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'ANTI-INCUMBENCY SENTIMENTS'

People will favour UDF in Kerala: KPCC chief

ASSEMBLY POLLS » PAGE 11

'BEAR GRIP'

Benchmark indices fall 2.5% amid West Asia war

BUSINESS » PAGE 13

INFLOWS FALL

Net FDI negative for fifth straight month

BUSINESS » PAGE 13

WORLD TB DAY

Pushing back against TB

A curated set of articles on eliminating the tuberculosis epidemic

EDITORIAL & OPINION » PAGES 8 & 9

'ORANGE ECONOMY'

Centre unveils plans to boost creative economy

NEWS » PAGE 12

NEARBY

Nine convicted of Sattankulam custodial deaths

MADURAI
Nearly six years after trader P. Jayaraj and his son J. Benicks died of custodial torture at the Sattankulam Police Station in Thoothukudi, the First Additional District and Sessions Court in Madurai has convicted all nine policemen accused in the case. » PAGE 6

DMK-Cong. rift over Puducherry seats persists

PUDUCHERRY
Differences within the Congress-DMK alliance over seat-sharing continued even on the last day of filing of nominations for Assembly polls in Puducherry. » PAGE 6

Trump pauses strikes on Iran, says deal is possible

Attacks on power infrastructure in Iran will be 'postponed' for five days, says U.S. President; major 'points of agreement' reached in 'good and productive talks', he says; Iran rejects Trump's claims

Stanly Johny

U.S. President Donald Trump, who issued a 48-hour ultimatum to Iran on Saturday to reopen the Strait of Hormuz or face strikes on its power infrastructure, said on Monday that he would postpone the attacks for five days after "very good and productive" talks with Tehran.

"I am please[d] to report that the United States of America and the country of Iran have had, over the last two days, very good and productive conversations regarding a complete and total resolution of our hostilities in the Middle East," Mr. Trump wrote in a social media post.

Later in Washington, Mr. Trump told pressmen that the Islamic Republic and the U.S. had "very, very strong talks" and there were "major points of agreement" between the two countries with a "real possibility of making a deal".

Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad-Bagher Ghalibaf, however, denied negotiations with the U.S., saying that "fake news is intended to... escape the quagmire in which America and Israel are trapped".

Iranian Foreign Ministry also denied Mr. Trump's claims while the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) said it launched a new wave of missile and drone attacks targeting the U.S. Fifth Fleet in Bahrain and U.S. bases in other West Asian countries.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 10
LONG-TERM IMPACT: PM
» PAGE 10

Taking hits: A residential building damaged by a strike, amid the U.S.-Israeli conflict with Iran, in Tehran on Monday. REUTERS

Two more Indian vessels cross Strait of Hormuz

CHENNAI
Two Indian-flagged LPG carriers, *Jag Vasant* and *Pine Gas*, have transited through the Strait of Hormuz on Monday evening. They are together carrying nearly 93,000 tonne of LPG, as per the inter-Ministerial briefing held on Monday. » PAGE 10

BJP allotted 27 seats in AIADMK-led NDA in T.N.

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

The BJP, one of the key constituents of the AIADMK-led NDA in Tamil Nadu, has been allocated 27 seats for the 2026 Assembly election, seven more than in 2021.

The PMK, led by R. Anbumani, has been allotted 18 constituencies. The AMMK, led by T.T.V. Dhinakaran, has got 11 seats. AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K. Palaniswami announced the seat-sharing deal in Chennai on Monday.

He told the media that talks were under way with some more parties [such as the Tamil Maanila Congress (Moopanar)], and that the details would be announced shortly.

FULL REPORT ON
» PAGE 6
CPI(M)'S DEAL WITH DMK
» PAGE 6

Centre signals early delimitation, women's quota for 2029 polls

Nistula Hebbar
NEW DELHI

The Union government has indicated that it will bring an amendment Bill proposing a delimitation exercise based on the 2011 Census to ensure the implementation of the Women's Reservation Act, 2023, ahead of the 2029 Lok Sabha election.

Under the proposed amendments, the number of Lok Sabha seats will increase from 543 to 816, with 273 seats, 33%, reserved for women. The amendments could be brought in the ongoing Budget Session or in a Special Session called for the purpose.

States' concern

Though the draft of the amendments are yet to be circulated, it is understood by sources that care would be taken so that the existing proportion of seats will be maintained for all States, amid concerns that States that had showed success in population control programmes would lose out on representation *vis a vis* more populous States. Southern States had in particular expressed this concern. Overall, each State is likely to see a 50% rise in seats, but the pro rata basis would be maintained.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 10

The Bill will enable delimitation based on the 2011 Census to implement the 2023 quota Act.

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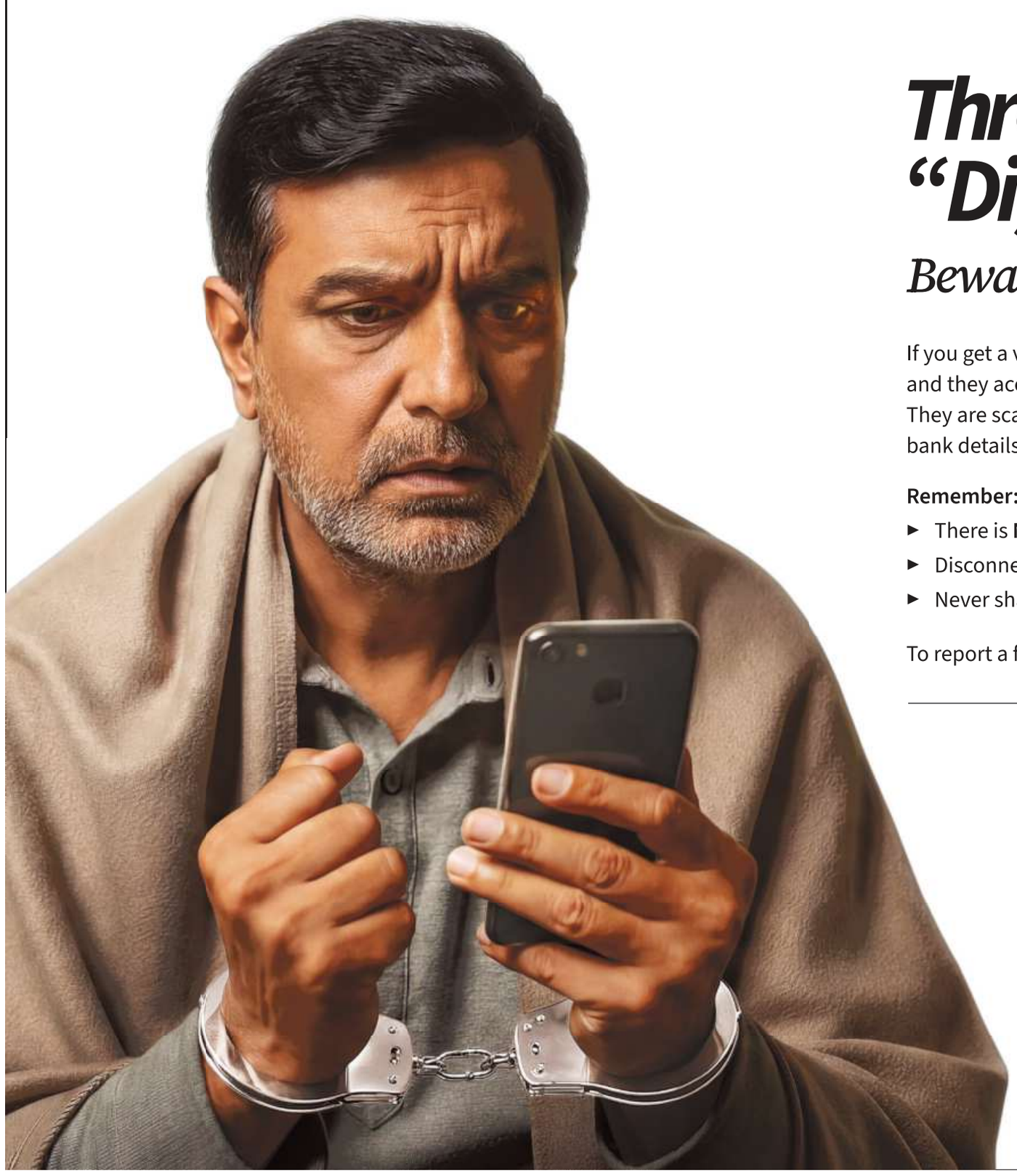

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Rapid growth continues to be marred by basic infrastructure issues, say residents

The Tambaram constituency lacks the civic amenities to tackle rapid urbanisation as arterial roads often face traffic congestion; untreated sewage is being discharged into lakes, and the interior roads remain in poor shape; MLA says drainage system has been implemented in the core areas

CONSTITUENCY WATCH

R. Sivaraman
CHENNAI

Tambaram, often described as the gateway to Chennai, has emerged as one of the fastest-growing suburban regions on the city's southern fringes, driven by rapid urbanisation, expanding residential layouts, and increasing commercial activity.

With rising population density and strong road and rail connectivity, it has developed into a key urban hub under the Tambaram City Municipal Corporation.

However, inadequate underground drainage coverage, shortcomings in solid waste management, persistent traffic congestion on arterial stretches such as GST Road, and pollution of water bodies remain major areas of concern.

The constituency encompasses a diverse mix of urban and semi-urban neighbourhoods, including Tambaram East and West, Selaiyur, Chitlapakkam, Peerkankaranai, Perungalathur, Mudichur, Hasthinapuram, Sembakkam, and Rajakilpakkam, along with peripheral areas such as Agaramthen, Madurapakkam, and Kovilanchery.

Currently represented by S.R. Raja of the DMK, a former two-time Chairman of the Tambaram Municipality, the constituency has witnessed significant infrastructural expansion in recent years. However, the pace of urban growth has outstripped civic infrastructure, leaving residents grappling with persistent issues such as traffic congestion, inadequate drainage, waste management challenges, and gaps in basic amenities.

As Tambaram continues to transform into a major suburban centre, the constituency presents a complex mix of development opportunities and governance challenges, making it a closely-watched segment in the electoral landscape.

Traffic congestion is a major issue especially around Tambaram town, GST Road, and the bus terminus, where encroachments and heavy vehicle movement create daily bottlenecks. Road conditions in many interior areas are poor, with potholes and lack of maintenance, and these problems worsen during the monsoon due to water stagnation.

B. Mahendra Poopathi, President of the Perungalathur-Peerkankaranai Residents' Welfare Association, said that Perungalathur serves as an entry point to Chennai city.

He pointed out that the underground drainage project for the area has been announced only as the elections approach.

Flyover project

The flyover project, which began in 2020, to connect Peerkankaranai and Perungalathur with Sadanandapuram and Alappakkam, is yet to be completed. Mr. Poopathi also highlighted a shortage of police personnel in the jurisdiction.

The long-pending demand for a foot overbridge in Perungalathur, has not been fulfilled. Traffic congestion continues to be a major issue along the stretch from Guduvanchery to Pallavaram.

He also said, "There is no permanent system for rainwater drainage, and our long-pending demand for water supply from the Palar river remains unfulfilled."

S.M. Govindarajan, founder-president of the United Federation of Residents' Welfare Associations under the Tambaram City Municipal Corporation, said that Shanmugam Road, the main bazaar area, continues to face severe congestion. He also alleged that several parks were opened hurriedly without proper planning or maintenance.

Mr. Govindarajan further highlighted that the underground drainage system remains incomplete, with untreated sewage being discharged into lakes such as Perungalathur, Sembakkam, Mudichur, and Madambakkam.

P. Viswanathan, convener of the Chitlapakkam Residents' Welfare Associations Coordination Committee, also urged the authorities to implement an underground drainage system in the area at the earliest.

The constituency MLA, S.R. Raja, said that significant development works have been carried out over the past five years, with a strong focus on stormwater drainage, following the heavy floods of 2015 and 2021. "We have undertaken several stormwater drain projects, including cut-and-cover works, to prevent water stagnation during monsoon. Underground drainage has been implemented in core Tambaram areas, and steps have been taken to extend the scheme to newly added areas such as Perungalathur, Chitlapakkam, Madambakkam, and Peerkankaranai," he said.

