medical specialists included obstetrician and gynaecologist R.K. Vidhyalakshmi, Clinical Haematology consultant D. Abinaya, Neonatology consultant C. Ashok, and Anaesthesiology consultant R. Shanmitha.

HC allows petition to summon Telecom Secretary as witness in telephone exchange case

Mohamed Imranullah S.
CHENNAI

The Madras High Court on Wednesday allowed a plea by DMK MP Dayanidhi Maran to summon the Union Telecommunication Secretary to depose as a court witness before the trial court here in the illegal telephone exchange case booked for alleged offences committed during his stint as the Union Minister between 2004 and 2007.

Justice A.D. Jagadish Chandira wrote: "In the instant case, where the allegations involve the provision and utilisation of telecommunication infrastructure, the interpretation of administrative rules and the functioning of public sector entities during the relevant period; the evidence of individuals who were directly connected with the relevant administrative processes, assumes significance."

He said the testimony of those individuals may shed light on the factual and procedural aspects underlying the allegations and may assist the special court for MP/MLA cases in Chennai to appreciate the evidence, already on record, in its proper perspective. Therefore, it was essential to summon those individuals and examine them as court witnesses to discern the truth, he added.

"In matters relating to departmental facilities and administrative privileges, the scope and nature of entitlement may vary depending upon the position held and the functional requirements of the office. In such circumstances, the person best placed to clarify the administrative framework governing such entitlement would be the Secretary (Telecom), who functions as the senior-most executive authority," the judge said.

The case against Mr. Maran and many other co-accused had been booked by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

According to the prosecution, he had dishonestly procured a large number of telecom facilities at his Boat Club residence as well as home office in Chennai, in connivance with senior officials of BSNL and permitted those facilities to be used for the business purposes of Sun TV Network Limited.

Alleging that the CBI had not examined many individuals as prosecution witnesses, thereby depriving them of a chance to cross-examine those witnesses, Mr. Maran and Sun TV Network's Chief Technical Officer S. Kannan had approached the High Court with a plea to permit the summoning of those individuals as court witnesses.

Justice Chandira allowed Mr. Kannan's sole petition and permitted the summoning of Rakesh Kumar Somani, who had served as AGM (Vigilance), BSNL, New Delhi. Similarly, the judge allowed five different petitions filed by Mr. Maran and permitted the summoning of individuals named therein as court witnesses.

He, however, dismissed the former Minister's sixth petition for summoning individuals named A. Mahalingam and Mohan Lal Sindhi as court witnesses.

'Notices have been issued to e-commerce platforms that engage in unfair practices'

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Notices have been issued to e-commerce platforms for engaging in unfair practices that violate consumer rights, said Anupam Mishra, Additional Secretary, Union Ministry of Consumer Affairs.

In his virtual address at a seminar on 'Responsible use of AI in consumer products and services' organised by Citizen consumer and civic Action Group (CAG) along with VIT Chennai, Mr. Mishra explained how artificial intelligence-enabled dark patterns were being used to manipulate consumers into making unfair choices.

The Ministry had identified 13 dark patterns used by online platforms, including creating false urgency (such as only two choices being left), basket sneaking (adding items or brochures without consent), and subscription trapping. Moreover, Guidelines for Prevention and Regulation of Dark Patterns, 2023, had been issued and notices sent to e-commerce platforms adopting such unfair practices, he said.

L. Jeganathan, professor, School of Computer Science and Engineering, VIT Chennai, said that AI systems could sometimes produce logically convincing but incorrect conclusion. He pointed to issues such as algorithmic bias that could lead to unfair outcomes due to biased data and data drift that could reduce accuracy over time.

AI's impact

Elaborating on AI's impact on consumers, Geetha Raju, senior policy analyst, Centre for Responsible AI, IIT-Madras, cited global instances of AI-related failures and stressed the significance of identifying risks at the data collection stage. CAG executive director S. Saroja said it was a platform to initiate multidisciplinary dialogue on evolving AI-driven consumer ecosystems and to identify policy gaps.

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CINEMA ❖ ARTS ❖ EVENTS

MUSIC DANCE DRAMA

Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan,
East Mada Street, Mylapore, Chennai-4
is celebrating "SriRamanavami" TODAY (26th March 2026), 6.00 pm, at its Main Auditorium, Mylapore. A documentary video titled "EMBERUMANAR" Sri Ramanujar's Life and Teachings) by Ponniyin Selvan and Friends team. Prasadam at 8.30 pm. All are welcome.
Best Wishes : Nalli

Sringeri Bharathi Vidyashram, T. Nagar. Ph: 24348964.
Vardhanti / Sri Ramanavami Music, Today 6.30 p.m, Smt Sikkil Mala Chandrashekhar - Flute, Shri Bombay Madhavan, Shri Mannarkoil J Balaji, Shri H Sivaramakrishnan. All are Welcome.

Sri Ramanjaneya Trust, Tambaram Sanatorium, Ch-47, Ct: 9445105533
Sri Ramanavami Festival 2026 Today at 7pm Kum. Srimathi Rangarajan - Vocal, Kum. Mridhula - Violin, Sri. Ajeet Sridhar - Mridangam

Sri Thyaga Brahma Gana Sabha (Regd) VANIMAHAL. Ph: 28152166
In association with M/s. RAJALAKSHMI INSTITUTIONS celebrates SRI RAMANAVAMI FESTIVAL 2026 at Sri Chandrasekarendra Saraswathi Mahaswami Auditorium, Vani Mahal. Today 6.30 pm Vocal Concert by Shertallay Dr. K.N.Renganatha Sharma, Chidambaram Sri G.Badrinath (Violin), Shertalai Sri R.Ananthakrishnan (Mrudangam), Trichy Dr.K.Murali (Ghatam). All are welcome.

MISCELLANEOUS

Sringeri Bharathi Vidyashram, T.Nagar, Ph: 24348964.
Tomorrow Sri Ramanavami Mor 9.30 a.m onwards Special Pooja & Sahasranama Archanai to Lord Sri Rama, 10.30 a.m Upanyasam by Pravachanathilakam Dhamal Sri. Ramakrishnan on "Sri Rama Jananam"11.45 a.m Mahadeeparadhanai, Prasada Viniyogam.All are Welcome.

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PERSONAL

CHANGE OF NAME

MY DAUGHTER Netania, born on 01 September 2014 (District of Birth: Chennai), residing at No.63, Vaiko Street, Rajiv Gandhi Nagar, Pattabiram, Chennai– 600062, shall henceforth be known as New Given Name: Netania, New Surname: Kumar Raj – Kumar Raj (Father)

I, BALAJI Chinnasamy Kuppusamy, residing at No 151 MIG, NH1, Vallal Kumanan Street, Maraimalai Nagar - 603209. My Name entered in Aadhar Card No.5896 3889 3056 is as Balaji Chinnasamy Kuppusamy and My name entered in my passport No.F 8140943 is as Balajee Chinnaswamy Kuppuswamy. Denotes and refers the same single person as Balaji Chinnasamy Kuppusamy, Vide affidavit dt. 24.03.2026

I, SOWDHAMINI, d/o Govindaraju born on 22 Apr 1984 residing at No. 32, Perumal Koil Street, Nazarathpuram, Chennai – 600016, have changed my name to Sowdhamini Udhayakumar vide affidavit dated 25 Mar 2026 at Chennai

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INBRIEF

NCSC reviews reservation policy at atomic energy units

The National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) reviewed the implementation of the reservation policy in the Department of Atomic Energy units in Kalpakkam on Tuesday. NCSC member Vaddepalli Ramachander, and Director, Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research (IGCAR) and General Services Organisation Sreekumar G. Pillai were present. The member held discussions with heads of key units, including Madras Atomic Power Station, Bhabha Atomic Research Centre Facilities, Bharatiya Nabhikiya Vidyut Nigam Limited as well as with senior officials. Mr. Ramachander also interacted with the office-bearers of the SC/ST Employees Association at Kalpakkam and expressed satisfaction with the implementation of the reservation policy, according to a press release.

Monitoring intensified to curb illegal movement of goods

The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI), Ministry of Finance, has intensified monitoring to prevent the movement of contraband and illicit goods in view of the upcoming Assembly election. The Directorate said in a press release that during the Model Code of Conduct period, it would primarily focus on tracking narcotics, gold, foreign currency, as well as other items linked to unlawful activities that may affect the electoral process. The public has been urged to share specific and actionable information, which will be kept confidential. Informants may also be eligible for rewards under the existing government policies, the release further said. Helpline and email contacts have been provided to facilitate reporting, the release said.

Encroachments, traffic congestion remain core issues in this densely populated area

Unregulated parking is one of the major issues faced by Anna Nagar residents; they say industrial effluents are being discharged into Otteri Nullah waterway, leading to groundwater contamination and demand the shifting of all mobile eateries to non-residential areas in the constituency

CONSTITUENCY WATCH

N. Sai Charan
CHENNAI

Anna Nagar, one of Chennai's most densely populated and well-planned residential neighbourhoods, is steadily emerging as a prominent commercial hub.

Named after former Chief Minister C.N. Annadurai and developed after the India International Trade and Industries Fair in 1968, Anna Nagar features a grid layout of wide avenues and residential plots, a standardised addressing system and designated green spaces.

The Anna Nagar Assembly segment comprises Anna Nagar, Kilpauk, Aminjikarai, ICF South Colony, and parts of Arumbakkam and West Choolaimedu. Besides avenues in Anna Nagar, some of the arterial roads in this Assembly segment include parts of New Avadi Road, Nelson Manickam Road, E.V.R Periyar Salai (Poonamallee High Road), and Jawaharlal Nehru Salai (100-feet Road).

Unregulated parking, encroachment of walkways by mobile eateries, traffic congestion and flood mitigation measures remain major concerns. R. Sukumar, president of the Federation of Anna Nagar Residents Associations (FOARA), said the mushrooming of mobile eateries encroaching walkways in residential areas has forced pedestrians to walk on roads. He demanded residential areas in Anna Nagar be declared no-vending zones and mobile eateries be shifted to non-residential localities.

G. Suresh, another resident, said indiscriminate parking of two-wheelers and four-wheelers along Second Avenue and Shanthi Colony, especially near restaurants and supermarkets, has reduced motorable space. Nearly half the carriageway is occupied by parked vehicles, with conditions worsening on weekends due to higher footfall.

Three key waterways such as the Virugambakkam-Arumbakkam canal, the Cooum river and the Otteri Nullah, run through this Assembly segment, serving as rainwater drains. Residents called for faster flood mitigation works and steps to curb pollution.

A ₹130-crore project has been sanctioned to divert surplus water from Ambattur lake, currently discharged into the Otteri Nullah. A cut-and-cover channel is under construction near the Maduravoyal bypass, said Mr. Sukumar, who demanded expeditious completion of a similar project along the 100-feet Road before the monsoon.

He also flagged the discharge of industrial effluents into the Otteri Nullah in Ambattur, leading to groundwater contamination. M.G. Raju, a long-time resident of N Block, said though a retaining wall had been built along the Otteri Nullah, there were no provisions for stormwater inflow. He also pointed to the dumping of construction debris along the waterway. Residents have also sought the widening of a narrow stretch of E.V.R. Periyar Salai in Aminjikarai, which becomes a traffic choke point in the evenings.

Sudha Ramalingam, advocate and resident of Tamilar Veedhi, said there are no parks in and around Padmanabha Nagar, Loganathan Nagar, and nearby areas in Arumbakkam. She also said the newly-built bridge across the Virugambakkam-Arumbakkam canal at Tamilar Veedhi is being used for unauthorised parking. She called for removal of encroachments, stricter parking regulation, installation of parking meters, and pedestrian walkways.

Residents of Arumbakkam also said they continue to live in fear of flooding during heavy rain. Reduced carrying capacity of the Virugambakkam-Arumbakkam canal leads to overflow and inundation in MMDA Colony Main Road and adjoining areas. Despite repeated complaints, desilting has not been carried out adequately, they said, and demanded restoration of the canal's full capacity.

Electoral past

Politically, the constituency has largely been a DMK stronghold since 1977, barring 1991 and 2011 elections. DMK stalwarts including former Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi, former Ministers K. Anbazhagan, and Arcot N. Veerasamy have represented the Assembly segment in the past.

With the Assembly elections approaching, the constituency is under focus due to its consistently low voter turnout. Since 1991 Assembly elections, the voter turnout has ranged between 50% and 60%, except in 2011 when it reached about 66%.

In the 2001 elections, voter turnout dropped to 42.59%, among the lowest in the city. Another closely watched aspect of this Assembly segment in the ensuing elections is the impact of Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls. The electorate has declined by nearly 35% following the SIR here.

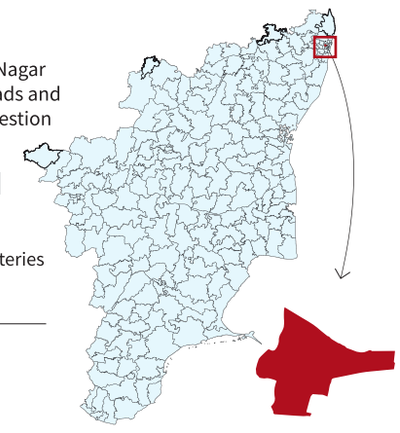
Anna Nagar

A densely-populated area, Anna Nagar suffers from encroachment of roads and walkways, and heavy traffic congestion

WARDS
100, 101, 102, 103, 105, 106, 107

KEY ISSUES

- Unregulated parking encroaching roads
- Mobile eateries occupying walkways
- Traffic congestion in E.V.R. Periyar Salai during peak hours
- Dumping of waste along the waterways



Electors before SIR:
Total: 2,80,422
Men : 1,37,073
Women : 1,43,251
Others : 98

Electors after SIR:
Total: 1,81,402
Men : 87,325
Women : 94,029
Others : 48

Number of polling stations
273

Major problem: Heavy traffic congestion on 2nd Avenue, Anna Nagar, as vehicles parked on road reduce motorable space. S.R. RAGHUNATHAN

M.K. Mohan of the DMK defeated S. Gokula Indira of the AIADMK by a margin of **27,445 votes** in 2021

Chennai Police at liberty to arrest 'Savukku' Shankar if required, orders Madras High Court in extortion case

Mohamed Imranullah S.
CHENNAI

The Madras High Court has granted liberty to the Greater Chennai City Police (GCCP) to arrest YouTuber 'Savukku' Shankar alias A. Shankar if his custody was required in connection with an extortion case for which he was arrested on December 13, 2025, but subsequently granted interim bail till March 25, 2026.

A Division Bench of Justices P. Velmurugan and M. Jothiraman refused to extend the interim bail granted for a period of three months by a Christmas vacation Bench of Justices S.M. Subramaniam and P. Dhanabal on December 27, 2025, following a writ petition and a habeas corpus petition filed by his mother.

"This court is of the view that the interim relief earlier granted on medical grounds does not warrant any further continuation. Accordingly, it is open to the investigating agency to proceed further in accordance with law in connection with the pending criminal cases and, if the custody of the son of the petitioner/detenu is considered necessary for the purpose of investigation, the respondents are at liberty to take appropriate steps in accordance with law," the Bench led by Justice Velmurugan observed.

'Savukku' Shankar

The observations were made while dismissing the habeas corpus petition (HCP) and disposing of the writ petition. The HCP was filed on December 26, 2025, alleging that the petitioner's son had been kept in solitary confinement at the central prison at Puzhal near Chennai and the writ petition (criminal side) was filed seeking specialised medical treatment for him since he was a cardiac patient and a diabetic.

However, after the grant of interim bail, a Medical Board at the Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital in Chennai examined the health condition of the petitioner's son on the basis of court orders and opined that he does not require any specialised treatment at present.

"Based on the available records, the medical history from Mr. A. Shankar, his clinical examination and investigations, the board opines that Mr. A. Shankar suffers from chronic medical ailments: Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus, Systemic Hypertension and Coronary Artery Disease (status post drug eluting stent). He requires no active cardiac intervention at present. His general condition is stable with cardiac and diabetes medications. He needs to continue optimal medical management along with lifestyle modifications," the report read.

Hence, the judges disposed of the writ petition with a direction to the police and prison authorities to provide adequate medical care to the petitioner's son as and when required. Insofar as the allegation of solitary confinement during his incarceration was concerned, the Bench did not find any material to support the charge levelled against the prison authorities.

Railway police seize unaccounted gold

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

As part of intensified surveillance for the upcoming Assembly election, the Railway Protection Force's (RPF) special team seized gold ornaments valued at over ₹1.09 crore which were unaccounted for, at Perambur railway station.

Two persons, R. Ravi Kumar, 51, and A. Sridhar, 44, from Coimbatore, were detained on suspicion.

Though their bags contained only clothes, frisking led to the recovery of concealed gold ornaments weighing 843 grams. The recovered ornaments were handed over to the Income Tax Department.

Timings
CHENNAI

THURSDAY, MAR. 26		
RISE	06:10	SET 18:20
RISE	12:21	SET 00:47
FRIDAY, MAR. 27		
RISE	06:09	SET 18:20
RISE	13:23	SET 01:45
SATURDAY, MAR. 28		
RISE	06:08	SET 18:20
RISE	14:22	SET 02:37

Chennai Weather	max	min
Tiruvallur	34	22
Chennai Airport	34	25
Chennai City	32	25

Chennai Airport Today
34°C Morning will be pleasant. Day will be warm. Night will also be pleasant. Mostly dry weather to prevail.

Chennai Airport Tomorrow
35°C The weather will be dry. Day will be warm. Night will be pleasant.

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THE HINDU
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Infra boost: Central, Tiruttani, Sullurupeta railway stations to get air-conditioned waiting halls soon

R. Srikanth
CHENNAI

Commuters at the Chennai Central railway station will soon have a new air-conditioned waiting hall to escape the city's searing heat.

Southern Railway, which established an air-conditioned waiting hall at the Central station a few years ago, has now planned to expand it, as the existing facility has been running at full capacity.

A senior official from the Chennai division of Southern Railway said that a contract to upgrade the retiring rooms along with dormitories has been awarded under the Renovate, Operate, Maintain and Transfer (ROMT) model. He added that passengers at the Central station have been enjoying the comfort of an executive lounge with modern amenities. This initiative aims to further improve passenger comfort and convenience at major suburban and intercity stations, the senior official added.

Modern facility: The newly inaugurated air-conditioned waiting hall at the Tambaram railway station.

Officials have also been expanding the air-conditioned waiting hall concept to a few other important railway stations in the city, with the latest being Tambaram station. A newly upgraded air-conditioned waiting hall was inaugurated there on March 13. With the opening of the air-conditioned hall at Tambaram, such facilities are now available at Central, Egmore, Katpadi, Tiruvallur, and Mambalam railway stations.

The Chennai Division has also proposed to create air-conditioned waiting halls at two more stations – Tiruttani and Sullurupeta – which were recently redeveloped under the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme (ABSS).

These proposed facilities will include 42-inch LED televisions displaying train-related information, comfortable seating arrangements, refreshment stalls serving tea, coffee, and snacks, modernised restrooms, and a small pharmacy selling medicines that do not require prescriptions.

The executive lounge at Central station has been a big hit among passengers, featuring sofas, recliners, and sleeping pods.

R. Krishnan, a regular commuter from Avadi, said that air-conditioned waiting halls should also be introduced at Perambur, Ambattur, and Avadi railway stations.

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH

SARASWATHI VENKATAKRISHNAN

Dec 19, 1942 - Mar 25, 2026
Deeply mourned by
Sriram V & Sarada, grandsons
Avinaash & Abhinava and family members
Address:
Kalyani, 11/9, RK Salai 2nd St, Mylapore, Chennai - 600004
Email: sriramv2206@gmail.com

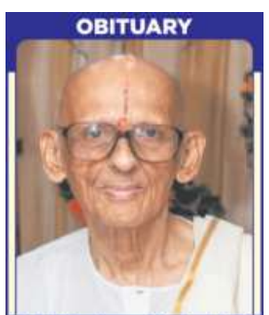
DEATH

WITH DEEP sorrow we inform the sad demise of Mr.T.G.Balachandran B.Sc, M.L aged 75 years Advocate, Saidapet. who Attained the Lotus Feet of the Almighty on 25-03-2026. Ph: 9884623811.

OBITUARY

G.MANNAMMAL
W/O G.MAHADEVAN
Passed away on
25.3.2026
Deeply mourned by
G M Family Members
G M ELECTRICAL WORKS
G M AUDIO TECHNICS

OBITUARY



Shri.S.Padmanabhachari (96)
(Formerly of Southern & Metropolitan Railways & TEAM Ltd)
Devoted husband of **P.Kalyani** and beloved father of **P.Srinivasan, P.Venkatesh and Latha Ramanathan**
Attained Acharyan Thiruvadi on Tuesday, the 24th March at 12.20 am.
Ct: P Srinivasan - 98400 35620

DEATH ANNIVERSARIES

TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Dr.A.C. ARULDAS, B.Sc., M.B.B.S
08.09.1951 26.03.2006
Daniel 12.3 those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever
Wife, Sons, Daughters-in-Law & Grand children

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

Two persons killed after truck hits two-wheeler

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Two persons were killed after a heavy truck hit their two-wheeler on Palar bridge near Maduranthakam on Wednesday.

A senior police official of Chengalpattu district said Abinesh and Charles were residents of Avadi and were travelling on the two-wheeler to Puducherry on the Grand Southern Trunk (GST) Road.

Attempt to overtake

As the vehicle was proceeding on the Palar bridge, a speeding truck knocked down the vehicle while attempting to overtake them.

In the impact, both persons were thrown-off from the vehicle and were killed on the spot after sustaining severe head and body injuries. The driver of the truck escaped from the spot. The Padalam police sent the bodies of the two persons to Chengalpattu Government hospital for a post-mortem. A probe has been launched and the police are searching for the truck driver.

CMRL begins tunnelling for Thiruvanmiyur-Indira Nagar section in phase-II project

Tunnelling through hard rocks in the 650-metre stretch may take nearly six months, officials say; a specialised TBM is being used in this section, which is part of the Madhavaram-SIPCOT corridor

TRACK TALES

Sunitha Sekar
CHENNAI

Chennai Metro Rail's tunnelling work from Thiruvanmiyur to Indira Nagar for the ongoing phase-II project has begun recently and the machine has drilled nearly 100 metres.

As part of the ₹63,246 crore project, three corridors–Madhavaram to SIPCOT (corridor 3), Light House to Poonamallee (corridor 4) and Madhavaram to Sholinganallur (corridor 5) are being constructed in most parts of the city for the past few years.

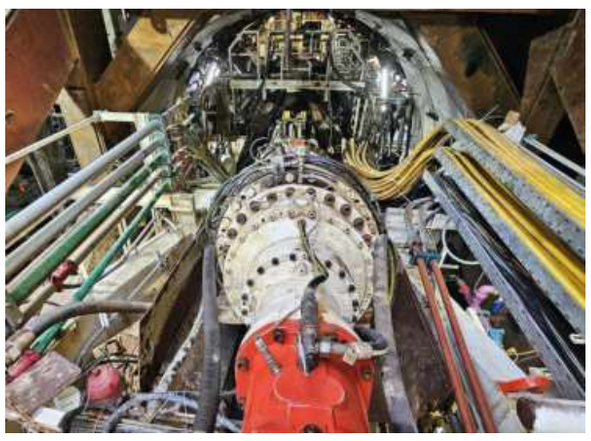
Under corridor 3, whose network is part elevated and part underground, much like the other two corridors, Chennai Metro Rail has been carrying out tunnelling work for building the underground stretches in small sections. The tunnelling in one small section of this corridor 3, Thiruvanmiyur to Indira Nagar, commenced recently. According to officials of Chennai Metro Rail Limited (CMRL), the shaft of the station, which has to be built only after which a Tunnel Boring Machine (TBM) can be lowered and launched, was ready and subsequently the machine began the drilling process.

For this stretch dominated by high-quality hard rocks, a TBM specialised for operating in such conditions is being utilised. Officials said tunnelling through the 650-metre stretch between Thiruvanmiyur and Indira Nagar could be tough and rather slow due to geological conditions, and it would probably require changing the parts of the TBM like the cutterhead more often than expected.

"We estimate that it may take nearly six months for this TBM to reach Indira Nagar. Due to site related constraints, the second TBM can be launched at Thiruvanmiyur only after the first TBM reaches Indira Nagar," an official said.

As such, the tunnelling work has been delayed quite a bit. At first, CMRL cancelled the tenders which were floated for the underground work since firms that were part of bidding submitted unreasonable quotes.

Excavating the station area and building the shaft too was difficult owing to hard rocks. Instead of controlled blasting, the contractor ended up disintegrating the rock with chemicals.



Hard task: The second Tunnel Boring Machine can be launched at Thiruvanmiyur only after the first TBM reaches Indira Nagar.

VCK chief urges Stalin to ensure Makkal Needhi Maiam contests upcoming Assembly election

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

A day after Makkal Needhi Maiam (MNM) founder and Rajya Sabha MP Kamal Haasan announced that his party would not contest the upcoming Assembly election, Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi (VCK) founder and Chidambaram MP Thol. Thirumavalavan, on Wednesday, appealed to Chief Minister M.K. Stalin to realise the alliance's "We will win together" slogan by ensuring the MNM fights the election under its own 'Battery Torch' symbol.

In a statement, Mr. Thirumavalavan said that the MNM not taking an active role in the election and supporting the alliance from outside will affect the "goodwill" of the alliance.

Mr. Thirumavalavan added that parties in alliance should not be compelled to "contest under the symbol" of another party. "This would hinder their independent political functioning. The alliance leadership refraining from interfering in such freedom of allied parties would be a mark of respect for democracy. In this critical situation, in this righteous struggle to defeat communal, divisive, and right-wing forces, Makkal Needhi Maiam too must join hands with us and contest the election as a participant like us," he said.

Mr. Thirumavalavan said that the strength of a party "does not solely correlate to its vote bank" but also on factors such as ideological strength and public goodwill. "Let it be considered his [Mr. Kamal Haasan] magnanimity that Makkal Needhi Maiam has decided not to contest this election. However, it would be a mark of your greatness to embrace Mr. Kamal Haasan – who possesses ideological strength in firmly opposing communalism, a confirmed vote bank strength of around 4%, and great influence and goodwill within Tamil society – and not let him remain outside," he said.

Govt. of Bihar
Civil Aviation Department
Airport Road, Patna – 800014.
TEL. No:- 0612-2225659, 2224423
Fax 0612 2224614
e-mail-cadbihar@bihar.gov.in

Letter. No: वा०सं०नि० (योजना) 09–17 / 2025 - *406*

TENDER NOTICE

Civil Aviation Department, Govt. of Bihar invites Tender in two cover bid system for Selection of Air Services to New International Destinations.

Eligible bidders can submit their responses to the tender **on or before 15th April, 2026, 15:00 Hrs. Details of Schedule is as below:-**

1.	Bid subject/work	:	Selection of Air Services to New International Destinations
2.	Bid Submission Start Date	:	25th March, 2026
3.	Pre- Bid Meeting (Virtual Mode)		7th April, 2026 at 12.30 PM (Link will be shared)
4.	Last date for submission of Bid	:	15th April, 2026, by 15:00 Hrs.
5.	Technical Bid Opening	:	16th April, 2026, at 15:30 Hrs. (Tentative date)
6.	Financial Bid Opening	:	Shall be intimated
7.	Tender Bid Validity	:	120 Days

The tender document(s), may be downloaded free of cost from the Civil Aviation Department, Govt. of Bihar website (https://state.bihar.gov.in/cad).

PR- 27249 (C A D) 2025-26

नशे की मार, बर्बाद करें सुखी परिवार।

Secretary
Civil Aviation Department

Bala Mandir Kamaraj Trust launches school project for holistic education

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

In an effort to support holistic education, the Bala Mandir Kamaraj Trust inaugurated the School Expansion and Modernisation Project at Satyamurthi Higher Secondary School in Chennai on Wednesday.

Value-based learning

Established at a cost of ₹16 crore the project has been designed to combine academics with opportunities in science, sports, arts, and value-based learning.

The school includes modern classrooms, science laboratories, a STEM learning facility, sports infrastructure, and a large auditorium for cultural and other activities. The project marks an important milestone in the institution's efforts to provide quality and holistic education to children from disadvantaged backgrounds as well as the surrounding community, according to a press release.

The project was done with support from Braade Stiftung (Denmark), Saint-Gobain India Pvt Ltd, Aptus Value Housing Finance India Ltd and Boeing India Pvt Ltd and others. Praveena Yagnambhat, Chief of Staff and CSR Head, Boeing India and South Asia, K.G. Venkataramanan, Chief Financial Officer, Saint-Gobain India Private Limited (SGIPL) and Maya Gaitonde, Honorary General Secretary and Trustee, Bala Mandir Kamaraj Trust were present at the inauguration.

The Bala Mandir Schools currently have around 400 students and aim to expand capacity to about 800 students in the coming years.

NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY

SECOND CORRIGENDUM
TO THE E-TENDER NOTICE T.No. JU/Const./T-04- 2025-26-BGKT-PH-II, dated 07.03.2026

In the aforesaid e-tender, the definition of similar nature of work has been changed, which is as under-
"Any Civil Engineering work involving construction of buildings, fabrication and erection of Industrial shed of height not less than 10 m using Pre- Engineered Building (PEB) with EOT crane of minimum 25 MT Capacity including foundation work for the shed-"
All other particulars of the original Tender Notice will remain same.

Dy. Chief Engineer (Const.)-I, Jodhpur

428-DR/26

Kerala man found dead in forest near Anaikatti

The Hindu Bureau
COIMBATORE

The Thadagam police police have launched an investigation after a man from Sholayur in Kerala's Palakkad district was found dead in suspicious circumstances in a reserve forest area near Anaikatti in Coimbatore.

The deceased has been identified as M. Mayilan, 56, a resident of Vechapathy. The Forest Department staff found a decomposed male body at Kozhikandimoolai during routine patrol on Monday and alerted the Thadagam police station.

A mobile phone found on the body was identified to be that of Mayilan. The Thadagam police launched an investigation into the death, after registering a case on Tuesday for suspicious death based on a complaint from the deceased's son Manikandan, 25. As per post-mortem findings, the body had multiple injuries, the police said.

Meanwhile, Forest Department officials raised suspicions on why Mayilan entered the reserve forest area in Tamil Nadu side, located over 20 km away from his village. They stated that a person by the same name from Sholayur had been involved in sandalwood felling cases in Coimbatore district before.

KARNATAKA INDUSTRIAL AREAS DEVELOPMENT BOARD
(A Government of Karnataka Undertaking)
No.2, 2/1 and 2/3, Kalidasa Marg, 1st Main Road, Gandhinagar, Bengaluru - 560009. Phone No. 080-22265383, website: www.kiadb.in

No. IADB/ENGG/ETND-DPR-08/4082/2025-26 Date: 25.03.2026

SHORT TERM NOTICE INVITING TENDER
(Through GOK Karnataka Public Procurement Portal Only)

KIADB invites tenders from reputed consultants/firms under two cover bid system having an office at Bengaluru with vast experience and proven record of similar nature of work for project mentioned below:-
Name of the works : Consultancy Services for Preparation of Detailed Project Report (DPR) Including Economic Analysis, Surveying, Layout Plan, Design, Preparation of Estimates, Cost Structure etc., for the proposed Jangamakote Industrial Area at Sidlaghatta Taluk of Chikkaballapura District. (Extent 2823.12 A). (3rd-Call).
The last date and time of receipt of tender is : **10.04.2026** upto **4.00 pm.**
Applicants May Download Bidding Documents from the Karnataka Public Procurement Portal **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in.**

Sd/-
Chief Engineer-1, KIADB, Bengaluru

DIPR/CP/6462/Zen/2025-26

BENGALURU SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT LIMITED
Office of the Deputy General Manager-1,BSWML, 1st Floor, BBMP Building, Thimmaiah Road, Vasanth Nagar, Bengaluru – 560 052.

No: DGM-1/BSWML/TEND/32/2025-26 Date: 25.03.2026

Invitation for Short Term Tender
(Through GOK KPPP only) (Call-03)

The Deputy General Manager-1, Bengaluru Solid Waste Management Limited on behalf of the Managing Director, BSWML, Bengaluru invites bids from eligible bidders for the Services mentioned in the table given below.

Sl. No.	Name of the work	Amount Put to Tender per annum (Rs. in Lakhs)	EMD (Amount in Rs.)	Time of Completion
1	Primary Collection and Secondary Transportation of Municipal solid waste (MSW) and Street sweeping waste in Shanthi Nagara division (Package-02) **Call-03.**	**1,411.47**	**Rs.1,00,000/-** through e-payment mode under of the following i.e., online / RTGS/ NEFT / OTC and the balance **Rs.14,00,000/-** by bank Guarantee/FDR issued by Nationalized /scheduled Bank.	84 Months

1) Last date for uploading Pre-bid Queries : 31**.03.2026 before17:30 hrs. 2)** Tender Pre-Bid meeting : **01.04.2026 at 15:00 hrs** at above mentioned office. **3)** Last Date of Receipt of Tender: **10.04.2026 before 17:30 hrs. 4)** Opening of Technical Bid: **13.04.2026 after 17:30 hrs.**
More details can be downloaded from website - **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in**

Sd/-
Deputy General Manager-1, BSWML

DIPR/CP/JA/6328/2025-26

THE HINDU GROUP

GRT JEWELLERS Since 1964
Presents
THE HINDU
WORLD of WOMEN
2026
Recognising Excellence
Co-Presented by
SATHYABAMA INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)
In Association with
DRA HOME OF PRIDE | Gold Winner

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Reaching for the Skies.

The Hindu has long championed voices that shape society.

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March 27, 2026 | 6:30 PM Onwards

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TV Partner: புதிய தலைமுறை, புதுயுகம்

From Page One

No major surprises as AIADMK releases its first list of candidates

In the 2021 election, Mr. Rajenthra Bhalaji and Mr. Shanmugam lost from Rajapalayam and Villupuram respectively, while Mr. Krishnamurthy won in Polur.

The party's deputy general secretaries K.P. Munusamy and Natham R. Viswanathan have been fielded again from their respective constituencies: Veppannahalli and Natham.