He noted that the promise to upgrade Tambaram Municipality into a corporation has been fulfilled, and that the creation of the Tambaram City Police, following the trifurcation of the Greater Chennai Police, has improved policing. He also highlighted the establishment of a railway third terminal in Tambaram, with premium trains such as Tejas and Vande Bharat now halting there.

"Underground drainage works in Tambaram have been completed, and tenders have been floated to begin work in newly-added areas," he said. He added that traffic congestion on GST Road has reduced considerably following the construction of flyovers in Tambaram and Perungalathur.

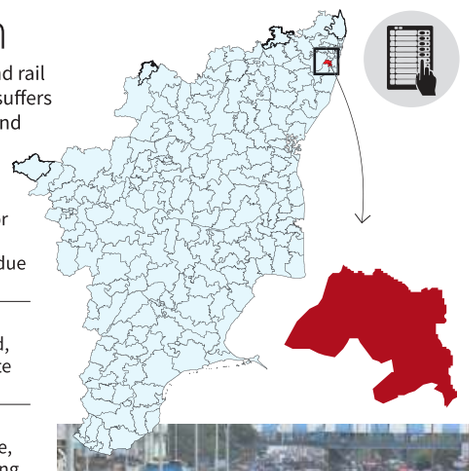
DMK representatives had won seven times in Tambaram constituency in 1970s. M.A.Vaithiyalingam of DMK was elected in 1989, 1996, and 2001. S.R.Raja of DMK was elected in 2006 and subsequently, AIADMK candidate T.K.M.Chinnayya was elected in 2011. Again Mr. Raja was elected in 2016 and 2021.

Tambaram

Boasting a strong road and rail connectivity, Tambaram suffers from traffic bottlenecks and poor drainage system

KEY ISSUES

- Road condition in interior areas remain poor and worsens during monsoon due to water stagnation
- Traffic congestion on Tambaram town, GST Road, and the bus terminus create bottlenecks every day
- Underground drainage system remains incomplete, with untreated sewage being discharged into lakes in Perungalathur, Sembakkam, Mudichur, and Madambakkam



Electors before SIR:
Total: 4,11,227
Men : 2,03,675
Women : 2,07,481
Others : 71

Electors after SIR:
Total: 3,23,677
Men : 1,57,580
Women : 1,66,046
Others : 51

Number of polling stations
465
(as on December 2025)

S.R. Raja of the DMK defeated T.K.M. Chinnayya of the AIADMK by a margin of **36,824 votes** in 2021

Choked stretch: With rising population density, arterial stretches such as GST Road face persistent traffic congestion. M. SRINATH

INBRIEF

T.N. SC/ST Commission VC to perform Chairperson duties

The Tamil Nadu State Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes vice-chairperson Imayam (V. Annamalai) will perform the duties of chairperson following the demise of Justice S. Tamilvanan on Sunday. According to a letter from the Adi Dravidar and Tribal Welfare Department to the member-secretary of the Tamil Nadu State Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, the vice-chairperson has been nominated to perform the duties of chairperson, consequent to the demise of the chairperson on March 22.

Chennai-based expert is division head of IoT Society

The IoT Society of India, a national-level not-for-profit industry body, working towards the advancement of Internet of Things (IoT) technology across India, has officially nominated L. N. Rajaram, co-founder and chief technology officer, Kritilabs Technologies Pvt Ltd to serve as the Head of the National Division for IoT Applications in Government, Public and Private Organisations. The appointment recognises his contributions to the fields of IoT and Artificial Intelligence over a career spanning more than four decades. In his capacity as Division Head, he would spearhead the society's national initiatives aimed at accelerating the adoption of IoT technologies across government departments, public sector undertakings, and private enterprises, according to a press release.

Text & Context and Science

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

- Nepal's political shift opens a strategic window for India **newsth.live/5wy0YG**
- New technique helps superconductor break 33-year temperature record **newsth.live/techniquerecord**

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.

Former Drugs Control Joint Director booked by DVAC in wealth case

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

The Directorate of Vigilance and Anti-Corruption (DVAC) has booked former Joint Director of Drugs Control P.U. Karthikeyan and his wife Hemalatha for possessing assets disproportionate to their known sources of income.

Karthikeyan was arrested in July last year by DVAC for demanding and accepting a ₹25,000 bribe from a Vellore-based soap manufacturing businessman to clear an application for licence.

Karthikeyan entered the Drugs Control Department as a Drug Inspector in 1999 and was serving as Joint Director of Drugs Control and Director in-charge at the DMS campus on Anna Salai since 2023. He held the position of Director in-charge from June 1, 2025. His wife Hemalatha is a yoga trainer.

The FIR by DVAC alleged that the assets accumulated by Karthikeyan and Hemalatha during the period between January 1, 2020, and July 31, 2025 were worth ₹99.86 lakh, which works out to 121.7% of their total income during the check period.

A case was registered, and the FIR has been placed before the Principal Sessions Judge, City Civil Court. Investigation is ongoing.

Suspect in businessman's abduction held

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

The J.J. Nagar Police have arrested a suspect in connection with a case of assaulting a businessman and abducting him.

According to police, Saravanan, 54, a resident of Mogappair, is engaged in buying and selling of cars.

On Saturday afternoon, when Saravanan had gone to a hotel in Mogappair with his son, an acquaintance, Manikandan, along with a few others, arrived in a car. They allegedly abused Saravanan and assaulted him and his son. They forcibly took Saravanan in their car. Based on a complaint lodged by Saravanan's wife, a case was registered and a probe was was initiated. The police intercepted the car near Golden George Nagar on Saturday night.

The accused, Manikandan, 29, a native of Tiruvallur district, was arrested, and Saravanan was rescued. During the investigation, it was found that Manikandan had purchased a car from Saravanan and, due to a dispute arising from the deal, he, along with his associates, had abducted Saravanan. A search is on to nab the other accused in the case.

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA
ROADS & BUILDINGS DEPARTMENT

"e" Procurement Notice 1. Online tenders are invited under the e-procurement platform in Peddapally, Khammam, Nizamabad, Districts, For 3 Bridge works & 8 Road works under Plan & Non Plan for an amount of **Rs.350.52 crores** vide **CE(R&B)**, SR, e-NIT No. 11/E-in-C(SR&CRN)/SE(D&P)-II/EE-II/DEE-II/AEE/2026 dt: 20. 03.2026.

List of works

S.No.	District	No. of Works	Scheme	Amount Crores
	Bridge works			
1	Peddapally	2	PLAN	228
2	Nizamabad	1	Non-Plan	0.82
	Road works			
3	Khammam	3	PLAN	116
4	Medak	2	Non-Plan	2
5	Nizamabad	3	STSDF	3.7
	Total Amount			**350.52**

2. Tenderers can download the tender schedule and further details can be seen from the e-marketplace i.e., Procurement marketplace at **https://tender.telangana.gov.in/.** The last date of receipt of tenders is 06.04.2026 **3.** Further, Corrigendum to the CTN issued vide NIT No. 1606-5/DCE(R)/EE(R)/DEE-IV/AEE-IV/2025-26, dated 06.03.2026 vide refernce 2nd cited, the Modified last date for receipt of tenders for 6 Nos. of works in Suryapet District, 2 No.s in Medchal Malkajgiri District is **31.03.2026 up to 4:00 PM.**

DIPR R.O.No.17449-PP/CL/ADVT/1/2025-26 Dt. 23.03.2026 Sd/-For Engineer-in-Chief (R&B) State Roads & CRN, MD-TGRDC

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PR 375814 Road(25-26).D

Centre For Railway Information Systems
Chanakyapuri, New Delhi - 110021

Tender No.: 01265043A

Tender Title: 03 Year AMC/ATS of IP PBX system installed at CRIS, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi. **Date of Closing: 09.04.2026** (Thursday) 15:30 hrs. Tender documents may be downloaded from website **www.ireps.gov.in.** For future modification/ extensions please see **www.ireps.gov.in.**

CENTRAL RAILWAY
NOTIFICATION

Sub: Tender for General upkeep and Management of TTE Rest House at LTT along with provision of subsidized meals and other items for a period of Two years (731 days). Divisional Railway Manager (Commercial), Central Railway, 1st Floor Reservation Building, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus, Mumbai-400001 for and on behalf of President of India invites tender through GeM portal for "General upkeep and Management of TTE Rest House at LTT along with provision of subsidized meals and other items for a period of Two years (731 days)". **Open Tender- GeM Bid Number:** GEM/2026/B/7358856, **Name of the work:** General upkeep and Management of TTE Rest House at LTT along with provision of subsidized meals and other items for a period of Two years (731 days). **Address of the office:** DRM office, Commercial Branch, Mumbai Division., **Work Location:** LTT Station, Mumbai Division, **Advertised Value:** Rs. 1,01,43,325.45, **EMD Amount:** Rs. 2,00,720/-, **Tender closing Date and Time:** 04.04.2026 at 21:00 Hrs., **Period of contract:** Two Years (731 days). **Validity of Offers:** 90 Days, **Tender Document available on website: https://gem.gov.in/** DE-1011

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MUSIC DANCE DRAMA

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6:00 pm
Launch of new
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Vardhanti / Sri Ramanavami Music, Today 6.30 pm, Smt Bharathi Ramasubban - vocal, Shri Madan Mohan, Shri Delhi Sairam, Shri Nerkunam Shankar. All are Welcome.

MISCELLANEOUS

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by Kalaimamani Isaikkavi Ramanan
All are Welcome
Contact : 18001022343

Sringeri Bharathi Vidyashram, T.Nagar, Ph: 24348964.
H.H.Sringeri Jagadguru Sri Sri Bharati Tirtha Mahasannidhanam 76th Vardhanti / Sri Ramanavami Mahothsavam 2026, Today 76th Vardhanti of His Holiness 7 a.m Veena Sharada Alankaram, 8 a.m onwards Rudhra Ekadasani, Ayushya Homam, 11.45 a.m Vasothara, 12 Noon Mahadeeparadhanai,Puspha Samarpanam To Paduka of His Holiness Mahasannidhanam, 12.15 p.m Mahaprasadam, 8.30 p.m Mahadeeparadhanai. All are welcome.

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CHANGE OF NAME

I, Padmaja Sathish Kumar, D/o. Bhaskaran, W/o. M. Sathish Kumar, born on 28th May 1983 (Native District Sivagangai), Residing at A7FTH1, VGN Ferndale, 440/6, Padma Street, Mogappair West, Chennai 600037, shall henceforth be known as Sripadmaja Bhaskaran.

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LEGAL NOTICE

BEFORE THE HONOURABLE 2nd ADDL. SUBORDINATE JUDGES COURT AT THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
EP.No. 322/2021 IN
O. S. No. 435 OF 2007

Between: Unnikrishnan P.S., S/o. Sankaran Namboodiri, Smrithy, Ullas Nagar, Peroorkada, Thiruvananthapuram, presently residing at Sreenivas, Vappalassery PO, Angamali, Ernakulam District, Kerala.

And: Joyce Raichel Thomas, Rehaboth, Plot No. 6&7, MRK Nagar, Opp. To Speed Post Counter, Gergumpakkom PO, Chennai-611 021.

It is hereby notified that the Decree Holder/Plaintiff has filed execution petition No. E.P. 322 of 2021 for executing the decree passed in O.S.435 of 2007 against the above Judgment Debtor/Defendant. The above case will be called by 11. A.M. on 06/04/2026. You above said Judgment Debtor/Defendant should appear in person or through her attorney and file objection if any, failing which the above numbered case/ petition will be decided in favour of the Decree Holder/Plaintiff

Sd/-, By Order, Adv. S.SUDEEP

FINANCIAL

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PUBLIC NOTICE

PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN to the general public at large that we are investigating the right, title and interest of **Sagunthala, wife of D.Gnanaraj,** with respect to the immovable properties described in the **Schedule** hereunder, **situated at Nolambur Village, Maduravoyal Taluk, Chennai District** (referred to as **Schedule Property**).

Any person(s) having / asserting any right, title, claim or interest of any nature whatsoever over the Schedule Property or in possession of the original documents and/or having any objection(s) of any manner whatsoever to the sale of the Schedule Property, are hereby called upon to notify the undersigned in writing with documentary proof within **14 (Fourteen)** days from the date of publication of this notice. Any claims or objections received thereafter shall be deemed forfeited / waived and shall not be entertained in any manner whatsoever.

Description of Schedule Property

All that piece and parcel of land measuring **69.40 cents**, comprised in **New Survey Number.123/1A2A2**, Old Survey Number.123 (Part), bearing Patta Number.5226 and situated at **Nolambur Village**, Maduravoyal Taluk, Chennai District and lying within the Sub-Registration District of Villivakkam and Registration District of Chennai Central.

Lenin J, Advocate
LenCorp LegalAdvocates & Legal Consultants
Level-3, No.109 &110, Safaan Square Chamiers Road, Chennai –18
E-mail: lenin@lencorplegal.com
Phone No.9894883678

Timings
CHENNAI

TUESDAY, MAR. 24		
RISE	06:11	SET 18:20
RISE	10:16	SET 23:45
WEDNESDAY, MAR. 25		
RISE	06:10	SET 18:20
RISE	11:18	SET 00:00
THURSDAY, MAR. 26		
RISE	06:10	SET 18:20
RISE	12:21	SET 00:47

Chennai Weather	max	min
Tiruvallur	34	24
Chennai Airport	35	25
Chennai City	33	26

Chennai Airport Today
35°C The morning will be pleasant. The day will be warm. The night also will be pleasant. Mostly dry weather to prevail.

Chennai Airport Tomorrow
36°C The weather will be dry. The day will be very warm. The night will be pleasant.

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THE HINDU
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Girder span in Metro Rail's phase II project comes under structural health monitoring

The real-time monitoring system continuously tracks structural responses during train operations, with automated trigger mechanisms that can capture critical data during passage of trains

TRACK TALES

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

The CSIR- Structural Engineering Research Center (SERC) has deployed a state-of-the-art, real-time structural health monitoring system for a crucial steel composite girder span in Chennai Metro Rail's phase II project stretch near Poonamallee Bypass.

"A total of 15 trigger sensors has been installed on the span to continuously record structural responses or deflections or in common man's parlance, bending of the track, each time a train passes. We have developed a dedicated, secure, web-based real-time monitoring portal at the Structural Health Monitoring Laboratory (SHML) of CSIR-SERC," said a scientist involved in the monitoring. Over the last 14 days, the deflections have been within prescribed limits.

The system continuously tracks structural responses during train operations, with automated trigger mechanisms capturing critical data during train passage. Importantly, the portal is not static–it is being continuously enhanced with advanced data analytics and emerging Artificial Intelligence tools. The structure is being intelligently assessed whereby operational safety is enhanced and predictive and condition-based maintenance is enabled. It will minimise uncertainties and allow for timely interventions, thereby improving the reliability and longevity of the infrastructure, he added.

Close watch: The move to monitor the span follows the inspection of the Poonamallee-Porur-Vadapalani stretch by the Commissioner of Metro Railway Safety. J. JOHAN SATHYADAS

Experts say that this span was not a routine structure but was executed under highly constrained site conditions

This effort to monitor this span comes in the wake of observations made by the Commissioner of Metro Railway Safety (CMRS), following his inspection on the Poonamallee-Porur-Vadapalani stretch (a part of corridor 4 of phase II project) last month.

The CMRS had noted that a 61.225-metre-long span of composite girder was laid from pillar 509 to pillar 512 (near Poonamallee Bypass).

The CMRS was not particularly convinced with the concept of the design though the design was proof checked by IIT Madras.

At this girder location alone, a speed restriction of 40 kmph is imposed and braking and acceleration is prohibited, he noted in the report. He also said that the girder shall be analysed under the expert advice of an institution like SERC and if any safety action is recommended, it should be implemented as well. He also said this measure should be completed within six months of commissioning of this stretch.

According to the officials of Chennai Metro Rail Limited (CMRL), they had to take up such a challenging and optimum design because of site constraints like vertical curve in that specific location. "We have followed international practice and had the design vetted by IIT Madras. This aside, the deflection monitored is less than the limit prescribed during the CMRS inspection. Yet we are doing this monitoring only to comply with the CMRS report," an official said.

CSIR - SERC experts said that this span is not a routine structure. It has been executed under highly constrained site conditions, where conventional pier-based solutions were not feasible. To address these challenges, an innovative portal-type substructure supporting a long-span steel composite girder has been adopted.

The CMRL is likely to open the Poonamallee-Porur-Vadapalani stretch after the Model Code of Conduct is lifted.

Protests held for withdrawal of amendment to Transgender Bill

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

As many as 300 transgender persons protested near the District Collectorate, demanding that the Transgender Bill Amendment be withdrawn, on Monday in Chennai.

The proposed amendment seeks to remove the right to a self-perceived gender identity and introduces the requirement for a medical board to determine whether a person is transgender based on a new definition of 'transgender person'.

Transgender rights activists noted that these amendments violate fundamental rights and contradicts the historic 2014 NALSA judgment by the Supreme Court.

Noting that now a transgender identity card will be given only after gender affirmation surgery, Guru (name changed), a trans man said that we have regressed to an earlier time where the doctors and officials would decide their identity.

"No longer can we speak for ourselves or our feelings. We will have to get the surgery, to get the identification card. We can't just say and get our identification done," he noted.

Sanjan Sasikumar, a trans woman said that not everyone can get the surgery done. "It's an expensive procedure. Only about 30% can afford it and change from the get-go. Others have to find other ways to sustain to even access hormone therapy. We don't want this judgment, and we don't want a third party deciding our identity."

In Tamil Nadu, officially the terms might change to *aravani* which, as transgender activist Sudha points out, does not recognise trans men. "Now, we have various terms in Tamil which we can use to get our identification done fairly. If this judgment passes, *aravani* does not recognise trans men. This will pose more difficulty in coming out. No *thirunambi* will be recognised," she added.

The transgender persons have planned to continue protests until the amendment Bill is withdrawn. "If it is passed, we will not rest until it's removed," Sudha stressed.

One injured by *manja* string in Maduravoyal

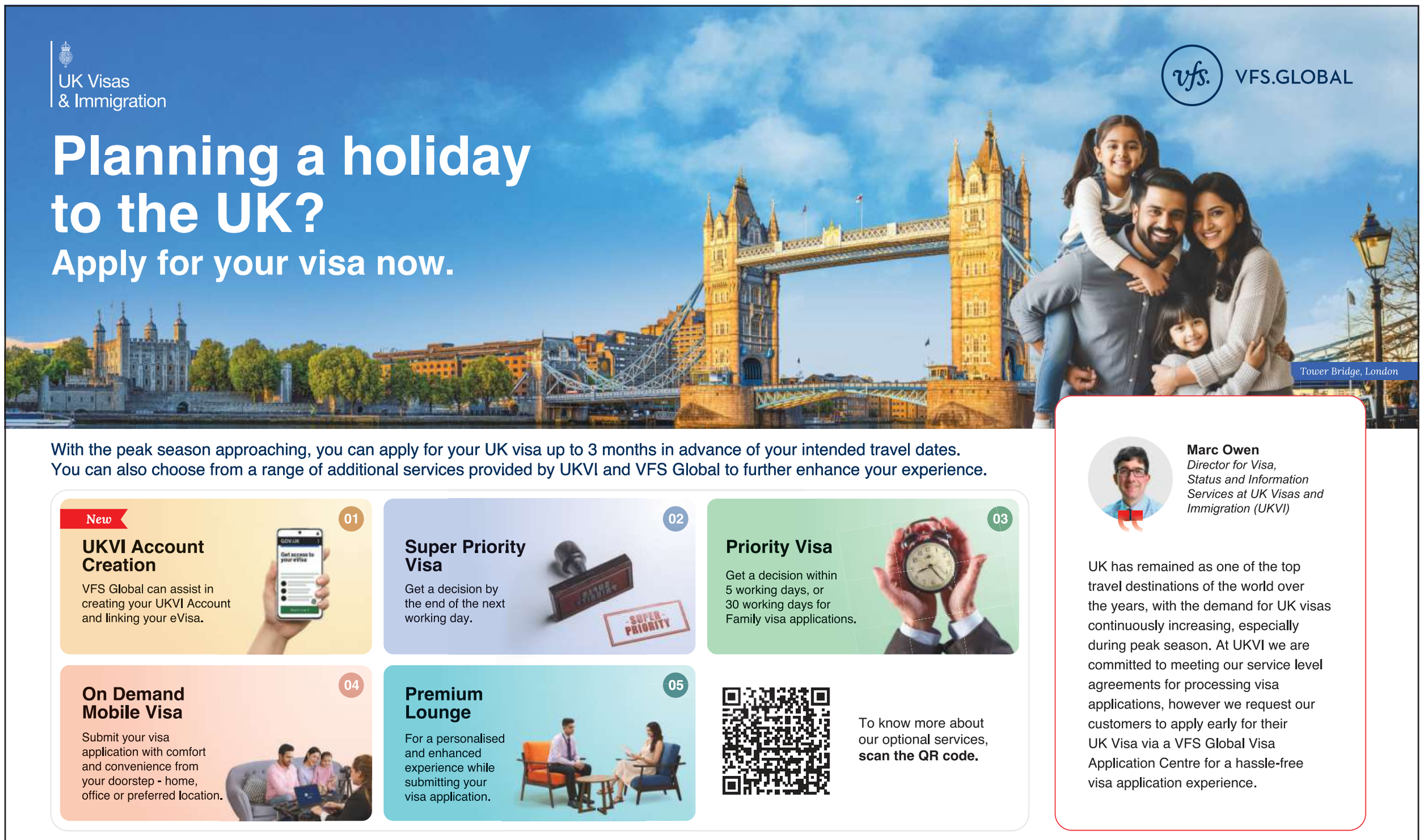
CHENNAI: A 26-year-old advocate was injured after a stray kite string coated with *manja* slashed across his face on the Maduravoyal bypass flyover on Sunday night. Mohammed Rasheed was riding a two-wheeler, when he was struck by the kite string.

The Vanagaram police have registered a case.

IMH to start psychology course soon

CHENNAI: The State government has granted permission to the Directorate of Medical Education (DME) and Research to start M.A. Clinical Psychology course with an annual intake of 18 seats at the Institute of Mental Health (IMH), Chennai from academic year 2026-2027.

The permission is subject to affiliation from the Tamil Nadu Dr. MGR Medical University, Chennai and approval from Rehabilitation Council of India, New Delhi.



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New
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03
Priority Visa
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04
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Submit your visa application with comfort and convenience from your doorstep - home, office or preferred location.

05
Premium Lounge
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To know more about our optional services, **scan the QR code.**

Marc Owen
Director for Visa, Status and Information Services at UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI)

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ISSN 0971 - 751X

Packaged water turns costly as raw material prices rise due to West Asia conflict

The cost of each cap used in bottles has increased from about 10 paise to 30 paise or 40 paise; the price of a 20-litre bubble-top container has been increased by ₹5 to offset rising input cost

WATER WATCH

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Feeling the pinch: Major brands have hiked the price by a minimum of ₹10 per container. FILE PHOTO

Packaged drinking water – both bubble-top containers and bottles – has become costlier across the State, with manufacturers citing rising raw material costs amid the ongoing conflict in West Asia. Prices are expected to rise further in the coming weeks if input costs continue to climb.

The increase in cost of packaged drinking water, now an essential commodity, is set to further strain household budgets.

A. Shakespeare, founder-president, Greater Tamil Nadu Packaged Drinking Water Manufacturers Association, said the cost of the petroleum-derived raw materials and plastic packaging like caps has increased by 60% recently.