The renominated candidates include treasurer Dindigul C. Sreenivasan (Dindigul); headquarters secretary S.P. Velumani (Thondamuthur); and organisation secretaries P. Thangamani (Kumarapalayam), D. Jayakumar (Royapuram), Sellur K. Raju (Madurai-West), K.P. Anbalagan (Palacode), R. Kamaraj (Nannilam), and O.S. Manian (Vedaranyam).

Former Health Minister C. Vijayabaskar will try his luck again in Viralimalai; Kadambur C. Raju in Kovilpatti; R.B. Udhayakumar in Thirumangalam; P. Benjamin in Maduravoyal; and V.V. Rajan Chellappa in Thirupparankundram.

Three other former Ministers – K.C. Karupannan, K.C. Veeramani, and M.R. Vijayabhaskar – will contest from Bhavani, Jolarpet, and Karur respectively, while former government whip in the Assembly, S. Rajendran, has been re-nominated to contest from Ariyalur.

Despite losing the previous election from their respective constituencies, Mr. Jayakumar, Mr. Benjamin, Mr. Veeramani, and Mr. Rajendran have been fielded from the same constituencies again.

Of the 27 seats the BJP will contest this time, the organisation is familiar with eight seats, where nominees from the same coalition contested in 2021. The constituencies are: Tiruvannamalai, Thalli, Modakurichi, Udhagamandalam, Nagercoil, Vilavancode, Ramanathapuram, and Colachel.

The remaining 19 seats are Mylapore, Avadi, Rasipuram, Avanashi, Tiruppur (South), Coimbatore (North), Gandarvakottai, Pudukottai, Thanjavur, Tiruvarur, Tirupattur (Sivaganga district), Madurai (south), Sattur, Tiruchendur, Vasudevanallur, Radhapuram, Aranthangi, Manamadurai, and Padmanabhapuram.

Nagenthran's move

Interestingly, Tirunelveli Assembly constituency, which was won by BJP State president Nainar Nagenthran, is not among the list of seats being contested by the national party. Mr. Nagenthran is likely to contest from Sattur Assembly constituency in Virudhunagar district.

AIADMK-led alliance will win 210 seats, says Palaniswami

Launching his campaign in Mylapore, AIADMK leader says NDA will form the government with an absolute majority; he accuses DMK of not fulfilling its promises and failing on law and order front

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

In poll mode: AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K. Palaniswami and BJP leader Tamilisai Soundararajan campaigning in Chennai on Wednesday. S.R. RAGHUNATHAN

Launching his election campaign from Mylai Mangollai in Chennai on Wednesday, AIADMK general secretary and former Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami said the AIADMK-led National Democratic Alliance would win 210 seats and form the government with an absolute majority.

Campaigning in Mylapore, a constituency allotted to the BJP, he appeared alongside BJP leader and former Governor of Telangana, Tamilisai Soundararajan, despite the fact that the BJP is yet to officially announce her candidature. In 2001, the BJP had won the constituency when the DMK was in an alliance with the BJP-led NDA.

Earlier, Mr. Palaniswami, accompanied by party cadre, visited the Kapaleeswarar Temple in Mylapore and offered special prayers at the temple.

Alliance comparison

Comparing his alliance with the DMK-led front, Mr. Palaniswami said the condition of the DMK was pitiable.

"Three days ago, we invited our alliance partners to our party office and announced the seat allocations. The very next day, we released our election manifesto. Since our manifesto benefits the people, it is being widely appreciated. Similarly, we held discussions with leaders of the alliance parties and finalised the seat-sharing arrangement. Not only that, the AIADMK has also released its first list of candidates. We are the first party to make such an announcement. We have released a list of 23 candidates," he said. He added that the remaining candidates would be announced in a couple of days.

"The alliance parties in the DMK struggled for 20 days just to form an alliance. Every party is struggling in the alliance, and they are forced to fight even to secure constituencies. The DMK alliance parties are treated like subordinates, whereas the AIADMK alliance leaders function independently," Mr. Palaniswami said.

Claiming that the DMK government had done nothing for the people in the past five years, he said, "The DMK is a family-run party driven by dynastic politics, and they have merely rebranded the AIADMK's schemes. The storm-water drain project was initiated during the AIADMK's tenure, with 2,400 km having been covered. Phases 1 and 2 were completed under AIADMK rule, while phases 3 and 4 remain incomplete under the DMK government. Two years ago, [Chief Minister] Stalin and city officials claimed that Chennai would not face water stagnation. Yet, flooding persists."

"Ahead of the last Assembly polls, the DMK made 525 promises but fulfilled not even a quarter of them. Yet, they falsely claim that 98% of the promises have been fulfilled. Did they waive education loans? Did they abolish NEET? They misled people and students with false assurances. Taxes have increased drastically – property tax by 100%, commercial tax by 150%, and electricity tariff by 52%. The cost of living has skyrocketed, and the government has failed to control prices. Under the AIADMK regime, a ₹100-crore price stabilisation fund ensured that essential commodities remained affordable. But the DMK has shown no concern on this front," he said.

Alleging that drug abuse was rampant, leading to crime, and that law and order had deteriorated, he said murders, robberies, and assaults were occurring frequently."Women's safety has been severely compromised, with thousands of POCSO cases having been registered. Such a government must be removed. The AIADMK-led alliance must win decisively to restore law and order," Mr. Palaniswami said.

Build consensus with transpersons before passing amendment Bill, CM tells Centre

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

M.K. Stalin

Chief Minister M.K. Stalin on Wednesday said the Union government should not impose the proposed amendments to the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, on the community.

In a post on X, Mr. Stalin said the amendment Bill cannot be pushed through without listening to the very people whose rights and lives it would affect.

The BJP government at the Centre must pause, engage, and build consensus with transpersons before moving forward with the changes, he added.

Cylinder shortage

Instead of taking measures to resolve the shortage of cooking gas cylinders due to the ongoing conflict in West Asia, the BJP government at the Centre was using delimitation to divert the attention of the people, Mr. Stalin said.

In a statement, he said that by equating the shortage in supply of cooking gas cylinders to the period of the COVID-19 pandemic, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had heightened fear among people, who were already suffering.

"In line with the BJP, the AIADMK, which has effectively silenced itself from speaking about people's issues, is questioning what the State government is doing. Is the supply of gas cylinders and foreign policy under the control of the State government," he asked.

"The State government has taken all possible measures in its capacity. The question being raised by the people is what the Union government is doing," he said.

Since attempts to create divisions among the constituents of the Secular Progressive Alliance (SPA) had failed, conspiracies criticising the seat-sharing arrangements were being circulated "based on imagination", Mr. Stalin said.

In a letter to party workers, he urged them to ignore rumours intended at misleading them, and to work together with allies to ensure victory in all 234 Assembly segments.

As new parties had joined the alliance, seats had to be allocated accordingly among the constituents, Mr. Stalin said, adding that he personally held talks with leaders of some of the parties that had been part of the DMK-led alliance for a long time.

He said the DMK and its alliance partners stood united in opposing the communal politics of the BJP government at the Centre.

AIADMK allots 11 seats reserved for Scheduled Castes to its allies

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

The AIADMK has allotted 11 constituencies reserved for the Scheduled Castes to its allies.

Five of them – Avanashi, Rasipuram, Gandarvakottai, Vasudevanallur, and Manamadurai – have been earmarked for the BJP; three – Periyakulam, Ottapidaram, and Poonamallee – for the AMMK; and two – Kattumannarkoil and Kilvelur – for the PMK.

Kilvaithinankuppam (K.V. Kuppam) has been allotted to the Puratchi Bharatham.

In total, there are 44 SC constituencies in Tamil Nadu.

In addition to the two SC seats, the PMK has been allocated Perambur, Ambattur, Thiruporur, Uthiramerur, Sholinghur, Polur, Gingee, Vriddhachalam, Rishivandhiyam, Vikravandi, Dharmapuri, Pennagaram, Salem (West), Salem (North), Mayiladuthurai, and Jayankondam.

Five of them – Avanashi, Rasipuram, Gandarvakottai, Vasudevanallur, and Manamadurai – have been earmarked for the BJP

In respect of the AMMK, the other seats allotted to it are Saidapet, Tirupattur (in northern Tamil Nadu), Madathukulam, Tiruchi (West), Mannargudi, Thiruvaiyaru, Karaikudi, and Nanguneri.

Ranipet, Kumbakonam, Oddanchatram, Erode (west), and Killiyoor have been given to the Tamil Maanila Congress (Moopanar); Pallavaram and Kunnam to the Indhiya Jananayaga Katchi; and Rajapalayam to the Tamizhaga Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam.

Releasing the list of constituencies identified for various constituents of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K. Palaniswami said all parties of the NDA were equally strong, and they were being treated equally in the alliance.

No party would come under any pressure to contest the election on the symbol of one party or the other, Mr. Palaniswami said.

PMK candidates

Meanwhile, the PMK announced that the party's general secretary, S. Vadivel Ravanan, will contest the Assembly election from the Kilvelur (SC) constituency; former State vice-president K.N. Sekar will be fielded from the Ambattur constituency, and former MLA A. Ganesh Kumar will enter the fray in the Gingee constituency.

SDPI, MJK, MPP get one seat each in DMK alliance

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

The Social Democratic Party of India (SDPI) led by V.M.S. Mohammed Mubarak, the Manithaneya Jananayaga Katchi (MJK) led by Thamimun Ansari, and the Mukkulathor Puli Padai (MPP) led by actor Karunas, have been allocated one seat each as part of the DMK-led Secular Progressive Alliance for the upcoming Assembly election.

To use DMK symbol

The leaders of these parties held meetings with a DMK delegation at Anna Arivalayam, the ruling party's headquarters, in Chennai on Wednesday.

All these parties are set to contest the election on the DMK's 'Rising Sun' symbol, and their respective seats will be finalised on Thursday.

By not keeping his word, EPS has lost credibility, says OPS

The Hindu Bureau
BODINAYAKANUR

Panneerselvam ridiculed AIADMK leader Palaniswami for claiming that he was leading the NDA in Tamil Nadu. FILE PHOTO

The people would not be carried away by the election manifesto of the AIADMK, as its general secretary Edappadi K. Palaniswami has lost credibility by not keeping his word, former Chief Minister O. Panneerselvam, who recently joined the DMK, said on Wednesday.

Addressing the media, Mr. Panneerselvam said that 10 consecutive elections since the R.K. Nagar byelection in 2017 had proved that Mr. Palaniswami lacked personality and efficiency. "Tall leaders such as M. Karunanidhi and Jayalalithaa too had faced defeats in elections. However, they had a great personality, which ensured that they made a quick comeback," he said.

He ridiculed Mr. Palaniswami for claiming that he was leading the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in Tamil Nadu. "If that were the case, the smaller parties should contest the election on the AIADMK's symbol and not the BJP's," he said. He claimed that AIADMK members had switched to the DMK en masse.

"The people would not believe the AIADMK's promises of ₹2,000 in monthly assistance to women and refrigerators to all ration cardholders. The DMK has fulfilled all of its poll promises, and has even implemented schemes that were not promised during the last election campaign," he said.

"When the DMK manifesto is announced, all political parties will run away (from the electoral arena)," he said. Chief Minister M.K. Stalin was working to spread industrialisation across the southern districts to generate job opportunities, he added.

Holidays cut nomination window to four days

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

The Election Commission of India (EC) on Wednesday said nominations for the upcoming Assembly election in Tamil Nadu could be filed between March 30, the date of notification, and April 6, the last date for receipt of nominations.

However, since four public holidays fall during this period, there are effectively only four days for filing nominations.

According to an official press release, nominations could be filed between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. Since March 31, April 1, April 3, and April 5 have been declared public holidays under the Negotiable Instruments Act, 1881, nominations will not be received on these dates.

No need for govt. sanction to register FIR on alleged scam in K.N. Nehru's dept., A-G tells HC

Mohamed Imranullah S.
CHENNAI

Advocate-General P.S. Raman on Wednesday informed the Madras High Court of having given a legal opinion that there is no need for the State government to grant sanction to the Directorate of Vigilance and Anti Corruption (DVAC) for registering an FIR in connection with an alleged cash-for-jobs scam in Minister K.N. Nehru's Municipal Administration and Water Supply Department.

Appearing before the first Division Bench of Chief Justice Sushrut Arvind Dharmadhikari and Justice G. Arul Murugan, the A-G said he had opined that it would be sufficient if the DVAC just informs the State government, and that it need not seek sanction, as required under Section 17 of the Prevention of Corruption Act, before commencing any inquiry against public servants when the High Court had ordered the registration of the FIR.

The A-G said he had also opined that in instances where constitutional courts had ordered registration of FIR in corruption cases, the government had no option but to just record the fact.

Contempt plea

The submissions were made during the hearing of a contempt of court petition filed by All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) Rajya Sabha member I.S. Inbadurai for non-compliance with the court order.

K.N. Nehru

While allowing a writ petition filed by the Member of Parliament, former Chief Justice Manindra Mohan Shrivastava and Justice Murugan had, on February 20, ordered registration of the FIR "forthwith" regarding the alleged scam. Since the direction was not complied with, the MP had filed the contempt of court petition against the then DVAC chief on February 26.

The A-G said he had opined that it would suffice if the DVAC informs the State government

During the course of the hearing of the contempt plea, the Bench led by Chief Justice Dharmadhikari expressed its displeasure over the DVAC not having registered the FIR till date, in spite of a specific judicial direction.

"As on date, the order is staring at you. You either comply with the order or take it on appeal. You cannot simply keep it in a limbo. Our order is very clear. You cannot frustrate the order," Justice Murugan said.

However, the A-G replied that the State government had filed a review petition against that order as early as on February 26, but it was yet to get numbered. He said that the review petition had been filed on eight elaborately drafted grounds, and that the petition was about to get numbered on Monday (March 23), but it did not happen as the case bundles had been shifted from one section to another in the Registry.

More time sought

He urged the court to grant him some time for getting the review petition numbered and listed before the Division Bench.

On his part, senior counsel N.R. Elango, representing the DVAC, said the agency was ready with its counter-affidavit to the contempt plea, and advocate Avinash Motwani, representing the MP, urged the court to take up the contempt petition as well as the review petition for hearing together.

After hearing all of them, the judges adjourned the matter for further hearing to April 20.

INBRIEF

Karnataka varsity faces freeze on accounts after conference

The Karnataka government has directed banks to freeze the accounts of Karnataka State Open University (KSOU), where a conference on Hindutva ideologue Deendayal Upadhyaya began on Wednesday despite official orders to cancel it. KSOU Vice-Chancellor Sharanappa V. Halase and Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot, also the KSOU Chancellor, attended it. The government cited a probe into the alleged financial anomalies at KSOU as the basis for its order to freeze accounts.

Age verification must at liquor joints, says Karnataka HC

Breweries and other establishments serving liquor must initiate rigorous age-verification protocols, be it through Aadhaar or other documents, said the High Court of Karnataka on Wednesday. "The managements of the places will be held accountable for any lapses," the court noted. Justice M. Nagaprasanna made the observations in a case stemming from the death of a 15-year-old who consumed alcohol and later fell from the top floor of an apartment and died.

MBBS student found dead at college hostel in Bidar

A 21-year-old medical student was found dead at the Bidar Institute of Medical Sciences (BRIMS) hostel in Karnataka on Tuesday. The police suspect that he ended his life after losing money in online gaming. The student was identified as Anishkar Chavan, a native of Kalaburagi district. Sources said he had been facing severe stress after losing around ₹80,000 in an online game. *(Those in distress can dial Tele Manas helpline 1800-89-14416 for counselling and support.)*

Cauvery basin to face dry spell until 2050, says study

Cauvery faces potential decline of about 3.5% of its waters between 2026 and 2050, even as its northern counterparts brace for floods; researchers warn that water sharing could get tougher

Jacob Koshy
NEW DELHI

While a warming climate is expected to significantly increase the flow of most major Indian rivers, the Cauvery basin stands out as an exception. The river faces a potential "near-term decline" of approximately 3.5% of its waters between 2026 and 2050, even as its northern counterparts brace for floods, according to a study by researchers at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Gandhinagar, published in the peer-reviewed journal *Earth's Future*.

Given the fraught history of Cauvery water sharing between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, particularly in years of deficit rainfall, the study suggests that despite climate models projecting increased rainfall from global warming in India in the decades ahead, the Cauvery might not benefit. In such a situation, river interlinking projects, such as the proposed Godavari-Cauvery link project, might be necessary, the researchers say.

The study finds that the Cauvery experienced a 28% decline in streamflow between 1951 and 2012, based on data from Kollegal which, one of the authors told *The Hindu*, "well represented" actual flows in the Cauvery.

While the study is based on a modelling study and is reliant on an extrapolation, it attempts to reduce errors that can creep in from blindly applying climate models to predict the impact of global warming on Indian rainfall. To do that, the authors use a novel statistical framework and base their analysis on actual river flows between 1951 and 2012, measured at nine stations representing nine major river basins, and then extrapolates the data using a "constrained modelling" approach.

The nine rivers are the Cauvery (measured at Kollegal), the Ganga (Farakka), Brahmaputra (Bahadurabad), Indus (Bhakra), Godavari (Polavaram), Krishna (Kurundwad), Mahanadi (Basantpur), Narmada (Mandleshwar), and Tapi (Burhanpur).

Decades of failed negotiations on water sharing between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu led to the establishment of the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal (CWDT) in 1990, which took 17 years to reach a final order in 2007. The tribunal calculated total available water at 740 thousand million cubic (tmc) feet in a normal year, and allocated shares accordingly. The 2018 Supreme Court verdict allocated 404.25 tmcft to Tamil Nadu and 284.75 tmcft to Karnataka, while also declaring the Cauvery a national asset.

In 2023, Tamil Nadu requested 24,000 cusecs a day citing drought, but Karnataka refused, citing its water shortage, leading to protests in both States.

Water shortage

Water challenges apart, the study highlights a persistent problem in climate science: while models agree that India will get warmer, they vary widely on exactly how much rain will fall. By applying observational constraints, the researchers identified that only eight out of 22 models accurately captured the seasonality of the Indian monsoon.

The source models used are the CMIP6 (Coupled Model Intercomparison Project Phase 6), which are the latest generation of global climate models used by scientists to project future climate change

Unconstrained models show a 5% increase in the Cauvery in the near term, the researchers said, as well as a 25% increase in the Indus, 8% in the Ganga, and 16% in the Krishna. When projections were restricted to these 'constrained' or more reliable models, the certainty of a wetter future for most rivers increased, but the outlook for the Cauvery was grim, with the basin facing "near- and mid-term water shortages".

The researchers were led by Dipesh Singh Chuphal and Professor Vimal Mishra of IIT Gandhinagar.

"Raw outputs have biases because of model resolution, simplified physics that global climate models use. To correct these biases and show future trends based on what is actually observed, we use constrained models," Mr. Chuphal, the lead author of the study, told *The Hindu*. "As far as the Cauvery is concerned, it implies that water sharing could get tougher."

Worry lines

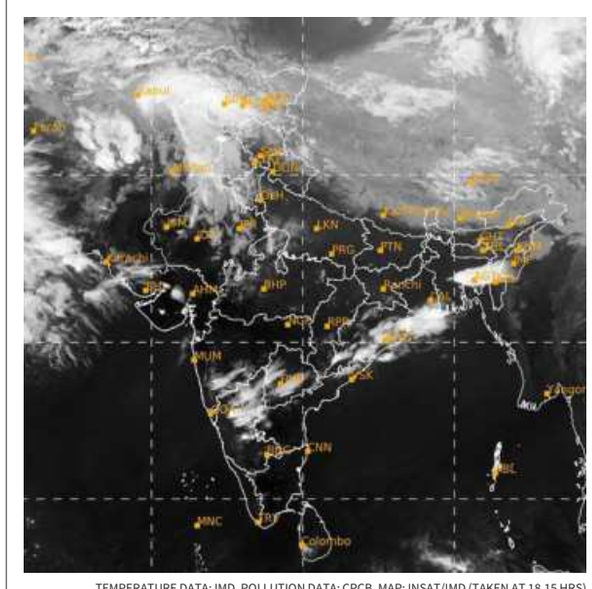
An IIT Gandhinagar study paints a grim picture

- Flows in the Cauvery basin are expected to decline in the 'near-term' (2026-2050) and rise only 'negligibly' from 2051
- The river will not benefit from the increased rainfall from global warming in the decades ahead
- River interlinking projects such as the proposed Godavari-Cauvery link could help

The Cauvery riverbed lies largely exposed at the Mukkombu dam in Tiruchi, Tamil Nadu. R. VENGADESH

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: Heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Sikkim and West Bengal. Thunderstorm with lightning/gusty winds likely at isolated places over Punjab, Delhi, Assam, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Karnataka. Hot and humid weather likely at isolated places over Konkan & Goa, Kerala and Mahe

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	4	32.0	19.5	Kozhikode	—	37.0	27.4
Ahmedabad	—	37.1	25.4	Kurnool	—	39.4	25.4
Aizawl	—	31.0	14.9	Lucknow	—	33.4	18.1
Allahabad	—	36.4	18.5	Madurai	—	38.0	23.1
Bengaluru	—	34.5	21.7	Mangaluru	—	33.8	25.0
Bhopal	—	35.8	18.6	Mumbai	—	34.6	24.5
Bhubaneswar	—	35.2	24.3	Mysuru	—	35.0	19.0
Chandigarh	—	31.2	14.9	New Delhi	—	33.5	16.4
Chennai	—	34.8	24.6	Patna	—	34.1	21.5
Coimbatore	—	36.2	23.8	Port Blair	—	32.7	23.7
Dehradun	—	30.2	15.1	Puducherry	—	32.8	24.4
Gangtok	27	17.6	9.0	Pune	—	38.3	23.3
Goa	—	33.8	24.5	Raipur	—	37.1	24.7
Guwahati	5	29.0	18.3	Ranchi	—	32.4	18.4
Hubballi	—	32.0	22.0	Shillong	—	22.0	10.8
Hyderabad	7	35.2	23.2	Shimla	—	22.6	10.0
Imphal	—	27.3	14.9	Srinagar	—	21.3	4.9
Jaipur	—	34.2	20.6	Thiruvananthapuram	—	36.1	25.5
Kochi	—	32.4	27.6	Tiruchi	—	36.5	23.6
Kohima	—	19.0	11.1	Vijayawada	—	35.2	24.2
Kolkata	—	34.8	24.8	Visakhapatnam	—	32.5	25.8

(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	.55	.68	41	102	170	
Bengaluru	6	.21	39	156	141	
Chennai	.17	.11	26	28	53	
Delhi	.38	.79	96	217	235	
Hyderabad	.14	.13	30	61	93	
Kolkata	.20	.33	78	43	60	
Lucknow	8	.36	68	102	142	
Mumbai	6	.80	20	58	89	
Pune	.—	.99	76	115	124	
Visakhapatnam	.30	.38	17	36	90	

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Ballabgarh, Haryana recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 236 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Kohima, Nagaland recorded a healthy AQI score of 32

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

SOUTH CENTRAL RAILWAY
Follow us on @SCRailwayindia
Details of the Tender Notices of S.C Railway can be seen on our website : www.scr.indianrailways.gov.in

Tender Notice

Sr. DME/Co-ord/SC acting for and on behalf of the President of India, invites e-tender for the below mentioned work upto 11.00 hrs of 15.04.2026.

Tender No and Date:CM.186.C&W.INFRA.CCTV.STABLING/WASHING YARDS Dated 06.03.2026,**Name of the Work:** Supply, Installation and commissioning of CCTV cameras at various locations in Stabling/Washing Yards over SC division with a warranty period of 03 years, **Estimated Value of the Tender Rs.:** 5,43,08,739.76/- **EMD Value Rs.:** 4,21,600.00/-**Tender Type:** Open Tender, **Completion of the work:** Six months + Warranty period of 03 years, **Last date of submission of bids:** 15.04.2026 by 11.00 hrs

The Tenderers should participate through e-tendering only and no manual offers may be considered. The Tender conditions/other details, Tender document, Corrigendum are available on the IREPS website **https://www.ireps.gov.in.** The Tender notice is also displayed in the Notice board located in the office of the Sr. DME/Co-ord/SC, which can be seen on all working days.

Sr. Divisional Mechanical Engineer/ Co-Ord/Secunderabad

PUB/2178/26

TENDER NOTICE
No. CEE/P/SC-2x25KV-OHE-HX-RU-GY-PDL-2025-26-01 Date: 24.03.2026

For and on behalf of the President of the Union of India, Chief Electrical Engineer (Projects), Secunderabad invites (online) e-tender for the following works:

Sl. No.: 1, **Tender No.:** 2×25kV-OHE-HX-RU-GY-PDL, Dt. 23.03.2026, **Description of work:** Design, Supply, Erection, Testing and Commissioning for OHE up-gradation of existing 1×25kV system to 2×25kV AT feeding system with feeder and earthing works in Kadapa (HX) (excl.)-Renigunta (RU) (excl.) & Gooty (GY) (excl.)-Pondikallu (PDL) (excl.) section of Guntakal Division under South Central Railway. Total 155 RKM/281 TKM, **Approx Value Rs.:** 123,48,55,709.34 **Earnest Money should be pay though online:** 63,24,300.00 Cost of **Tender form in Rs.:** NIL, **Completion period:** 24 Months (Twenty Four Months), **Place of tender opening:** Secunderabad

Sl. No.: 1, **Description:** Closing of Tender through e-tender (online) **Time:** 15.00 Hrs., **Date:** 08.05.2026

Sl. No.: 2, **Description:** Opening of Tender through e-tender (online) **Time:** 15.30 Hrs., **Date:** 08.05.2026

If the date of opening of tender happens to be a declared holiday at a later date, the tenders will be opened on the next working day at the stipulated time.
For further tender conditions/details & for submission of Tenders, please visit our website **www.ireps.gov.in**
Note: Any modification to the tender documents/corrigendum/addendum if required will be posted on the above website.

Chief Electrical Engineer/Projects/ Secunderabad
A2750

For further tender conditions / details and for downloading the tender documents, Please visit website at https://www.ireps.gov.in or www.scr.indianrailways.gov.in

आईआरईएल (इंडिया) लिमिटेड IREL (India) Limited
Formerly Indian Rare Earths Limited.
(भारत सरकार का उपक्रम)
(A Government of India Undertaking)
CIN: U15100MH1950GOI008187 Website: www.irel.co.in
ISO 9001: 2015, ISO 14001: 2015 & ISO 45001: 2018 Company

Ref: ADVT. NO. 25-26/18 निविदा सूचना/TENDER NOTICE **Date: 05-03-2026**

आईआरईएल, ओसकॉम निम्नलिखित मदों/जॉब विवरण के लिए प्रस्ताव हेतु अनुरोध आमंत्रित करता है

IREL, OSCOM invites request for proposal for the following items / job descriptions.

बिड सं/Bid No.	जॉब/मद विवरण/Job / Item Description
GEM/2026/B/7329142	Supply of Caustic Soda Lye (1200 MT)

बोलीदाता निविदा दस्तावेज http://irel.co.in, http://gem.gov.in या https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app से डाउनलोड कर सकते हैं। उपरोक्त निविदाओं का कोई भी शुद्धिपत्र/विस्तार केवल उपरोक्त वेबसाइटों पर ही होस्ट किया जाएगा।
Bidder may download tender document from **http://irel.co.in**, **http://gem.gov.in**, or **https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app**. Any corrigendum / Extension to above tenders shall be hosted in above websites only.

ह./Sd/-
महाप्रबंधक/प्रभारी GM & HEAD, OSCOM

CBC 48146/12/0018/2526

Directorate of Tourism, Government of Maharashtra
Head Office : 4th Floor, Sakhar Bhavan, Plot No. 230, Nariman Point, Mumbai- 400 021
Tel. No. 91-22-69107600, 91-22-69107604 E-mail: ee.diot.tourism@gmail.com

TENDER NOTICE

Directorate of Tourism is inviting proposals for the following project via its e-tendering system from pre-qualified organizations. Details of the project are as follows :
Project: Selection of Project Management Consultant for the World Bank supported 'MahaSTRIDE' Operation for Directorate of Tourism, Govt of Maharashtra.
E – Tender Schedule
Period for downloading and submitting tenders online – **25.03.2026 (05:00 PM) to 27.04.2026 (03:00 PM)**
Date and time of opening of Technical proposal – **27.04.2026 (05:00 PM)**
Corrigendum - **The above e-tender notices and corrections will be displayed online only.**
Detailed tender instructions and e-tender information are available from the following website **www.mahatenders.gov.in**

Sd/-
Director, DoT, Mumbai

NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY **OPEN E-TENDER NOTICE**

Divl. Rly. Manager, N.W. Railway, Jaipur for and on behalf of President of India invites open E-Tender for the following works upto 15.00 hours on the date shown as below- **(1) Name of work with location**: ENGG-JP-2026-27-01-S, APPOINTMENT OF PROJECT SUPERVISION SERVICES AGENCY (PSSA) for PROVIDING PROJECT SUPERVISION SERVICES at Various Construction Sites / Sections for Various works like Earthwork, Minor Major/ Important Bridges/ RUBs/ ROBs, Blanketing, Ballasting, Station Buildings, Platforms Construction/ Raising/ Extension, FOB's, Platform Shelters, Other Buildings, Staff and Passenger Amenity Works, All P.Way linking works and any other ancillary works in the jurisdiction of Ajmer, Bikaner, Jaipur and Jodhpur Division of North-Western Railway (Engineering Open Line). **Approx Cost of work:** ₹ 67227239.52/-, **Earnest money:** ₹ 486100.00/- **(2) Name of work with location**: ENGG-JP-2026-27-02, Providing BLT for Rewari yard line no.07 and AWR yard line no.03. **Approx Cost of work:** ₹ 97967040.00/-, **Earnest money:** ₹ 1959300.00/- **(3) Name of work with location**: ENGG-JP-2026-27-05, ADEN (HQ-II)/ JP Sub Div. - Supply of potable drinking water at various locations in JP-CKS & JP-BAI Section for Staff colony, LC gates, Gang quarters & Station. (For 2 years). **Approx Cost of work:** ₹ 5760916.00/-, **Earnest money:** ₹ 115200.00/- **(4) Name of work with location**: ENGG-JP-2026-27-06, USFD testing of Rails on loop lines/Main lines, SEJ & Turnout and AT welds through outsourcing over Jaipur division. **Approx Cost of work:** ₹ 17058270.71/-, **Earnest money:** ₹ 341200.00/- **(5) Name of work with location**: ENGG-JP-2026-27-07, Jaipur- Repair and replacement of water supply pipe Line at Station, Ganpati Nagar colony and Loco colony. **Approx Cost of work:** ₹ 10892648.66/-, **Earnest money:** ₹ 217900.00/- **(6) Name of work with location**: ENGG-JP-2026-27-08, ADEN/AWR Subdivision:- Improvement to road surface, drainage system and ancillary works at RUBs. **Approx Cost of work:** ₹ 23260865.67/-, **Earnest money:** ₹ 465200.00/- **(7)** ENGG-JP-2026-27-09, ADEN/AWR Sub Division: - Supply of potable sweet drinking water at various LC's, stations and colonies for two year. **Approx Cost of work:** ₹ 2690508.44/-, **Earnest money:** ₹ 53800.00/- **(8)** ENGG-JP-2026-27-10, ADEN/SIKR Subdivision:- Improvement to road surface, drainage system and ancillary works at RUBs. **Approx Cost of work:** ₹ 23300114.57/-, **Earnest money:** ₹ 466000.00/- **(9)** ENGG-JP-2026-27-11, Improvement of drain in RGS & SIKR yard. **Approx Cost of work:** ₹ 77350813.90/-, **Earnest money:** ₹ 1547000.00/- **(10)** ENGG-JP-2026-27-13, ADEN BKI Subdivision:- Improvement to road surface, drainage system and ancillary works at RUBs. **Approx Cost of work:** ₹ 21092704.62/-, **Earnest money:** ₹ 421900.00/- **(1)** Detail is available on N.W.Rly website-www.ireps.gov.in and Notice Board in WA section, DRM Office, NWR/Jaipur. **(2)** Tender No. ENGG-JP-2026-27-05 & 06, is to be closed on 06.04.2026 at 15.00 hrs and opened on 06.04.2026 at 16.00 hrs. Tender No. ENGG-JP-2026-27-02,07, 08. 09 &13 is to be closed on 08.04.2026 at 15.00 hrs and opened on 08.04.2026 at 16.00 hrs. Tender No. ENGG-JP-2026-27-10 &11 is to be closed on 10.04.2026 at 15.00 hrs and opened on 10.04.2026 at 16.00 hrs. Tender No. ENGG-JP-2026-27-01-S is to be closed on 21.04.2026 at 15.00 hrs and opened on 21.04.2026 at 16.00 hrs. Pre bid conference date & time is 27.03.2026 at 11:00 in the conference room of DRM Office, Jaipur. 416-DK/26

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

NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY
E-TENDER NOTICE
CPM /GSU/ NWR Ajmer on behalf of The President of India invites E - Tenders for the following work up to 15.00 Hrs. on the mentioned date. **(1) Tender No.:** GSUAII-PFshlt-Re-02-2026, **Name of work**: Providing of full length platform shelter for each platform at Bhilwara, Bijaynagar, Mavli Jn & Kapasan in Ajmer-Udaipur section of Ajmer Division. **Approximate cost of work:** ₹ 29,90,20,441.13/- **Bid Security:** ₹59,80,500.00/- **Date & Time of closing E-tender:** 13.04.2026 at 15.00 Hrs. **Date of Time of Opening E-tender:** 13.04.2026 at 15.30 hrs. The details of above E-tender are available on website www.ireps.gov.in 418-DK/26
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NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY
CORRIGENDUM
इस कार्यालय द्वारा ज्ञापित **खुली निविदा सूचना संख्याः जीएसयू/सीपीएम/जेपी/निविदा/26–27 दिनांक 11.03.2026** में निविदा सं. गति – शक्ति/इन्जी./जेपी/2026–27/01 जो दिनांक 10.04.2026 को खोली जावेगी। इस निविदा में पुर्व में डाली गई निविदा फार्म और निविदा अनुसूची को हटाकर नया निविदा फार्म, निविदा अनुसूची और ठेके की सामान्य शर्तो की शुद्धि पत्र सख्या 11 को वेब साइट www.ireps.gov.in पर डाली गई है कृपया नया निविदा फार्म, निविदा अनुसूची और ठेके की सामान्य शर्तो की शुद्धि पत्र सख्या 11 को मध्य नजर रखते हुये निविदा प्रस्तुत करे। यह अन्य शर्ते यथावत रहेगी।
उप मुख्य इंजीनियर(जी.एस.यु.), जयपुर
429-DR/26

PUBLIC CAUTION NOTICE

Our client, **M/s. Bearys Properties and Developments Private Limited,** a company having its registered office at Bearys Horizon, No. 21, Wood Street, Bangalore 560025 (referred to as "**Client**") had entered into a Term Sheet dated 9th January 2024 with **M/s. Shivananda Steels Limited,** a company having its office at Plot 18 – 20, Ambit Park Road, Ambattur Industrial Estate, Chennai 600058, for procuring **Plot 18 – 20, Ambit Park Road, Ambattur Industrial Estate, Chennai 600058,** measuring 6.86 acres, at Ambattur Industrial Estate, Chennai 600058 (more fully detailed in the Schedule hereunder and referred to as the "**Schedule Property**").

NOTICE is hereby given to the public at large in relation to the valuable rights of our Client in the Schedule Property under the above Term Sheet who have expended large amounts in furtherance of the proposed transaction for the Schedule Property. Any acts, discussions or transactions by any persons whomsoever in relation to or affecting the Schedule Property in any manner whatsoever will be considered as being with due notice of the rights of our Client, and will also be considered to be done at their own risk, costs and consequences. Any act and transactions in relation to or affecting the Schedule Property in any manner whatsoever will be subject to the rights of our Client under the Term Sheet and the same will not be binding on our Client and/or the Schedule Property.

SCHEDULE

The property bearing **Plot 18 – 20**, Ambit Park Road, measuring 6.86 acres, at Ambattur Industrial Estate, Chennai 600058, carved out of land measuring 8.69 acres in Plot Nos. 18, 19 and 20, formed out of land in Survey Nos. 425, 426, 427, 428, 429 of Ambattur Village and Survey Nos. 24, 26, 27, 29, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 154, 167 and 169 of Mannurpet Village, Ambattur Taluk, Thiruvallur, and the larger property is bounded on the following:

East By : Plot No. 28, 29, 30, 31A and 31B (SP)
West By : Land belonging to Chettinad Academy and Eppendorf India Limited
North By : Plot No. 7 and 8 (owned by NTT Global)
South By : 80 feet wide road.

Place: Chennai
Dated: 25th March 2026

Ms.MAIMOONA BADSHA
Advocate
M/s.Badsha Legal, Suite # 21D, TVH Triveni Apts.
C.V.Raman Road, Alwarpet Chennai 600018.
Email Id: maimoona@badshalegal.com
vennila@badshalegal.com Mob No: 9094996974.

Homage to
C R RAMASWAMY

24-06-1917 26-03-1986

NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY **E-TENDER NOTICE**

DRM/Electrical, North Western Railway, Jodhpur for & on behalf of the president of India, invites E-tender for the following work.**1. Complete details of tenders can be seen on Website No : http://www.ireps.gov.in 2. Date & time of closing of e-tender: 08.04.2026** up to 15.00 hrs. **3. Date & time of opening of e-tender:** After 15.00 hrs. on **08.04.2026 Tender Notice No.** : 54/2025-26 **Name of work** : (i) Electrical work in connection with repair and maintenance of staff quarters (ii) Electrical work in c/w -Up gradation & improvement of personnel Department **Approx. Cost of the work (Rs.)** : 17729413.51 **Tender Notice No.** : 55/2025-26 **Name of work** : (i) Electrical work in connection with replacement of old/dilapidated quarters by 20 units Type III quarters in Nehru Park Colony under ADEN/HQ. (ii) Electrical work in connection with improvement of staff quarters in Medical Colony, BGKT colony in the section of ADEN/HQ/JU (iii) Electrical work in connection with improvement of staff quarters in DS Colony, NP Colony in the section of ADEN/HQ/JU (iv) Electrical work in connection with improvement of staff quarters in Workshop Colony, Loco colony in the section of ADEN/HQ/JU (v) Electrical work in connection with improvement of staff quarters in Old Loco Colony, BGKT Colony in the section of ADEN/HQ Jodhpur (vi) Electrical work in connection with improvement of staff quarters in DS Colony, Medical Colony in the section of ADEN/HQ Jodhpur **Approx. Cost of the work (Rs.)** : 21478796.41 **Tender Notice No.** : 56/2025-26 **Name of work** : Preventive Schedule maintenance, operation,troubleshooting and up-keeping of Electrical substation at BGKT, SMR & BME for a period of two years. **Approx. Cost of the work (Rs.)** : 12512000.00 **Tender Notice No.** : 57/2025-26 **Name of work** : Preventive Schedule maintenance, operation, troubleshooting and up-keeping of Electrical substation at MTD & DNA for a period of two years **Approx. Cost of the work (Rs.)** : 6256000.00 For detailed information visit **http://www. ireps.gov.in**
431-DR/26
Please join us on /NWRailways NWRailways_

BENGALURU SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT LIMITED
Office of the Deputy General Manager-1,BSWML, 1st Floor, BBMP Building, Thimmaiah Road, Vasanth Nagar, Bengaluru – 560 052.

No: DGM-1/BSWML/TEND/31/2025-26 **Date: 25.03.2026**

Invitation for Short Term Tender
(Through GOK KPPP only) (Call-03)

The Deputy General Manager-1, Bengaluru Solid Waste Management Limited on behalf of the Managing Director, BSWML, Bengaluru invites bids from eligible bidders for the Services mentioned in the table given below.

Sl. No.	Name of the work	Amount Put to Tender per annum (Rs. in Lakhs)	EMD (Amount in Rs.)	Time of Completion
1	Primary Collection and Secondary Transportation of Municipal solid waste (MSW) and Street sweeping waste in CV Raman Nagara division (Package-01) **Call-03.**	**1,477.85**	**Rs.1,00,000/-** through e-payment mode under of the following i.e., online / RTGS/ NEFT / OTC and the balance **Rs.14,00,000/-** by bank Guarantee/FDR issued by Nationalized /scheduled Bank.	84 Months

1) Last date for uploading Pre-bid Queries : 3**1.03.2026 before17:30 hrs. 2)** Tender Pre-Bid meeting : **01.04.2026 at 15:00 hrs** at above mentioned office. **3)** Last Date of Receipt of Tender: **10.04.2026 before 17:30 hrs. 4)** Opening of Technical Bid: **13.04.2026 after 17:30 hrs.**
More details can be downloaded from website - **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in**

Sd/-
Deputy General Manager-1, BSWML
DIPR/CP/JA/6327/2025-26

MSME Ministry of MSME Govt. of India
MSME TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT CENTRE CHENNAI
Government of India Autonomous Body
CFTI, 65/1, G.S.T. Road, Guindy, Chennai - 600 032
ONLINE TRAINING PROGRAMME ON (SUNDAYS ONLY)
HOW TO FIND EXPORT OPPORTUNITIES
EXPORT START-UP COURSE
DATES : 5, 12, 19 & 26 of April 2026 (Sundays Only ONLINE LIVE)
TIMINGS: 10.30 A.M. TO 1.00 P.M.
KEY TOPICS COVERED WITH PRACTICAL SESSIONS
- **HANDS ON PRACTICE** Finding Export Potential Products / Markets
- **MARKET SELECTION** Political & Economic Environment Analysis / Trade Agreements
- **BUYER IDENTIFICATION** Finding Authentic Buyer Address using Portals / Trade Events
- **BUSINESS REGISTRATION** Getting Started UDYAM, GST, IEC, RCMC, FSSAI & ICEGATE Registration
- **EXPORTS SCHEMES REFUNDS** Duty Drawback, RODTE, ROSCTL GST
- **END TO END ORDER PROCESSING** Step by Step Roadmap from inquiry to payment.

WHO SHOULD ATTEND
- MSME Manufacturers Export aspiring Entrepreneurs
- Export Marketing Managers Documentation Executives
- MBA (International Business)., M.Com., B.Com., Students

COURSE FEE : Rs.5,900/- (incl.GST)
TOTAL NUMBER OF SEATS : 25 ONLY (FIRST COME FIRST SERVED BASIS)
For Further Details **www.cftichennai.in E-Mail: msmetdc@cftichennai.in**
Mob : 91504 95272 / 93457 88166 Ph : 044 22501529 Ext : 27
GOVT OF INDIA CERTIFICATE WILL BE ISSUED

Welfare and distress

The Opposition is trying to undermine the LDF's development pitch

Kerala stands on the threshold of a high-stakes election on April 9 which could mark an inflection point in the State's electoral history. In 2021, the Left Democratic Front (LDF) led by the CPI(M), which broke tradition with its consecutive win, now seeks a third term. But it is beset by a slew of allegations, rebellion in its ranks and high-profile defections to the Congress and the BJP. This election, therefore, unfolds on a very different political terrain. The Congress-led United Democratic Front is counting on a perceptible undercurrent of anti-incumbency, the signs of which were evident when it outperformed the LDF in the December 2025 local body elections; it notched up a vote share of 38.8% against the LDF's 33.4% and won most local bodies. The Congress-led alliance has fielded a handful of Left leaders who had defected, causing agony to its cadres in some seats even as it was set back by senior leader K. Sudhakaran's mutiny during candidate selection. The Congress is seeking to counter the Left's development rhetoric by offering its own welfare schemes, aimed at women and youth. Attempting to queer the pitch in the bipolar polity is the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance, which wrested the Thiruvananthapuram Municipal Corporation from the Left Front in the local body elections in December 2025 through deft election engineering. But its vote share dropped to 14.7% from 19.2% in 2024 when it made its Lok Sabha debut from Kerala. Aiming to build on what it sees as a gradual shift in the political landscape, the BJP has drawn a few disenchanted leaders from both major coalitions and broadbased its reach by aligning with emerging outfits such as Twenty20, which claims a foothold in parts of central Kerala. The alliance is also attempting to expand its reach into minority communities, particularly among Catholic Christians in central Travancore.

The ruling coalition has largely retained its incumbent legislators, projecting continuity and seeking to rebut claims of anti-incumbency. It is also banking on its decade-long development welfare initiatives while attempting to capitalise on perceived uncertainties in the Congress over its chief ministerial candidate. Beyond the familiar rhetoric of development, a complex interplay of factors, with demographics being a key variable, will likely determine the outcome in each constituency. Foremost is the alignment of Kerala's two major religious minorities, Muslims and Christians, who constitute nearly 47% of the electorate. A range of issues, from the Union government's approach to the State, the Sabarimala gold theft, concerns over land encroachment to agrarian distress and debates around political Islam, is expected to shape voter sentiment.

Cuban sorrow

The U.S. asphyxiation of Cuba demands global condemnation

Even as the world is feeling the pinch of the ill-thought-out and cruel attacks by the United States and its West Asian loose-cannon ally, Israel, on Iran, an equally heinous imperial act is under way in the Caribbean, drawing little attention. The Trump administration has effectively blockaded Cuba's fuel supplies to pressure regime change. In actions taken since December 2025, interdicting Venezuelan oil shipments, threatening punitive tariffs on any country supplying fuel and deterring Russian diesel and crude oil supplies, the U.S. has strangled a petroleum-dependent country, where oil drives 83% of power generation. The consequences have been devastating. There have been three grid collapses in March 2026, even as garbage is piling up in Havana and other cities, perishable food is rotting, and industry and government offices have shut. Donald Trump's actions are criminally illegal by international law. He claims that Cuba is "seeing the end", boasts that he will have the "honour" of "taking" Cuba, and has called on the Cuban government to "make a deal before it's too late", without specifying any terms.

The actions against Cuba must be seen against a six-decade long U.S. embargo – but what Cubans term a blockade – ever since the revolution nationalised U.S.-owned enterprises in the early 1960s. The U.S.'s trade embargo in 1962 was progressively strengthened as the Helms-Burton Act of 1996 effectively conscripted the global business community into enforcing it. Meanwhile, Cuba's designation as a state sponsor of terrorism – removed by Barack Obama but restored by Mr. Trump and lacking any rational basis – has cut the country off from international banking. That these coercive measures persisted much after the Cold War reveals that their true purpose is not U.S. national security, but the appeasement of the right-wing Cuban-American community in Florida, led by U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio, son of Cuban émigrés, for whom regime change in Havana is a lifelong ambition. Mr. Trump's military intervention in Venezuela, including capturing a sitting President and seizing control of its oil, was itself partly designed to sever Cuba's primary fuel lifeline under the doctors-for-fuel arrangement. The pattern is clear: impunity in Venezuela emboldened the Trump administration to asphyxiate Cuba and impunity in Cuba has accompanied America's war on Iran. Each unchallenged act of imperial overreach normalises the next, threatening not just vulnerable nations in the U.S. orbit but also the very framework of international order. The world, including India, must not remain silent and have the gumption to condemn these actions and provide humanitarian assistance, under the aegis of the United Nations, for the people of Cuba.

The Transgender Persons Amendment Bill, a flawed fix

Gopi Shankar Madurai

Special Monitor for Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression and Sexual Characteristics (SOGIESC) Rights, National Human Rights Commission of India

The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Bill, 2026 (Bill No. 79 of 2026), introduced in the Lok Sabha on March 13, 2026, makes several sharp changes to the 2019 Act. It narrows the definition of "transgender person" to only specific socio-cultural identities such as kinner, hijra, aravani, jogta, eunuch, or biologically-defined intersex variations, or persons forcibly compelled into such an identity through mutilation, castration, amputation, or any surgical, chemical or hormonal procedure. It explicitly excludes persons with different sexual orientations and non-heteronormative gender fluid identities.

The Bill removes the right to "self-perceived gender identity" from Section 4(2), replaces the simple District Magistrate process with a medical board "authority" headed by a Chief Medical Officer, and mandates hospitals to report every transgender surgery to the District Magistrate and the authority.

Perpetuating structural problems

The government claims that the new amendments fix the vagueness and implementation failures of the 2019 Act. Every year, thousands of intersex infants are killed or undergo medically unethical, non-consensual sex-selective surgeries that mutilate their bodies without regard for lifelong physical and psychological trauma, all in pursuit of a false "normalcy". Millions of intersex individuals remain ghosts in our Census systems, their births and deaths unregistered, rendering them invisible to legal protections and social services.

Even the highest authorities fail to grasp the fundamental distinctions between sex identity and gender identity, or between intersex variations and transgender identities, which fuels rampant discrimination. The Bill itself refers to male and female as "gender identity", which is fundamentally wrong – male and female are sex identities. By clubbing sex identity under the gender column, the Bill creates new problems where it is meant to solve existing ones.

The government does not have reliable data on transgender and intersex persons in India. They want to grant us rights but do not know who we are. Separating sex and gender identity as different categories on official documents would address the root causes of this problem.

Despite the new wording, the Bill still lumps "persons with intersex variations" inside the definition of a "transgender person." The term "transgender persons" often conflates distinct identities. The Trans Act's definition includes persons with intersex variations under "transgender", which erases intersex-specific needs. Intersex is a natural biological spectrum (recorded 1%-2% globally). Transgender identity is a psychological and social construct.

> The Bill only deepens the conflation of gender identities and ignores core crises

Retaining this conflation under one label violates rights under Article 21 to bodily integrity and privacy. It leaves out intersex infants without any specific ban on "normalising" surgeries and ignores repeated calls for separate intersex legislation.

The Bill's definition also contradicts established international standards: the United Nations and the World Health Organization define intersex as innate variations in sex characteristics that do not fit typical male or female binaries, requiring distinct legal recognition and explicit protections against non-consensual medical interventions. By forcing intersex persons into a transgender category, the Bill undermines these global definitions and erodes the very human rights framework that India has committed to uphold.

The Bill leaves the outdated title, National Council for Transgender Persons, and all State Welfare Boards unchanged. It ignores the long-standing proposal to rebrand them as a National GIESC Welfare Council and State GIESC Welfare Boards (GIESC is Gender Identity/Expression and Sex Characteristics). This keeps the entire policy architecture trapped under the problematic "transgender" umbrella instead of creating a scientifically accurate, inclusive framework. The government continues to promote a single identity at the national level.

This heteronormative bill erases the reality that GIESC communities, including transgender persons, may have diverse sexual orientations such as transgay, translesbian, transbisexual, or queer.

Legally empowering exploitative structures

New clauses in Section 18 introduce rigorous imprisonment (between five to 14 years) for forcing adults or children into "transgender presentation" plus begging or servitude. Yet, the Bill does nothing to regulate or dismantle the colonial hijra jamath-gharana system. By targeting only external perpetrators while leaving internal hierarchies untouched, the amendment effectively legitimises and empowers the long-standing hijra jamath-gharana system, codifying it into law. These structures are not inherently traditional; earlier Indic frameworks were more inclusive and rooted in a broader, affirmative understanding of diverse identities, free from later external influences.

At present, chief hijra nayaks control chelas' earnings from begging and prostitution, trapping gender non-conforming children (often abandoned) in bonded labour. Meanwhile, thousands of gender non-conforming children, abandoned or rejected by families, are thrust into exploitative hijra jamath gharanas, havelis, and dayars, where education is a distant dream; instead, and forced into begging and prostitution.

State police often refuse to register missing child complaints for gender non-conforming children, and there are no dedicated policies to address their vulnerability to trafficking and abuse. There is also no framework for reform, rehabilitation, or protection of minors within these systems. By protecting these colonial-era identities without evidence-based safeguards, the government is undermining earlier inclusive traditions.

The Bill contains no requirement for genetic counselling by medical geneticists before certification, intersex surgeries and health management. It offers no mandate for India-specific longitudinal studies on "affirming surgeries" and raises serious privacy concerns due to inadequate safeguards.

Instead of addressing the problems faced by diverse GIESC communities such as administrative barriers and unregulated medical practices which include gender-affirming surgeries and hormone therapies (Government of India promotes freely despite severe health risks) the Bill offers only superficial measures with little relevance to their needs. Despite the 2019 UN CRPD recommendations to prioritise intersex welfare and dignity, these concerns remain largely neglected.

No intersectionality

The Bill contains no intersectional lens for caste, disability, poverty or religion. Transgender persons from Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe or disabled backgrounds will continue to face compounded discrimination with zero targeted remedies. It also fails to protect India's family-dependent societal structures by skipping any requirement for rigorous, evidence-based research before policy changes. Most critically, the Bill is completely silent on civil and marriage rights of diverse GIESC identities. It offers no provisions for marriage, adoption, inheritance, divorce, or succession for transgender persons, leaving them without full legal recognition in family law, and perpetuating their exclusion from the very institutions that define citizenship and dignity in Indian society.

The 2026 Amendment Bill tightens some definitions and increases penalties for forced exploitation, but leaves every core structural flaw untouched – the hetero-normative erasure of diverse SOGIESC identities, the complete neglect of civil and marriage rights, the legal entrenchment of colonial hijra structures at the expense of ancient Indic heritage. India needs a scientific, culturally grounded approach that separates biological sex characteristics from gender identity, prioritises evidence over ideology, bans non-consensual intersex surgeries, ensures equal rights, dismantles exploitative systems, and protects the dignity of intersex persons and gender non-conforming children. The Constitution demands nothing less.

Democracy, dissent and the 'national image' debate

Sandeep Phukan

The dramatic 'shirtless' protests by the Indian Youth Congress (IYC) at the India AI Impact Summit on February 20 triggered a debate on the limits of dissent and the response of the ruling party. As soon as the visuals of IYC workers going shirtless to protest the India-U.S. trade agreement went viral, several leaders from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) were quick to describe it as an "anti-national" act and called Congress leader Rahul Gandhi a "traitor" who was determined to tarnish India's global image. The Delhi Police quickly filed charges, including rioting and promoting enmity between groups, and arrested 14 IYC members.

Does protesting against the government in front of international delegates at the AI summit dent the country's image? While there can be a debate on the manner of protests, it is not uncommon to find protesters at international events. Such protests are often seen as a demonstration of democratic credentials.

Perspective that might not sit well

In democracies, dissent is often considered a safety valve through which citizens not only express disapproval of a particular policy but also participate in the governance process. Such a view, however, does not fit well into the narrative of parties that seek to project strong and decisive leadership, where the personality and charisma of the leader drive the decision-making process.

In 1976, when former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi imposed the Emergency in the country, Congress president Dev Kanta Barooah had famously said, "India is Indira, Indira is India." Though no BJP leader has gone to the extent of equating Prime Minister Narendra Modi with the country, they routinely brand any serious criticism of him or his government as "an attack on the nation".

The projection of an all-pervasive leadership often blurs the line between the government and the state. In theory, though, there exists a clear one: the state is sovereign, permanent and supreme, while the government manages the affairs of the state. The executive, or the government, is another organ of the state, just as the legislature and the judiciary are. In a democracy, the state would also include a healthy opposition that would provide the checks and balances.

> Democratic strength lies in engaging dissent without equating it to disloyalty to the nation

How this distinction plays out in practice depends largely on the institutional design of the state, the distribution of power within it and how a ruling party frames its relationship with them.

Federal structure tensions

The concept of an all-pervasive "strong leader" necessarily leads to the notion of a strong state, where the distinction between dissent and sedition may dissolve. The extent to which this tendency manifests itself, however, is shaped by the constitutional arrangement of the state.

In the Indian context, the Constitution has been described as a document that is federal in structure and unitary in spirit. While there is a neat division of responsibilities in the central and the State Lists, the Union government has been accorded primacy in the Concurrent List – subjects over which both State governments and the Centre have jurisdiction.

Parties arguing for a "strong" state often adopt a reading of the Constitution that focuses on the unitary spirit of the document, and any contrarian position is viewed as an attempt to weaken the Centre. From this perspective, excessive regional assertions are sometimes seen as carrying the potential to encourage centrifugal tendencies.

Those who insist on the federal structure of the Constitution emphasise its pluralistic design, with different linguistic, cultural and ideological currents coexisting within the constitutional framework.

Political parties or ideologies alone do not shape our understanding of the state and the government; it is also influenced by the historical experience of the state with separatist movements and internal security challenges.

Intelligence and security agencies prefer political messaging through mass media that pushes towards creating a 'one nation, one identity' narrative. Such messaging not only reinforces a strong and powerful Centre but also acts as a safeguard against any centrifugal force.

And the mass media acts as a force multiplier, especially when political communication has become visual and performative. Every evening, TV anchors issue certificates of patriotism and sit in judgment on what constitutes an anti-national act. In doing so, they merge the line between the government and the country, often arguing that criticism, when amplified globally, are used by actors to question the legitimacy of the state.

Be it the protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) in 2019 or the farmers' agitation of 2020-21, a large section of the mass media accused the protesters of playing into the hands of the forces that are inimical to the country. And, therefore, a protest against policy became a protest against the nation.

The tension between these two approaches reflects a deeper debate about the nature of nationalism in a democracy – whether unity is best preserved through a celebration of diversity or the assertion of a singular national identity.

Deeper questions

The debate sparked off by the IYC protests goes beyond what constitutes a 'decent' protest. It raises larger questions about how a democracy negotiates the space for dissent while maintaining national cohesion.

A confident nation derives its strength not merely from uniformity but also from its ability to accommodate competing voices within the constitutional framework, while remaining alert to attempts that may challenge the unity and integrity of the State.

The real test of democratic maturity lies not in the absence of dissent but in the willingness to engage with it without conflating criticism of the government with disloyalty to the nation.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The war in West Asia

President Donald Trump's shifting ultimatums and abrupt reversals expose not strength, but confusion and desperation. His claims of "victory" ring hollow when Iran continues to retaliate effectively, holding its ground despite sustained military pressure. This is not strategy. It is miscalculation of the highest order. Every act of aggression has been met with escalation, pushing the region closer to a catastrophic conflict. Such brinkmanship is not only irresponsible but deeply dangerous, with the global economy already paying the price. Equally, Israel's continued strikes, enabled by U.S. backing, risk dragging the entire region into prolonged instability.

K.J. Haroon Basha,
Vaniyambadi, Tamil Nadu

This is an event with cascading second-order effects. Curtailment of gas to petrochemical units threatens to choke the production of essential polymers, disrupting supply chains that sustain everyday life, from food packaging to infrastructure materials. Equally concerning is the vulnerability of semiconductor hubs. India must be prepared for deepening economic shock.

M. Jeyaram,
Sholavandan, Tamil Nadu

Corrections & Clarifications

A sentence in "India's dual dependence on West Asia for urea production" (Opinion page – 'Data Point', March 23) should have read, "In 2025, India's urea imports *exceeded $2.3 billion,* with a staggering 71% of these imports coming from West Asia (Chart 4)", and not "... exceeded 2,300 lakh metric tonnes, with a staggering ...".

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An energy transition driven by ethics

Vasudevan Mukunth

"Fossil fuel dependency is ripping away national security and sovereignty, and replacing it with subservience and rising costs," UN climate change arm executive secretary Simon Stiell told European Union officials and ministers in Brussels on March 16, against the backdrop of the U.S.-Israel-Iran war. He added that the disruption serves as an "abject lesson" on the pitfalls of banking on fossil fuels.

The war in West Asia has disproportionately affected economies such as India which gets nearly 60% of its crude oil from the region. The closure of the Strait of Hormuz has forced state-run refineries to declare force majeure – an act of god. Pushing a country like India to abandon its remaining coal or domestic gas reserves without a take-off ramp could lead to industrial collapse.

Mr. Stiell's comments are reminiscent of the expressions of impatience by climate negotiators and stakeholders about how slow countries have been to switch away from fossil fuels: in 2021, activist Greta Thunberg called the COP26 talks "blah, blah, blah".

The West used fossil fuels to build its strategic reserves and today can't deny India and other countries like it the same opportunities, especially as the latter waits for its renewables infrastructure to mature and expand. At the same time, India's reliance on fossil fuels from West Asia is obviously why its economy is currently hostage to the region's geopolitical crisis.

Dependence on minerals

Mr. Stiell et al. have argued that renewables are immune to such blockades, which is true in part: if the flow of fossil fuels stops today – it is pinched in the Strait of Hormuz – the 'flow' of energy also stops, because we burn fossil fuels to release energy. With renewables, the critical minerals are not the source of energy itself. Once the state has set up solar panels and erected wind turbines, their ability to generate energy cannot be embargoed because they will operate as long as the sun shines and the wind blows.

However, critical minerals still represent a significant bottleneck, with additional complications such as the number of industries that need them – from consumer electronics to missile targeting, with the renewable energy sector somewhere in between. The supply chains for many minerals are even more concentrated than oil. The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC+) controls around 40% of global oil production. And while the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Australia plus Chile extract most of the cobalt and lithium, respectively, a single country – China – currently processes almost 60% of the world's lithium, 70% of its cobalt, and 90% of rare-earth elements.

With renewable energy also making intensive use of hardware, a blockade of the required components, whether it be turbine blades or magnets based on rare earth minerals, would be just as effective as one of oil. At that point, it is once again a question of whether war could break out between the world's primary mineral-processing hubs.

Fossil versus mineral

The "abject lesson" is only so abject because of the prevailing oil situation. If, say, the West Asia conflict had not begun and Brent crude was $65 a barrel, the trade-off for renewables could return to seeming like a moral luxury – in turn retrenching the value of 'shock' events like wars to push the world away from fossil fuels. And to that extent, perhaps Mr. Stiell et al. are smart to seize the chance.

Without a war driving prices up, the high upfront capital expenditure for renewables is less attractive to governments. If oil is cheap, the payback period for a large offshore wind farm might be 15 years; if gas prices jump 50%, this period could shrink to 4-5 years. In other words, sans a war, governments would have continued to place fiscal responsibility before energy sovereignty.

In the same scenario, the world's dependencies on the critical mineral supply chain presents itself as a scarier prospect. If West Asia is stable and oil is flowing, the U.S. and its allies would likely view the option of trading West Asian oil for Chinese minerals as a net loss in strategic autonomy, which could encourage countries to reshore mineral mining and processing capabilities even before the energy transition picks up pace.

For India, a more stable supply of oil together with its arguably excessive focus on easing business could render its off-ramp into a long and gentle slope with room to continue using its domestic coal and cheap imported gas to power industrial growth while waiting for renewables to mature.

In other words, the Strait of Hormuz blockade could be forcing India to accelerate investments in renewables simply because it has no choice.

Fear not an effective tool

Mr. Stiell is in effect wielding fear as his primary tool, especially when he says "dependency is ripping away national security". The effects of fear never last – especially when countries imagine new ways to outmanoeuvre these threats. What ultimately matters is ethics. The virtue of renewables should be debated, and adopted, in order to save the planet rather than for saving the economy for another month.

This also matters because when oil is cheap, the environmental damage of mining lithium, or human rights issues in Congolese cobalt mines are scrutinised more heavily by the public – and while this is as it should be, it should not just be because oil is cheap.

Short-term gains or geopolitical shocks should not dictate green energy shift

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Tidings from Kejriwal's comeback

The BJP will have to ensure that the 'triple engine' sarkar works efficiently

STATE OF PLAY

Jaideep Deo Bhanj
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As the extended celebrations by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government in Delhi, on completing one year in office, brings to an end its honeymoon phase, the focus of the government is on ensuring that the "triple engines" that run Delhi, work in tandem to deliver on the vision laid out by Prime Minister Narendra Modi of making Delhi a "world class" city.

With the arduous task of addressing legacy problems such as cleaning the Yamuna and fixing Delhi's air pollution on the cards, Chief Minister Rekha Gupta will have to reveal a clear blueprint of what her government plans to build, moving away from blaming the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) for "neglecting" Delhi's development and finances for over a decade.

The return of Kejriwal

Coinciding with the end of the first year of the BJP government is also the return of former Chief Minster Arvind Kejriwal to Delhi's political field, ending a self-imposed exile. After a Delhi Court discharged Mr. Kejriwal, his deputy Manish Sisodia and 21 others from a politically-charged liquor policy case, the former CM explained that he had decided to remain silent until he is proven innocent before the country, and when his *kattar imandar* (staunchly honest) credentials were back. With Mr. Kejriwal staying silent, senior AAP leaders busy in Punjab where it is in power, and the Leader of Opposition and former Chief Minister Atishi in-charge

of the AAP's Goa unit, the role of the Opposition was being played by the AAP's Delhi unit president Saurabh Bharadwaj.

Some leaders in the AAP say that the vacuum created by Mr. Kejriwal's decision to step out of the limelight was deliberate so that the BJP could have a chance at governing Delhi. It would then turn up the heat once the party starts failing to deliver its promises.

Mr. Kejriwal's return acquires significance as his political persona has been built on opposition – opposition to entrenched power, to central authority, and to what he calls bureaucratic overreach. Even when in power, frequent run-ins with the Lieutenant Governor (L-G) and the Union government had him fighting against the tide. How Mr. Kejriwal leads his party on its home turf as the Opposition is sure to keep the BJP guessing his next move.

However, the political impact of the allegations against Mr. Kejriwal will not be easy to erase. Crores of public money spent on renovating the official residence allotted to him, that the BJP has mockingly called the 'Sheesh Mahal', has tarnished the original image that he created of being a politician that will shun VIP treatment when he comes to power. Mr. Kejriwal will have to curate a comeback from controversy if he wants to carry on with his original mission.

Adding to this mix is the entry of former bureaucrat-diplomat Taranjit Singh Sandhu as Delhi's new L-G. He is seen as someone the Centre has brought in to help the first time Chief Minister in a city that has a large diplomatic community. Mr. Sandhu who served as the Indian Ambassador to the U.S between 2020-2024, joined the BJP on March 19, 2024 and contested unsuccessfully from the Amritsar constituency in Punjab in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

His predecessor V.K Saxena's tenure was marked by frequent run-ins with Mr. Kejriwal who accused him of stalling development in the capital. A less confrontational relationship between the Chief Minister and the L-G will see files move faster in the national capital territory.

The road ahead

The Delhi government in its first year has mostly relied on implementing central government schemes like the Ayushman Bharat, or modifying welfare schemes to introduce Arogya Mandirs as an alternative to the AAP's Mohalla Clinic scheme, or replacing the AAP's schools of specialised education with the CM Shri Schools.

There has been careful compliance, with the Centre and the Chief Minister not going off-script.

The BJP, for its part, is unlikely to cede ground easily to the AAP but it will have to prove that Delhi benefits from aligning with the Centre, particularly in areas requiring large-scale coordination and resources. Will Delhi's "triple engine" government generate enough power to change the face of the capital? Or will it idle away the next four years allowing the AAP to reclaim its space?

Rural Telangana's verdict on the Congress, BRS and BJP

Defections, pro-incumbency, and better performance among the tribals were factors which aided the Congress' victory in the local body elections

DATA POINT

Pradeep Kumar Dontha
Vignesh Karthik K.R.

In December 2025, Telangana's ruling Congress swept the rural body local polls, winning 53.7% of gram panchayats. This analysis maps every one of those 12,702 results individually to their Assembly Constituencies (ACs), mandals, and reservation categories, covering 94 rural/semi-urban ACs and 590 mandals. The party inclination of each sarpanch was gathered through district-level reporters on the ground; and the reservation category of each seat was sourced from the Telangana State Election Commission. Together, these two data streams make it possible to read the results not just by party aggregate but by geography, community category, and the specific context of each constituency.

While the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) held 27.7% panchayats, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) managed 5.5%, and the remaining went to smaller parties, independents, and rebels. Mapped to ACs, the Congress led in 83 of the 94 rural/semi-urban ACs, the BRS in 8, the BJP in 2, and others in 1. At the mandal level, the Congress led in 445 of the 590 seats **(Table 1)**. The sweep extended well beyond the 62 out of 94 rural/semi-urban ACs the Congress won in 2023.