The cost of a 20-litre capacity bubble-top containers has been increased by ₹5 to offset rising input cost. Major brands have hiked the price by a minimum of ₹10 per container. A 20-litre capacity bubble-top is priced between ₹35 and ₹50. Though production has dipped by 20%, it has not yet impacted the market as demand typically peaks from mid-April, he said.

On an average, nearly three crore litres of packaged drinking water are sold across the State everyday. Of this, Chennai and neighbouring areas account for nearly 1.5 crore litres. There are nearly 1,486 manufacturers operating across the State.

E. Saravanan, the association's general secretary said the cost of raw materials such as polyethylene terephthalate (PET) and high-density polyethylene (HDPE) used in bottles and bubbletops, has seen a sharp spike. This has had a cascading effect on packaging components like bottles and caps.

The cost of one-litre bottle has risen to ₹25. Further price hikes are expected if there is a revision in fuel prices

For instance, the cost of each cap used in bottles has increased from about 10 paise to 30 paise or 40 paise now. Similarly, bubbletop container, which was priced at ₹110, now costs ₹175.

Manufacturers have raised the price of bottled water, with the cost of one-litre bottle revised up to ₹25. Further increases are expected if there is a revision in fuel prices, Mr. Saravanan said.

Residents noted that bottled water is often sold above the MRP, particularly at railway stations. Consumer activist T. Sadagopan called for stricter price regulation and installation of free drinking water dispensers in public places.

Supreme Court asks PMK to approach Civil Court in party symbol dispute

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

S. Ramadoss

R. Anbumani

The Supreme Court on Monday said the Madras High Court "appears to be right" in dismissing petitions filed by Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK) founder S. Ramadoss, seeking a direction to the Election Commission of India to decide the dispute between him and the faction led by his son, R. Anbumani, over the party's 'mango' symbol.

The PMK had appealed to the Supreme Court against the High Court's dismissal of Dr. Ramadoss's petition to either let his faction use the party's symbol during the Assembly election in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry, or freeze the symbol.

"The High Court appears to be right in holding that the dispute re: allocation of symbol among the two rival groups of an unrecognised political party cannot be decided by the Election Commission of India," a Bench led by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant observed. However, the top court said the aggrieved party must not be left remediless.

The Bench said the petitioner had already filed a civil suit. The court said the petitioner could file an appropriate application raising his demand before the Civil Court. "If such an application is filed by tomorrow, March 24, 2026, we direct the Civil Court to decide the same after hearing the parties and in accordance with law within a period of three days," the Supreme Court said. The top court said it had not expressed any opinion on merits, leaving the parties to the suit, including those who may seek their impleadment, at liberty to raise all legal contentions before the Civil Court.

The High Court had agreed with the ECI that factional disputes in an unrecognised political party could be resolved only through a Civil Court decree. The civil suit had been filed in the dispute between the father and son over the party presidentship.

Decomposed body of 25-year-old man found inside quarry

The Hindu Bureau
DINDIGUL

A 25-year-old man, hailing from Senthurai Pillayar Natham in Dindigul district, was reportedly found dead inside a private stone quarry at Saralaipatti village near Natham on Sunday. Police said the highly decomposed body - which was later identified as that of Karuppasami - was spotted by some workers on Monday morning.

Mental illness

On receiving information, the police sent the body to a government hospital for a post-mortem examination. Family members of Karuppasami had been searching for him for the past few days after he went missing.

He was suffering from a mental illness, a police officer said during a preliminary inquiry.

Demanding the closure of the stone quarry, the villagers sought a detailed investigation into the death.

10 dummy AK-47 rifles seized in Ashok Nagar

CHENNAI: A routine vehicle check by the election flying squad in Ashok Nagar on Monday morning led to the seizure of 10 AK-47 rifles from a minivan, briefly triggering security concerns. However, subsequent verification confirmed that the weapons were realistic film props.

AMARAVATI GROWTH and INFRASTRUCTURE CORPORATION LIMITED (AGICL)
PROJECT OFFICE, RAYAPUDI, THULLURU MANDAL, (A.P.)

E Procurement Tender Notice

NIT NO:130/ MAU61-USI0HB(OTH)/493/2025-HB, Dt: 23.03.2026,
Name of the works: Construction of Andhra Pradesh Judicial Academy with Pile Foundation, Super Structure with RC Columns-Beams Framed Structure, Architectural Finishes, Internal Electrical & Plumbing works, HAVC works and IT works including External Electrical, Plumbing, Infrastructure Facilities, Internal Roads, for Andhra Pradesh Judicial Academy, Amaravati, Andhra Pradesh. The bid can be downloaded on AP e-procurement portal from 28.03.2026 to 15.04.2026 up to 14.00 Hrs. Pre-Bid Meeting Date02.04.2026,Due date for submission of Bid 15.04.2026up to 15.00 Hrs, Technical bid opening 15.04.2026@16.00Hrs. For further details please refer to **www.apeprocurement.gov.in and www.crda.ap.gov.in**

Sd/- Managing Director, AGICL, Project office APCRDA, Rayapudi

BENGALURU EAST CITY CORPORATION
Office of the Executive Engineer, Marathahalli Division,
Bellanduru Main Road, Bellanduru, Bengaluru - 560103

No.: BECC/EE/MRH/TN/06/2025-26 **Date: 23.03.2026**

INVITATION FOR TENDERS (Short Term)

(Only through KPP Portal)

The Executive Engineer, Marathahalli Division, invites **item rate** tenders from the eligible tenderers for the work details in the table given below. The Tenderers shall be registered in Bengaluru East City Corporation / CPWD / KPWD / Railways / MES / any State or Central Govt. Organization.

Sl. No.	Name of the Work
1	Annual maintenance of footpath, desilting of drains and other allied works of arterial and sub-arterial roads in ward no. 41, Munekolala. **Amount put to tender (in Lakhs) Exclusive of GST: 59.26, EMD (in Rs.): 59,500/-, Eligibility of Contractor and Category: SC.**
2	Desilting of ward roads and engaging tipper and labour in ward no. 41, Munekolala. **Amount put to tender (in Lakhs) Exclusive of GST: 101.64, EMD (in Rs.): 1,52,500/-, Eligibility of Contractor and Category: Others.**
3	Annual maintenance of footpath, desilting of drains and other allied works of arterial and sub-arterial roads in ward no. 45, Marathahalli. **Amount put to tender (in Lakhs) Exclusive of GST: 60.15, EMD (in Rs.): 1,20,500/-, Eligibility of Contractor and Category: Others.**
4	Desilting of ward roads and engaging tipper and labour in ward no. 45, Marathahalli. **Amount put to tender (in Lakhs) Exclusive of GST: 80.47, EMD (in Rs.): 80,500/-, Eligibility of Contractor and Category: CAT-1.**
5	Annual maintenance of footpath, desilting of drains and other allied works of arterial and sub-arterial roads in ward no. 46, Yamaluru. **Amount put to tender (in Lakhs) Exclusive of GST: 61.00, EMD (in Rs.): 1,22,000/-, Eligibility of Contractor and Category: Others.**
6	Desilting of ward roads and engaging tipper and labour in ward no. 46, Yamaluru. **Amount put to tender (in Lakhs) Exclusive of GST: 84.72, EMD (in Rs.): 85,000/-, Eligibility of Contractor and Category: ST.**
7	Annual maintenance of footpath, desilting of drains and other allied works of arterial and sub-arterial roads in ward no. 47, Bellanduru. **Amount put to tender (in Lakhs) Exclusive of GST: 127.09, EMD (in Rs.): 1,91,000/-, Eligibility of Contractor and Category: Others.**
8	Desilting of ward roads and engaging tipper and labour in ward no. 47, Bellanduru. **Amount put to tender (in Lakhs) Exclusive of GST: 55.04, EMD (in Rs.): 1,10,500/-, Eligibility of Contractor and Category: CAT-III(A).**
9	Annual maintenance of footpath, desilting of drains and other allied works of arterial and sub-arterial roads in ward no. 48, Panathuru. **Amount put to tender (in Lakhs) Exclusive of GST: 169.44, EMD (in Rs.): 2,54,500/-, Eligibility of Contractor and Category: Others.**
10	Desilting of ward roads and engaging tipper and labour in ward no. 48, Panathuru. **Amount put to tender (in Lakhs) Exclusive of GST: 101.62, EMD (in Rs.): 1,52,500/-, Eligibility of Contractor and Category: Others.**
11	Annual maintenance of footpath, desilting of drains and other allied works of arterial and sub-arterial roads in ward no. 49, Doddakananahalli. **Amount put to tender (in Lakhs) Exclusive of GST: 156.74, EMD (in Rs.): 2,35,500/-, Eligibility of Contractor and Category: Others.**
12	Desilting of ward roads and engaging tipper and labour in ward no. 49, Doddakananahalli. **Amount put to tender (in Lakhs) Exclusive of GST: 84.70, EMD (in Rs.): 1,69,500/-, Eligibility of Contractor and Category: Others.**
13	Filling of potholes in ward no. 41, 45, 46, 47, 48 and 49. **Amount put to tender (in Lakhs) Exclusive of GST: 135.58, EMD (in Rs.): 2,03,500/-, Eligibility of Contractor and Category: Others.**
14	Annual maintenance of Marathahalli Division of Zone-01 storm water drain in Mahadevapura Constituency. **Amount put to tender (in Lakhs) Exclusive of GST: 121.46, EMD (in Rs.): 1,82,500/-, Eligibility of Contractor and Category: Others.**

Calendar of events: (1) Tender Documents may be downloaded from Government of Karnataka e-procurement website **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in. (2)** Last date for submission of queries: **30.03.2026** within **11:00 a.m. (3)** Date & time for pre bid meeting: **30.03.2026** at **4:00 p.m. (4)** Last date & time for receipt of tenders: **04.04.2026** upto **4:00 p.m. (5)** Date & time for opening of Technical bid: **06.04.2026** at **4:00 p.m. (6)** Date & time for opening of Financial bid: **07.04.2026** at **4:00 p.m.** Further details may be obtained from the above office during office hours or website **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in**

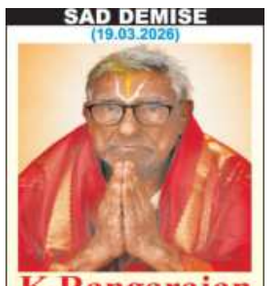
Sd/- Executive Engineer, Marathahalli Division, BECC

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH

S. THYAGARAJAN (85), RETIRED ASSOCIATE EDITOR (Sports), THE HINDU, Chennai passed away on 23- March -2026. Address 2, Krishna Avenue, C V Raman Nagar, Alwarpet, Chennai-600018.Contact: 9884261077

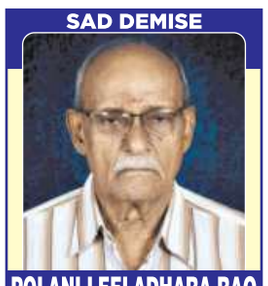
SAD DEMISE
(19.03.2026)



K.Rangarajan
1928 - 2026
Retd PA to CMPE. (Rly.) Chrompet
Ph: 044 - 2223 4806

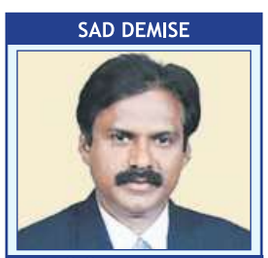
DEATH

SAD DEMISE



POLANI LEELADHARA RAO
Retd. Sr. Audit Officer, A.Gs Office
(89 Years) Passed away on 23-03-2026, at 6:30 am.
With Love
Wife P. Indira Kumari
Sons & Daughter
P.S.Balaji Rao, D.Sudha Rani, P. Girija Sankara Rao, P. Venkata Krishna Rao
Ph: 9840044996

SAD DEMISE



M.S.Soundararajan
M.Com., BL., MBA., CAIIB
DOB: 28-4-1957 DOD: 14-3-2026
Advocate (Business & Corporate Laws)
Ex Officer Canara Bank - Circle Office
Subhasweekaram on 26/3/2026
(Thursday 11 to 1 pm)
Commemoration on 29/3/2026 (Sunday)
Deeply mourned by
Wife: Uthra Soundararajan
Daughter :
Adv. Sona Priyadharshini Soundararajan
MOB : 94431 49068
82204 68318.