The defection factor

The single most revealing pattern in the data is the effect of MLA defections. Eight BRS legislators defected to Congress in function if not in law, campaigning under the Congress banner, and coordinating with its leadership. The Assembly Speaker did not disqualify them under the anti-defection law, leaving them formally as BRS members even as they operated as Congress on the ground. It is this legal grey zone that made reversals possible: the same MLA could walk to the Congress for the panchayat elections, walk back to the BRS for the municipals, and never technically have left either party. The consequences are written plainly in the data. In the eight constituencies where MLAs crossed over, the BRS averaged just 18.6% against the Congress's 61.8%. Where the BRS MLAs remained united, the party averaged 38.4%, nearly matching the Congress's 37.7% **(Table 2)**. A single MLA crossing the floor cost the BRS roughly 20 percentage points. Banswada is the starkest case, where the BRS was left with just a 2.2% share of panchayats.

Patancheru proved the effect works in both directions. Its BRS MLA crossed to the Congress in July 2024; Congress won the segment in December 2025. When the same MLA returned to the BRS in January 2026 before the municipal polls, BRS swept the urban wards in February 2026. That is, wherever MLAs held firm, the BRS showed that it remained a formidable local force. Harish Rao's Siddipet returned 80% of panchayats to the BRS, reducing the Congress to 6.6%. K. T. Rama Rao's Sircilla gave the BRS 47% of panchayats. The party finished second in 67 of 94 ACs despite having no government at any level and eight of its own legislators campaigning against it.

The BJP finished fourth or worse in 79 of the 94 rural/semi-urban constituencies, and won zero panchayats in 20 ACs. Any meaningful presence of the party was confined to just two northern Adilabad seats – Mudhole (49.7% panchayats) and Adilabad (35.3% panchayats). In south Telangana, the BJP is not just weakening; it does not exist.

A bipolar contest

The regional split sharpens the picture further. Northern Telangana, that is, the old districts of Adilabad, Nizamabad, Karimnagar, and Medak, account for 5,418 panchayats. The Congress won 47.5% panchayats here, the BRS 27.4%, and the BJP 9.3%. Southern Telangana accounts for 7,284 panchayats, where the Congress won 58.3%, the BRS 27.9%, and the BJP collapsed to 2.7%. The pattern is clear: the BRS's vote share is remarkably consistent across both regions, suggesting a baseline of organisational loyalty that does not depend on geography. The Congress is stronger in the south. And the BJP's already thin State-wide presence is almost entirely a northern phenomenon, driven by sitting MLAs in Adilabad and pockets of Nizamabad and Karimnagar. This geographic context matters for reading the caste patterns that follow: tribal seats concentrate in the north, Dalit seats are more evenly spread, and the two geographies produce different competitive dynamics.

Looking at each party's performance within reservation categories against its State-wide average, reveals a striking Congress-BRS mirror image. The Congress overperforms in tribal seats (Scheduled Tribes (ST) Women +5.8%, ST General +3.6%), likely reflecting post-2023 forest rights and tribal welfare policy. The BRS overperforms in Dalit seats (Scheduled Castes (SC) General +3.8%, SC Women +3.3%), retaining loyalty built during its decade in power. The BJP shows its only notable variance in Backward Classes women seats (+3.8%), reaching 9.4% against its overall 5.5% **(Table 3)**. The SC base is the BRS's most durable asset and the Congress's most visible vulnerability.

The Congress's 2023 wave has deepened rather than receded, reinforced by incumbency and absorbed MLA networks. Whether this is genuine organisational growth or just a ruling-party advantage will only become clear when it is no longer in power. The BRS survives as a collection of political fortresses, potent where its leaders held, hollowed out where they left. However, the BJP's claim to a Telangana growth story is contradicted at every level of this data.

Panchayat verdict

The tables map panchayat results across constituencies, mandals and reservation categories to understand Telangana's rural political balance

Table 1: Party performance in panchayat elections across Assembly Constituencies (ACs) and mandals

Party	Panchayats (%)	ACs led	Mandals led	2nd place in ACs
Congress	53.7%	83	445	5
BRS	27.7%	8	101	67
BJP	5.5%	2	19	5
Others	13%	1	25	17

Total ACs: 94 | Total mandals: 590

Data were sourced from Telangana State election commission and the authors' constructed dataset

Table 2: The effect of MLA defections on panchayat results

MLA status	BRS avg share	Congress avg share
Crossed to Congress (8 ACs)	18.6%	61.8%
Stayed with BRS (17 ACs)	38.4%	37.7%
Difference	−19.7 pp	+24.1 pp

Table 3: Party performance by reservation category

Category	Seats	Congress %	Distortion*	BRS %	Distortion	BJP %	Distortion*
UR (General)	2,747	53.08%	-0.62%	28.54%	0.82%	6.3%	0.76%
UR (Women)	2,488	52.77%	-0.93%	28.50%	0.78%	6.07%	0.53%
BC (General)	1,215	52.59%	-1.11%	28.81%	1.09%	7.49%	1.95%
BC (Women)	962	51.66%	-2.04%	27.86%	0.14%	9.36%	3.81%
SC (General)	1,170	49.74%	-3.96%	31.54%	3.82%	4.79%	-0.76%
SC (Women)	918	50.76%	-2.94%	31.05%	3.33%	4.79%	-0.75%
ST (General)	1,741	57.27%	3.57%	24.35%	-3.37%	3.1%	-2.44%
ST (Women)	1,461	59.48%	5.78%	22.72%	-5%	3.08%	-2.46%

Distortion (in %) measures each party's performance within reservation categories against its State-wide average

Pradeep Kumar Dontha is a political consultant based in Hyderabad. Vignesh Karthik K.R. is a postdoctoral research affiliate of Indian and Indonesian politics at KITLV-Leiden and research affiliate at King's India Institute, King's College London.

Local poll: Voters wait to cast their votes during the second phase of the Telangana panchayat polls in Shivampet on Sunday. MOHD ARIF

FROM THE ARCHIVES

The Hindu

FIFTY YEARS AGO MARCH 26, 1976

New diversion line on S.C. railway

From our Vijayawada correspondent: A new diversion railway line between Bhigwan and Pophlaj stations on the Daund-Kurudwadi section of the South Central Railway, constructed at a cost of Rs. 6.91 crores, is expected to be thrown open to traffic in April.

The diversion to a length of 33 km has become necessary because of the Maharashtra Government's decision to construct a dam on River Bhima, a tributary of the Krishna, at Ujjani, 150 km from Poona. The reservoir of the dam submerges the existing railway track for a length of 34 km.

The Government of Maharashtra has contributed Rs. 5.67 crores while the Railways are bearing the rest of the expenditure, as the diversion has been taken up at the instance of the Maharashtra government.

There are four major bridges on the new line – Bhima, Hingni, Bhopalpet and Pandara. The bridge on the Bhima is the longest with 23 spans of 60 feet each.

The work was started in 1971 and is now complete in all respects expect for the launching of girders on three bridges. The project has provided employment to the tune of 18 lakh mandays.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MARCH 26, 1926

Medicine in ancient India

Madura, March 25: Dr. Lakshmipathi delivered a lecture yesterday on "Indian medicine" in the Edward Hall, Madura, under the presidency of the Municipal Chairman, Mr. R.S. Naidu, Bar-at-Law. He said after the recent publication of the Artha Sastra, which was not merely a text book of political economy, but an encyclopaedia of contemporary scientific knowledge in all departments, the history of Indian medicine and the methods adopted by the ancient Hindus for living a healthy life, had become very clear. The work had given us strong contemporary evidence in proof of many valuable facts contained in ancient medical works. The scale of punishment laid down for infringement of public health rules was very severe. Society was thoroughly organised in the most democratic manner. The medical practitioners were held in great esteem. The physicians helped the King, in keeping up a high state of morality in the State.

From Page One

Iran dismisses U.S. bid on war, sets own terms

The comments from Mr. Trump, who has put off his threatened strikes until Friday, came amid reports that the Pentagon was planning to deploy thousands of troops from the elite 82nd Airborne Division to West Asia.

The *Associated Press* earlier cited two Pakistani officials as saying that Islamabad had delivered the U.S. plan to Tehran.

"We are closely monitoring all U.S. movements in the region, especially troop deployments," Iran's Parliament Speaker Mohammad-Bagher Ghalibaf said on Wednesday in a social media post. "What the generals have broke[n], the soldiers can't fix; instead, they will fall victim to [Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin] Netanyahu's delusions," he added. He later warned of a possible invasion of an Iranian island with the support of an unnamed regional country.

"Our forces are monitoring all enemy movements, and if they take any step, all the vital infrastructure of that regional state will be targeted with relentless, unceasing attacks," he said in another social media post.

Centre defends stand on crisis in West Asia

Barring the Trinamool Congress, all Opposition parties attended the meeting. Their questions covered India's silence on the assassination of Iran's late Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei; the timing of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Tel Aviv; and Pakistan's reported role as a mediator.

Congress Rajya Sabha member Mukul Wasnik opened the questioning by highlighting Pakistan's reported central role as a mediator in the crisis. According to sources, he said that the Manmohan Singh-led United Progressive Alliance government had succeeded in isolating Pakistan globally after the 26/11 attacks, whereas today Pakistan occupied a prominent position in global diplomacy.

Mr. Jaishankar, in response, traced the history back to 1971, during the India-Pakistan conflict, when Pakistan brokered communication between the U.S. and China in an effort to corner India. Mr. Jaishankar also pointed to Pakistan's role in mediating talks between the U.S. and the Taliban in 2004. If Pakistan's current mediatory role is viewed as a setback for Indian diplomacy, he reportedly said, "then the setback began in 1981, when Pakistan began working as interlocutor between U.S. and Iran". "We don't run around asking countries what kind of brokerage (*dalali*) we can do," Mr. Jaishankar reportedly said.

India eyes 60% non-fossil fuel power goal by 2035

The Conference of Parties, or CoP, is a body of nations that convenes annually to discuss climate issues and transition their economies away from fossil fuel. India and Argentina were the only two G-20 countries that had not announced a 2035 NDC as of December 31, 2025.

A total of 128 parties, representing about 78% of global greenhouse gas emissions, had submitted new NDCs by that date. These included 21 Small Island Developing States, 19 Least Developed Countries, and 18 G-20 members.

Current commitments

Currently, about 52% of India's installed electric capacity comes from non-fossil fuel sources – a target achieved well before the deadline – though only about 25% of the power generated is non-fossil. These sources include solar, wind, hydropower, biomass, and nuclear power. As of 2019, say official estimates, India has achieved an emissions intensity of 36% from 2005-2020.

A carbon sink of 1.97 billion tonnes of CO_2 equivalent had already been created from 2005 to 2019. However, forest and tree cover accounts for about 24.6% of India's geographical area as of 2021, which is higher than the 21% in 2005, but still less than the national policy goal of 33%.

UDAN scheme revamped with changes in subsidy

Out of the total ₹28,840 crore outlay for the modified UDAN scheme, ₹10,043 crore is set aside for a subsidy to support airlines flying on regional routes over the next 10 years. A government official explained that airlines would receive subsidy support for specific routes for five years at a stretch. Under the earlier scheme design, these subsidies were not funded by the exchequer but through a Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS) levy built into airfares on non-UDAN routes.

Subsidies were also capped at three years to push airlines towards self-sustaining routes. However, a Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) report found that only 7% to 10% of these routes had remained viable beyond the subsidy period. As of February 2026, of the 663 routes launched under the UDAN scheme since 2017, 327 routes had been discontinued, according to data recently presented in Parliament by Minister of State for Civil Aviation Muralidhar Mohol. The data showed that 15 of the 95 airports revived under the scheme have also fallen into disuse.

'Vande Mataram advisory not a threat to conform'

Ministry's advisory on National Song only prescribes protocol and those who do not sing it will not face any action, says SC; even then, there is burden on those who refuse to sing, argues petitioner

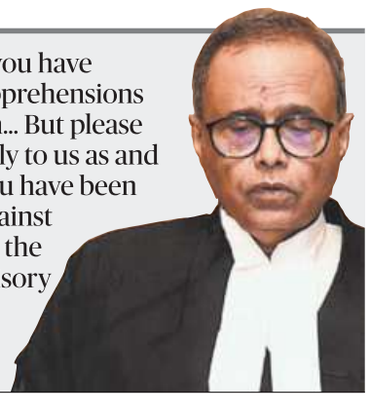
Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday said the January 28 guidelines issued by Union Home Ministry on playing National Song *Vande Mataram* in full at public and ceremonial occasions are not a "threat to conform" and do not fall foul of constitutional freedoms.

"...it is only an advisory... The Ministry feels the National Song is as much an expression of the national identity. You may have a different point of view. But we feel you have vague apprehensions of discrimination which do not have a clear nexus with the advisory now... But please come immediately to us as and when you feel you have been discriminated against or singled out on the plank of this advisory," Justice Joymalya Bagchi addressed petitioner Muhammed Sayeed Noori, represented by senior advocate Sanjay Hegde.

Mr. Hegde began his arguments by noting the Ministry's circular made the singing of the National Song "mandatory" and compelled citizens to participate in a social demonstration of loyalty which goes against one's individual conscience. He pointed out that the circular has instructed the three-minute National Song to be played before the 55-second National Anthem, reducing the status of the latter to an "epilogue".

> We feel you have vague apprehensions of discrimination... But please come immediately to us as and when you feel you have been discriminated against or singled out on the plank of this advisory
>
> **JUSTICE JOYMALYA BAGCHI**
> Supreme Court



Anthem vs. Song

Chief Justice Surya Kant, heading the three-judge Bench, said there was absolutely nothing in the January 28 circular to show that people who did not play or sing the National Song would face penal or adverse action.

"Even if there is no penalty and even if today there is no legal sanction, there is a huge burden on somebody who refuses to sing or stand up," Mr. Hegde argued.

"What is that burden in law here? The circular prescribes a protocol of when and how the National Song must be played, what is to be done when it is played, etc. We can understand if somebody sends you a notice saying you did not play or stand up for the National Song and your institution should be closed or derecognised as a result," the Chief Justice reacted.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta intervened to emphasise that respect for the National Song was organic and, ideally, even an advisory was not necessary. He referred to Article 51A of the Constitution, which made it a fundamental duty to respect the National Flag and National Anthem.

Mr. Hegde said the National Anthem and National Song were distinct from each other. "..It was on January 24, 1950 that Rajendra Prasad, as President of the Constituent Assembly, ended the controversy by saying *Jana Gana Mana* would be the National Anthem and *Vande Mataram* the National Song. When the Parliament subsequently inserted Article 51A [in the 42nd Constitutional Amendment], it spoke only of the National Anthem," he explained.

He said India was a country which paid equal respect to all religions and everyone's individual conscience, even that of an atheist. Mr. Mehta retorted that it was not as if people were being compelled to sing *bhajans*.

Justice Bagchi referred to the circular which said, "In all schools, the day's work may begin with community singing of the National Song". "The expression 'may' means you could sing as much as not sing. It allows individual conscience to take the decision," he said.

Mr. Hegde said patriotism cannot be compelled, provoking the Chief Justice to ask if "patriotism cannot be compelled even for the National Anthem".

The court refused to entertain the petition, terming it "premature".

Cong. gets notice to vacate its iconic 24 Akbar Road office

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Centre has issued notices to the Congress to vacate its 24 Akbar Road office and 5 Raisina Road premises, where the Youth Congress functions, by March 28. The notice was sent by the Estate Department under the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, informed sources said, adding they were served in mid-March and the party faces eviction, as it is the final notice sent by the department.

The party has been told that its new headquarters already functions from Indira Bhavan on Kotla Road and it is not entitled to hold on to the premises, the sources said. Congress sources said the party was still formulating its strategy to counter the notices and was keeping options open of moving court.

A two-member Congress delegation led by G.S. Sappal, in-charge of Administration, met Urban Development Minister M.L. Khattar over the notices.

The party, according to Congress sources, was paying market rent for its 24, Akbar Road office and there were attempts to get the bungalow allocated to a party MP so that it could hold on to it but it did not materialise. When it shifted to Indira Bhavan office on Kotla Marg, sources had indicated the party will not vacate 24, Akbar Road and it will continue to house some of its cells arguing that the BJP has not vacated its old headquarters at 11, Ashoka Road, even after shifting to DDU Marg.

The 24 Akbar Road office has been the address of the Congress for the past 48 years.

Congress MP Karti Chidambaram said the Centre should apply its rule uniformly to all and not single it out while BJP spokesperson Shehzad Poonawalla said the Congress should shed the "unnecessary victimhood card", recalling the policy made under the UPA government that parties would shift their offices from Lutyens to DDU Marg or to Rouse Avenue.

The 24 Akbar Road address has been the Congress headquarters since January 1978 when Indira Gandhi made it the office after her election loss following the Emergency.

Papa Rao, 17 other Maoists surrender in Chhattisgarh

Shubhomoy Sikdar
RAIPUR

Chhattisgarh Deputy Chief Minister Vijay Sharma on Wednesday said that 96% of the Bastar region was free from Maoism and that only 30 to 40 cadres were surviving in the remote areas.

Mr. Sharma made the remarks at a programme held in the wake of the surrender of Maoist commander Papa Rao.

In a press note, the Bastar Police said that Papa Rao and 17 others – carrying a collective reward of ₹87 lakh – had shunned violence and joined the mainstream.

Inspector General of Police (Bastar Range) P. Sundarraj said that security forces recovered 18 weapons, including AK-47 rifles, SLRs, INSAS rifles, .303 rifles, a 9 mm pistol, a BGL launcher, and ₹12 lakh in cash from the surrendered cadres.

Papa Rao

The press note stated that Papa Rao was also known by the aliases Ashok, Sunnam Chandrayya, and Mangu, and his association with the Maoist movement dated back to 1997. "A South sub-zonal bureau secretary (SZCM), he held key operational roles in Bastar," the note said. He had been in charge of the Pamed-Usur Area Committee and, from 2018, handled operations in West Bastar. He carried a bounty of ₹25 lakh.

Rajya Sabha brushes aside objections by Opposition, starts debate on CAPF Bill

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Brushing aside the Opposition's notices against the introduction of the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF-General Administration) Bill, the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday started discussions on the legislation, moved by Union Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai.

Opposition members had moved six notices against its introduction.

The Bill aims to regulate recruitment, deputation, promotion, and other service conditions for the paramilitary officers.

Trinamool Congress MP Derek O'Brien termed the Bill anti-federal and alleged that States' rights are being taken away. Congress MP Ajay Maken said the Bill is encroaching upon the rights of the judiciary. He said six Supreme Court judgments had stated there has been an injustice to paramilitary forces.

The Bill seeks to nullify historical judgments of the Supreme Court, says DMK MP Tiruchi Siva

DMK MP Tiruchi Siva said the Bill seeks to nullify historical judgments of the Supreme Court that the deputation of IPS officers in CAPFs will be done away with. He said the Centre's stand was rejected by the apex court, and Parliament is being used to override the Supreme Court's powers.

Responding to charges, Mr. Rai said the Bill is under the ambit of the legislative competence and right of the Rajya Sabha. He said the concerns raised by the Opposition are baseless, and the Bill does not interfere with judicial rights, and it is on the service conditions of police officers in CAPFs. Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju said the judiciary has been mandated to interpret the laws, to arbitrate and to pass judgments. "This nation is run with the spirit of the Constitution and the laws passed by Parliament of India and Assemblies. How can the legislative competence of this House be taken away...," he said.

Rejecting the notices, the Deputy Chairman put the introduction of the Bill to vote and invited Mr. Rai to introduce the Bill.

Later, initiating the debate, Mr. Maken said the paramilitary forces play a key role in protecting democracy. "The Bill should have gone to a Parliamentary panel for scrutiny."

Parliament to function until April 2: Rijiju informs LS

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju on Wednesday informed the Lok Sabha that the second part of the Budget session would continue as per schedule, and the government would take up its business on Friday instead of private members' business.

Mr. Rijiju said though there was a proposal to hold sittings during the weekend, Parliament will not function on Saturday and Sunday. March 31 will be a holiday because of Mahavir Jayanti. "On the rest of the days, the House will function as proposed," he said, indicating Parliament will function until April 2.

The announcement came amid reports that it may adjourn early in view of the Assembly polls in four States and one Union Territory.

Immigration, visa issuance scheme gets 5-year extension

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

The Union Cabinet has approved the continuation of the Immigration, Visa, Foreigners Registration & Tracking (IVFRT) scheme for a period of five years from April 1, 2026 till March 31, 2031 with a budget outlay of ₹1,800 crore, the government stated on Wednesday.

The IVFRT platform seeks to interlink and optimise functions related to immigration, visa issuance and registration of foreigners in India. The core objective of the scheme started in 2010 is to modernise and upgrade immigration and visa services within a secure and integrated service delivery framework.

IVFRT system has enabled 100% contactless visa process leading to faster processing

"After the recent enactment of the Immigration and Foreigners Act, 2025 and its subsequent rules and order, it has become imperative to strengthen and modernise the Immigration, Visa, and Foreigners Registration & Tracking (IVFRT) system to effectively meet emerging requirements and future challenges in the domain of immigration control and foreigner management, including illegal migration," the government stated.

The scheme has covered 117 Immigration Posts, 15 Foreigners Regional Registration Officers (FRROs) and 854 Foreigners Registration Officers (FROs)/ Superintendents of Police (SPs)/ Deputy Commissioners of Police (DCPs) across the country.

The IVFRT system has enabled a 100% contactless visa process with online appointment scheduling and payment facilities, leading to faster visa processing times with 91.24% of e-visa applications cleared within 72 hours during the past five years, it further stated.

Congress criticises Modi govt.'s 'U-turn' on women's quota law

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Wednesday accused the Narendra Modi government of making a U-turn on the women's reservation law by seeking to implement it after carrying out of delimitation of Lok Sabha and Assembly seats on the basis of the 2011 Census.

Congress general secretary (communications) Jairam Ramesh alleged that the move marked a reversal of the government's earlier stand that the provisions of the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam could only be operationalised after the completion of the next Census and delimitation exercise. "When the Nari Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023 was being debated, the Indian National Congress had demanded its immediate implementation from the 2024 Lok Sabha elections itself. The Modi Govt said this was not possible since both delimitation and the census had to necessarily be completed first," Mr. Ramesh said in a post on X. "Now the U-turn Ustad has, after 30 months, suddenly changed his mind and wants to implement the reservations WITHOUT completing the delimitation and census operations," he added.

Jairam Ramesh

He termed the move a "weapon of mass diversion", and said, "Desperate to change the narrative from his foreign policy failures and setbacks from the LPG crisis, he has come up with this new initiative. Wanting to take full political advantage of it, he has let it be known that a special two-day session will be convened to pass the amendments necessary to the Nari Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023."

ASSEMBLY POLLS

BJP will win 177 seats in Bengal polls: Suvendu

Leader of the Opposition Suvendu Adhikari on Wednesday claimed that the Bharatiya Janata Party would win 177 of the 294 seats in the West Bengal Assembly polls.

The BJP leader said if people were allowed to vote, "the BJP will win nothing short of 177 seats".

This is the first time that a BJP leader in West Bengal has put up a figure on how many seats the BJP will win in the Assembly polls.

There are 294 seats in the Assembly and the magic figure for securing a majority is 148 seats.

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, while announcing candidates for the polls, had said her party would win at least 226 seats. In the 2021 Assembly polls, the Trinamool Congress had won 215 seats and the BJP was reduced to 77 seats.

BJP leader Suvendu Adhikari during an election campaign, in Kolkata. PTI

'Grave breach': CPI on EC letter with BJP seal

Communist Party of India (CPI) Rajya Sabha member P. Sandosh Kumar has written to Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar, flagging what he termed a "serious breach of institutional neutrality and procedural integrity" after an Election Commission communication was found with the seal of the BJP.

The Kerala Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) has reportedly acknowledged circulating the document, attributing the presence of the party's seal to a "clerical mistake", an explanation the MP described as untenable and deeply troubling. He argued that the incident goes beyond routine administrative lapses and strikes at the credibility and constitutional impartiality of the EC, especially at a time when public confidence in democratic processes requires utmost protection.

Some say there are many Muslims in Trinamool Congress. But that is anonymous leadership. What we want is leadership with a voice

ASADUDDIN OWAISI
AIMIM chief

R.G. Kar victim's mother gets BJP ticket in Bengal

The BJP on Wednesday fielded the mother of the doctor who was raped and murdered at Kolkata's R.G. Kar Hospital and Medical College in August 2024. She will contest from Panihati in North 24 Parganas. The party also released candidates' list for 19 other constituencies. The list includes many candidates from north Bengal.

If you criticise the government, you are put in jail, cut off from schemes. This is not the politics of democracy but fascism. People of Assam deserve better

GAURAV GOGOI
Congress leader

Twist in tale: The United People's Party Liberation led by Pramod Boro walked out of its alliance with the BJP recently. FILE PHOTO

Lone rangers flex their muscle against alliances in Assam battle

Rahul Karmakar
GUWAHATI

The "non-aligned" political parties may become the dark horse in Assam's electoral battle between two blocs – the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and the Asom Sonmiloto Morcha (ASM).

Mandate 2026 is largely expected to be a straight fight between the Bharatiya Janata Party-led NDA and the Congress-led ASM across Assam's 126 constituencies.

The BJP has three allies – the Asom Gana Parishad, the Bodoland People's Front (BPF), and the Rabha Hasong Joutha Mancha. The Congress has five partners in the ASM – two of the Left Front, two sired the anti-Citizenship (Amendment) Act stir of 2019, and a hill-based tribal party.

The two blocs are gung-ho about victory on April 9, the day of voting. However, the neutral parties have been gaining in confidence as the D-Day approaches.

The most confident among these parties are the All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF), which was part of the Congress-led Mahajot (Grand Alliance) during the 2021 election, and the United People's Party Liberation (UPPL), which was the BJP's ally five years ago. Both walked out of their respective alliance, the UPPL less than a fortnight ago.

Best strike rate

The AIUDF had the best strike rate in 2021, winning 16 of the 20 seats it contested. Mohammed Badruddin Ajmal, the party's chief and candidate from central Assam's Binnakandi seat, said the AIUDF had the firepower to at least match its 2021 performance.

The AIUDF is contesting 27 seats, the bulk of them in Muslim-dominated areas.

"Assam's political landscape will undergo a major shift this time, as the minority people know both the BJP and the Congress have been exploiting them. The people also know today's Congress is the A-team of the BJP," he said. The UPPL, which won six of the 11 seats it contested in 2021, is equally upbeat about a good show. The party is contesting 18 seats, three beyond its core area covered by the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR).

"We are fighting this election independently because our grassroots supporters, our strength, wanted us to. We played a key role in restoring peace in the BTR, which is relapsing into violence," UPPL president Pramod Boro said. Elected to the Rajya Sabha a few days ago, he is contesting the Tamulpur seat in the BTR.

The UPPL ruled the Bodoland Territorial Council, which governs the BTR, in alliance with the BJP for five years until the BPF defeated it in the September 2025 council polls.

Other parties

Four other non-aligned political entities in the fray are the Trinamool Congress (contesting 23 seats), the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (21 seats), the Aam Aadmi Party (14 seats), and the National People's Party (NPP) headed by Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma, which is contesting three seats.

These neutral parties do not face each other in many constituencies, raising hopes that they could cause an upset or two.

The Trinamool Congress and the NPP drew a blank in 2021.

Game of throne: surfeit of faces for CM's post in Cong. in Kerala

P.J. Kurien endorses Chennithala, but leader downplays it, says final decision rests with high command; K.C. Joseph warns against potential divisiveness; Congress has 'a galaxy of leaders' capable of executing any political task, says Satheesan

IN FOCUS

G. Anand
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Speculation is rife in the Congress over who will be the Chief Minister if the party-led United Democratic Front (UDF) wins the Assembly election in Kerala, despite the best efforts of the party leadership to tamp down such "schismatic" conjecturing.

P.J. Kurien, veteran Congress leader and former Deputy Chairperson of the Rajya Sabha, on Wednesday pushed the organisational contestations over the Congress's choice, at times muted and at times loud, into the public domain.

At a UDF election convention in Thiruvalla, Mr. Kurien said the UDF would win on May 4, the poll results day. Pointing at senior party leader Ramesh Chennithala, who shared the dais with him, Mr. Kurien said, "I have no doubt that Mr. Chennithala will be the Chief Minister. He [Mr. Chennithala] might protest, saying that the party will decide," he said.

Looking ahead: Congress leaders Sunny Joseph, V. D. Satheesan, Ramesh Chennithala and K.C. Venugopal at a party event in Thiruvananthapuram. A. JAYAMOHAN

Varghese Mammen, a Kerala Congress leader contesting as the UDF candidate from Thiruvalla, sat next to Mr. Chennithala. Glancing at them, Mr. Kurien quipped: "Mr. Mammen will sit on the right of Mr. Chennithala on the Treasury bench in the Kerala Legislative Assembly after the polls."

Mr. Kurien's statement sent the political rumour mill into overdrive. His averment went viral, with some channels claiming that the Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee's senior leadership, including K. Sudhakaran, among others, backed Mr. Chennithala over Leader of the Opposition V.D. Satheesan and All India Congress Committee (AICC) general secretary K. C. Venugopal, to the high office.

Mr. Chennithala later made light of Mr. Kurien's statement. He echoed the AICC's line that the party's national high command would take the final call in consultation with the members of the Congress Legislature Party. "The Congress and the UDF are marching in lockstep to end Left Democratic Front (LDF) rule. The aim of winning the elections gains primacy over everything else," he said.

Senior Congress leader K.C. Joseph said senior leaders should "desist from broadcasting self-defeating conjectures" about the prospective Chief Minister.

'Live-or-die battle'

In a Facebook post, Mr. Joseph said the party was locked in a "live-or-die" electoral battle. "Tens of thousands of UDF workers are braving hostile circumstances, including the sweltering summer, to win the fight for the party and not to capture the Chief Minister's post for any individual. Leaders should respect their sentiment and sacrifice," he said.

Mr. Joseph said he was not offering any counsel, but merely reminding leaders that they know how the Congress decides the party's Chief Ministers.

Mr. Satheesan sought to sidestep the debate. He told presspersons in Palakkad that the Opposition was fighting the polls as "Team UDF".

He noted, somewhat cryptically, that the Congress had "a galaxy of leaders" capable of executing any political task given to them by the party.

Singapore report ignites Zubeen death issue in Assam

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

In poll-bound Assam, Singapore coroner's inquiry report has fuelled a debate over Assamese cultural icon Zubeen Garg's mysterious death.

In a judgment on Wednesday, the island country's State Coroner, Adam Nakhoda, said Garg drowned accidentally and he found no reason to disagree with the Police Coast Guard's findings about the nature of his death. Earlier, the Singapore General Hospital cited drowning as the cause of his death on September 19, 2025.

Reacting to the coroner's report, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said the judgment and the chargesheet filed by the SIT of the Assam police were similar. However, he said in November 2025 that Garg had been murdered.

State Congress president Gaurav Gogoi said the Singapore ruling challenged the Chief Minister's murder theory. "The Indian government coordinated with its Singapore counterpart on this matter, and the Assam government sent a police team to Singapore to investigate. The Singapore verdict is a gift for those accused of killing him," he said.

India's 'newest voters' caught in SIR adjudication trap in West Bengal

Shiv Sahay Singh
DINHATA

Dinhata residents Manmohan Barman and Mohammad Mujjamel Khandakar are among India's newest voters, with their citizenship recognised through an international agreement, but that has not stopped the Election Commission from putting them in the uncertain category of "electorate under adjudication".

Mr. Barman, 66, and Mr. Khandakar, 64, are both now residents of the Dinhata constituency in Cooch Behar district. Just over a decade ago, however, they lived in Dasiarchara, an Indian enclave located deep within Bangladeshi territory.

In July 2015, they were among 989 people scattered across 111 such Indian enclaves who chose to relocate to India after the Land Boundary Agreement (LBA) was signed, when the territory of those enclaves was absorbed into Bangladesh.

At the same time, 14,854 residents of 51 Bangladeshi enclaves located within Indian territory also became Indian citizens as per the LBA.

Mr. Barman and Mr. Khandakar have voted in several elections, but they have little hope that they will be able to vote in next month's Assembly poll, given the hurdle posed by the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls.

Left out: Manmohan Barman and Mohammad Mujjamel Khandakar at a camp in Cooch Behar. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

When the EC kicked off the SIR process in West Bengal in October 2025, residents of the settlement camp were sceptical about participating in the process. Their families have no legacy data to trace their ancestry to the 2002 voter list, since they had an effectively Stateless existence before 2015. Sure enough, their names cropped up in the "logical discrepancies" list after the first phase of the SIR.

Not in list

Now, nine members of the Khandakar family and four from the Barman family have found their voter status "under adjudication". Their names were not included in the EC's first list of those cleared through adjudication on March 23, so their right to vote still hangs in the balance.

"If we were to be denied voting, why were we brought here under the [bilateral Land Boundary] Agreement? By bringing in this SIR, we have been pushed towards uncertainty," Mr. Khandakar said.

The 58 families that have been living in the Dinhata enclave settlement camp since 2019, insist that they came to India through a bipartite agreement and thus should have not been subject to the SIR at all. Most of their youth have migrated for work and the elders fear that if their names are not cleared off the adjudication list, the youth may not return to vote.

Mohammad Saraul, who runs a small grocery shop in the camp, said women like his wife, who were born in India and have married erstwhile enclave dwellers now residing in the settlement camp, have been marked "under adjudication" in the lists.

'Are we outsiders?'

Hamida Begum, 60, and Namita Barman, 39, both residents of the settlement camp, are angry. "Why did they put us under adjudication? Are we outsiders? The government brought us and now says we have no voting rights," Ms. Barman said.

Osman Gani, a resident of the Dinhata camp, claims that that there is a communal design in the way voters from minority communities have been kept "under adjudication".

"There are three enclave settlement camps for people who came from Bangladesh, located at Dinhata, Haldibari, and Mekhliganj. The camps at Haldibari and Mekhliganj have Hindu majority so most of the people have been cleared as voters during SIR. It is in Muslim majority areas that the names of electors remains stuck," he said.