DEATH

OBITUARY

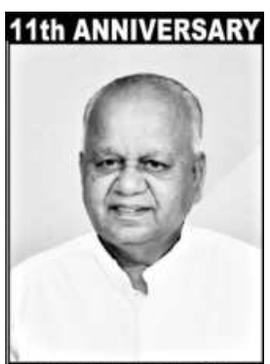
Dr. PREMA RAJAGOPALAN
Asst. Professor (Retd.), IITM
Passed away on 23rd March 2026.
Cremation 11:30 am, 24th March, Mylapore Crematorium
Survived by her grieving
Sister **Rama Rajagopalan**
+91 98417 16673

SAD DEMISE

We regret to inform that
CA G MURALIDHARAN (77)
2B-B2, Timber Leaves Apartments, 1, Veerabadran street, Nungambakkam, Chennai 600034. passed away on 23 March 2026, after a brief illness. He was much loved by friends and relatives.
Deeply mourned by
Geetha Muralidharan
Ashwin Muralidharan, Krishnapriya and children
Anandarupan Muralidharan and Subashini
Ph: 93826 03266

DEATH ANNIVERSARIES

11th ANNIVERSARY



Mr.D.CHANDRAMOHAN
Born on 09/04/1940 Died on 24/03/2015
Fondly Remembering & Continuing Our journey with Your Blessings
Management, Employees of
HYBRID AUTO CAST
CHENNAI - 600 098.

DEATH ANNIVERSARIES

In Loving Memory of

R. Ramakrishna Raja
May 15, 1937 — March 24, 2020
You are in our hearts and continue to inspire us.
Rajalakshmi
Ranganath, Radha, Geetha & Sridhar

DEATH ANNIVERSARIES

In Loving Memory of

K.B. NIRMAL KUMAR (A) RAMESH
Fondly Remembered by
Family Members & Baywoods, Chennai
24.03.2025

DEATH ANNIVERSARIES

Tenth Anniversary

S. RAJASEKAR
Loved beyond words and missed beyond measures
We miss you
Dr. Christilda Felicia (Wife)
Children and
Grand Children

IN MEMORY OF YOUR LOVED ONES
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DEATH ANNIVERSARIES

11th ANNIVERSARY
"YOUR NOBLE DEEDS AND THOUGHTS ARE VISION OF OUR LIFE"

Mr. DURAISINGHAM CHANDRAMOHAN
FOUNDER
JAIBALAJI CONTROL GEARS PVT. LTD
SRI DAYA ENGINEERING INDUSTRIES
Your presence continues to surround us.
In our heart you are always there
We miss you.
BHUVANESWARI CHANDRAMOHAN
CHANAKYA CHANDRAMOHAN
MALARVIZHI CHANAKYA
NANDHINI JAIKANTH
Family Members, Relatives
Management & Staff
BORN 09-04-1940 - DIED 24.03.2015

सी.एस.आई.आर.मद्रास कॉम्प्लेक्स

CSIR MADRAS COMPLEX

सीएसआईआर रोड, सीएसआईआर परिसर, तरमणि, चेन्नै
CSIR Road, CSIR Campus, Taramani, Chennai-600113.

CSIR-NML

अधिसूचना सं. NOTIFICATION No.ML/01/2026

वॉक-इन-इंटरव्यू / Walk-in-Interview

पद / Position (s)	PAT-1 (Project Associate-I) - (1 No.) Junior Research Fellow (JRF) (1 No.)
पात्रता मानदंड और अन्य विवरण Eligibility Criteria and other details	Visit website **www.csircmc.res.in** and click on "careers"
साक्षात्कार की तिथि Date of Interview	**09.04.2026**

प्रशासनिक अधिकारी / ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

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Letter No: 233 **Date Extension Notice-03** Date: 23/03/2026

Due to unavoidable circumstances, due dates in respect of online Bid Identification Nos.: (i)T-04/EE(Solar)/2025-26 (ii)T-05/EE (Solar)/2025-26

(iii) T-06/EE(Solar)/2025-26 & (iv)T-07/EE(Solar)/2025-26 are as follows:

Last Date /Time of Receipt of bid on the portal : 28-03-2026 upto 16:00 Hrs.

Last Date /Time of submission of bid in Office :30-03-2026 upto 12:00 Hrs.

Date of opening of the bid on website : 30-03-2026 from 13:00 Hrs.

All other details and terms & condition shall remain same. Detail of subsequent addendum/corrigendum/cancelation etc. may be obtained from the website.

Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal **http://uktenders.gov.in.**

Executive Engineer (Solar)

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Open e-tender notice No.CR-DRM(W)BB-2026-14 of 18.03.2026.

Sr. No.1. Name of work: Kalyan yard: Proposed replacement, design, manufacturing, and supplying of existing non standard diamond crossing in KYN Yard. **Approximate Value:** Rs. 144.49 Lakhs, **EMD:** Rs. 2,22,300/- **Completion Period:** 8 months. **Sr. No.2. Name of work:** Providing and fixing of land boundary post by released PSC unserviceable sleepers in Sr. DEN (East) BB Section. **Approximate Value:** Rs. 49.45 Lakhs, **EMD:** Rs. 98,900/-, **Completion Period:** 6 months. **Sr. No.3. Name of work:** Testing of welds as per Indian Railway Standard Specification for Ultra Sonic Testing of Rails/welds (provisional) revised 2022 as given by RDSO, in Mumbai Division for 2 years. **Approximate Value:** Rs. 441.81 Lakhs, **EMD:** Rs. 3,70,900/-, **Completion Period:** 24 months, **Sr. No.4. Name of work:** Misc. repairs of bridges by pointing, grouting, guniting, seour filling, side drain repairing, wing wall repairing, floor repairing, bridge numbering & Nalah training etc. under ADEN (West) PNVL. **Approximate Value:** Rs. 146.37 Lakhs, **EMD:** Rs. 2,23,200/- **Completion period:** 12 months. **Sr.No.5. Name of work:** In-Situ Reconditioning of CMS Crossing using Robotic Welding Machine under Sr. DEN/SE section. **Approximate Value:** Rs. 136.80 Lakhs, **EMD:** Rs. 2,18,400/-, **Completion Period:** 12 months. **Sr. No.6. Name of work: A).** Schedule for the work of Miscellaneous P. Way work for SSE(Pway) NRL section under ADEN(T)KYN. **B).** NRL-MAE Schedule for the work of P.Way Miscellaneous work for SSE (P. Way) NG NRL-MAE section under ADEN T KYN, **C).** Hiring of mulcher with poclain for clearing of cess grass, vegetation cutting/mulching trimming in KYN-KJT, & KJT-PNVL section under ADEN (Trael) KYN. **Approximate Value:** Rs. 366.53 Lakhs, **EMD:** Rs. 3,33,300/-, **Completion Period:** 12 months. **I). Tender closing date & time of aforesaid tender:** Up to 15:00 hrs. of Sr. No.1 on 03.04.2026, Sr.No. 2, 5 and 6 on 10.04.2026, Sr. No. 3 on 07.04.2026 and Sr.No. 4 on 14.04.2026 to be opened after 15:00 hrs. **II).** The prospective tenderers are requested to visit the website **www.ireps.gov.in** for details of tenders & corrigendum, if any. **III).** Tenderer may participate in above e-tender electronically through website **www.ireps.gov.in** only & submission of manual offers against e-tender are not allowed. Manually, if submitted shall neither be opened nor considered. **IV).** The Bid Security shall be deposited either in cash through e-payment gateway or submitted as Bank Guarantee bond from a scheduled commercial bank of India or as mentioned in tender documents. **V)** For further enquiry, may contact: Divisional Railway Manager (Works) Office, Central Railway on phone. 022-67455323. **VI)** This tender complies with Public Procurement Policy Order 2017 dated 16.9.2017, Complete details of tenders are available at the website **"www.ireps.gov.in".** The complete details of tenders are also available in the **"Notice Board"** of the Divisional Railway Manager (Works) Office, Mumbai CSMT. **DE-1005**

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Corrigendum to Advertisement No. R(HR) 308-2026/1 dated 20/02/2026 for the post of Registrar

It is hereby notified that the last date for submission of application for the post of **Registrar** is hereby **extended till 04.04.2026.**

The eligibility criteria and other terms and conditions remain the same.

Date: 21.03.2026 **Sd/-, REGISTRAR**

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बिहार सरकार

समाहरणालय, नवादा

(मद्य निषेध एवं उत्पाद विभाग)

अल्पकालीन आम नीलामी सूचना

एतद् द्वारा सर्वसाधारण को सूचित किया जाता है कि नवादा जिलान्तर्गत विभिन्न थाना काण्डों/उत्पादवादों में राज्यसात किये गये निम्नलिखित वाहनों को बिहार मद्य निषेध एवं उत्पाद अधिनियम, 2016 के सुसंगत प्रावधानों के तहत् आम नीलामी (Public Auction) दिनांक **07.04.2026** को समाहरणालय, नवादा में 11:00 बजे पूर्वाहन से की जायेगी। नीलामी योग्य वाहनों की सूची निम्नवत है :–

क्र. सं.	लॉट सं०	थाना का नाम	थाना काण्ड संख्या	वाहन का प्रकार	निबंधन संख्या	निबंधन का वर्ष	इंजन संख्या	चेचिस संख्या	मूल्यांकित राशि	अग्रधन की राशि	वाहन की अवस्थिति	वाहन मालिक का विवरणी
1	36	गोविन्दपुर	D.R.No-1036(A)/23	TVS STAR CITY BIKE	TN28AJ /4511	3/7/2011	AF1BB13 74474	MD625NF19 B1B35588	4500.00	1200.00	गोविन्दपुर थाना	मनोहर पासवान, पिता–आनंदी पासवान, सा०–103 टेंक स्ट्रीट, मरीयमन कोवील स्ट्रीट, सोवरीपल्लम, जिला–कोयम्बटुर, तमिलनाडू, पिन–641028

1. विशेष जानकारी के लिए कार्यालय अधीक्षक मद्य निषेध, नवादा से सम्पर्क किया जा सकता है nawada.bih.nic.in पर देखा जा सकता है।

(कृते समाहर्त्ता, नवादा)
अधीक्षक मद्यनिषेध, नवादा

उक्त सूचना **www.state.bihar.gov.in/prdbihar** पर भी देखी जा सकती है।

PR. No. 27042 (Excise) 25-26

बिहार में शराब का व्यापार, बिक्री एवं सेवन अवैध है। इससे संबंधित शिकायत इस नंबर पर दर्ज करायें, आपकी जानकारी गुप्त रखी जाएगी।
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BUSINESS CONNECT

A Business Initiative

GRT's Swarna Ugadi Offers

GRT Jewellers, a trusted name since 1964, celebrates Ugadi with its 'Swarna Ugadi' campaign, marking new beginnings with festive offers across South India. Customers can enjoy Rs. 250 off per gram on gold jewellery purchases, Rs. 100 extra on old gold exchange, 12.5 percent off on diamond value (excluding solitaires), 25 percent off on silver wastage, and 10 percent off on silver jewellery MRP. Mr. G.R. 'Anand' Ananthapadmanabhan said: "We are delighted to present our Swarna Ugadi campaign to our valued customers." Mr. G.R. Radhakrishnan, Managing Director, further added: "We invite everyone to celebrate this Ugadi as a 'Swarna Ugadi' with us and welcome prosperity into their homes.