Residents of Madhya Masaldanga, a Bangladeshi enclave that became part of India during the 2015 LBA-sanctioned swap of enclaves, say that since their right to vote is doubtful in the run-up to this election, no candidate has even reached out to them.

'Names of 13 lakh Bengal voters under adjudication deleted'

Shrabana Chatterjee
KOLKATA

Around 28 lakh voters under adjudication are still waiting for a decision in the State

A decision has been made on 32 lakh voter records of the 60 lakh under adjudication in West Bengal till Wednesday, according to sources in the State's Chief Electoral Office. Of the 32 lakh, names of at least 40% (about 13 lakh) have been deleted from the electoral rolls, the sources added.

Around 28 lakh voters under adjudication are still waiting for a decision.

The Election Commission had published the first supplementary list on March 23 midnight containing 10 lakh names.

No details were formally shared by the EC officials on Wednesday about the number of deletions nearly 40 hours after publication of the first list.

At least 60 lakh people across the State were put under adjudication with 700 judicial officers working to dispose of the pending cases.

Digital gap

While constituency and booth-wise data are available online, voters lament that the lists have not been displayed on paper in any government offices, leaving those without digital access scrambling for information. The names on the lists have to be verified individually after logging into the Election Commission's website.

Appeal to tribunals

The voters whose names have been deleted can make an appeal to the 19 tribunals set up across districts in the State. Their pleas will be reconsidered by these tribunals led by former judges.

According to sources, the EC officials have sought permission from the Calcutta High Court to publish supplementary lists every day instead of publishing them every Friday.

At least 522 voters were under adjudication in the Silampur 1 gram panchayat area in Sujapur constituency of Malda district where people alleged that 427 names have been deleted. "We have lived here for generations. My forefathers were born here. We are citizens of the place. What will we do now," said a man in his 70s whose name has been struck off the list.

Residents alleged large-scale deletions despite submitting documents during the special intensive revision (SIR) process.

INBRIEF

Sonia admitted to Delhi hospital; condition stable

Senior Congress leader Sonia Gandhi was admitted to Sir Ganga Ram Hospital in Delhi late on Tuesday, sources from the hospital said. Her condition is said to be stable. Dr. Ajay Swaroop, Chairman, Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, said, "She is stable. Doctors are conducting further investigations to check for possible infection in the stomach and urinary tract. A team of doctors is closely monitoring her condition, and antibiotics have been administered." This is the second time that the Rajya Sabha member has been admitted this year. Ms. Gandhi was admitted to Sir Ganga Ram Hospital in January, after she experienced respiratory issues.

CJI objects to litigant's father calling up his brother

Chief Justice of India Surya Kant on Wednesday objected strongly to a litigant's father calling up his brother to question an order passed by the top court, at one point asking "how dare he do that". The CJI told the litigant's counsel in open court that he was inclined to initiate criminal contempt proceedings against the person who called his brother. The court was hearing the plea seeking minority reservation in medical admissions after converting to Buddhism. The court had directed Haryana to explain whether affluent general category candidates could claim quota benefits after converting to Buddhism.

2 resign from NCTP over Transgender Persons Bill

Ashna Butani
Ragavi M.
NEW DELHI/CHENNAI

Soon after the Rajya Sabha passed the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Bill, 2026, which takes away the right to self-determination of gender, two members and community representatives resigned from their posts at the National Council for Transgender Persons (NCTP). They cited the amendment Bill which they called "a step backward for our fundamental rights to self-identification and dignity."

Kalki Subramaniam, member and Southern region representative, submitted her resignation to the Union Minister, stating that she cannot continue to hold a seat at a table where "collective voice has been silenced on a matter of such existential importance." She said she will be filing a public interest litigation plea in the Supreme Court, with many others.

Rituparna Neog, member and North East region representative, said, "I cannot be a part of something that refused to listen to the community," she told *The Hindu* on Wednesday evening.

Transgender Bill receives RS approval amid uproar

DMK, Trinamool demanded the Bill be sent to a select committee of the House for scrutiny; Union Minister says it will ensure protection to persons who face discrimination due to biological issues

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Rajya Sabha on Wednesday passed the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Bill, a day after the Lok Sabha cleared the legislation. The Opposition had demanded the Bill should be sent to a select committee of the House for further scrutiny as it had provisions that would have an impact on the dignity of the third gender people.

Union Social Justice and Empowerment Minister Virendra Kumar, countering the Opposition's charges against the Bill, said it is an effort to take along all segments of the society together.

The Minister said the Bill will ensure protection to only those who face discrimination due to biological issues and added that transgender people will continue to get legal recognition and protection.

"The Narendra Modi government is committed to protecting all those people who are suffering due to biological reasons," he said adding that transgender welfare boards have been set up in over 30 States. "This Bill will bring administrative clarity and protect rights of the transgender persons," he said, adding: "This Bill is not merely a legal reform but a pathway to justice for those who have long faced social exclusion and discrimination due to their identity."

LGBTQIA+ community members during a protest demanding repeal of the Transgender Amendment Bill, 2026, in Mumbai. REUTERS

Takes away rights: DMK

DMK MP Tiruchi Siva argued that the amendments take away the right of self-identification and forces transgender persons to present themselves before a medical board for gender identification. "I am voicing for the people who cannot come to Parliament," Mr. Siva said and demanded that the Bill must be sent to a select committee for consultation with all stakeholders, legal experts, civil society and transgender community.

Trinamool Congress MP Saket Gokhale said that only 32,000 transgender persons out of their five lakh population (according to 2011 Census) have obtained certificates and identity cards so far under the existing Act. "They are afraid to come out in the first place," he said.

Social bias: Trinamool

Mr. Gokhale said that 31% of transgender people in India have attempted suicide and out of them, 50% were below the age of 20. "They are attempting suicide because of the discrimination that they are facing everyday," the Trinamool MP said adding that as if social discrimination was not enough, now the government is going to "start discriminating" against them.

CPI(M) MP John Brittas said the new legislation is an exclusionary restrictive measure.

"Recently, the Supreme Court-appointed committee conveyed to the government not to proceed with this piece of legislation. What happened to that? Why is it that the government is not considering the request of the Supreme Court-appointed committee?" Mr. Brittas asked.

SC panel calls to scrap Bill on gender choice rights

Abhinay Lakshman
NEW DELHI

A Supreme Court-constituted Advisory Committee headed by former Delhi High Court judge Justice Asha Menon has sent a resolution to the Government of India, requesting that the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Bill, 2026, be withdrawn as the proposal to "deny self-identification" of gender went against the decision of the Supreme Court in the 2014 *NALSA versus Union of India* verdict.

The Chairperson said that the amendment Bill had come as a "great shock" and would amount to a "tremendous setback" to efforts to mainstream transgender communities so far, *The Hindu* has learnt.

The Bill proposes to remove a section that recognised transgender people's "right to a self-perceived gender identity", redefine a transgender person, and introduce the requirement of a medical board's nod to acquire a transgender certificate and identity card. The Bill was passed by voice vote in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday, amid an Opposition-led walkout.

Patrolling along China border increased significantly after 2020 Galwan clash, data show

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

Patrolling by the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) along the China border has seen a significant rise after the 2020 incident in eastern Ladakh's Galwan valley when 20 soldiers were killed in violent clashes with the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA).

The Union Home Ministry's annual report for 2024-25, which was published on Wednesday, stated that from April 1, 2024 to December 31, 2024, as many as 4,503 patrols were conducted by the ITBP, the primary border guarding force deployed along the 3,488-km China border. On an average, the ITBP conducted 500 patrols per month during the period. "ITBP ensured security of the border and remained vigilant during heightened security scenarios along the Indo-China border. To keep strict vigilance, ITBP conducted 4,503 patrols along Indo-China border," the report said.

ITBP remained vigilant during heightened security scenarios along the India-China border, the report said.

A comparison with the previous reports show that 6,561 patrols were conducted between January 1, 2023 and March 31, 2024, a 15-month window averaging about 437 patrols per month, while 2,899 patrols were conducted between April 1, 2022 and December 31, 2022, with an average of 322 patrols per month. The corresponding data for other years were not available but the numbers reflect a marked escalation in border patrols since 2017-18, when only 2,083 patrols were recorded over the year, around 173 patrols per month.

Till 2023, there were at least 26 patrolling points, out of 65 PPs in eastern Ladakh that were not being patrolled by Indian troops since April-May 2020. In eastern Ladakh, several areas that were being patrolled earlier have been turned into "buffer zones" with the Chinese Army also not sending their troops. The PPs are used to assert territorial claims along the undefined Line of Actual Control as there is no mutually agreed border.

Centre asks RBI to keep retail inflation target at 4% till 2031

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

The Union government on Wednesday asked the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to target retail inflation at 4% with a margin of 2% on either side for another five years ending March 2031.

To control the price rise, the government in 2016 gave a mandate to the RBI to keep the retail inflation at 4% with a margin of 2% on either side for five years ending March 31, 2021. Subsequently, in March 2021, the government maintained the same target. This is the second time the government has retained the inflation target.

The Union government, in consultation with the RBI, hereby notifies the inflation target for the period beginning April 1, 2026, and ending on March 31, 2031, a Gazette notification issued by the Department of Economic Affairs dated March 25 said. According to the notification, the inflation target is 4% with an upper tolerance level of 6% and a lower tolerance level of 2%. India adopted the inflation-targeting framework and formally tasked the central bank with it in 2016.

The inflation target is for the period from April 1, 2026 to March 31, 2031, as per the notification

In its first meeting in October 2016, the six-member Monetary Policy Committee was given the mandate to maintain annual inflation at 4% until March 31, 2021, with an upper tolerance of 6% and a lower threshold of 2%.

Congress questions Supreme Court order denying SC status to Christians, Muslims, others

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Wednesday questioned a two-judge Supreme Court Bench ruling that barred persons professing religions other than Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism from claiming the Scheduled Caste status.

In a statement, Congress general secretary Randeep Surjewala said the judgment denying SC status to Christians, Muslims and other minorities had caused "deep consternation, disquiet and fear" among economically weaker sections of minority communities.

He described the question of granting or continuing SC status after religious conversion as a "sensitive issue" affecting several underprivileged people seeking to escape entrenched social prejudice, and argued that it cannot be decided through a "simpliciter interpretation" of the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950.

Randeep Surjewala

Mr. Surjewala said the issue of SC status for converts has been pending before a three-judge Bench since January 21, 2011, in public interest litigation. "Then, how can a two-judge Bench of Supreme Court decide the issue, without reference to larger Bench? Why did the Modi government not bring this to the notice of the Supreme Court Bench regarding issue being under adjudication before a three-judge Bench? Was it done deliberately by the government?" he asked.

He pointed to the commission led by former Chief Justice of India K.G. Balakrishnan, set up in 2022 to examine the issue, noting that its report is still awaited. Mr. Surjewala alleged that the government had failed to place relevant facts before the court, and asked whether this amounted to "deliberate misleading".

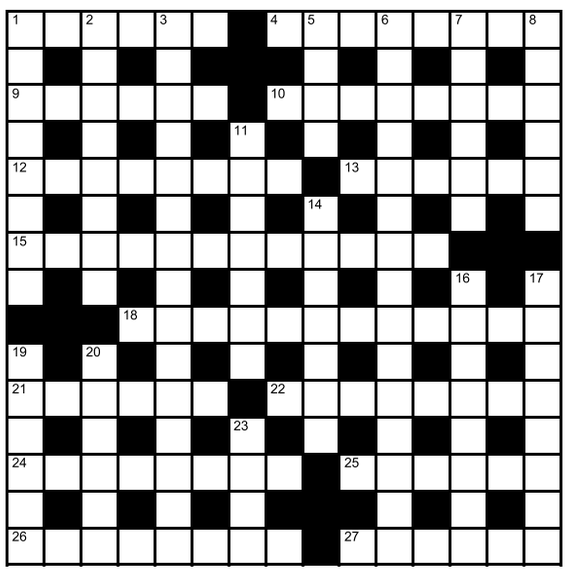
He rejected the argument that the case pertains only to the applicability of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, and not reservation, terming such a distinction untenable.

THE HINDU CROSSWORD + 14751

(set by Arden)

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

SCAN TO PLAY



Across

1 Port deck is exposed in general (6)
4 Can start with current location - pitch tents here (8)
9 Sleep disorder? Break open and get into a self-help group (6)
10 Laxative leaves Peter in a dizzy (8)
12 Hector at Hector the divine ruler (8)
13 South African wants a revolution (6)
15 Amusing to hear them - millions for charity, a prop is placed inside (12)
18 I need coastal police for suspension of hostilities (2-10)
21 Bring the wagon back - that is tough (6)
22 Fishermen had enormous catch of fish (8)
24 Go pack a banian - it's a poor imitation (8)
25 Review arts - takes a second for the tissue that forms the structure of an organ (6)
26 Memorial in place - not a phase (8)
27 Second copy - no work for the harvester (6)

Down

1 Live, let Marie go crazy (4-4)
2 Becomes hard when half the opposition party's on short leash, perhaps (8)
3 Macron perhaps makes a Parisian, say, to keep quiet (6,9)
5 Guarding a sherpa's place while climbing mountains (4)
6 Part of the nervous system providing caring support to a soldier (15)
7 Melt ice cap to help you throw up (6)
8 Catch associate's brief rise (6)
11 Ring us - intend to drink and make merry (7)
14 Keep in deficit - a delay accepted (7)
16 Spooner may object to the entertainer right at the very end (8)
17 Somehow unite, protect political group and overwhelm (8)
19 Systematic changes, losing seat as if by magic (6)
20 Police raid, no rule (6)
23 Tread softly - take enough precautions first of all (4)

SUDOKU

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

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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★☆☆☆☆

Solution to previous puzzle

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

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

FAITH

5 causes of human actions

Some noble qualities such as love, affection, compassion, humility, gratitude, grace, kindness, straightforwardness, and a desire to help others elevate a person's character and personality. A person's wealth, education, name, fame and employment position may sometimes lead to self-pride or arrogance. Such attitudes reflect one's inner state and may arise due to a lack of self-awareness. These negative traits can hinder the development of devotion (bhakti). Thanneerpalli Sri Krishnan Swamy said in a discourse that life is like a cart wheel that constantly rises and falls. People should understand that both good and bad experiences are natural parts of life. One should neither become overly joyful in times of success nor fall into deep sorrow during difficult times. Scriptures explain that God acts in five ways in every human action: as the giver of abilities and senses (*Karayitha*), as the doer or overseer (*Kartha*), as the one who allows freedom without interference (*Upekshakan*), as the granter of liberty (*Anumanta*), and as the supporter who helps in accomplishing actions (*Sahakari*).

Sage Veda Vyasa, in the Mahabharata, teaches that God is the ultimate cause behind all our actions, and that events unfold according to His will, shaped by our karma. Yet, this truth should not lead us to idleness or complacency by shifting all responsibility onto the Divine. Human effort is essential. Lord Krishna, in the Bhagavad Gita, explains that every action has five causes: the body, the individual soul, the senses, the vital forces, and the Divine. These five essential elements are necessary to understand how any action is performed.

INBRIEF

RBI scraps treasury bill sale to support banking liquidity

India's central bank rejected all bids at a treasury bill auction on Wednesday, its first such move in 13 months, in a step expected to support banking system liquidity ahead of the financial year-end on March 31. The government had planned to raise ₹350 billion ($3.72 billion) through the sale of 91-day, 182-day and 364-day treasury bills, but the Reserve Bank of India did not accept any bids. The latest move is expected to boost the liquidity surplus by ₹350 billion. REUTERS

Markets rally as investor optimism crawls back

Markets rallied for the second consecutive day on Wednesday, with benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty closing nearly 2% higher, as crude oil prices dropped and global markets advanced amid hopes of de-escalation in the war in West Asia. BSE Sensex jumped 1,205 points, or 1.63%, to settle at 75,273.45. The 50-share NSE Nifty surged 394.05 points, or 1.72% to end at 23,306.45. The improving optimism in the market is seen as an outcome of easing crude prices.

SEBI partners Google to 'tick off' errant finfluencers

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has requested Google to leverage AI to take down rule-breaking finfluencers, Chairperson Tuhin Kanta Pandey said, launching the app label in Mumbai on Wednesday. The market watchdog, in collaboration with Google, unveiled a 'tick mark' that would appear next to applications of intermediaries. "The verified badge is being rolled-out over apps of registered stockbrokers and Google Play Store," he said.

India said to have bought Iran LPG after U.S. eased sanctions

Sanctioned tanker Aurora carrying Iranian LPG expected to shortly reach the west coast port of Mangalore, say sources, LSEG data; Indian official denies knowledge of the cargoes being bought

Reuters
NEW DELHI

India has bought its first cargo of Iranian liquefied petroleum gas in years after the U.S. temporarily removed sanctions on Tehran's oil and refined fuels, LSG trade flows and three industry sources said.

India had shunned Iranian energy in 2019 under pressure from Western sanctions. The tanker was initially bound for China, LSEG data showed.

Sanctioned tanker Aurora carrying Iranian LPG is expected to shortly reach the west coast port of Mangalore, the sources said and LSEG data showed.

The South Asian nation has been hit hard by the disruption of energy shipments via the Strait of Hormuz caused by the U.S.-Israeli war against Iran.

The Iranian LPG cargo will be shared among the three fuel retailers, Indian Oil Corp, Bharat Petroleum Corp, and Hindustan Petroleum Corp.

The cargo has been purchased from a trader, and payment will be made in rupees, the sources said, adding that India was exploring buying more Iranian LPG cargoes.

Guzzling down: The Iranian LPG cargo will be shared among the three major fuel retailers, say sources. REUTERS

Still, an official said he was not aware of Iranian cargoes being bought.

"[There are] no loaded cargoes from Iran, we have not heard of that," Rajesh Kumar Sinha, special secretary in the federal shipping ministry said Wednesday at a press conference.

The three firms and India's oil ministry did not respond to *Reuters* requests for comments.

The world's second-largest LPG importer is battling its worst gas crisis in decades with the government cutting supplies for industries to shield households from shortage of cooking gas.

India consumed 33.15 million metric tons of LPG last year.

Paradip set to receive 7 mn barrels of crude

Satyasundar Barik
BHUBANESWAR

Amid the continuing crisis in West Asia, there is a note of reassurance. Off the coast of Odisha, Paradip Port is in midst of hosting four tankers carrying over 7 million barrels of crude oil, an amount exceeding India's average daily consumption.

While two ships are emptying crude oil at Paradip Port which will continue till Thursday evening, a mid-sized vessel carrying 3.296 metric tonnes will be docking at Paradip by Thursday evening.

According to Paradip Port sources, *San Ramon Voyage*, carrying 2,63,530 metric tonnes of crude oil from Angola and Nigeria, both members of Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, has commenced discharge operations at the Single Point Mooring and is expected to complete unloading by Thursday evening.

Similarly, *Phoenix*, a crude oil tanker carrying 99,016 MT, which recently moored at Paradip, began discharging operations on Wednesday. The vessel had sailed from Nakhodka Anchorage in the Russian Far East.

Another tanker, *Alexandros*, is currently in the Bay of Bengal and is scheduled to berth at Paradip Port at 11 am on Thursday. The vessel is carrying 2.53 lakh MT of crude oil and had departed from Forcados Terminal in Nigeria on March 23, 2026.

Meanwhile, *Almi Titan*, carrying 3.296 lakh metric tonnes of crude oil, is expected to dock at Paradip Port around 10 pm on Thursday. The tanker had commenced its voyage from Panama in South America.

MoPNG issues directions to strengthen natural gas infra

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (MoPNG) has instituted reforms to ease provisions towards expanding piped gas network – both domestic and commercial. Late on Tuesday, the government invoked the Essential Commodities Act (ECA), seeking to accelerate the push for piped natural gas.

The Ministry stressed that the reforms were aimed at "addressing delays in approvals and access to land, and enabling faster development of natural gas infrastructure, including in residential areas", alongside instituting an investor-friendly network and improving last-mile connectivity.

The gazette notification underlines that in housing areas, the relevant entities would have to grant necessary permission to "lay, build or expand" a pipeline within three days of receiving an application. Further, they would have 48 hours to accord approvals for last-mile connectivity.

In public areas that are not housing areas, the gazette clarifies that if the entity concerned neither rejects nor grants permission for laying of pipelines within the stipulated timelines, the application would be "deemed approved".

FM defends Centre's right to levy cess, says Constitution allows it

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Wednesday emphatically reiterated the Centre's right to collect cesses and surcharges, saying the Constitution allowed it and the Centre would continue to use the provision.

However, she added that over the last six years, the government had spent on the States 105% of what it had collected through cesses and surcharges. That is, its spending has exceeded its collections.

Nirmala Sitharaman

She was replying to the Lok Sabha debate on the Finance Bill 2026, which was passed on Tuesday following the conclusion of her speech.

"The Constitution makers knew what they are doing, and we all pay respects to them," she said, in response to comments by several MPs about the Centre's levy of cesses and surcharges that are not part of the divisible pool that is shareable with the States.

'It's not a zero-one situation' for 2-wheeler industry: Gupta of TVS

Mini Tejaswi
BENGALURU

TVS Motor Company, like every other enterprise, government and supply chain player, was in the process of working out scenario analysis, scenario mapping and scenario planning, said Gaurav Gupta, president, Indian two-wheeler business at TVS to a query on the impact of West Asia crisis on two-wheeler business.

Responding to a query on how the West Asia crisis was impacting the export operations and margins of the two-wheeler industry, Mr. Gupta told *The Hindu*, "It is very difficult to give some kind of guidance on that aspect. We are evaluating, watching the scenario and trying to understand how it will all pan out. I won't be able to give any kind of forward guidance as nobody would be able to second guess at this point of time."

Gaurav Gupta

We are evaluating, watching the scenario and trying to understand how it will all pan out

Scenario planning

He said, the entire industry was focused on scenario planning, scenario mapping and scenario analysis: how many weeks does it continue? What gets impacted? If this gets impacted, then what will be the result? etc. "So, we all have to work this from all fronts and that's what is happening right now."

As per Mr. Gupta, it is not a zero-one situation yet for the industry. What if the whole situation ended in two weeks and therefore, it is tough to predict anything at the moment.

When asked about the possibility of increasing demand for electric bikes in the backdrop of the current fuel crisis, he said it was too early to predict consumer interest in different fuel types: whether it will be a movement of fuel A or fuel B.

Assessing impact

"We have seen in domestic homes, because of the LPG shortage, people are moving towards electric induction plates and ovens. In the two-wheeler space, as of now, we still have to look at the overall impact.

"We have to understand the continuity of the situation. How long will this continue, hence the impact," Mr. Gupta added.

However, he said, if there is a movement towards EV, TVS was certainly prepared to meet any changing customer trend.

LIC gets I-T order for ₹7,100 crore, set to appeal

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

The Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) has received from the Assessment Unit of the Income Tax Department a demand order for almost ₹6,147 crore income tax as well as interest of over ₹953 crore.

Tax, interest

The order pertains to FY 2021-22 and consists of income tax demand of ₹61,46,71,18,015 and an interest component of ₹9,53,25,87,935, LIC said in a filing with the stock exchange on Wednesday.

The order is appealable before the Commissioner of Income Tax (Appeals), the State-owned insurer said in the filing.

Avantel bags ₹460-cr. Railways contract

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

Avantel has received a rate contract valued at ₹459.9 crore from Bengaluru-based Zetwerk for the supply and AMC of Real-Time Train Information System (RTIS) devices for the Centre for Railway Information Systems (CRIS), Indian Railways.

Boosting efficiency

The contract covers supply and AMC of 12,000 RTIS devices over a period of three years, which will support real-time tracking and improve the efficiency of railway operations, director Siddhartha Abburi said on Wednesday. Shares of Avantel rose 7.60% to ₹130.20 apiece on the BSE.

RTIS is an Indian Railways project developed in collaboration with ISRO to automatically track train locations, speeds and arrival/departure times using satellite technology.

The contract covers supply and AMC of 12,000 RTIS devices over a period of three years.

CRIS is responsible for designing, developing, implementing, and maintaining critical information systems for Indian Railways, Avantel said in a release.

Watchdog cautions hotels against 'gas crisis levy'

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Addressing levy of any forced surcharge amid the West Asia crisis' impact on LPG supplies, the Consumer Central Protection Authority (CCPA), in an advisory issued Tuesday, asked restaurants and hotels to not levy any unfair additional charges, as 'gas surcharge', 'fuel cost recovery' or 'gas crisis charge', over and above the final price of food.

The watchdog termed such levies as violation of existing guidelines and asked consumers to seek removal of any such levy from the bill amount and/or lodge a complaint with the National Consumer Helpline (NCH).

ICICI Prudential gets ₹391-cr. IT demand

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

ICICI Prudential Life Insurance Company has been issued an order by the Income Tax Department asking the company to pay up more than ₹391 crore.

The amount consists of I-T demand of ₹3,471,293,534 and interest ₹439,545,379. The order from the I-T authorities in Mumbai relates to Assessment Year 2024-25, the insurer said in a filing.

The company said it will file an appeal against the order before appropriate authority in due course.

Indian tech start-ups raised $9.1 bn in 2025, 23% rise: Nasscom-Zinnov study

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

In 2025, Indian tech start-ups raised $9.1 billion, marking a 23% year-on-year increase, even as capital became more selective, milestone-linked and increasingly concentrated in scalable, commercialisation-ready ventures, said a Nasscom-Zinnov analysis.

Deep-tech funding surged 37% to $2.3 billion last year with AI driving 91% of investments. Over 140 tech mergers and acquisition deals were recorded in 2025, a near double rise over last year. Seed and early-stage deals accounted for 74% of total funding activity with AI capital deployment and innovation driving the momentum, said the study.

Deep-tech funding surged 37% to $2.3 billion, the report said.

Rajesh Nambiar, president, Nasscom, said, "India's start-up ecosystem is entering a more disciplined phase of growth, and AI is clearly at the centre of this transition, emerging as core infrastructure for India's next innovation cycle. This signals growing global confidence in India's ability to build, deploy and commercialise AI at scale across sectors ranging from enterprise software to defence and industrial systems."

AI to market

The next chapter would be defined by how effectively we translate AI innovation into market adoption, intellectual property and globally competitive platforms, he added.

The report titled "Momentum to Maturity" said India's Start-up Ecosystem at a Strategic Inflection Point, Indian Tech Start-up Report 2025," offers an in-depth analysis of the evolving dynamics of the country's technology start-up ecosystem.

As per the report, with an estimated 31,000-34,000 start-ups, new venture formation is increasingly concentrated in established hubs and proven sectors, highlighting investor preference for infrastructure readiness, talent density and faster commercialisation pathways.

Realtor Puravankara unveils 30 projects in South, Mumbai

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

Real estate developer Puravankara Ltd. plans to unveil 30 projects in 24 months, primarily across South India and Mumbai.

The planned pipeline comprises almost 51.14 million sq. ft. of developable area with an estimated Gross Development Value (GDV) of more than ₹55,000 crore, marking a significant step-up in the firm's growth trajectory.

Of the 30 projects, a significant number are already in the approval stage while the balance are in the design stage with approval processes set to be initiated shortly, the company said.

Ashish R. Puravankara

Pre-sales, collections

As of 9MFY26, the firm reported pre-sales of ₹3,859 crore and customer collections of ₹3,045 crore. The company said its upcoming developments are likely to contribute meaningfully to economic activity.

"This pipeline is expected to generate about 8 million man-days of direct employment annually and give a fillip to more than 250 ancillary industries associated with the real estate sector," it said.

"As we enter our next phase of growth, we are poised for the next leap, backed by stronger capabilities, a professional and well-governed organisation and a high-quality project pipeline across Mumbai and South India," said Ashish Puravankara, managing director, Puravankara Ltd.

WASHINGTON

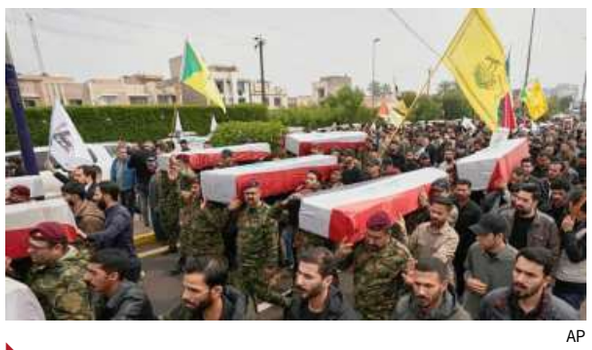
Trump reschedules his Beijing visit to May amid West Asia conflict

REUTERS

U.S. President Donald Trump will travel to Beijing for a rescheduled summit with Chinese President Xi Jinping on May 14 and 15, the White House announced on Wednesday. Mr. Trump had been scheduled to travel to China later this month but announced he was delaying the trip due to the ongoing conflict in West Asia. AP

BAGHDAD

New strike on base in western Iraq kills seven security personnel



AP

A new strike in western Iraq killed seven security personnel on Wednesday, a day after a deadly attack on the same base in Anbar province targeted members of the Popular Mobilisation Force. The Office of the Prime Minister said Iraq would submit a formal complaint over the latest strike to the United Nations. AFP

NEW YORK

UN designates African slave trade as 'gravest crime against humanity'

REUTERS

The UN General Assembly designated the transatlantic African slave trade as "the gravest crime against humanity," in a move hailed as a step towards healing and possible reparations. The resolution was adopted on Wednesday by a vote of 123 in favour, three against — the U.S , Israel and Argentina — and 52 abstentions. AFP

SEOUL

North Korea's Kim vows stronger ties, 'unshakable' support to Russia

AP

North Korea's leader Kim Jong-un said his country will continue to provide 'unshakable' support to Russia, state media reported on Wednesday. Ties between the two nations have grown closer since Moscow's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, with Pyongyang dispatching ground troops and weapons systems to aid Russia's war effort. AFP

'U.S. to deploy 1,000 elite troops to West Asia'

In a latest addition to the Iran war effort, U.S. officials say thousands of Marines as well as rapid response naval vessels will be heading to the region; Iran and Israel exchange strikes; Gulf neighbours Kuwait and Saudi Arabia come under fire; Iran's military says it also targeted a U.S. aircraft carrier

Agencies
WASHINGTON/TEHRAN/DUBAI

Amid the escalating strikes, counter attacks and rising tensions in West Asia, the United States military is preparing to deploy at least 1,000 troops from the 82nd Airborne Division to the region in the coming days, according to people with knowledge of the plans.

The unit is considered the Army's emergency response force and can typically be deployed on short notice.

The force would include a battalion of the 1st Brigade Combat Team as well as Maj. Gen. Brandon Tegtmeier, the division's commander, and division staff, according to the people, who spoke on Tuesday on condition of anonymity.

Rising risk: Smoke plumes billowing near the Kuwait International Airport after drones hit a fuel tank on Wednesday. AFP

It's the latest addition of American troops to the Iran war effort after U.S. officials recently said thousands of Marines aboard several Navy ships will be heading to the region.

Diplomats from various countries said they were working behind the scenes to ferry messages between the warring parties. But there was no let-up in the military activity, with targets in Iran, Israel, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia all coming under fire.

Volley of attacks

The Israeli military said on Wednesday it had completed several waves of airstrikes in Tehran. The semi-official Iranian SNN News Agency said the strikes hit a residential area in the city, with rescuers searching the rubble.

Missile alert sirens sounded multiple times in Israel as Iran launched its own attacks.

Iran also kept up the pressure on its Gulf Arab neighbours. Saudi Arabia's Defence Ministry said it had destroyed at least eight drones in the kingdom's oil-rich Eastern Province.

Kuwait said it shot down multiple drones but the General Civil Aviation Authority said one hit a fuel tank at Kuwait International Airport, sparking a fire that sent a huge plume of smoke into the sky.

Iran's military said on Wednesday it fired a volley of cruise missiles at a U.S. aircraft carrier.

It said the cruise missiles aimed at *USS Abraham Lincoln* had "forced it to change its position", warning of "powerful strikes" when the "hostile fleet" comes into range.

Meanwhile, White House spokeswoman Anna Kelly deferred to the Pentagon when asked about the impending deployment but noted that "President [Donald] Trump always has all military options at his disposal."

Members of the Senate Armed Services Committee are scheduled to receive a classified briefing from Pentagon officials on Wednesday on Capitol Hill where the potential deployment is expected to be discussed, according to a U.S. official.

Officials previously have said the Japan-based *USS Tripoli* and the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit had been ordered to West Asia – shifting them from exercises near Taiwan.

They also confirmed that the Navy has rushed to deploy a set of ships carrying a rapid-response Marine force.

Israel continues to pound Lebanon as Hezbollah presses on

Agence France-Presse
BEIRUT

Israel launched strikes on south Lebanon and Beirut's southern suburbs on Wednesday, Lebanese state media said, as Iran-backed militant group Hezbollah said it kept up its attacks on Israeli troops.

Israel has intensified strikes across Lebanon and sent ground troops into the country's south since the latest bout of fighting began. On Tuesday, it said its military would take control of the border area up to the Litani River.

Hezbollah said its fighters on Wednesday targeted Israeli troops "massed in the border towns of Naqura and Qawzah" and in sites across the border "with more than 100 rockets".

Lebanon's state-run National News Agency reported Israeli strikes in several locations in the south on Wednesday.

Israel's military said it struck Hezbollah targets across Lebanon overnight "including a command centre" in Beirut's southern suburbs.

Meanwhile, Hezbollah chief Naim Qassem said on Wednesday that negotiating with Israel under fire would amount to "surrender" for Lebanon.

Lebanon's Health Ministry said more than 1,000 people have been killed in more than three weeks of Israeli strikes.

Russia and Ukraine engage in tit-for-tat aerial barrages

Associated Press
MOSCOW

Russian air defences downed 389 incoming Ukrainian drones, Russia's Defence Ministry said on Wednesday, in what was the largest reported overnight attack on Russian regions and Crimea since Moscow's forces invaded Ukraine more than four years ago.

The drones were stopped over 13 Russian regions as well as the Crimean Peninsula, which Russia illegally annexed from Ukraine in 2014.

The attack underlined the growing capability of Ukraine's domestically developed and manufactured long-range drones.