Girias Expands Across Tamil Nadu

Girias, a leading consumer durable retailer since 1971, continues its growth with the launch of multiple multi-brand showrooms across Tamil Nadu, reinforcing its position as "South India's No.1 Consumer Durable Retailer." Known for customer-centric service, flexible payment options, and a wide product range, the brand aims to make appliance shopping seamless and rewarding. The brand recently opened new showrooms in Sankarankovil, Kattur (Trichy), and Vyasarpadi (Chennai), with special inaugural offers including 20 percent cashback on credit card EMI, zero charges, assured free gifts, exchange benefits up to Rs. 25,000, and up to Rs. 31,000 cashback on finance purchases. Customers can also enjoy zero percent interest, extended EMI options, holiday packages on AC purchases, and complimentary gold and silver coins.

Revivo Launches Wellness Programs

Revivo Clinic for Metabolic Health, Alwarpet, has launched Mental Health Counselling and a Sleep Reset Program, expanding its care for obesity, Type 2 diabetes, and related conditions. The counselling program addresses stress, anxiety, and emotional eating, helping patients build resilience without medication. The Sleep Reset Program focuses on improving sleep quality for issues like sleep apnea and disrupted patterns without pharmacological dependency. Founded by Dr. Arun Raghavan and Arvind Ashok, Revivo integrates these with its medical, nutrition, and fitness services. The founders noted, "When we align the mind, sleep, movement, and nutrition under one roof, we give our patients the most complete path to lasting recovery."

VIT Signs MOU With CMC

Vellore Institute of Technology (VIT) and Christian Medical College (CMC), Vellore, have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to advance collaborative research in healthcare. The agreement was signed at the CMC campus by Dr. Solomon Sathishkumar and Dr. T. Jayabharathi in the presence of Chancellor Dr. G. Viswanathan. "This partnership honors CMC's legacy of 'firsts' by looking toward the future of medical science," said Dr. Viswanathan. Dr. Sathishkumar added, "Integrating VIT's technical capabilities with our clinical environment will enable superior healthcare solutions." The collaboration will focus on fostering affordable and cutting-edge advancements in patient care.

Pothys Old Gold Exchange Mela

POTHYS SWARNA MAHAL
Idhu Paripooranathin Adayalam

Pothys Swarna Mahal has announced its Old Gold Exchange Mela across all branches in Tamil Nadu and Kerala, including key outlets in Chennai, Tirunelveli, Tiruchirappalli, Coimbatore, Salem, and Thiruvananthapuram, valid until March 31. Customers can exchange old gold jewellery for new BIS HUID-hallmarked designs and avail an additional Rs. 300 per gram. Old diamond jewellery can also be exchanged for new 100 percent natural diamond pieces at attractive values. "At a time when gold prices are reaching new highs, this Old Gold Exchange Mela is a great opportunity for customers to make use of unused jewellery or old gold coins," said Sadaiyandi Ramesh, Director.

Dr. A.V. Anoop Wins Lifetime Award

Dr. A.V. Anoop, Managing Director of AVA Group of Companies, was honoured with the MV Lifetime Achievement Award at MVCON 2026, held in Chennai. The prestigious recognition celebrates his enduring contributions and commitment to excellence in the healthcare sector. MVCON, a leading medical conference, brings together eminent doctors, researchers and healthcare professionals to exchange insights on advancements in diabetes care, research and clinical practices. Dr. Anoop received the award in the presence of distinguished members of the medical fraternity and delegates from across the country, marking a significant moment at the conference and underscoring his impactful role in supporting healthcare initiatives and innovation.

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INBRIEF

T.N. Chief Secretary, DGP (in-charge) call on Governor

Tamil Nadu Chief Secretary N. Muruganandam and Director-General of Police (in-charge) G. Venkataraman called on Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar at the Lok Bhavan in Chennai on Monday. They presented flowers to the new Governor. A communication from the Lok Bhavan said the visits were courtesy calls.

EC appoints Special Observer for T.N. Assembly election

The Election Commission of India (EC) has appointed Pratap Singh as Special Observer in connection with work relating to the Tamil Nadu Assembly election. Mr. Singh can be contacted on 044-28338378 and 7845321461 or through email at splobs.pelecd@tn.gov.in. Liaison Officer Jagan Mohan can be reached at 9551322999, an official release from Chief Electoral Officer Archana Patnaik said. "The public and political parties can contact the Special Observer regarding election-related matters by reaching out to the above contact details," Ms. Patnaik said. The surveillance and enforcement teams have been deployed across the State to monitor and curb illegal inducements, including cash, liquor, drugs, and other prohibited items. As of March 23, cash to the tune of ₹30.53 crore, liquor valued at ₹0.72 crore, drugs/narcotics valued at ₹6.47 crore, precious metals valued at ₹92.02 crore were seized, an official release said.

Sattankulam custodial deaths: court convicts 9 policemen

The First Additional District and Sessions Court in Madurai found the policemen guilty of murder and various other offences. The court will pronounce the quantum of sentence on March 30

The Hindu Bureau
MADURAI

Nearly six years after trader P. Jayaraj and his son J. Benicks died of custodial torture during COVID-19 lockdown at the Sattankulam Police Station in Thoothukudi district of Tamil Nadu, the First Additional District and Sessions Court in Madurai on Monday convicted all nine police personnel accused in the case.

Judge G. Muthukumaran said he would pronounce the quantum of sentence on March 30 and extended the remand of the convicts till then. The judge found the police personnel guilty of murder and other offences under the Indian Penal Code (IPC). The judge has sought a report on the medical condition of the police personnel. The Superintendent of the Madurai Central Prison was asked to produce the accused before the Medical Board of the Government Rajaji Hospital in Madurai. The judge sought a report on the last property statements and salary certificates of the accused. Furthermore, the judge sought a report from the Union and State governments as to the aggravating/mitigating circumstances.

Judgment day: The police personnel on trial in the custodial death case being brought to the court in Madurai on Monday. G. MOORTHY

The crime, which took place in June 2020, shocked civil society. The Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court took *suo motu* cognisance of the crime and passed a slew of directions. The then AIADMK government transferred the probe to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). In all, 10 police personnel were named as accused in the case. One of them died during the trial. The CBI has prosecuted nine police personnel. The CBI filed a charge sheet on September 25, 2020 and followed it up with a supplementary charge sheet on August 12, 2022. It arraigned as accused the then Sattankulam inspector, S. Sridhar; sub-inspectors P. Raghu Ganesh and K. Balakrishnan; head constables S. Murugan and A. Saamidurai; and constables M. Muthuraj, S. Chelladurai, X. Thomas Francis, and S. Veilumuthu. Special sub-inspector Pauldurai was also an accused. But he died during trial after contracting COVID-19. The CBI said Jayaraj and Benicks were subjected to brutal torture by the policemen. During the investigation, it was revealed the traders had not violated the COVID-19 lockdown rules, a charge on which the police had detained them.

The CBI saidJayaraj was picked from his shop near the Kamaraj statue at 7.30 p.m. on June 19, 2020, and lodged at the Sattankulam police station. On information, Benicks rushed to the station to inquire about the arrest of his father. He objected to his father being beaten up. Following an altercation, the two were wrongfully confined at the police station and beaten up through the night.

A false case was registered against the two, the CBI added. In the supplementary charge sheet, the CBI submitted a report on the examination of video footage available in the case.

The family members of the victims sought stringent punishment to the nine convicted policemen. Speaking to journalists on the court premises, J. Selvarani, wife of Jayaraj, and J. Persis, daughter of Jayaraj, said they hoped the nine would get the maximum sentence. They said they had lost their beloved family members, who were both innocent and died due to police excess. The sentence should serve as a deterrent to those in power, they said.

CPI(M) accepts 5-seat offer, signs pact with DMK

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

After days of hard bargaining, the CPI(M) on Monday night finally accepted the five seats offered by the DMK for the Tamil Nadu Assembly election. DMK president and Chief Minister M.K. Stalin and CPI(M) State secretary P. Shanmugam signed the agreement at the Anna Arivalayam in Chennai.

"Though not satisfied, we accepted the seats because we do not want to create a favourable condition for the AIADMK-BJP combine," Mr. Shanmugam said. The CPI(M), which was allotted six seats in the last Assembly election in the same alliance, had begun negotiations with the DMK, pitching for the allotment of double digit seats. However, the DMK, citing the entry of more parties in the alliance, refused to concede the demand.

Over the past few days, the CPI(M), under pressure from its rank and file and State secretariat, repeatedly went to the negotiation table urging that it be allotted at least the same six seats as last time. However, even a meeting with Mr. Stalin failed to break the ice, with the DMK leader remaining firm in allotting only five seats, a number it had also given the CPI.

Sources said the CPI(M) general secretary M.A. Baby had conveyed that in the interest of the INDIA bloc, the party would accept the DMK's reduced offer. On Monday, Mr. Shanmugam and former CPI(M) State secretary K. Balakrishnan met Mr. Stalin requesting him one final time to allocate six seats. But Mr. Stalin again expressed inability to concede their demand.

VCK's demand

Meanwhile, the VCK's high-level committee on Monday passed a resolution seeking "double digit" seats in the election and a Rajya Sabha seat in 2028. This comes against the backdrop of the DMK seeking to restrict seats for allies to accommodate new entrants to the alliance, including the DMDK and the MNM. The resolution pointed out that the VCK had been a part of the DMK-led Secular Progressive Alliance and had "made a very significant contribution to the alliance's victories since 2019."

Palaniswami announces Assembly seat allocations for BJP, PMK, and AMMK

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), one of the key constituents of the AIADMK-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in Tamil Nadu, has been allocated 27 seats for the Assembly election, seven more than its allocation in 2021.

The Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK) has been allotted 18 Assembly seats, five fewer than what it got five years ago. This reduction may be attributed to the perception that the PMK does not enjoy as much strength as it had a few years ago, as former Union Minister Anbumani Ramadoss and his father and PMK founder S. Ramadoss are heading their own factions. Dr. Anbumani's PMK is a part of the NDA. Headed by T.T.V. Dhinakaran, the Amma Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam (AMMK), a breakaway group of the AIADMK, has got 11 seats.

Announcing the seat sharing arrangement on Monday at the AIADMK headquarters in Chennai in the presence of Union Minister and the BJP's point-person Piyush Goyal, Mr. Dhinakaran, and Dr. Anbumani, among other leaders, AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K. Palaniswami told the media that talks were in progress with some more parties [such as the Tamil Maanila Congress (Moopanar)] and the details would be announced soon.

United front: Leaders of the NDA at the media briefing held at the AIADMK headquarters in Chennai on Monday. J. JOHAN SATHYADAS

Asked why the BJP was allotted more seats than the PMK, the AIADMK general secretary rebutted the suggestion of any dissonance within the coalition and asserted that this had been finalised in a "cordial way." Though Tamizhaga Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam (TMMK) founder John Pandian was also present at the media briefing, Mr. Palaniswami did not mention what had been decided for the party.

In the 2021 Assembly election, the BJP won four seats with a vote share of 2.62% and the PMK, five seats with 3.8%. Then too, the two were part of the AIADMK-led front. The AMMK, which tied up with the Desiya Murpokku Dravida Kazhagam (DMDK), cornered 2.35% of the vote share in 165 constituencies.

Two years ago, during the Lok Sabha election, the BJP headed the Alliance, wherein it garnered a 11.26% vote share, with its allies the PMK and the AMMK gaining 4.3% and 0.9% respectively. The AIADMK, which had its own coalition with the DMDK, faced the electorate independently. In the 2024 poll, none of these parties obtained any seat. A senior functionary of the AIADMK said his party would contest in about 170 seats.

DMK-Congress rift persists even on final day of filing nominations in U.T.

Rajesh B. Nair
PUDUCHERRY

Differences within the Congress-DMK alliance (INDIA bloc) over seat-sharing continued even on the last day of filing nominations on Monday for the April 9 Assembly election in Puducherry. Meanwhile, Puducherry Lok Sabha MP Vaithilingam (Congress) filed his nomination for the Assembly election, prompting questions from allies over the decision.

There were hectic consultations between the Congress and the DMK in both Chennai and Puducherry on Sunday. As per the directions of the All India Congress Committee, former Finance Minister P. Chidambaram held talks with DMK president and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin in Chennai. After the talks in Chennai, there were reports that the Congress had agreed to contest 16 seats in Puducherry, leaving 12 to the DMK and one each to the CPI and VCK, out of the total 30 seats in the Union Territory. Although there was broad agreement on the number of seats, the parties failed to finalise the distribution of constituencies, as was evident on the day of filing nominations, with candidates of alliance partners filing papers for the same constituencies.

Entering the fray: MP Vaithilingam filing his nomination papers for Thattanchavady Assembly seat on Monday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The constituencies in contention are Thattanchavady, Nellithope, Kalapet, Muthialpet, and Ozhukarai. While Nellithope, Kalapet, and Muthialpet were allocated to the DMK in the previous election, Thattanchavady and Ozhukarai were allotted to the CPI and VCK respectively in the 2021 election. For the current election, Congress candidates have filed nominations in all five constituencies. Notable among the Congress leaders who have filed papers is Mr. Vaithilingam, who is contesting from Thattanchavady. The DMK, CPI, and VCK have also filed nominations in the five constituencies based on the 2021 formula.

"If there is no intervention at the leadership level in Chennai or Delhi, we will end up in friendly fights in four to five constituencies. There are only two days left for candidates to withdraw their nominations. Damage has already been done due to the delay in reaching a consensus on seat-sharing, and the filing of nominations from the same constituencies has created further divisions among workers of the INDIA bloc," said a CPI leader.

Vaithilingam's entry

The DMK and CPI leaders have also questioned the rationale for allowing Mr. Vaithilingam to contest after INDIA bloc leaders in Puducherry worked 'tirelessly' to ensure his victory in the 2024 Lok Sabha election. "During the Lok Sabha election, we had sought the lone seat to field our candidate, but it was not given to us. Later, we all worked tirelessly to ensure Mr. Vaithilingam's victory. Two years later, he is being fielded in the Assembly election. We do not understand the rationale behind this decision," a DMK leader told *The Hindu*.

CPI(M) to go it alone

Though the context is different, another INDIA bloc member, the CPI(M), has decided to fight the election alone considering the political factors in the enclave of Mahe, which is nestled between the towns of Thalassery and Vadakara in Kerala.

The CPI(M)' s political decisions pertaining to Mahe are traditionally aligned with the politics of Kerala. As the Congress and CPI(M) are leading opposite political fronts in Kerala, the Left party either fields its own candidate or extends support to Independents there.

For the 2026 election, the Thalassery unit has decided to extend support to T. Ashok Kumar, an advocate contesting as an Independent. The party has also decided to contest in Lawspet, Muthialpet, Thirubhuvanai, and Bahour Assembly segments in Puducherry.

DMDK open to 'give-and-take policy' in seat-sharing

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

DMDK general secretary Premallatha Vijayakant on Monday said the party was open to a "give-and-take policy" with regard to seat-sharing with the DMK for the Tamil Nadu Assembly election.

When asked if the party has been urged to reduce its number of seats in the DMK alliance during an interaction with journalists at the party headquarters in Chennai, She said, "*Captain* (Vijayakant) was the Leader of the Opposition [2011-16], and we have been able to form booth committees across Tamil Nadu comparable to the DMK and the AIADMK. We will also 'give and take' for the sake of the larger interests of the alliance." She said the alliance was forged as per the wishes of the party's office-bearers and the DMDK expects the DMK to call the party for talks after finalising deals with other allies.

Ms. Premallatha recalled the DMDK in the past had contested in all 234 assembly constituencies. She said "loyalty to the party" would be the main criteria for those aspiring to contest on a DMDK ticket.

EPS flays Stalin for remarks on NDA leaders' Delhi visits

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K. Palaniswami on Monday criticised DMK president and Chief Minister M.K. Stalin for indulging in a 'disinformation' campaign on the visits by leaders of Tamil Nadu parties in the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) to New Delhi.

Addressing the media after announcing the details of seat distribution among the constituents of the NDA, Mr. Palaniswami described the coalition as an "emotional alliance", and said the visits were meant for holding discussions on the Assembly election, and for "exchange of views". But it had become "customary" for Mr. Stalin, who was sensing the "poll defeat", to spread "false information in a pre-planned manner", he said.

Claiming that the distribution of seats had been carried out "swiftly", the AIADMK leader said that on the contrary, the DMK and the Congress held negotiations for over 20 days. Also, no understanding had been reached among the ruling party, the VCK, and the CPI(M), he said.

> The visits are meant for holding discussions on the Assembly election, and for the exchange of views
>
> **EDAPPADI K. PALANISWAMI**
> AIADMK general secretary

Emergency and MISA

He also pointed out that though the leaders of one party (alluding to the DMK) had been saying they had suffered during the Emergency, and had faced cases under the now-repealed Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA), which was brought in by the Congress, they had struck an electoral deal with the national party.

When a journalist asked him how he viewed Mr. Dhinakaran's visit to the AIADMK headquarters after a gap of nine years [as the AMMK founder was once the AIADMK's deputy general secretary], Mr. Palaniswami responded by saying, "What is your problem?"

Mr. Palaniswami added that the NDA leaders would "not allow any problem" to crop up. He expressed hope that the AIADMK would secure a majority on its own and form a government.

Nine convicted of petrol bomb attack that killed seven persons

The Hindu Bureau
KARUR

The District and Sessions Court in Karur on Monday convicted nine accused on the charge of murdering seven persons by hurling petrol bombs at their vehicle in October 2012.

The attack occurred in the Avaniyapuram police station limits when the group was returning to Madurai from Ramanathapuram district on the night of October 30, 2012. Jayapandi, Sundarapandi, Vetrivel, Desingaraj, Ranjith Kumar, Vishnu alias Vishnupriyan, and Sivaraman were killed in the attack, and 13 others were injured.

The Avaniapuram police had registered a case under various sections of the Indian Penal Code and the Explosive Substances Act. They named 13 persons, including two juveniles, as the accused. The trial was conducted by District and Sessions Court following a direction from the Madras High Court. Two of the accused, Ramar Pandi and Muthu Vijayan, were murdered during the course of the trial. The legal proceedings against the juveniles was taken up separately. The quantum of sentence is to be pronounced by the court later.

INBRIEF

Wayanad to get extra ₹10 cr. from Karnataka government

Ahead of the elections to the Kerala Assembly, the Congress government in Karnataka is set to provide an additional grant of ₹10 crore for the rehabilitation of families affected by the landslide in Meppadi of Wayanad district in July 2024. A provision in this regard has been made in the supplementary estimates of 2025-26 (third and final instalment), tabled in the Karnataka Legislative Assembly on Monday. The supplementary estimates of 2025-26 aggregate to ₹14,767.89 crore.

Kerala High Court stays order disqualifying Yogam leaders

A Division Bench of the Kerala High Court on Monday stayed an order passed by a single judge of the court on March 12 that disqualified general secretary of SNDP Yogam Vellappally Natesan and other office-bearers from their posts in the organisation for failing to file audited accounts for three consecutive years and not having the director identification number issued by the Kerala government. The Division Bench was hearing appeals filed by Mr. Natesan, his son Tushar Vellappally, vice-president of the Yogam, and a few other directors of the organisation challenging the single judge order. The HC on March 16 ordered status quo on the order.

SC restores FIR against IAS officer in 2022 bribery case

The Supreme Court has restored an FIR against IAS officer J. Manjunath in an alleged bribery case, when he was serving as Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Bengaluru Urban in 2022. Now the Lokayukta police can continue the investigation, which was initiated by the erstwhile Anti-Corruption Bureau. The order set aside two separate judgments of the Karnataka HC, which in 2023 quashed the FIR against Mr. Manjunath and Mahesh P.S, a deputy tahsildar working as his Personal Assistant (PA) to the DC. The High Court, while quashing the FIR against Mr. Manjunath in September 2023, had said that "there is neither circumstantial nor direct evidence to substantiate that Mr. Manjunath demanded bribe through other two accused".

Kerala Assembly polls: 1,202 candidates file nominations

Final picture will emerge after scrutiny of nomination papers today and the last date of withdrawal on Thursday; over one lakh complaints have been filed on model code violations

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Election officials here said that 1,202 candidates have filed nomination papers for the April 9 Assembly polls in the State when the deadline for submitting them ended at 3 p.m. on Monday. In all, 2,039 forms have been filed, counting multiple forms submitted by some of the candidates.

A final picture on candidates will emerge after the scrutiny of the nomination papers on Tuesday and the March 26 deadline for the withdrawal of candidature.

There were 957 candidates in the fray in the 140 constituencies for the 2021 elections in Kerala.

As many as 1,39,799 complaints have been filed regarding Model Code of Conduct violations till March 22.

Procedures related to the processing of an application and adding the name to the electoral roll take up to 10 days. Therefore, only those applications filed on or before March 15 would be treated as eligible for the upcoming Assembly polls, Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Rathan U. Kelkar said.

Speaking at the release of 'Vottarivu,' an election booklet published by the Thiruvananthapuram unit of the Press Information Bureau, Mr. Kelkar sought the cooperation of voters to ensure the highest turnout in Kerala's electoral history. The aim is to cross the 85% voter turnout mark this time, he said.

Friendly fight: BJP's Karamana Jayan and LDF's Sudheer Karamana greet each other in the Kerala capital. NIRMAL HARINDRAN

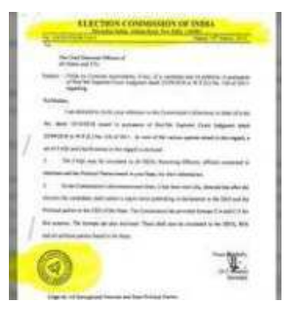
BJP seal on EC letter sparks row in Kerala

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The presence of a seal of the BJP Kerala unit on a 2019 Election Commission of India (EC) letter on poll-related guidelines, which was distributed to political parties recently, sparked a row in the State on Monday, the final day for submitting nominations for the April 9 Assembly polls.

While the ruling CPI(M) alleged that "seals are being casually swapped" and questioned whether "all pretences" have been dropped by the BJP, Chief Electoral Officer (Kerala) (CEO) Rathan U. Kelkar attributed the issue to a "clerical error" and added that corrective measures had been taken.

The CPI(M) had shared on its X handle a copy of a March 19, 2019, Election Commission letter bearing the BJP seal. The letter, to CEOs of all States and Union Territories ahead of the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, dealt with the EC guidelines on the publicity of criminal antecedents by political parties and candidates. Copies of the letter had been issued afresh to political parties by mistake, according to the CEO's office.



An Election Commission letter bearing the BJP seal that was shared by the CPI(M) on X.

Clerical error, says CEO

The CEO issued a clarification attributing the episode to a clerical error and asking everyone to avoid spreading the "wrong message."

According to him, the BJP Kerala unit had visited the CEO's office seeking clarification on the EC guidelines.

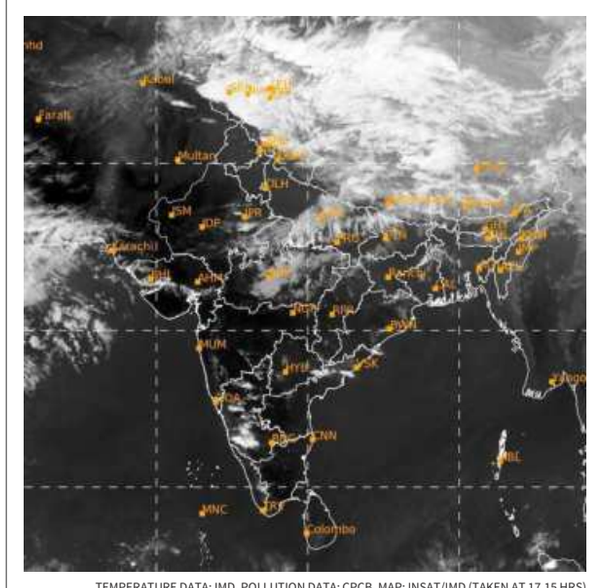
The party seal was on a copy of the EC letter submitted along with the application seeking the clarification.