It came a day after Russia fired almost 1,000 drones and 34 missiles at civilian areas of Ukraine, in one of its biggest aerial attacks of the war. At least six people were killed and around 50 people were injured, Ukrainian authorities said.

Moscow says it shot down close to 400 inbound drones, a day after it fired nearly 1,000 drones towards Ukraine

The escalation in aerial attacks comes amid a pause in U.S.-mediated talks between delegations from Moscow and Kyiv, as Washington's attention is diverted by the Iran war and as Ukraine anticipates a spring offensive by Russia's Army.

Alexander Drozdenko, Governor of the Leningrad region north of Moscow, said 56 drones were shot down there, and a fire broke out in the Baltic Sea port of Ust-Luga as the result of Ukraine's attack.

Ukrainian forces also carried out a missile strike on the Belgorod region on the border with Ukraine overnight, damaging energy infrastructure, its Governor Vyacheslav Gladkov said.

Power, water and heating supplies were disrupted, he said.

In Ukraine on Wednesday, Russian drones smashed into residential areas of the second-largest city, Kharkiv, injuring at least nine people, according to Mayor Ihor Terekhov.

UN condemns Iran strikes on Gulf, demands 'reparation'

Agence France-Presse
GENEVA

The UN Human Rights Council on Wednesday condemned Iran's "egregious attacks" on its Gulf neighbours and demanded full "reparation" for all victims of its strikes.

The 47-member council backed a resolution brought by the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and Jordan demanding Iran immediately "cease all unprovoked attacks".

The resolution was adopted by consensus, though some countries, while backing the text, criticised its scope and the fact that it made no mention of Israel or the United States.

U.S. judge questions govt.'s motives for labelling Anthropic as a security threat

Agence France-Presse
SAN FRANCISCO

A federal judge on Tuesday expressed scepticism over the government's retaliation against AI powerhouse Anthropic, which has sued over its designation as a national security risk because of a dispute over military applications.

Anthropic filed a lawsuit this month seeking to overturn the designation, which is typically reserved for organisations from unfriendly foreign countries and could seriously handicap its popular AI model Claude.

It had refused to let the Pentagon use Claude for pursuing autonomous lethal warfare and mass surveillance of Americans, but the government rejected Anthropic's proposed safeguards. Claude is the Pentagon's most-widely deployed frontier AI model and the only such model currently operating on its classified systems.

Agentic edge: Anthropic's Claude is the Pentagon's most-widely deployed frontier AI model. AP

After a short hearing, judge Rita Lin said she would issue her ruling "in a few days."

But she noted that "what is troubling to me about these reactions" by the government "is that they do not really seem to be tailored to the stated national security concern."

If the military was not happy with the contract, the government "could just stop using Claude," she said.

"It looks like defendants went further than that because they were trying to punish Anthropic...for criticising the government's contracting position in the press," she added, "which of course would be a violation of the First Amendment."

She also questioned a claim by a government lawyer that Anthropic's ethical fears raised the risk that the company could intervene in military operations. "I'm just wondering why it is that someone questioning the way things work leads to suspicion that they might build a back door," Ms. Lin said.

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER PWD CIRCLE KOTA
No. 4147 Date:- 16/03/2026
Short Term Notice Inviting Bid
(NIT No. 19/2025-26)
Bid for Construction of Various Road work in Distt. Kota (15 Works) is Invited from interested bidders up to 06:00 PM of 30.03.2026 (Monday). Other Particulars of the bids may be visited on the procurement portal (http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in, http://sppp.rj.nic.in) of the Rajasthan State. The approximate value of the procurement is **Rs. 2130.16 Lacs.**
UBN No. (PWD2526WSOB25736), (PWD2526WSOB25737), (PWD2526WSOB25738), (PWD2526WSOB25739), (PWD2526WSOB25740), (PWD2526WSOB25741), (PWD2526WSOB25742), (PWD2526WSOB25743), (PWD2526WSOB25744), (PWD2526WSOB25745), (PWD2526WSOB25746), (PWD2526WSOB25747), (PWD2526WSOB25748), (PWD2526WSOB25749), (PWD2526WSOB25750)
(J.P. Gupta)
Superintending Engineer
P.W.D. Circle Kota
DIPR/C/5749/2026

RajCOMP Info Services Limited (RISL)
C-Block, 1st Floor, Yojana Bhawan, Tilak Marg, C-Scheme, Jaipur
RISL invites bids from the eligible bidders for Short Term RFP for Selection of Agency for Annual Technical Support (ATS) of HCL AppScan and Procurement of Security Audit Tools with ATS for 3 Year **(UBN: RIS2526SLOB00096)**. Total estimated cost is INR 1.40 Cr. The details can be seen on the websites:
https://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in, https://sppp.rajasthan.gov.in, https://risl.rajasthan.gov.in, https://doitc.rajasthan.gov.in
Raj.Samwad/C/25/23210 Additional Director

GVK Power (Goindwal Sahib) Limited
Regd. Office: Plot No. 10, Paigah Colony, Sardar Patel Road, Secunderabad - 500003. Telangana, India CIN: U40109TG1997PLC028483
(A wholly owned subsidiary of Guru Amar Das Thermal Power Limited, GATPL)
(A step down wholly owned subsidiary of Punjab State Power Corporation Limited, PSPCL)
HOD - Electrical, GATP, Goindwal Sahib, invites E-Tender for the work of:
1 **Tender Enquiry No. 138/GATP/EMD/O&M/50007305 dated 25/03/2026 AMC for Routine/Preventive, Breakdown & Shutdown Maintenance of complete EMD Equipment/Instruments of BTG/BOP/AHP/CHP area at 2x270MW GVK Power Goindwal Sahib Ltd, Goindwal Sahib Plant as per details given in the tender specifications for a period of One year, at 2x270 MW Guru Amardas Thermal Plant (GATP), Goindwal Sahib, Distt.: Tarn Taran, Punjab as per details given in the tender specifications.**
For detailed NIT & tender specifications, please refer to **https://eproc.punjab.gov.in** from **25/03/2026** from **17:00 Hrs.** onwards.
Note: Corrigendum and addendum, if any, will be published online at **https://eproc.punjab.gov.in**
1079/12/2025-26/9898 GATP - 31/26

KARNATAKA POWER TRANSMISSION CORPORATION LIMITED
(CIN : U40109KA1999SGC025521)
No. CEE/T&P/SE-1/2025-26/11607-19 Date:25.03.2026
BRIEF SHORT TERM TENDER NOTIFICATION
(THROUGH KARNATAKA PUBLIC PROCUREMENT PORTAL ONLY)
Karnataka Power Transmission Corporation Limited invites Bids on electronic mode for the following works against following enquiry number on **Partial Turnkey basis.**
Enquiry No. and Name of the works
KPTCL/2025-26/SS/WORK_INDENT3519
Combined Package for:
Work A: Establishing **2x20MVA,** 66/11kV sub-station at **Bommenahalli** with associated 66kV, 1000sqmm SC UG cable for a distance of **2.680Kms** along with construction of 66kV Terminal Bay in Bengaluru East Taluk, Bengaluru Urban District.
Work B: Establishing **2x31.5MVA,** 66/11kV sub-station at **Jnanabharathi Layout (Nagadevanahalli)** with associated 66kV, 1000Sqmm SC UG cable for a distance of **7.04Kms** and along with construction of 66kV Terminal Bays in Bengaluru South Taluk, Bengaluru Urban District
The bids will be received through electronic tendering mode only. The details regarding participation in the E-tendering process can be obtained by logging on to KPTCL website **https://kptcl.karnataka.gov.in** with hyperlink 'E Procurement KPTCL' or **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in on or after 27.03.2026 @ 15:00hrs. Last date & time for receipt of Bids and any extension of Due date for Bid submission will be intimated in the Karnataka Public Procurement portal.** Any details required in this regard can also be obtained from the office of the undersigned during office hours.
All Corrigendum/Addendums shall be noticed by the bidders before the last date of submission of the Bids.
Sd/- Chief Engineer, Electy.,
Tendering & Procurement, KPTCL, 9th Floor,
Indhana Bhavan, Anand Rao Circle, Bengaluru-560 009

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA
OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER, FUTURE CITY DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
NOTICE INVITING FOR (RFP) REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL
No: FCDA/Plg./RFP/2025/007, Dt: 23.03.2026
Request for re-call of Proposal (RFP) is hereby invited from reputed consultancy firms for the project titled "Preparation of Vision and Comprehensive Master Plan 2047 for Future City Development Authority Area." The previous tender bearing ID 679993 has been cancelled due to technical reasons, and the revised tender is now issued under ID 688106.
Interested consultancy firms are requested to submit their RFP along with their credentials, relevant experience, list of similar assignments undertaken, technical capabilities. Further, details regarding submission timelines and evaluation criteria will be shared in the Request for Proposal to be obtained from **@tender.telangana.gov.in.**
The Interested consultancy firm may obtain Request for Proposal (RFP) from e-procurement platform i.e., **tender.telangana.gov.in.**

1	Start Date for downloading RFP document	23.03.2026 01:00 PM
2	Last date and time for downloading RFP document	10.04.2026 05:00 PM
3	Last date for Submission of RFP document (including Technical and Financial) along with Demand Draft for Rs. 50,000 drawn in favour of Commissioner FCDA [Non-Refundable]	10.04.2026 05:00 PM
4	Technical bid opening	10.04.2026 05:01 PM
5	Price bid opening	Will be intimated by FCDA

R.O. No. : 1280-PP/CL-AGENCY/ADVT/1/2025-26 Dt: 25.03.2026
Sd/-
Commissioner, FCDA

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BRIDCUL (ब्रिडकुल)
ब्रिज,रोपवे, टनल एण्ड अदर इन्फ्रास्ट्रक्चर डेवलपमेंट कॉरपोरेशन ऑफ उत्तराखण्ड लिमिटेड (उत्तराखण्ड सरकार का उपक्रम)
पूर्व में उत्तराखण्ड राज्य अवस्थापना विकास निगम लिमिटेड, प्रधान कार्यालयः अवस्थापना भवन, 583,ठ, राजकीय आई0टी0आई0 निरंजनपुर के सामने, माजरा, सहारनपुर रोड़, देहरादून, टेलीफोन नं. : 0135–2522941 ई–मेलः bridcul@gmail.com CIN No. U45203UR2008SGC032591
Ref No:-506/BRIDCUL–995(elect)/26 **E-Tendering** Date: 25/03/2026
On behalf of Hon'ble, Governor of Uttarakhand, E-Tenders are invited by Managing Director BRIDCUL, from the Contractors registered with any Govt./Semi Govt./PSU/Nigam in suitable Class & Category for the works given as below:-

S. No	Ref No.	Name of Project	Estimated Cost (In lac Including GST)	Earnest Money (In Lac)	Cost of Tender Document (In Rs.)	Time Period
1	BRIDCUL/HQ DDN/85/2025-26	SITC of 3 nos. lift at Sub District Hospital, Purola Distt. Uttarkashi.	93.10	1.86	5000+ 18% GST	18 Months

For above tenders, document download start date is **31.03.2026** and Bid submission end date is **15.04.2026** at 1500 Hrs. The details of e-tender of above works can be obtained directly from website **https://uktenders.gov.in**
Changes, if any will be intimated only through website **https://uktenders.gov.in**
DGM (HQ)

CALL-UP

Saini replaces injured Harshit in the Knight Riders squad

INSTAGRAM@NAVDEEP_SAINI10_OFFICIAL

Pacer Navdeep Saini has replaced injured Harshit Rana in the Kolkata Knight Riders squad for IPL 2026. "When I came to know about it last night, I didn't know how to react. I've been working hard and manifested it. It's a revival for me as I have gone through ups and downs in the last two to three years," said Saini.

MEANS A LOT

Royal Challengers pacer Mangesh happy to make his father proud

SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

When I went to Delhi, my father (Ramavadh Yadav) had given me ₹24,000 with great difficulty. When my father supported me in cricket, my extended family and society thought he was a fool. I am just happy. That's what makes me emotional, my father can now walk with pride — Royal Challengers pacer Mangesh Yadav.

THE ULTIMATE GOAL

Playoff entry not enough, LSG has to win first trophy: owner Goenka

X@DRSANJIVGOENKA

Our true identity is still evolving. For any sports team, until you win, you don't receive the same level of respect or affection that comes with lifting the trophy. We've made the playoffs twice, but that's clearly not good enough. You win some, you lose some, but we've to win our first trophy — Sanjiv Goenka, Lucknow Super Giants owner.

FITTING TRIBUTE

Knight Riders retire talismanic all-rounder Russell's No. 12 jersey

SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Kolkata Knight Riders paid tribute to West Indian all-rounder Andre Russell by retiring his jersey, No. 12. Russell donned the KKR colours from 2014 to 2025 and helped the side win two titles in 2014 and 2024. After retiring from the IPL, Russell has taken up the role of a 'power coach' in the franchise.

MI banks on a galaxy of stars to end drought

The power-packed Mumbai franchise is chasing its first silverware since 2020; finding the right combination early in the tournament is the key for the Hardik-led team

Amol Karhadkar

Mumbai Indians didn't win a title in the first five editions of the Indian Premier League. In the next eight seasons, it lifted the trophy five times to establish itself as the most successful franchise in the league's history.

Rough patch

But in the last five editions, MI didn't even come close to winning the silverware. Mumbai Indians would, however, hope that history repeats itself as it begins its quest to end another title drought.

The side reached the playoffs twice in the five-year phase, but ended up losing in Qualifier 2 on both occasions.

Still debated

The inconsistency in recent years has meant that the decision to hand the captaincy to Hardik Pandya – following the high-profile return to his alma mater – is still being debated, despite the team bouncing back to qualify for the last-four stage in 2025 after a disappointing 2024 campaign.

Heading into IPL 2026, though, Mumbai Indians appears better equipped. The balance of the squad makes it a strong contender for a playoff berth, if not more. Allah Ghazanfar, the mystery spinner who missed the previous edition, returns fit. The acquisition of Sherfane Rutherford adds middle-order muscle, while Mitchell Santner offers control and all-round depth.

The duo of Will Jacks and Corbin Bosch arrive on the back of impressive T20 World Cup campaigns. The presence of Trent Boult provides experience with the new ball, while Ryan Rickelton strengthens the top-order.

Quinton de Kock remains an able back-up for the wicketkeeper-batter's role, adding further depth.

Combine this overseas strength with one of the best Indian cores, MI is a force to reckon with.

A fit Rohit Sharma at the top, Suryakumar Yadav anchoring the middle-order, and Tilak Varma providing youthful flair give the batting unit solidity and explosiveness.

Add Hardik's finishing prowess and Jasprit Bumrah's unmatched artistry with the ball, Mumbai Indians looks formidable on paper.

Balance important

The key, however, lies in settling on the right combination early in the tournament.

Under Hardik and head coach Mahela Jayawardene, the team will be eager to shed its reputation of a slow starter – a recurring issue since IPL's inception.

If it can solve the problem of plenty and build momentum from the outset, the Mumbai franchise could once again become an unstoppable force.

Depth and experience

The squad has depth, experience and match-winners.

Can the team management get its act right? Will the players deliver collectively? And will history repeat itself for Mumbai Indians? It's time to wait and watch.

IPL-19 COUNTDOWN

Mumbai Indians

OVERALL NUMBERS

M	W	L
277	153	124

BY OPPONENT

	M	W	L
CSK	39	**21**	18
DC	37	**21**	16
GT	8	**3**	5
KKR	35	**24**	11
LSG	8	**2**	6
PBKS	34	**17**	17
RCB	34	**19**	15
RR	30	**16**	14
SRH	25	**15**	10

Mumbai Indians' remaining matches were against Deccan Chargers (10), PWI (6), RPS (6), GL (4) and KTK (1)

MI's 2026 LEAGUE CAMPAIGN*

March 29	vs. KKR	Mumbai	7.30 p.m.
April 4	vs. DC	Delhi	3.30 p.m.
April 7	vs. RR	Guwahati	7.30 p.m.
April 12	vs. RCB	Mumbai	7.30 p.m.

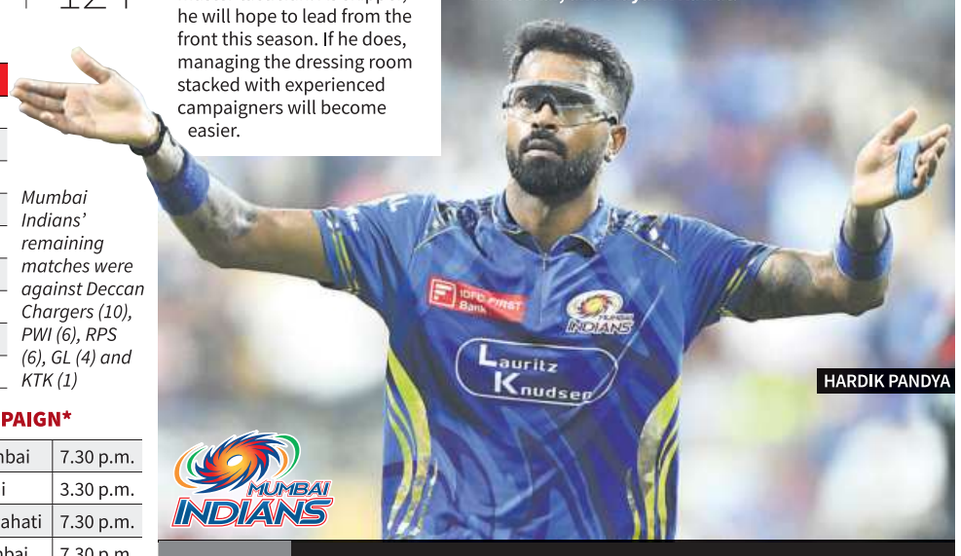
**announced so far*

MIRACLE MAN

Hardik Pandya: Ever since his high-profile return to Mumbai Indians for an astronomical sum, Hardik Pandya has been expected to perform miracles. But, the all-rounder is yet to deliver consistently, either as a top performer or a master tactician. As skipper, he will hope to lead from the front this season. If he does, managing the dressing room stacked with experienced campaigners will become easier.

THE SQUAD

Hardik Pandya (Capt.), Rohit Sharma, Suryakumar Yadav, Tilak Varma, Ryan Rickelton (wk), Robin Minz (wk), Quinton de Kock (wk), Mitchell Santner, Corbin Bosch, Will Jacks, Naman Dhir, Sherfane Rutherford, Raj Angad Bawa, Shardul Thakur, Deepak Chahar, Trent Boult, Jasprit Bumrah, Allah Ghazanfar, Ashwani Kumar, Raghu Sharma, Mayank Markande, Danish Malewar, Mohammed Izhar, Atharva Ankolekar, and Mayank Rawat.



HARDIK PANDYA

CHAMPION 2013 | 2015 | 2017 | 2019 | 2020

COMPILED BY G. PRASAD & AMOL KARHADKAR

Man on a mission: A re-energised Rohit would hope to get back to his menacing best. MUMBAI INDIANS

Indian Premier League: The meeting was the first all-Indian captains' gathering ahead of a season. IPL

Impact Player rule to stay at least until 2027

Sports Bureau
MUMBAI

Despite calls to review the Impact Player rule and revert to traditional 11-a-side contests, Indian Premier League (IPL) officials have indicated that any reassessment will take place only after the 2027 edition.

At the customary pre-season captains' meeting held at the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) headquarters here on Wednesday evening, a majority of the 10 franchise captains expressed reservations about continuing with the rule.

It is understood that once one of the senior-most skippers raised concerns, he received vocal backing from several others during the first all-Indian captains' gathering ahead of an IPL season.

While IPL and BCCI officials listened to the apprehensions – ranging from creating an uneven playing field to potentially hampering the development of Indian all-rounders – they clarified that the rule would remain in place until at least after IPL 2027.

Introduced in 2023, the Impact Player rule allows teams to make a substitution at any stage during the match. In practice, this has led to teams replacing an additional batter with a specialist bowler or vice versa, effectively altering team balance and reducing the importance of all-rounders.

Meanwhile, a captain also raised the possibility of extending the option of a ball change midway through the second innings to counter heavy dew. However, Javagal Srinath and Nitin Menon – head of the IPL's match referees' and umpires' panels, respectively – declined the suggestion, explaining that the existing ball-change provision was already designed to address dew in the latter stages of a match.

Cummins joins SRH training, but doesn't overtly exert himself

Ashwin Achal
BENGALURU

Sunrisers Hyderabad's regular skipper Pat Cummins joined the team's training session at the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium here on Wednesday.

The Australian fast bowler, who is battling fitness concerns, did not overtly exert himself. The 32-year-old indulged in a light warm up, and took part in fielding and catching drills. He went on to deliver a few balls with a shortened run-up in an empty net.

While his Sunrisers teammates went full tilt, Cummins did a few sprints under the watchful eyes of head coach Daniel Vettori and his staff.

England all-rounder Liam Livingstone, signed for ₹13 crore at the auction, got into the groove with a batting stint.

Livingstone, who last featured for England a year ago, is searching for form and runs. South African Heinrich Klaasen struck big blows, sending the ball to all parts.

SRH is preparing for the IPL 2026 opener against defending champion Royal Challengers Bengaluru here on Saturday.

Given that Cummins will miss the first few games of the season, Sunrisers appointed wicketkeeper-batter Ishan Kishan as the interim captain.

Abhishek Sharma will take charge as the vice-captain.

Kishan missed the SRH practice session on Wednesday as he was part of the IPL captains' meeting in Mumbai.

Cummins last played in the third Ashes Test in December, and did not figure in Australia's disastrous T20 World Cup campaign.

Stark contrast: While SRH sweats over the return of Cummins and form of Livingstone, Abhishek provides it hope. K. MURALI KUMAR

I've made mistakes, but that's history: Shaw on his journey

Vivek Krishnan
NEW DELHI

From the highest of highs to the lowest of lows, Prithvi Shaw has endured a whirlwind of emotions in his cricketing career.

Once touted as the next big thing to emerge from Mumbai's *maidans*, Shaw, now 26, seemed set to fulfil his vast promise when he led India to under-19 World Cup glory in 2018 and scored a century on Test debut in the same year.

But as his form waned and fitness troubles surfaced, the perception of Shaw succumbing to the pitfalls of early fame became hard to ignore.

He hit rock-bottom in the 2024-25 season when he was dropped from Mumbai's Ranji Trophy team on fitness and disciplinary grounds.

Not long after, he found no takers in the IPL auction after seven seasons with Delhi Capitals.

Shaw's desire for a reset saw him move to Maharashtra for the 2025-26 domestic season, and he had a promising start before runs tapered off.

Despite all that has unfolded, Shaw has a fresh shot at redemption as part of DC's roster in IPL-19.

The stylish batter was acquired by the franchise at his base price of ₹75 lakh in the mini-auction in December.

Shaw. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

"Humans make mistakes. I have also made mistakes. That's history. I like to be in the present. That's what I have learned," Shaw told the media on Wednesday.

"If I don't think of a comeback [for India], it will be wrong. Because I am playing for that. And for that, I am working hard."

Mentally prepared

According to Shaw, the enforced break from last year's IPL helped enhance his mental toughness.

"I went to a couple of destinations to refresh my mind a little, and then I came back.

"I practised, worked hard, whether it was training or batting. Whatever I used to do, I started doing three times as much. I can't say I took a step back. It was just a needed break, so that I could strengthen myself mentally," Shaw reflected.

South Africa has the last laugh against New Zealand

Reuters
CHRISTCHURCH

Connor Esterhuizen's 75 off just 33 balls (5x4, 6x6) helped South Africa secure a 33-run win over New Zealand in the fifth and final T20I on Wednesday and clinch a comeback 3-2 series victory.

Esterhuizen, who made his international debut earlier in the series, rekindled South Africa's innings after a muted start to help it post 187 for four.

Two-wicket hauls from Gerald Coetzee, Wiaan Mulder and Ottniel Baartman then restricted New Zealand to 154 for eight.

The scores: South Africa 187/4 in 20 overs (Hermann 39, Esterhuizen 75, Sears 2/37) bt New Zealand 154/8 in 20 overs (Jacobs 36, Coetzee 2/21, Mulder 2/28, Baartman 2/38).
Toss: New Zealand.
PoM & PoS: Esterhuizen.

Esterhuizen... a memorable debut series. AFP

INBRIEF

Toronto unveils upgraded and expanded WC Stadium

Toronto unveiled its upgraded World Cup Stadium on Tuesday, insisting that temporary seating installed to meet FIFA capacity requirements would be safe for fans. "The stands will be perfectly safe," said Nick Eaves, COO at Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment, which operates the Toronto Stadium called BMO Field.

Indian archers win two bronze at Asia Cup Stage-1

Indian archers claimed two bronze and ensured at least five more medals at the Asia Cup Stage-1 archery tournament in Bangkok on Wednesday. The country's recurve women's team – comprising Ruma Biswas, Kirti and Ridhi Phor – saw off Malaysia 5-1 while the compound men's team – consisting of Rajat Chauhan, Rishabh Yadav and Uday Kamboj – knocked out Bhutan 234-232 in bronze medal matches. The Indian recurve men's team and compound women's team reached their respective finals. In individual events, Ridhi secured a place in the recurve women's individual title clash, while Prathamesh Jawkar and Kamboj set up an all-Indian final in compound men's individual event. Chauhan and Tejal Salve made the compound men's and women's individual bronze matches respectively.

Patriots terminated from UTT for non-payment of dues

Jaipur Patriots, one of the two recent additions in the UTT, has been terminated for non-payment of dues to the promoters of the league. According to a statement issued by 11Sports, promoters of UTT, the termination was inevitable due to "repeated non-compliance with the terms of the executed franchise agreement and persistent payment defaults owed to 11Sports under the contract." A new team will be inducted as the Patriots' replacement ahead of UTT 2026.

Zoravar left out for workload management: coach Wilson

India's foreign trap coach Peter Wilson said on Wednesday that the country's top trap marksman Zoravar Singh Sandhu has been left out from the season-opening ISSF Shotgun World Cup in Tangier from Thursday due to "workload management".

The team: Trap (men): Prithviraj Tondaiman, Kynan Chenai, and Bhowneesh Mendiratta; **Women:** Kirti Gupta, Rajeshwari Kumari, and Aashima Ahlawat.

LIVE TELECAST

Golf: Indian Open, Sony Sports Ten 2 & LIV, 1 p.m.

Football: European Qualifiers, Sony Sports Ten 2, 5 & LIV, 8.30, 10.30 p.m. & 1.15, 1.30 & 5 a.m. (Friday).

Bhatia, Molinari in focus as Indian Open tees off at the tough DLF course

Defending champion Chacarra and Jarvis among the top players in the fray; Kartik, Shubham, Ahlawat and Shubhankar carry the host's hopes

Time to reboot: Molinari, who has been struggling in recent times, will look to find his range and rhythm at the Indian Open. GETTY IMAGES

GOLF

Uthra Ganesan
GURUGRAM

The 10th hole will be the centre of attention when Akshay Bhatia tees off at the Hero Indian Open on Thursday morning but the 24-year-old will not be the only one hoping to conquer what is generally considered one of the toughest courses on the tour.

The DLF Golf & Country Club has remained a difficult venue for even the best in the business. Besides Bhatia, the hottest talent on the PGA Tour at the moment, Italian Francesco Molinari will be the other top draw, the 43-year-old a former Open winner (2018) and part of the victorious European Ryder Cup team thrice but hasn't really peaked since then.

"There's been a bit of a dip but obviously I am trying to improve from where I am and trying to get some more wins.

"Even with the results not being what I wanted the last few years, I still enjoy practising on my own, trying to find something that might work," Molinari said on the eve of the event.

Other top players include Casey Jarvis (69), a two-time winner already on the DP World Tour this year and defending champion Eugenio Chacarra, who became the first Spaniard to win the title.

"It was a life-changing week last year and I feel like the good vibes again. I feel it's a really good test of golf. It's one of the few courses that you need to hit every shot that you have in the bag, you can't really have any negatives in your game or you get exposed very easily," Chacarra said.

Among the home hopefuls will be rising stars Kartik Singh and Shubham Jaglan along with Veer Ahlawat, joint runner-up last year, Shubhankar Sharma, Yuvraj Sandhu and Rayhan Thomas, aiming to become the first home champion since S.S.P. Chawrasia in 2017.

Gurindervir wins 60m gold in national record time

Pace is ace: Gurindervir outclassed the field in the men's 60m final while Harita emerged as the fastest woman. BISWARANJAN ROUT

ATHLETICS

Sports Bureau

Twenty-six-year-old international sprinter Gurindervir Singh held his nerve to secure the men's 60m crown on the concluding day of the inaugural National Indoor athletics championships at the Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar on Wednesday.

In a thrilling final reduced to five athletes after three false starts, Gurindervir crossed the line with 6.60. His time was better than the previous National 60m indoor record of 6.67 seconds, set by V.K. Elakkiadasan in 2022. Local lad Lalu Bhoi clocked 6.65.

National outdoor champion Animesh Kujur was among those who were disqualified for false starts.

Harita Bhandra won the women's 60m dash with a time of 7.32.

Swadhin Majhi recorded 2.18m to upset Olympian high-jumper Sarvesh Kushare, who managed 2.15m.

The results: Finals (winners only): Men: 60m: Gurindervir Singh (Rel) 6.60; **400m:** Mohammed Sinan (Rel) 48.27; **1500m:** Vinod Singh (MP) 3:46.13; **Triple jump:** Vimal Mukesh (Navy) 15.41m; **Pole vault:** Reegan G. (TN) 5.30m; **High jump:** Swadhin Kumar Majhi (Odi) 2.18m;
U-20: 60m: Kshitij Sunil (Mah) 6.78; **400m:** Umesh Sahani (UP) 49.14; **3000m:** Dolamani Chirgun (Odi) 8:39.13; **High jump:** Basant (Raj) 2.16m.
Women: 60m: Harita Bhandra (Mah) 7.32; **400m:** Kumari Saloni Nagar (UP) 55.73; **1500m:** Priyanka C. (Kar) 4:34.31; **Triple Jump:** Mallala Anusha (JSW) 13.20m; **High jump:** Payal Jamod (Guj) 1.71m.
U-20: 60m: Kajal Hirabhai Vaja (Guj) 7.50; **400m:** Sai Chinthana Senthil (TN) 59.96; **High jump:** Arpita Sarkar (WB) 1.68m.

Boxing coach Nieva believes team-building activities could make a big difference

Y. B. Sarangi
KOLKATA

Driven by the philosophy that team bonding is beneficial in an individual sport like boxing, head coach Santiago Nieva has engaged the Indian boxers in team-building activities during their preparation for the Asian championships in Mongolia.

The boxers were put through a photo contest during their camp at the NIS, Patiala. And on Tuesday, they enjoyed a visit to the statue of Genghis Khan, the founder of the Mongol empire, in Ulaanbaatar.

A day off: Indian boxers at the statue of Genghis Khan in Mongolia. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

"I have always tried to create a positive environment. We want boxers to have long careers and enjoy their time in the national team. In Patiala, we had a team-building day once during the pandemic, and it was pretty successful," Nieva responded to a query from *The Hindu* on Wednesday.

"During my stint in Australia, we did a couple of such activities and the photo contest, and the boxers liked it very much. I thought that it could be a good idea to implement it in Patiala. Team support is as important in an individual sport as in team sports. There are studies that show this."

Recalling the photo contest in Patiala, Nieva said, "In the beginning, it was difficult to know how much effort they would put into it or how creative they would get. But pretty quickly, we started seeing different outfits. There were really great costumes. People started going to different places, even outside the NIS, to take great photos.

"They even started using AI photos. Then we had to put rules that we would not count the AI photos. Otherwise, they came up with some really crazy photos. The most extreme was when they started using paint on body and face to recreate super heroes. It was fun."

Nieva said that the team activities, apart from regular training, in Ulaanbaatar helped the athletes to collaborate, think strategically and outsmart each other and that it would boost the boxers' overall performance. "Now the problem is that we have set the bar pretty high. But we have a couple of surprises in store for them," he said.

When the technique is right, performance follows — record-breaker Baranica's mantra for success

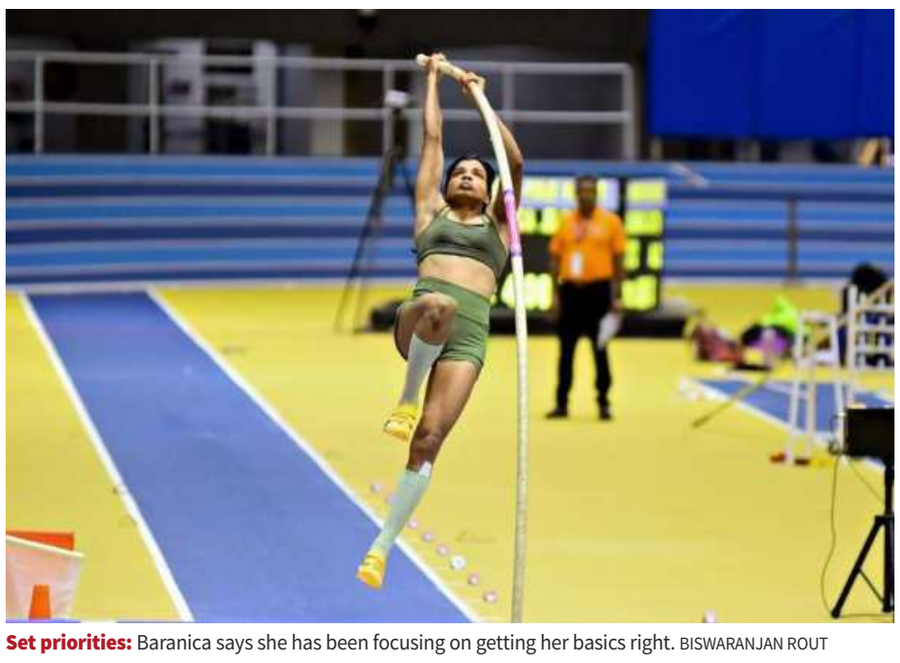
Jayantho Sengupta
CHENNAI

In a 2023 interview, Baranica Elangovan had insisted she was not chasing the National Record (NR), wary that dwelling on it could shift her focus away from the technical aspects of her training.

On Tuesday, at the inaugural edition of the National Indoor Athletics Championships in Bhubaneswar, that clarity paid off.

The Tamil Nadu vaulter cleared 4.22m in the women's pole vault final to break the NR and also register a Personal Best (PB), surpassing the mark held by Statemate Rosy Meena Paulraj.

The breakthrough followed a series of near misses, with Baranica saying she had attempted to break the record at least five times before finally succeeding.



Set priorities: Baranica says she has been focusing on getting her basics right. BISWARANJAN ROUT

"I'm very happy. I have been focusing on my technique rather than just performance. I'm not thinking about whether I can clear a height or not. I just wanted to listen and apply what I practice in training, and it has finally clicked for me," Baranica told *The Hindu*.

Baranica attempted 4.25m thrice on the day but fell short, pointing to a lack of speed in her run-up. She added that she has not yet peaked this season, having consciously prioritised technical refinement.

This approach has already brought consistency. Days earlier, she cleared 4.10m at the Indian Open Jumps to breach the Athletics Federation of India (AFI) qualification mark for the Asian Games.

"I'm solely focusing on getting my basics right. If I focus only on performance, technique suffers. When the technique is right, performance follows," she said.

With the Asian Games scheduled for September and the Commonwealth Games set to begin in July, Baranica is also adapting to a more demanding domestic calendar.

"AFI wants athletes to be consistent. Earlier, we could pick competitions, but now we have to compete regularly. To take part in the Federation Cup in Ranchi in May, we need to compete in national meets before that," she said.

The Mayiladuthurai native also reflected on her formative years alongside Rosy Meena and Pavithra Vengatesh. Training together until mid-2023, the trio formed a competitive unit that pushed each other to improve.

"We used to push each other. I was around the 3.80m mark then, and at National Championships, it would often be the three of us from Tamil Nadu competing for medals. It helped all of us improve," she said.

At the Indoor Championships, Baranica opened with comfortable clearances at 3.80m, 3.90m, 4.00m and 4.10m before opting to attempt 4.22m directly – a decision shaped by both strategy and fatigue.

"After 4.10, I didn't have a lot of stamina left. My coach, Milber Bertrand Russel, asked me to focus on execution and technique," she said.

The execution held firm, and the long-standing record finally gave way.

No clash of dates between C'wealth TTC and UTT

TABLE TENNIS

Amol Karhadkar
MUMBAI

The potential clash of dates between the Commonwealth Table Tennis Championship (CTTC) and the seventh edition of Ultimate Table Tennis (UTT) in July has been averted, with all stakeholders agreeing to ensure the two events do not overlap.

The Hindu understands that UTT executives met representatives of Commonwealth Table Tennis Federation (CTTF) and the Table Tennis Federation of India (TTFI) in New Delhi last week to work out a mutually acceptable solution.

Multiple officials, requesting anonymity, confirmed that the seventh edition of UTT will be held in Goa from July 9 to 26. The 22nd edition of the CTTC will then begin in New Delhi on July 27, with the finals scheduled for August 2.

The revised schedule ensures that top Indian paddlers, as well as players from Commonwealth table tennis strongholds such as Singapore, Nigeria and England, will be able to participate in both events.

Initially, UTT had been allotted two potential windows – July 9 to 26 and July 16 to August 2. While UTT was deliberating over a mid-July start, the TTFI secured hosting rights for the CTTC, which was awarded the July 23 to August 2 window.

The overlap prompted the TTFI to bring all stakeholders to the table. After discussions, the parties agreed on back-to-back scheduling to safeguard players' interests and avoid dilution of the quality of players participating in both prestigious competitions.

Nelson's Esakkimuthu claims his maiden five-wicket haul

Its match against Alwarpet, which lost its last six wickets for 62 runs, ends in a draw; Vijay left-arm spinner P. Vignesh takes five for 62; Vignesh S. Iyer slams an unbeaten 156 for Grand Slam and adds 212 for the third wicket with Akshay

FIRST DIVISION

Sports Bureau
CHENNAI

Medium-pacer A. Esakkimuthu returned his maiden five-wicket haul (five for 46) while left-arm spinner Sachin Rathi took four for 48 as Nelson SC bowled out Alwarpet CC for 353 in its second innings on the third and final day of the TNCA first division league at the Wahe Guru 'A' ground on Wednesday.

Resuming at 291 for four, Alwarpet lost its last six wickets for just 62 runs, and the match ended in a draw. Nelson claimed five points after securing the crucial first-innings lead.

Stars of the day: Esakkimuthu (Nelson, 5/46); P. Vignesh (Vijay, 5/62); Vignesh S. Iyer (Grand Slam, 156 n.o.).

At Guru Nanak College ground, left-arm spinner P. Vignesh starred for Vijay CC with figures of five for 62 against Singam Puli CC, which declared its second essay at 209 for nine. The match ended in a draw.

Vignesh S. Iyer (156 n.o., 331b, 14x4, 3x6) and Akshay Sarangadhar (92) added 212 for the third wicket, before the former put on an unbroken 109-run fourth-wicket stand with R.K. Jayant (63 n.o.) to propel Grand Slam CC to 384 for three, enforcing a draw against Young Stars CC at the SRMC ground.

The scores: At A.M. Jain: Globe Trotters 151 & 250/9 in 95 overs (D. Santhosh Kumar 53, Yash Rathod 38, V. Shavin 75 n.o., Bhargav Bhatt 3/48) drew with MRC 'A' 429/8 decl. **Points: MRC-A 5(29); Trotters 1(24).**

At Wahe Guru-A: Alwarpet 136 & 353 in 89.1 overs (Manav Parakh 95, A. Esakkimuthu 5/46, Sachin Rathi 4/48) drew with Nelson 167 & 232/7 in 76.4 overs (Shivam Singh 84, Sunny Sandhu 33 n.o., P. Vidyuth 4/102).
Nelson 5(26); Alwarpet 1(16).

At Tagore: Jolly Rovers 478 drew with Sea Hawks 331 in 115.2 overs (Maan K. Bafna 69, P. Shijit Chandran 34, N. Selvakumaran 48, S. Lakshay Jain 4/82, Siddharth Desai 4/74). **Rovers 5(21); Sea Hawks 1(23).**

At Guru Nanak: Singam Puli 223 & 209/9 decl. in 83 overs (Ch. Jitendra Kumar 55, R. Sibi 32, U. Mukilesh 32, B. Arun 36 n.o., P. Vignesh 5/62) drew with Vijay 118 in 46.1 overs.
Singam Puli 5(23); Vijay 1(17).

At SRMC: Young Stars 584/7 decl. drew with Grand Slam 384/3 in 140 overs (L. Suryapprakash 33, Akshay Sarangdhar 92, Vignesh S. Iyer 156 n.o., R.K. Jayant 63 n.o.).
Young Stars 2(22); Grand Slam 2(20).

TNCA LEAGUE

Ajay claims six in Twentieth Century's win over MUC

Leg-spinner S. Ajay's six for 70 set up Twentieth Century Club's two-wicket win over The MUC in a TNCA IV-A match.

Naveen Kumar (Jubilee, 128); Vishaal (Eccentrics, 104).

Ajay (Twentieth Century Club, 6/70); Kanish (Indian Oil, 122).

Karthick (Amar, 5/19); Yuvan (CUC, 5/43).

The scores: IV-A: Friends XI 187 in 49 overs (S.V. Praveen 35, K. Srihari 33, M. Parthiban 3/52, A. Dhanaraj 3/55) lost to Royapettah 188/4 in 39.3 overs (P. Ezhilraj 91, L.B. Naveen Balaji 32).
Bharathi 114 in 33 overs lost to YMA 116/5 in 20.3 overs (P.S. Siva Ramakrishnan 35, K.S. Barath Rithvik 3/28).
GE T&D India 143 in 49.5 overs (G. Sakthi Mahendran 35, B. Ashwin 47, B. Yuvan Raj 5/43) lost to CUC 144/3 in 34.1 overs (U. Jakvis Yosaph 73 n.o., B.B. Mugunthavathanan 37).
The MUC 236 in 45 overs (S. Yathin 47, G. Maharaja 66 n.o., J. Joseph Jebaraj 35, S. Ajay 6/70, K. Keerthy Vashan 3/49) lost to Twentieth Century Club 239/8 in 48.5 overs (V. Srihari 33, R. Rokith 63, Doni J. Manoj Vasan 38 n.o., J. Joseph Jebaraj 3/39).
Jubilee 307/4 in 50 overs (G. Naveen Kumar 128, P. Dillen Joe 64, B. Harish 58 n.o.) bt Sumangali Homes 165 in 39.1 overs (G. Babu 45, B. Amal 3/20).
Purasawalkam 227/6 in 50 overs (A. Sarathi 41, K. Vijay 68 n.o., Vedansh Bavesh Shah 77 n.o., R. Kamagodeeswaran 3/58) lost to Social 229/4 in 45.2 overs (V. Immanuvel 95, B. Yuvaraj 72).
V-C: Bharathi SC 181/7 in 50 overs (K. Karthick 43, M. Krishnakumar 37, S. Kumaresan 38 n.o., V. Ganesh 3/47) lost to Youth Centre 184/4 in 43.1 overs (S. Kaushik Babu 51, T.K. Gowthama Raj 64, Hussain J. Darbar 36 n.o.).
V-D: Indian Oil (RO) 318 in 46.1 overs (P. Kanish Prabhu 122, A. Karthik Sankar 33, Deepak Raj 3/51) bt Youngsters 153 in 39.4 overs (G. Balasubramanian 33, V. Sachin 3/72).
VI-A: Eccentrics 276/6 in 30 overs (G. Shravan 49, V. Aravindakumar 42, R. Vishaal 104) bt Bank of India 131 in 30 overs (S. Seshank 34, G. Shravan 3/22, M. Parthiban 3/30, Vivek Balasubramanian 3/19).
VI-B: Amar 175/8 in 30 overs (K. Karthik 55, L. Jai Harish 39, S. Gopal 4/39) bt Ashok Leyland 72 in 20 overs (U. Gunaseelan 34 n.o., P. Karthick 5/19, L. Jai Harish 3/19).

Salah confirms his Liverpool exit after the season

Agence France-Presse
LONDON

Mohamed Salah will leave Premier League champion Liverpool at the end of the season, the Egypt forward announced on Tuesday as he started a farewell to what the club said were nine "illustrious" years at Anfield.

The 33-year-old arrived at Anfield from Roma in 2017 before making 435 appearances for Liverpool, scoring 255 goals to leave him third on Reds' all-time leading goalscorers chart.

He has also won the Premier League Golden Boot award on four occasions while starring for Liverpool in both their 2019/20 and 2024/25 title triumphs as well as lifting the 2019 Champions League trophy.

His Liverpool honours also include a Club World Cup, UEFA Super Cup, FA Cup and two League Cups.

But currently injured Salah has scored just five Premier League goals this season, compared with 29 last year. His Anfield future became the subject of intense speculation after a bust-up with manager Arne Slot in December.

Salah. AFP

AROUND THE CITY

The best: SDAT (Chennai), which took the honours in the Asmita Khelo India women's volleyball City league. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Champion side: Fairway Assassins, winner of the Tablets India-TNGF Golf Premier League. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

SDAT (Chennai) triumphs

SDAT (Chennai) won the Asmita Khelo India women's volleyball City league. Sivanthi Club finished second while Panimalar Engineering College emerged third.

Fairway Assassins emerges on top

Fairway Assassins (193 points) won the title round of the Tablets India-TNGF Golf Premier League (TPL) on Wednesday. The 19th Hole Smashers (192) came second while Allsec (184) finished third. K.C. Raghunathan, Chairman, Tablets India-TNGF Premier League, gave away the prizes.

SRM IST wins gold

SRM IST defeated Vels IST by nine wickets in the final to win gold in the South India-level inter-private University men's T20 tournament, organised by Sathyabama IST.
The scores: Final: Vels IST 63 in 15 overs lost to SRM IST 64/1 in 5.1 overs.

Nungambakkam-C beats Anna Nagar K Block-A

Nungambakkam-C edged out Anna Nagar K Block-A 2-1 in Zone-A of the 33rd Sanmar-TNTA Chennai City Club tennis league.
The results: Zone-A: MCC-A bt Nungambakkam-Z 2-1; Anna Nagar K Block-B bt Gandhi Nagar-A 2-1; Nungambakkam-C bt Anna Nagar K Block-A 2-1; Besant Nagar-A bt Nungambakkam-Z 3-0; Nungambakkam-Z bt Anna Nagar K Block-B 3-0. **B:** Ransa-A bt Presidency-C 2-1; Madras-A bt Presidency-C 2-1; Presidency-A bt Cosmopolitan-B 2-1; Madras-A bt Cosmopolitan-B 2-1; Besant Nagar-B bt Cosmopolitan-B 3-0.
C: MGC-A bt YMCA Nandanam-A 2-1; YMCA Nandanam-A bt Gandhi Nagar-C 2-1; MGC-A bt Gandhi Nagar-C 2-1; MUC-C bt MCC-M 3-0; YMCA Nandanam-A bt Gandhi Nagar-B 2-1; MUC-C bt MRC-A 2-1.

NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY

CORRIGENDUM
website: www.ner.indianrailways.gov.in Date: 25.03.2026

Under noted amendment is hereby made against tender No. 29265116 due on 15.04.2026 & Tender Notice No. 52 dt. 17.03.2026 (Item No. 03). **Item No.:** 03; **Item Description:** Tender Opening date- with time; **Existing Entry:** 15.04.2026 at 11:30 am.; **Amended as:** 11.05.2026 at 11:30 am. **Description may be viewed at IREPS website.** All other terms and condition will be remain unchanged. **Note:** Above information may be seen on N.E. Railway website **www.ner.indianrailways.gov.in** & Govt. of India's website **www.tenders.gov.in.**

Dy. CMM/Admin Gorakhpur
CPRO/S-97

DO NOT SMOKE BIDI/CIGARETTE IN TRAINS

NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY

E-TENDER NOTICE

CPM /GSU/ NWR Ajmer on behalf of The President of India invites E - Tenders for the following work up to 15.00 Hrs. on the mentioned date. **(1) Tender No.:** GSUAII-PFshlt-Re-04-2026, **Name of work**: Providing full length platform shelters for each platform of Somesar, Rani Falana, Jawai Bandh and Pindwada stations in AII-PNU section of Ajmer Division. **Approximate cost of work:** ₹34,35,40,130.63/- **Bid Security:** ₹68,70,900.00/- **Date & Time of closing E-tender:** 13.04.2026 at 15.00 Hrs. **Date of Time of Opening E-tender:** 13.04.2026 at 15.30 hrs. The details of above E-tender are available on website www.ireps.gov.in 420-DK/26

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NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY

E-TENDER NOTICE

CPM /GSU/ NWR Ajmer on behalf of The President of India invites E - Tenders for the following work up to 15.00 Hrs. on the mentioned date. **(1) Tender No.:** GSUAII-PFshlt-Re-03-2026, **Name of work**: Providing full length platform shelters for each platform at Fateh Nagar, Rana Pratap Nagar and Dungarpur station in AII-COR-UDZ-HMT section of Ajmer Division. **Approximate cost of work:** ₹26,64,92,659.12/- **Bid Security:** ₹53,29,900.00/- **Date & Time of closing E-tender:** 13.04.2026 at 15.00 Hrs. **Date of Time of Opening E-tender:** 13.04.2026 at 15.30 hrs. The details of above E-tender are available on website www.ireps.gov.in 419-DK/26

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NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY

OPEN E-TENDER NOTICE
(Through e-tender)

On the behalf of President of India e-tenders are invited by the Sr. DMM/ DSD/ NWR, Jodhpur. **1. Name of Item**: E-tender Notice No.:-33265021 supply, installation and commissioning of IOT based water level indicator system **2. Approximate cost of items** : Rs. 44890740.00 (Rs Four Crore Fourty Eight Lakh Ninety Thousand Seven Hundred Fourty Rupees only) **3. Earnest Money to be deposited** : Rs. 897810.00 (Rs. Eight Lack Ninety Seven Thousand Eight Hundred Ten Rupees Only.) **4. Last date and time for submission of E-tender Opening of E-tender** : 13.04.2026, 14.25 Hrs. **5. Web site from E-tender forms can be obtained** : **www.ireps.gov.in 6. Address of NIT issuing Office** : Officer of the Sr. DMM/DSD/NWR, Jodhpur-342001 (Rajasthan) **Notice** : **1.** Manual offers are not allowed against this tender, and any such manual offer received shall be summarily rejected. **2.** Cost of tender document & EMD online through e-transfers i.e. through payment gateway facility on the IREPS website.

427-DR/26

Please join us on /NWRailways NWRailways_

WEST CENTRAL RAILWAY

E-TENDER NOTICE

Divisional Railway Manager (S&T) West Central Railway, Bhopal acting for and on behalf of President of India, invites **"e-Tenders"** for the following work. Manual offers are not allowed against this tender and any such manual offer received shall be ignored. Tender document has been up loaded on website **https://www.ireps.gov.in**:-**Tender Notice No. and published Date:** BPL/N/WKS/ 2025-26/Tele/12, Dated 24.03.2026, **Name of work with its location:** (1) Augmentation of Video Surveillance system at 05 station (HD, SCI, BAQ, GUNA, SVPI) of Bhopal Division. (2) Provision of CCTV for yard coverage of mainline facing points at Misrod, Kurwai Kathora and Nishatpura station of Bhopal Division, **Approx. Cost of the work (Rs.):** ₹ 2,56,61,887.52, **Earnest Money to be deposited (Rs.):** ₹2,78,300.00, **Cost of Tender form (Rs.) (Non-refundable):** NIL, **Completion period of the work:** 06 Months, **Due Date & Time for submission of tender and opening of tender:** Opening Date **16.04.2026**, submission time up to **15:00** hrs., opening time **15:30** hrs. **Note:** The tenderer/bidders must have class-III digital signature certificate & must be registered on **IREPS** portal. Only registered tenderer/bidders can participate on **e-tendering**. All relevant papers must be uploaded at the time of participating in e-tendering. Online payment through payment Gateway has been enabled. Payment towards tender document cost, EMD etc. can be made online through multiple Net banking, debit & credit cards. **(Sd)**

Divisional Railway Manager (S&T)
WCR, Bhopal 462024

स्वच्छ भारत अभियान
एक कदम स्वच्छता की ओर

NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY — **SUPPLY OF STORES ITEMS "THROUGH E-PROCUREMENT TENDERS"**

TENDER NOTICE No.: S/2026/11 **Date: 23.03.2026**

The Principal Chief Material Manager, North Western Railway, headquarter Jaipur, for and on behalf of the President of India invites Open E-tenders on www.ireps.gov.in site as follows.

Sr. No.	Tender No.	Brief Description	Qty	Unit	Due date
1	37264707	11" Bogie Mounted Brake Cylinder	149	Nos	13-04-2026
2	30260537	Stainless steel litter bin	1976	Nos.	20-04-2026
3	30260149	Health faucet 1/2 inch, Minimum 1 Meter Length With Metallic mounting bracket.	17518	Nos	21-04-2026
4	60255216A	Supply and commissioning of Micro Controller Based Electronic Speed Indicating and Recording System	45	Set	23-04-2026
5	30262246	Rubber pad for primary suspension	10243	Nos	16-04-2026
6	36260529	Overhauling kit for Levelling Valve	2789	Set	21-04-2026
7	20261257	Set of Dampers	40	Set	14-04-2026
8	37264705	Overhauling kit for POH of CASNUB Bogie	612	Set	04-05-2026

Note: (1) Interested tenderers may visit the website ireps.gov.in for Full details/description/Specification/EMD & tender cost etc. All tenderers are requested to obtain digital signatures and get them registered on above site and quote electronically only. **(2)** For viewing and participating in other tenders such as open tender costing below ₹ 50 Lakh, limited tenders, special limited tenders and low value tenders, please visit www.ireps.gov.in

Follow us on : /NWRailways NWRailways_ 417-DK/26

Government of Punjab
Punjab Energy Development Agency

Dt. 25.03.2026

E-TENDER NOTICE NO. PEDA/2026-27/02

Punjab Energy Development Agency (PEDA) invites online bids from companies regarding to conduct detailed Energy Audits in 1875 MSMEs under RAMP scheme at various locations in the State of Punjab with scope of work as mentioned in DNIT.

Closing Date & Time for Submission of e-bids - 16.04.2026 upto 3:30 PM
Date & Time for Opening of Technical e-bids - 17.04.2026 at 11:30 AM
For more details logon to - https://eproc.punjab.gov.in/

Note:
1. Corrigendum/ Addendum/ Corrections, if any will be published on the above mentioned website and no separate notices shall be issued.
2. PEDA reserve the right to accept or reject any or all the tenders without assigning any reason thereof.

1034/12/2025-26/9900 **ADDITIONAL DIRECTOR**

ଓଡ଼ିଶା ବିଦ୍ୟୁତ୍ ଶକ୍ତି ସଂଚାରଣ ନିଗମ ଲିଃ
(ଓଡ଼ିଶା ସରକାରଙ୍କ ଏକ ଉପକ୍ରମ)
OPTCL Lifeline of Odisha

ODISHA POWER TRANSMISSION CORPORATION LIMITED
(A Government of Odisha Undertaking)
Regd. Office: OPTCL Tech Tower, Janpath, Saheed Nagar, Bhubaneswar-751007

NOTICE INVITING E-TENDER

E-Tender No.	Tender Description:	Estimated Cost
SGM-NZ-BLS-07/2025-26	Bids are invited under single stage two-envelop system from reputed manufactures/ firms/ contractors for Metal spreading in 132kV & 33kV S/Y of 132/33 kV GSS, Baripada under EHT (O&M) Division Baripada under Northern (O&M) Zone, Balasore.	Rs. 33,14,980/-
SGM-SZ-BAM-18/2025-26	Bids are invited under single stage two-envelop system from reputed contractors having valid B class Civil license and HT/EHT license or a valid HT/EHT license having EHT supervisor and Civil license (B class) for Painting of 220kV Jayanagar-Balimela DC line under EHT (O&M) Division, Jayanagar under Southern (O&M) Zone, Berhampur	Rs. 55,29,185/-

Complete set of bidding documents are available at **www.tenderwizard.com/OPTCL** and **www.optcl.co.in.**

/optcl.odisha /optcl_odisha **HIPR-87/2025-26**

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*Effective ex-showroom price Tamil Nadu inclusive of PM E-Drive subsidy. The start price in the advertisement is for Chetak C2501 valid for first 10K customers of C2501. Other series prices are indicative of the starting prices of different models of the series. Chetak is now available in 3 series. Features are differentiated by Chetak variants and availability with TecPac. Book now at www.chetak.com. The Chetak image is illustrated with the help of computer graphics solely for the purpose of advertising. Features, specifications and accessories as shown may not be part of the standard fitment and may vary. Actual colours and upholstery might differ. Please follow RTO guidelines while riding.

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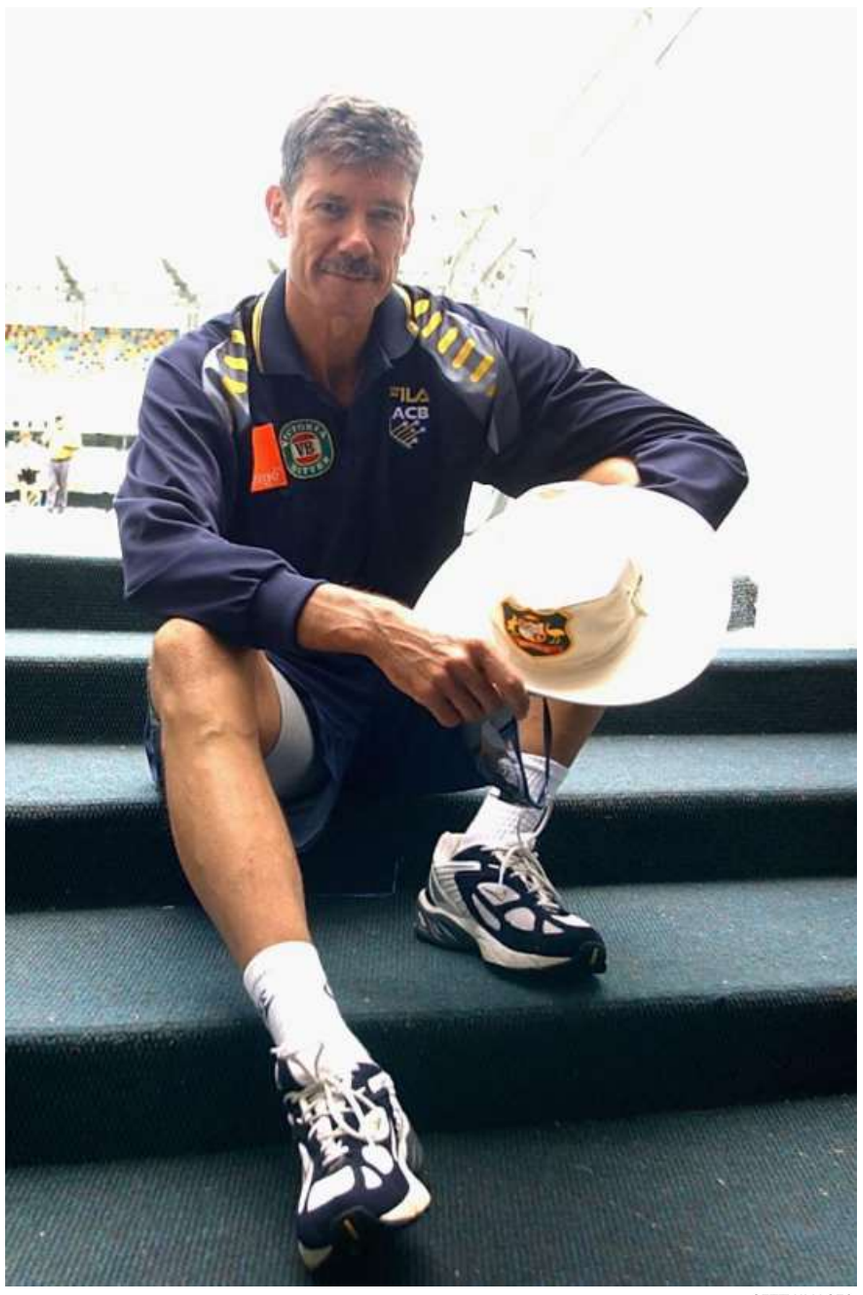
Time for Australian cricket to do some soul-searching

Buchanan, the former coach, reflects on what it takes to build a successful unit; says he was fortunate to have worked with greats like Warne and McGrath; feels that the younger crop of Aussies has not able to survive at the highest level, particularly in the longest format



GETTY IMAGES

INTERVIEW

John Buchanan

S. Dipak Ragav

John Buchanan is one of the most successful coaches in international cricket. He presided over Australia's golden era, guiding the team to two World Cup titles in 2003 and 2007 – both achieved without losing a single match – and overseeing a side that won nearly three-fourths of the Tests it played during his tenure.

In this conversation with *The Hindu*, the 72-year-old reflects on what it takes to build a successful team, revisits some of the memorable battles against India, and shares his insights on the modern game. Excerpts

How do you assess the current state of Australian cricket?

They had a strong Ashes series before the T20 World Cup exit. They did win 3-1, but I thought it was a very disappointing series. The skill levels of both sides were not what I would term 'Test match standard.' And I say that not just because the matches lasted two or two-and-a-half days, but because, from both a batting and bowling perspective, I saw players unable to adapt and adjust their skills to the conditions.

Wickets always play a role, but the ones I saw shouldn't have dictated such short games. So, in a nutshell, I think it's time for Australian cricket to do some soul-searching. That includes taking accountability for both good and bad outcomes. Australia's record over the last three or four years across formats is still quite strong. Nonetheless, the results in T20 cricket are indicative of some underlying cracks in the system.

With players like Mitchell Starc, Steve Smith, and Josh Hazlewood nearing the end of their careers, how do you see the road ahead?

It ties back to what we just discussed. There will need to be turnover. In any team aiming for sustained success, you need a balance – experienced players alongside younger ones coming through.

Right now, particularly in Test cricket, Australia has a group dominated by older players, with very little infusion of young talent. The younger players who have come in occasionally, like Sam Konstas, haven't been able to survive at the highest level. A lot of this comes down to the domestic system – the Sheffield Shield, the BBL, and the One-Day competitions. The issue is that the best players often do not participate in these tournaments. When they do get opportunities, they may opt out due to injury, rest, or time away from the game.

So, when your domestic system is no longer the best indicator of whether a player is ready for international cricket, then you've got a problem. That's something Australia needs to examine very carefully.

Do you see any promising youngsters coming through?

I don't follow the under-19 level closely anymore. But broadly speaking, I believe there is enough talent. The key question is whether that talent can be consistently executed at a higher level.

At the moment, the competitions these players are involved in are not sufficiently testing them. So while talent exists, the challenge is nurturing it into players who can perform consistently in international cricket.

What separates a good coach from a truly successful one at the highest level?

You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear – you need talented players. We were fortunate to have greats like Shane Warne and Glenn McGrath, and someone like Ricky Ponting, who was close to that level.

Just below them were players like Jason Gillespie, Matthew Hayden, and Justin Langer, who were also outstanding performers.

Then you need strong leadership – Steve Waugh and Ponting, supported by senior players like Adam Gilchrist.

That leadership shapes the team culture – how you prepare, how you approach the game, and how you respond to both wins and losses. Losing hurts, but then you are ready to make amends the next time around.

I remember after the 2007 World Cup, I was asked if I had ever coached the perfect match. I said no – we came close a few times, but never perfect. What we did have, though, was the perfect team: players who constantly looked to improve themselves.

How did you manage a team full of big personalities and still raise the bar further?

It wasn't always smooth sailing. Like any family, there were disagreements. Initially, it was about working with a small core group – Warne, McGrath, the Waugh brothers, and Slater.

Others like Ponting and Gillespie were still establishing themselves, and Gilchrist was just starting. The first 18 months were about understanding how the group functioned before trying to make a significant impact.

Over time, I formed a close working relationship with Steve Waugh and Adam Gilchrist. Together, we focused on building the right culture, planning processes, and training methods. Even though we were winning, it took about 18 months for everything to really solidify.

Success played a key role – early wins helped players believe in the direction we were taking.

You were ahead of the curve with data and fitness. Was there resistance from players?

There's always resistance to change, especially when things are going well. But my view was that if we didn't evolve, other teams would catch up and surpass us. Take the example of our 'Target 400' approach. When I introduced it, players were enthusiastic, but they questioned how we would get there, given that our highest scores were around 340-350.

So we used data to show that we were only maximising about 50% of scoring opportunities. That meant there was untapped potential. From there, we focused on areas like running between the wickets. Technically, many players weren't efficient in that aspect. So that's where a physical change would come in. We needed to actually get them to understand how to get low and power out of their legs to give themselves momentum to get down the other end. These small improvements would help us extract more runs, either by converting singles into twos or scoring off previously unused deliveries.

What were the highlights of your coaching career?

Three moments stand out: Winning Queensland's first Sheffield Shield, coaching my first Test match in Brisbane, singing the national anthem, and finishing with the 2007 World Cup final. Those moments were deeply personal and meaningful.

Was there a player you were particularly fond of?

I'd say, Andrew Symonds. He wasn't necessarily the best or the most disciplined, but he brought something special to the team dynamic. He could bat, bowl both spin and medium pace, and was an outstanding fielder. More importantly, we shared a strong relationship.

Which current Indian players have caught your eye?

Jasprit Bumrah stands out immediately. Alongside Starc, he's one of the leading fast bowlers in the world. He's composed, humble, and consistently delivers. I also really like Shubman Gill. I think he's a very special player.

What advice would you give to Shubman Gill as captain during this transition phase?

First and foremost, he has to perform as a player. Leadership becomes very difficult if you're not contributing with the bat. From there, he needs to back himself and his decisions. If you look at Steve Waugh and Ricky Ponting, they had different styles. Steve was someone who would generally quietly confide in people, but then make the decision. Ricky Ponting would always confide in a way that was very obvious, but still make the decision. Gill needs to find what works best for him.

Your favourite India-Australia contests?

The 2001 and 2004 series stand out. 2004 was a real achievement for us. But it was on the back of 2001 for me, because I hadn't been to India before then. I remember learning from E.A.S. Prasanna, S. Venkataraghavan, and B.S. Chandrasekhar. I got to meet Bishan Singh Bedi, just listening to them talk about spin bowling and how you do it and how you play it, and watching the Indian batters, how they play spin. So 2004 was a real outcome of what happened in 2001. The 2003 World Cup final against India was also an incredible performance.

Any regrets on enforcing the follow-on in that famous Test in Eden Gardens in 2001?

I regard it as one of my poor decisions as a coach. But it was not just about enforcing the follow-on. The game was set up nicely, and we had a big lead (274 runs). My job was not to get caught up in the emotion of what was going on the field. Except, I did. My job was to sit them down quickly as the players walked in and explain our options. I think they still would have all gone there (to enforce the follow-on), but I didn't take the time to get them to think that if we had batted, we would have batted India out of the game. Our objective was to go there to win the series. But we enforced the follow-on.

It was the way we'd been playing, and that was the obvious choice for us to make. We'd won the first Test (in Mumbai), albeit that was a little bit masked by Hayden and Gilchrist's performances. When I look back, they were playing sweeps, the balls were landing [in between fielders], and we had things going our way, which we probably ignored a little bit. And so the obvious decision was to enforce the follow-on, which we did, and the rest is history.

Can you elaborate on the strategy behind the 2004 series win in India?

Our strategy was to cut down scoring opportunities. Indian players are strong on the leg-side, so we used specific field placements – like multiple mid-wicket positions – to create pressure. We focused on bowling at the stumps and back-of-a-length deliveries, forcing batters to take risks. We also mixed in short balls to disrupt the rhythm.

The idea was to restrict boundaries, force errors, and take the crowd out of the game. In India, once the crowd gets behind the team, it can be overwhelming for the opposition. And Warne's role was somewhat less; he was to play a supporting role, not necessarily a lead one, which didn't fit his ego.

But by that stage, he was very much governed by all the players around him, and so they didn't let him get away and let him go and do his own thing. And the other thing was that Adam Gilchrist really stuck to the plan (Ponting was injured for the first three Tests), which made a big difference as well.

What's your take on India's success, especially in white-ball cricket, and the overall state of Indian cricket today?

I may not follow it as closely as I once did, but my overall view is that Indian cricket is heading exactly where you would expect – a powerhouse of world cricket. There is an enormous pool of talent, and the competition to get into the national team is incredibly high. As a result, the players who do make it are generally very well prepared for international cricket. You can see that in their recent performances, including the T20 World Cup win. Their ODI side has also been performing very credibly. The depth of talent pushing through – whether into India-A or the senior team – will continue to ensure India remains a dominant force.

West Asia conflict: how finding oil changed the Persian Gulf's ecology

The Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz bring oil and war to mind, but until recently the region looked very different; to see how, it is only necessary to look at its shallow waters and precarious coasts, where many fragile ecosystems live amid heat, salinity, ships, and geopolitical tensions

Ipsita Herlekar

Birds take flight around vessels in Persian Gulf waters near Hormuz Island, Iran, in 2011. NINARA (CC BY-SA)

Military ships and oil tankers dominate how we imagine the Persian Gulf today. Yet beyond this familiar imagery of geopolitics and petroleum lies a mosaic of vulnerable ecosystems.

It wasn't always this way. Just six decades ago, these waters were busy not with warships but fishing boats, and the glittering megacities that now line the coast were then little more than fishing villages.

The Gulf coastline is remarkably young. Formed 3,000 to 6,000 years ago as the sea flooded the Arabian basin through the Strait of Hormuz, it is today a shallow, semi-enclosed sea spanning about 226,000 sq. km, with an average depth of just 30 m.

Its shallowness and limited water exchange with the open waters of the Arabian sea drive its extreme conditions. The summer temperatures regularly exceed 35 °C while the high rate of evaporation keeps the water salty to the tune of 44-70 parts per thousand – almost twice as salty as open sea water.

Yet life persists.

Life on the edge

At the boundary of land and sea lies the intertidal zone – shaped by cycles of exposure and submergence to heat and hypersalinity.

These are dynamic systems where organic matter breaks down and is recycled, helping microorganisms survive in the adjacent waters. Beyond them, lagoons host specialised microbes and commercially important species like shrimp. Mangroves are fish nurseries, migratory bird refuges, and carbon sinks.

The mudflats also sustain shrimp as well as coastal food webs while the offshore seagrass meadows are among the Gulf's most productive ecosystems, proving to be places where fish and pearl oysters spawn.

These meadows are also important feeding grounds for sea turtles. Five of the world's seven sea turtle species occur here, including the critically endangered Hawksbill sea turtle, and nest along parts of the coast despite the wars.

The Gulf's waters also support the world's second-largest population of dugongs outside Australia, with an estimated 5,000 to 6,000 individuals. Dugongs are marine mammals that depend almost entirely on seagrass to survive.

Scattered across these waters are coral reefs covering an area the size of Goa. They support several fish and invertebrate communities. Importantly, they can survive extreme conditions, making them a natural laboratory for scientists to understand how coral ecosystems might respond to climate change.

Together, the Gulf is a finely balanced ecological network adapted to extremes.

At its peak, in the 18th to the early 20th centuries, the Gulf's oyster beds supported a thriving economy that supplied nearly 80% of the world's Basra pearls, named after a port in Iraq. This system collapsed when Japanese cultured pearls entered the market in the 1920s.

Then people found oil. By the 1970s, oil had made West Asia one of the world's fastest-growing regions. Today, the Gulf region alone produces nearly a third of the world's oil, with around 800 offshore platforms and more than 25,000 tankers moving in and out every year. Nearly a fifth of the world's oil passes through these waters.

This wealth has driven rapid urbanisation. The number of people has tripled in four decades, with more than 85% of people and economic activity concentrated within 100 km of the coast.

Coastlines remade

Large-scale land reclamation, dredging, and engineering have transformed the shorelines. In Dubai alone, more than 60% of the natural coastline has been changed.

Projects such as Palm Jumeirah have altered currents and sediment flows, eroding sand in some areas and causing sand to accumulate in others, leaving beaches to be maintained constantly.

Nearly two-thirds of the salt flats have disappeared, mangroves have shrunk, and natural beaches have been replaced with seawalls that eliminate nesting grounds for birds and turtles. Seagrass beds and mudflats have been buried under land reclamation projects, removing important nursery habitats for marine life.

The consequences have also extended offshore. Coral reefs have been buried or smothered by sediments while dredging and construction have disrupted natural flows.

These physical changes have been compounded by industrial pressures such as desalination and pollution.

The Gulf hosts about half of the world's desalination plants, with over 200 facilities producing around 11 million cubic metres of freshwater every day. They produce hot, saline brine, often laced with chemicals and heavy metals, that is discharged into the sea, where it accumulates in the semi-enclosed basin, further raising temperatures and salinity.

The Gulf coastline is remarkably young. Formed 3,000 to 6,000 years ago as the sea flooded the Arabian basin through the Strait of Hormuz, it is today a shallow, semi-enclosed sea spanning about 226,000 sq. km, with an average depth of just 30 m

Intake systems also remove plankton and larvae, disrupting the base of the food web.

War and water

Algal blooms fed by sewage deplete oxygen and trigger mass fish deaths, such as those recorded off Kuwait's shores in 1999 and 2011. Chronic nutrient loading also disrupts coral physiology, increases bleaching, and suppresses the growth of seagrass.

Industrial pollutants further accumulate in marine life. The pearl oyster (*Pinctada radiata*), once central to Gulf economies, has borne the brunt of pollution and sedimentation, which have left behind degraded oyster beds.

Leaks, spills, and tanker traffic continue to damage ecosystems. The 1991 Gulf War spill devastated coastlines, mangroves, bird populations, and fisheries while oil fires spread pollutants far afield. The UN Compensation Commission awarded Kuwait $52.4 billion for a clean-up; decades later, the effort is still underway.

These threats persist even today. The oil infrastructure continues to be a target of drones and missiles, and rising temperatures trigger repeated coral bleaching, pushing already stressed ecosystems to the brink.

The consequences extend far beyond the sea. Across West Asia, the Arabian oryx, populations of the Asiatic cheetah, and the Arabian leopard have fallen sharply due to hunting and other conflicts. The Arabian oryx vanished from the wild by 1972. Then, the Phoenix Zoo in the U.S., Fauna & Flora International in the U.K., and the World Wide Fund for Nature reintroduced it in Oman in 1982, with populations later established across Saudi Arabia, Israel, the UAE, and Jordan. Meanwhile, the Asiatic cheetah survives in Iran in critically low numbers.

Repeated wars have also derailed conservation efforts. The Iranian Revolution in 1979 followed by the Iran-Iraq War in 1980 brought wildlife protection to a near halt, leaving protected areas to decay and wildlife populations to crash.

A narrowing window

Today, the Gulf is among the worst affected marine regions on the planet. But signs of awareness do exist. The UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar have imposed limits on shrimp trawling. The UAE and Saudi Arabia are also leading mangrove restoration efforts and, together with Kuwait, have established marine protected areas to conserve what remains of these ecosystems.

As marine biologist and New York University (Abu Dhabi) professor John Burt noted in his work on Gulf ecosystems, the region's highly centralised governance – for all its deficiencies – could also facilitate rapid environmental action. What is required is for ecological concerns to be prioritised at the highest levels.

Time is also limited. Ecosystems such as coastal swamps, saltpans, oyster habitats, and the nesting sites of endangered sea turtles are already approaching points of no return.

(Ipsita Herlekar is an independent science writer. ipsitaherlekar@gmail.com)

A truck carries the transportable antimatter trap during a road test at CERN near Geneva, Switzerland on Tuesday. AP

Antiprotons take a ride in novel test by CERN scientists

Associated Press

Scientists in Geneva took some antiprotons out for a spin – a very delicate one – in a truck, in a never-tried-before test drive that has been deemed a success.

If this so-called antimatter came into contact with actual matter, even for a fraction of an instant, it would have been annihilated in a quick flash of energy. So experts at the European Organization for Nuclear Research, known as CERN, over the course of four hours on Tuesday, brought about 100 antiprotons on the road. The antiprotons were suspended in a vacuum inside a specially designed box and held in place by supercooled magnets. After easing them from the lab and onto the truck, the scientists transported the antimatter on a half-hour drive to test how the infinitesimal particles could be transported by road without seeping out. The antiprotons were then taken back to the lab in the final stage that concluded with applause and a bottle of champagne.

For every type of particle that exists in the universe, there is a corresponding antiparticle, with an opposite charge. Manipulating antimatter, like antiprotons, can be tricky business

CERN spokesperson Sophie Tesauri called the experiment successful. It was not immediately clear how many antiprotons had survived the entire journey, but roughly 91 of 100 were still there after the truck's trip.

Manipulating antimatter, like antiprotons, can be tricky business. As scientists understand the universe today, for every type of particle that exists, there is a corresponding antiparticle, exactly matching the particle but with an opposite charge. If those opposites come into contact, they "annihilate" each other, setting off lots of energy, depending on the masses involved. Any bumps in the road on the test journey that are not compensated for by the specially-designed box could spoil the whole exercise. "The motivation behind these experiments is to compare matter and antimatter with extremely high accuracy and watch for differences which we might have not seen yet," said Stefan Ulmer, the leader and spokesperson for Tuesday's experiment.

The experiment was a first step toward making good on hopes, one day, to deliver CERN antiprotons to researchers at Heinrich Heine University in Düsseldorf, Germany, which is about eight hours away in normal driving conditions. The antiprotons were encased in a 1,000-kg box called a transportable antiproton trap. It was compact enough to fit through ordinary laboratory doors and fit on a truck. It used superconducting magnets cooled to -269°C that allowed the antiprotons to remain suspended in a vacuum – not touching the inner walls, which are made of matter. The mass in the test – slightly less than that of about 100 hydrogen atoms – is so little, experts say, that the worst possible outcome was the loss of the antiprotons. Even if they did touch matter, any release of energy would be unnoticeable. Only an oscilloscope, which picks up electrical signals, would have been able to detect it. The trap, says Ms. Tesauri, "is supposed to contain these antiprotons no matter what: if the truck stops, if it starts again, if it has to slam on the brakes – all that".

Work remains: the trap can contain the antiprotons on its own for only about four hours, and the drive to Düsseldorf is twice that.

THE SCIENCE QUIZ

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

Survival struggle: when and how animals go extinct

Vasudevan Mukunth

QUESTION 1

When the last individual of a species worldwide has died, it is said to become extinct. What is the single-word term for when the last individual of a species has died in a particular region even as the species persists in other areas?

QUESTION 2

_____ is a name for evolution within a single lineage where a population changes so significantly over time that it is reclassified as a new species. As a result of this, the 'old species' is said to end as the 'new species' begins. Fill in the blank.

QUESTION 3

X extinction is when a species still exists but its population is so small that it no longer plays a significant role in its ecosystem. Y extinction is like X extinction taken to an extreme, i.e. when the species is so rare that its presence in the ecosystem can be ignored without consequence. Name X and Y.

QUESTION 4

Individuals of a species whose numbers have fallen below the _____ _____ _____ are sometimes called the 'living dead'. This is because the population no longer has the genetic diversity for the species to adapt well to new threats and/or it is losing too much habitat. Fill in the blanks.

QUESTION 5

A species is said to have an _____ ____ if an event in the past is bound to lead to the species being wiped out in future. Fill in the blanks with a description coined so because the species is 'owed' to extinction.

Visual: Name this fish. It's a good example of a Lazarus taxon, which denotes a species thought to be extinct but which is then rediscovered. AMELIA GUO

Answers to March 19 quiz:

1. Minimum amount of fissile material for a chain reaction – **Ans: Critical mass**
2. Method used to eliminate mosquitoes' breeding grounds – **Ans: Drain the swamp**
3. When too much NaCl in soil dehydrates plants – **Ans: Salting the earth**
4. Name for assets that threaten the health of institutions – **Ans: Toxins**
5. Temperature point when an environment is ready to combust – **Ans: Flashpoint**

Visual: **Runaway**

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For feedback and suggestions for 'Science', please write to **science@thehindu.co.in** with the subject 'Daily page'

Text&Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Prisoners benefiting from support scheme for poor inmates

458 Minister of State for Home Affairs Bandi Sanjay Kumar said the scheme aims to provide financial assistance to prisoners who are unable to pay fines or secure bail due to financial constraints. PTI

Political prisoners released by the Cuban government

20 Cuba has freed at least 20 political prisoners. The unusual show of clemency was made after President Miguel Diaz-Canel confirmed that his government was in talks with the U.S. amid rising tensions between the two countries. AFP

The estimated value of India's healthcare sector by 2030

700 in $ billion. The country's healthcare ecosystem was valued at around $300 billion in FY25 and projected to reach $700 billion by 2030, but health financing remains underpenetrated. PTI

Number of Lokpal complaints registered in 2025-26

389 Anti-corruption ombudsman Lokpal registered 389 complaints in 2025-26 (till February this year), Union Minister Jitendra Singh said on Wednesday. The Minister said the Lokpal disposed of 336 complaints. PTI

Number of migrants who died on the Eastern Route in 2025

922 The number of migrants who died on the "Eastern Route" from the Horn of Africa to the Arabian Peninsula doubled to a record high of 922 last year, the UN migration agency said. AFP

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What is at stake at the WTO's MC14?

What is the context in which MC14 is taking place? What has weakened the WTO's dispute settlement system? What are the key issues before MC14? Why is the e-commerce moratorium contentious? What role should India play at MC14?

EXPLAINER

Prabhash Ranjan

The story so far:
The World Trade Organization's (WTO) 14th Ministerial Conference (MC14) will take place from March 26 to 29 at Yaoundé, Cameroon. The conference is the WTO's highest decision-making body and generally meets once every two years. It is empowered to make all decisions on WTO law and to chart a path for the organisation's future work.

What is the context in which MC14 is taking place?
MC14 is taking place amid rising geopolitical rivalry between the U.S. and China, ongoing global conflicts, and the mounting securitisation of international trade relations. Furthermore, trade multilateralism appears to be in retreat, while unilateralism is on the rise. The U.S. has, over the last year, launched a massive assault on trade multilateralism by weaponising tariffs. Arbitrary tariff impositions by the U.S. grossly violate the cardinal rules that underpin the WTO, namely the most favoured nation (MFN) rule, which epitomises non-discrimination, and the obligation not to impose tariffs beyond bound rates. The U.S. has also begun signing new, one-sided trade agreements with countries through tariff coercion.

Why is trade multilateralism reeling under a crisis?
There is a growing belief in Washington that the WTO, which the U.S. was instrumental in creating in 1995, has not served American interests well. The meteoric rise of China in the last two decades has significantly narrowed the gap between Washington and Beijing. Moreover, China's accession to the WTO, which the U.S. facilitated, has not had the desired impact of disciplining Beijing's state-led industrial policies.

Consequently, the U.S. now wants to eliminate all legal constraints that apply to it, such as WTO law, to take on the Chinese threat head-on. For this reason, the U.S. paralysed the WTO's dispute settlement system by relentlessly blocking the appointment of members to the Appellate Body – the organisation's highest judicial arm.

Another key reason for the crisis is the WTO's inability to draft new trade rules due to consensus-based decision-making. Over the past three decades, the WTO has created only two new agreements: the Trade Facilitation Agreement and the Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies. The sluggishness in forming new trade rules has pushed countries to seek new venues for trade law-making, such as free trade agreements (FTAs).

GETTY IMAGES

What are the key issues in MC14?
A fundamental issue at MC14 is whether plurilateral agreements, such as the Investment Facilitation for Development, endorsed by over 120 countries, and the Agreement on Electronic Commerce, should be incorporated into the WTO rulebook.

Although the WTO is a multilateral organisation, it allows plurilateral trade agreements – agreements between fewer than all WTO members. These are typically included in Annex 4 of the WTO treaty. Plurilateral agreements bind only the signatories. However, for inclusion in Annex 4, such agreements must be approved by consensus among all WTO members.

Given the difficulty of achieving consensus, many countries believe that plurilateral agreements are the way forward to reinvigorate the WTO's legislative function. On the other hand, a few countries, such as India, argue that inaugurating the plurilateral rule-making door would open a Pandora's box and lead to the fragmentation of the system. It will be riveting to see whether countries can break this logjam at MC14.

Another key issue is the WTO's e-commerce moratorium. First agreed in 1998 and renewed every two years, this agreement among WTO member countries not to impose tariffs on electronic transmissions has benefited digital trade. This moratorium is set to expire on March 31. While the developed world wants it to be made permanent, the choice is not so easy for developing countries like India. Given the rise in digital trade, continuing the moratorium could lead to significant revenue losses for developing countries.

The 166 WTO member countries meeting in Cameroon are also expected to deliberate on issues of special and differential treatment (SDT) for developing and least developed countries (LDCs). SDT, part of the 'WTO reforms', recognises that, since not all WTO members are on an equal footing, special rights shall be conferred on developing countries and LDCs. The U.S. is keen to weaken the SDT principle by prohibiting larger economies, such as China, India, Brazil, and Indonesia, from enjoying special rights.

On dispute settlement reforms, it is critical to unequivocally demand the restoration of the Appellate Body to put the WTO's dispute settlement system back on track.

The U.S. is also expected to use MC14 to challenge foundational WTO principles, such as the MFN rule. Developing countries that benefit from these principles should strongly oppose such efforts.

What should be India's role?
India, which has always maintained its support for trade multilateralism, needs to walk the talk. It should regain its role as the normative leader for the third world by using the MC14 to articulate the importance of multilateralism and to forge alliances with other developing countries.

To do so, New Delhi should not shy away from re-visiting its deeply entrenched positions, such as opposing plurilateral agreements. India, along with other countries, should also consider other innovative solutions, such as electing Appellate Body members through voting. If MC14 fails to strengthen the WTO and promote trade multilateralism, it will represent a victory for America's blatant unilateralism and its effort to establish a new global trade order rooted in coercion. This will be detrimental to the developing world.

(Prabhash Ranjan is a Professor and Vice Dean (Research), Jindal Global Law School. Views are personal)

THE GIST

- MC14 takes place amid rising U.S.-China rivalry, global conflicts, and the retreat of trade multilateralism, with unilateralism and tariff coercion on the rise.
- Key issues include plurilateral agreements, the e-commerce moratorium, SDT, and restoring the Appellate Body, with developing countries seeking to protect the WTO system.

Why is Chennai's microplastic problem bigger than it looks?

What are the ecological risks of microplastics in beach sediments?

T.V. Padma

The story so far:
Microplastics, especially nylon fibres, seem to be present rather sparsely in Chennai's beach sediments but could still wreak long-term ecological damage, new research has cautioned. A study by researchers at V.O. Chidambaram College in Thoothukudi examined the abundance, sources, and ecological risks of microplastics from beach sediment samples from 15 sites along the Chennai coast. The findings show fibres dominating, with most particles smaller than 1000 μm.

Why does low abundance not mean low risk?
"This study is important because it shows that microplastics are already present in Chennai's beach sediments, even if we don't always see them," Sekhar Selvam, senior assistant professor at the Department of Geology, V.O. Chidambaram College, Thoothukudi, said. "We found that most of the microplastics are nylon fibres, which are more harmful than many other plastics."

In other words, even though Chennai's beaches have fewer microplastics than many global ones, the risk to marine life remains significant.

An additional insight from the study is the disconnect between abundance-based assessments and risk-based evaluations, Shaji Erath, professor of geology at the University of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, said. Traditional monitoring often focuses on microplastic counts alone.

However, the study has shown that polymer type, shape, and aging characteristics are equally, if not more, important in determining ecological risk, he added.

What are the ecological concerns?
Ecological concerns in the study are chiefly centred on marine life and coastal ecosystems, Dr. Selvam said. Small organisms living in beach sand, such as worms, crabs, and shellfish, easily ingest the small plastic fibres, which can go on to block or injure their digestive tracts. Toxic compounds in plastics can also enter and poison their bodies.

According to Dr. Erath, besides feeding by marine microorganisms, plankton, and marine animals, hazardous polymers such as nylon pose higher ecological risks due to their persistence, chemical additives, and capacity to adsorb pollutants.

Fibre-shaped microplastics in particular can alter habitats by modifying the structure of sediments, affecting the benthic – or bottom layer – of seas and the microbial communities there, he explained. There could also be prolonged environmental exposure and long-distance transport of microplastics, highlighting the transboundary nature of microplastic pollution.

How do human activities contribute?
Most microplastics found by the Chennai study team were clearly linked to human activities, according to Dr. Selvam. These include fishing, where damaged nets and ropes shed plastic fragments that break up into microplastics; synthetic clothes, which release minuscule fibres when they are washed; tourism and beach use; and urban sewage and stormwater drains that carry plastics into the sea.

After reaching the coast, they reenter human bodies via seafood contaminated by microplastics, among other pathways. Seafood in particular can ferry both harmful chemical substances and disease-causing bacteria and other microorganisms into the body, causing tissues to become inflamed and affecting the hormonal and immune systems over longer periods.

Is it too late to act?
Right now, microplastic pollution levels are not so extreme in Chennai and better waste management, responsible fishing practices, and public awareness can still prevent a much bigger problem in the future, according to Dr. Selvam.

In the final analysis, the research has reinforced the need for timely policy-driven interventions, including better solid waste management, recycling of fishing gear, promotion of biodegradable alternatives, and public awareness, Dr. Erath said.

(T.V. Padma is a science journalist based in New Delhi)

THE GIST

- Microplastics, especially nylon fibres, are present in Chennai's beach sediments in relatively low abundance, but low overall microplastic abundance does not necessarily imply low ecological risk.
- Even small particles can cause long-term ecological damage by affecting marine life, moving up the food chain, and eventually impacting human health through contaminated seafood.

BUILDING BLOCKS

What is mineral water and how does it naturally contain dissolved minerals?

Mineral water comes from a protected underground reservoir and retains the natural minerals it has acquired from geological processes over years, decades or even centuries; in India, tap water is drawn from rivers and borewells and disinfected with residual chlorine

Vasudevan Mukunth

Millions of people around the world drink mineral water every day because their tap water is unsafe or because they prefer the taste. It's packed with naturally occurring minerals that support bone and muscle health and governments and health organisations promote it as a clean, reliable source of hydration.

What is mineral water?
Mineral water is water that naturally contains dissolved minerals and trace elements. It comes from a protected underground reservoir, like a spring or aquifer, and has a specific composition of minerals. Unlike ordinary tap water, which treatment plants produce by filtering and purifying water drawn from rivers or groundwater, mineral water retains the natural minerals it has acquired from geological processes it has been a part of over years, decades or even centuries.

As rainwater and snowmelt slowly percolate through layers of limestone, granite, sandstone or volcanic basalt, the minerals from the surrounding rocks dissolve in the water, and the differences in pressure underground push this enriched water back towards the surface, where it emerges as a spring or collects in a subterranean reservoir. Producers then drill wells or tap natural springs and flow the water into containers, using pumps if required.

How is mineral water regulated?
The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the European Parliament and the Council both have regulations that stipulate that mineral water must come from a geologically stable source, which producers must undertake to protect; that separate batches of the same water must have the same profile of minerals; and that producers must not chemically treat it to alter its mineral composition.

In India, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) and the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) stipulate that natural mineral water must come from underground sources such as natural springs and borewells, must be protected by various formations that ensure the water is free from pollution, and should ideally be collected in conditions that guarantee the original bacteriological and chemical composition.

As in the U.S. and the EU, the BIS standard IS 13428 requires the water's TDS and the relative proportions of various minerals to be stable over time and across producers' batches. Producers are also prohibited from treating the water to change its mineral composition, and instead are only allowed to filter or decant it, aerate it, and sterilise it. Chemical decontamination, such as by adding chlorine, is also disallowed.

Finally, unlike many food products in India, mineral water requires mandatory certification: to sell mineral water, producers must have both an FSSAI license and a BIS certificate and every bottle must carry the ISI mark (according to IS 13428). The FSSAI also requires the bottle to be labelled with the location and name of the source and the levels of various minerals, and disallows the packager from claiming the water has any medicinal or healing properties.

GETTY IMAGES

How is mineral water packaged?
To meet these strict criteria, producers usually bottle the water directly at or near the source. Once they extract the water, they filter it to remove particulate matter and elements such as iron to ensure the liquid is clear. Producers may also pass it through ultraviolet light for disinfection and adjust the level of dissolved carbon dioxide to produce still or sparkling variants.

Finally, the producers store the water in tanks and package it in glass bottles, PET bottles or aluminium cans at or near the source to avoid contamination or changes in composition. That said, the storage materials come with tradeoffs of their own. For instance, glass is chemically inert and doesn't react with the water but it must be handled with care; PET is light but can leach small amounts of plastic over time, especially when it's hot; and aluminium cans are most recyclable but require an internal plastic lining to prevent the metal from reacting with the water, which reintroduces concerns about chemical leaching and increases costs.

Packaged drinking water is not always the same as natural mineral water. Producers may start with tap or groundwater, purify it through reverse osmosis, then add back small amounts of minerals to improve taste. Similarly, spring water comes from a natural underground source but doesn't need to meet the same strict standards for mineral consistency.

That said, under 'bottled water', the U.S. FDA encompasses Artesian water, mineral water, sparkling bottled water, spring water, and purified water (including distilled, deionised, and/or demineralised water or water that has undergone reverse osmosis). Artesian water is groundwater being pushed to the surface due to pressure created underground by impermeable rocks.

What effects do minerals have?
The minerals present in mineral water depend on its natural source. The most common minerals include calcium, magnesium, sodium, potassium, bicarbonates, sulphates, chlorides, silica, and sometimes fluorides or iron in trace amounts.

Calcium and magnesium make water 'hard' and give mineral water the mouthfeel people are familiar with and have come to expect, including a slight weight and body. Higher calcium levels render a smooth or slightly chalky sensation, while magnesium introduces a subtle bitterness. Similarly, bicarbonates neutralise acidity and give the water an almost sweet finish, sulphates – associated with magnesium-rich springs – add a slightly crisp taste, and sodium imparts a faint saline note.

Dissolved minerals also raise the water's content of total dissolved solids (TDS) and change how it interacts with food, soap, pipes, and tissues, with different chemical and thermal environments (e.g. cooking), and with tissues in the human body. You may know from common experience that harder water deposits 'scales' in kettles and washing machines and doesn't lather well with soap. Its inherent chemical properties also mean hard water supports bone density and aids muscle function, although the contribution of drinking water to these outcomes is generally much smaller compared to nutrition. Bicarbonates may improve digestion.

What are other forms of water?
When water is distilled, it means it is boiled into steam and condensed back to liquid, in the process leaving all dissolved solids, including minerals as well as contaminants, behind in the vessel. As a result the condensed water is nearly pure H_2O, and tastes very different, almost hollow. It does not form scales on metal surfaces and behaves in the sort of predictable way that research laboratories and diagnostic labs prize.

However, while it is safe to drink, distilled water is not advised for regular human consumption because, aside from being devoid of minerals, it can also draw minerals out of surfaces it comes in contact with, including food and, potentially to a small degree, biological tissue.

Industries also treat water according to their needs. They may soften it to remove calcium and magnesium, deionise it to strip it of almost all dissolved ions or alter its chemistry to use in boilers or cooling systems. They could also demineralise it to prevent scaling and/or add compounds like sodium phosphate to lower its corrosion potential. Industrial water is neither safe nor suitable for human consumption.

To prepare municipal tap water, finally, treatment plants draw water from natural sources like rivers and groundwater, remove pathogens and chemical pollutants by filtering and chlorinating it, and add disinfectants such as chlorine. Unless a local authority specifically softens it, tap water retains its dissolved minerals. Its mineral content varies enormously by region: London's tap water is noticeably hard because it comes from chalk aquifers while many Scandinavian cities supply naturally soft water low in minerals.

How is tap water 'made' in India?
The main source of water that eventually becomes tap water in India is rivers and deep borewells.

Because the pathogen loads are higher in tropical areas, municipalities subsequently disinfect it more aggressively than in temperate or cold regions like North America or Scandinavia. Among other steps, they add alum to make dirt clump together so that it filters out more easily, and add residual chlorine, meaning more chlorine than what is required to disinfect the water, so that water disinfected at first becomes reinfected later if, say, a leaky pipe exposes it to sewage.

In fact, such 'mixing' is so common that most Indian municipalities don't guarantee potable tap water. Among the few exceptions are Puri in Odisha and parts of Coimbatore in Tamil Nadu.

Tap water is a State responsibility while the Union government sets the standards. The IS 10500:2012 standard prescribes limits for the quantity of minerals in potable water but also has room for variations. For instance, while the TDS limit is 500 mg/l, it can go up to 2,000 mg/l if no alternative source is available.

Rajasthan, Gujarat, and parts of Delhi/NCR have very high mineral content, including calcium and magnesium, because their groundwater lies in aquifers rich in minerals, whereas cities and States drawing water from Himalayan rivers or areas with high rainfall, such as Mumbai and parts of Kerala, have much softer water with lower mineral levels.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Know your English

S. Upendran

"What was the name of the movie you saw yesterday?"

"I think it was called 'White Men Can't Jump'. I really enjoyed it. It was a real entertainer. It ..."

"...'White Men Can't Jump', eh? After seeing some of the decisions made by the umpires in Australia, I have decided to make a movie called 'White Men Can't Ump'."

"That's an excellent idea! I am positive that the Indian team will finance your project. The umpiring was terrible, wasn't it? Some of the decisions made by Hair and Co. had me tearing my hair out."

"Does 'tear one's hair out' mean to become angry?"

"Yes. 'To tear one's hair out' means to be anxious, frustrated or angry. It's an informal expression."

"When Sachin was given out LBW in the second innings of the first test, I was ready to tear my hair out. How does that sound?"

"Sounds great. It's getting late. Your parents will be tearing their hair out."

"No, they won't. They will..."

"...that was just an example!"

"I see. I don't think my parents would tear their hair out on my account."

"Your mother told me the other day that you had the habit of getting in her hair."

"I certainly do not get in my mother's hair! How could I...."

"...do you know what the expression 'to get in someone's hair' means?"

"Doesn't it mean to irritate someone?"

"Excellent! When you get in someone's hair, you bother or irritate him/her."

"I am sure Hair and Co. got in Tendulkar's hair."

"The umpires must have given the batsmen sleepless nights. As my friend put it, the umpires' policy seemed to be, 'When in doubt, give Tendulkar out'."

"Yes, the umpires in Australia were very patriotic! How about this example? There are times when you get in my hair."

"You're beginning to sound like my boss. He complains that I am in his hair all the time."

"That's understandable. By the way, does the expression 'to curl someone's hair' mean the same thing as 'to get in someone's hair'?"

"No. When you make someone's hair curl, you frighten, alarm, or shock them. I thought that the movie 'The Haunting' would make my hair curl. It did nothing of the kind."

"My friend, Lavanya, said that some of the special effects curled her hair."

"Boris Becker, when he came to Chennai last year, said that the speed at which people in India drove made his hair curl."

"Perhaps that's why he lost in the second round! He didn't want to take any more drives from the hotel to the stadium!"

"You may have a point there!"

"Some of the decisions given by the Australian umpires were enough to make my hair curl."

"...You've been harping on about them...."

"...what does 'harp on about' mean?"

"It means you keep talking about it again and again, although your listener may be sick and tired of it."

"Some of my cousins who are in 10th class keep harping on about how difficult it is to get through the IIT entrance exam."

"My friend in Bombay keeps harping on about what a great all-rounder Ajit Agarkar is."

Published in The Hindu on January 18, 2000

Word of the day

Clandestine:
conducted with or marked by hidden aims or methods

Synonyms: secret, covert, private

Usage: *They held a clandestine meeting late at night.*

Pronunciation: newsth.live/clandestine

International Phonetic Alphabet: /klændestɪn/

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

THE DAILY QUIZ

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

With the media 'conclusively' uncovering the identity of the world-famous street artist yet again, here's a quiz on Banksy and his works

Mohammed Hidhayat

QUESTION 1
The elusive artist worked under which pseudonym before shortening it to Banksy (as per media reports)?

QUESTION 2
The recent Reuters expose hopped on hints left behind in a war-torn country where the anti-establishment spray painter drew seven murals in 2022. Name the country.

QUESTION 3
Banksy has cited this graffiti artist as one of his many inspirations. Name the personality who is also a musician and a founding member of the British trip hop group Massive Attack.

QUESTION 4
What is the name of Banksy's dystopian theme park-style art exhibition?

QUESTION 5
What is the artist's most widely reported likely real name, as suggested by media investigations since 2008?

QUESTION 6
The Reuters report released last week suggests Banksy may have changed his legal name to David Jones. It is also the given name of which famous English rock star, best known for pioneering glam rock?

QUESTION 7
The enigmatic creator famously orchestrated the partial self-destruction of his artwork via a hidden shredder at Sotheby's London auction in 2018. Name the painting, which is an adaptation of his 2002 mural.

Visual Question:
At a 2023 exhibition, Banksy acknowledged this scene from an iconic 1975 film, featuring a doctored tourism billboard, which inspired him to get into graffiti. Name the movie and its director. IMDB

Questions and Answers to the previous day's daily quiz: 1. His tribute single "Candle in the Wind 1997", a rewritten version of his 1974 single, sold over 33 million copies worldwide. Who was this tribute to? **Ans: Princess Diana**
2. What is EGOT? **Ans: EGOT is an acronym for the Emmy, Grammy, Oscar, and Tony Awards**
3. Which was John's debut album? **Ans: Empty Sky in 1969**
4. What is the name of the film in which his life and career were dramatised? **Ans: Rocketman**
5. Every year, John hosts a party. What is the reason he does it? **Ans: Aids**
Visual: John's songwriting partnership with this lyricist is considered one of the most successful in history. **Ans: Bernie Taupin**
Early Birds: Prem Nath Tiwari | Neil Lall | Akshansh Thakur | Abhay Krishan | Satvik Prashasti