"The old letter was distributed to political parties due to an oversight," Mr. Kelkar said.

Once the error was noticed by the CEO's office, all political parties, district election officers, and returning officers were told in writing that the letter was being withdrawn and it should be disregarded, he said.

WEATHERWATCH

Rainfall, temperature & air quality in select metros yesterday



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 17.15 HRS)

Forecast for Tuesday: Heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Sikkim and West Bengal. Thunderstorm with lightning/gusty winds likely at isolated places over Nagaland, Mizoram, Tripura, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. Hot and humid weather likely at isolated places over Kerala and Mahe

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	—	29.4	17.4
Ahmedabad	—	36.5	23.6
Aizawl	—	27.2	14.4
Allahabad	—	34.6	16.8
Bengaluru	0.8	32.9	22.8
Bhopal	—	33.0	17.0
Bhubaneswar	—	35.8	21.5
Chandigarh	—	29.7	15.0
Chennai	—	34.4	25.2
Coimbatore	—	35.4	23.6
Dehradun	—	27.9	14.8
Gangtok	19	15.6	9.2
Goa	—	33.5	24.4
Guwahati	1	29.4	19.5
Hubballi	—	37.0	22.0
Hyderabad	—	34.6	24.0
Imphal	—	25.1	15.1
Jaipur	0.6	28.5	19.2
Kochi	—	32.6	26.8
Kohima	6	15.3	10.8
Kolkata	—	32.5	20.0
Kozhikode	—	36.0	27.4
Kurnool	—	38.5	25.2
Lucknow	—	31.2	17.1
Madurai	—	38.0	25.1
Mangaluru	—	34.0	24.6
Mumbai	—	36.5	21.6
Mysuru	—	33.4	18.2
New Delhi	1.4	29.7	17.8
Patna	—	32.0	20.0
Port Blair	—	32.5	25.2
Puducherry	—	32.7	24.3
Pune	—	38.4	21.8
Raipur	—	35.2	21.2
Ranchi	—	29.9	14.0
Shillong	—	17.2	9.3
Shimla	—	21.2	9.8
Srinagar	—	19.1	5.9
Thiruvananthapuram	15	33.1	25.5
Tiruchi	—	35.5	24.4
Vijayawada	—	35.8	23.8
Visakhapatnam	—	33.4	25.2

(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	92	67	19	145	214	
Bengaluru	13	59	35	79	90	
Chennai	16	10	25	17	39	
Delhi	16	112	84	107	156	
Hyderabad	3	17	4	50	137	
Kolkata	19	40	58	56	71	
Lucknow	10	35	48	108	119	
Mumbai	32	100	41	75	102	
Pune	—	52	26	177	180	
Visakhapatnam	14	33	22	38	88	

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Hajipur, Bihar recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 237 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Kohima, Nagaland recorded a healthy AQI score of 24

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

SOUTHERN RAILWAY

Chennai Division

E-Auction Notice / Catering / Passenger Amenities / NFR / Parking / E-Auction / 2026

For and on behalf of the President of India, the Divisional Railway Manager, Chennai Division, Southern Railway calls for bids (commercial) through E-Auction and E-tender for award of Catering stall contracts and Passenger Amenities, NFR and Parking contracts in the following Railway Stations / locations. The 'E'-Auctions and E-tenders scheduled are as detailed below:

Sl. No.	Catalogue No.	Sub Category	Location	Auction Date	Tendering Mode	Auction Time
1	MAS-EMR-2026	Emergency Medical Room	TBM	01.04.2026	E-auction	15:00
2	MAS-EMR-2026	Emergency Medical Room	KPD	01.04.2026	E-auction	15:00
3	MAS-EMR-2026	Emergency Medical Room	CGL	01.04.2026	E-auction	15:00
4	MAS-EMR-2026	Emergency Medical Room	MS	01.04.2026	E-auction	15:00
5	MAS-PAUT-177	Pay & Use Toilet	CGL	07.04.2026	E-auction	15:00
6	MAS-PAUT-177	Pay & Use Toilet	MLMR	07.04.2026	E-auction	15:00
7	MAS-BOC-31	Battery Operated Carts	CGL	07.04.2026	E-auction	15:00
8	MAS-BOC-31	Battery Operated Carts	TBM	07.04.2026	E-auction	15:00
9	MAS-MPS-2026-2	Multi-purpose stall	KPD	31.03.2026	E-auction	15:00
10	MAS-MPS-2026-2	Multi-purpose stall	KPD	31.03.2026	E-auction	15:00
11	MAS-MPS-2026-2	Multi-purpose stall	TBM	31.03.2026	E-auction	15:00
12	MAS-MPS-2026-2	Multi-purpose stall	PER	31.03.2026	E-auction	15:00
13	MAS-WVM-CGL	Water Vending Machine	CGL Cluster (15 locations at 10 stations	31.03.2026	E-auction	15:00
14	Tender No. 26008	Catering stall / General Minor Unit	CGL	10.04.2026	E-Tender	15:00
15	Tender No. 25009	Catering stall / General Minor Unit	PON	10.04.2026	E-Tender	15:00
16	NFR-BSS-VLK	Battery Swapping Stations	VLK	30.03.2026	E-auction	15:30
17	NFR-MAS-GZ-2026	Gaming Zone	MAS	06.04.2026	E-auction	15:30
18	NFR-MAS-BR-26	Supply of sanitized quality bedroll services	16159/160, 12695/696 & 22639/640, 12671/672 &12685/686	06.04.2026	E-auction	15:30
19	MAS-PARKING-26	Two Wheeler Parking	KVP	06.04.2026	E-auction	15:00
20	MAS-PARKING-26	Two Wheeler Parking	GI	06.04.2026	E-auction	15:00
21	MAS-PARKING-26	Mixed Parking	VLCY Part C and D	06.04.2026	E-auction	15:00

All other details can be viewed in the website - **www.ireps.gov.in.**

Senior Divisional Commercial Manager / Chennai

कार्यपालक अभियंता का कार्यालय,
ग्रामीण कार्य विभाग, कार्य प्रमण्डल, चतरा

शुद्धि-पत्र

ग्रामीण कार्य विभाग, कार्य प्रमण्डल, चतरा के अन्तर्गत जिला खनिज फाउण्डेशन ट्रस्ट (DMFT) मद के तहत् **ई–अल्पकालीन निविदा संख्या– 13/2025-26/RWD/CHATRA**, दिनांक–16.02.2026 (**Construction of Road from House of Prem Bhuiyan to Teli Tola via Banjari Tola**), भुद्धि–पत्र के अनुसार निविदा प्राप्ति की अंतिम तिथि – 30.03.2026 है, जिसका **P.R. No. 374426 Rural Work Department(25–26):D** है, उसमें निम्नलिखित संशोधन किया जाता है :–

1. वेबसाईट में निविदा प्रकाशन की तिथि :– **02.04.2026**
2. ई–निविदा प्राप्ति की अंतिम तिथि एवं समय :– **16.04.2026 अपराह्न 5.00 बजे तक।**
3. ई–निविदा खोलने की तिथि एवं समय :– **18.04.2026 अपराह्न 03.30 बजे।**
4. अन्य शर्तें यथावत् रहेंगी।

विस्तृत जानकारी के लिए वेबसाईट **www.jharkhandtenders.gov.in** में देखा जा सकता है।

कार्यपालक अभियंता,
ग्रामीण कार्य विभाग, कार्य प्रमण्डल, चतरा।

PR.NO.375809 Rural Work Department(25-26):D

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

Centre For Railway Information Systems
Chanakyapuri, New Delhi-110021

Tender No.: 01265077
Tender Title.: Procurement of Subscriptions for Red Hat Virtualization (Premium) for UTS.
Date of Closing: 09.04.2026 (Thursday) 15:30 hrs.
Tender Documents may be downloaded from Website **www.ireps.gov.in.** For future modification/extensions pl. see **www.ireps.gov.in.**

NOTICE DOCUMENT MISSING

Notice is hereby given that as per information given by my client that the property comprised in Survey Nos. 42/6A & 42/7B to an extent of 3.35 Acres & 1.15 Acres respectfully, totally 4.50 Acres, situated at Oragadam Village, then Sriperumbudur Taluk, Now Kundrathur Taluk, Kancheepuram District belongs to 1) Mrs. Uma Maheshwari Srinivasan, 2) Mrs. M. Megala Devi 3)Mrs. M. Pushpakanthi 4)Mrs. Anita Krishnan 5)Mrs. C.P. Subbalakshmi. Whereas the (1) Settlement deed in Doc.No.693 of 1962, dated 14.03.1962, registered at SRO- Walajabad, (2) Settlement deed in Doc.No.1793 of 1974, dated 27.06.1970, registered at SRO- Walajabad (3) Mortgage deed in Doc.No.1794 of 1974, dated 26.06.1974, registered at SRO-Walajabad,(4) Sale deed in Doc.No. 988 of 1970 dated 04.05.1970, at SRO- Walajabad are misplaced by my client and not traceable. If any person/persons finds the above mentioned original documents pertaining to the above said properties, they are requested to hand over the said documents within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice to the below Address, failing which, it will be presumed that the documents have been irretrievably lost.

S.SAKTHIVEL,
Advocate & Notary Public,
No.63, Ambattur-Vanagaram Road
Ambttur Kuppam, Chennai – 600058
Cell.No. 9841183351

Place: Chennai
Date: 24-03-2026

NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY

SURVEY & CONSTRUCTION
(No. JU/Const./74-W-15/2025-26/BGKT/VBTSD/PH-II, Dated: 21.03.2026)
1 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 following changes have been made- **(1)** The Advance Correction Slip (ACS-11) to the Indian Railway General Condition of Contract-2022 has been incorporated in the said tender and the same has been placed on IREPS. **(2)** The correct total of scheduled 'A' (DSR-2023) is ₹ 37,72,70,086.85, whereas the total of Schedule 'A' (DSR-2023) shown under the breakup in the published NIT, i.e., ₹37,72,50,060.35, may be treated as incorrect. All other particuars of the original Tender Notice will remain same.

Dy. Chief Engineer (Const.)-I
414-DK/26 **North Western Railway, Jodhpur**

TIRUMALA TIRUPATI DEVASTHANAMS - TIRUPATI
EXECUTIVE ENGINEER -VII **e-AUCTION NOTICE**

TTD is disposing scrap materials (Iron scrap, Teak wood, plastic, Stainless Steel, Assorted Coir beds and pillows etc., available in the DPW Stores Civil, TTD, Tirupati through E-Auction (Online) to be held on 04-04-2026, 2.00 PM to 5.00 PM on e- KONUGOLU Portal, Govt. of A.P. The registered bidders in "Konugolu" are eligible to participate in the Auction. Further details please log on to **https://konugolu.ap.gov.in** or **www.tirumala.org** or contract **No.7702510006/9701391777**

TTD-40021/10/2025-PRO SEC(Adv.No.443) Date:23-03-2026 **EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY

Publication of Tender Notice No. CAO/CN/BNC/177/2026 Dated: 16-03-2026

The undersigned, on behalf of the President of India, Invites E-Tenders for the following work:

Item of work	Approx. Value
Conducting Final location survey for New line between Shivamogga - Sringeri Mangaluru (332 km), Talguppa-Honnavara (95 km), Alamtti -Yadgiri (162 km) and Bhadravathi - Chikjajur (73 km). **(Tender Ref. No: SWR-FLS-RATE-CONTRACT-03R)**	**Rs. 33,52,62,609/-**

Last date for submission of bids:
Upto 15:00 Hrs. on 09-04-2026

For details log on: www.ireps.gov.in

Deputy Chief Engineer/Construction/Works
Bengaluru Cantonment
PUB/1013/AAF/PRB/SWR/2025-26

Download the **RailOne** app. RailOne is the all-in-one railway app by Indian Railways. Passengers can book reserved tickets, unreserved tickets, platform tickets, and season passes, check PNR status, order food, and access many more services at their fingertips. Use digital payment to book unreservedtickets through **RailOne** app, and enjoy up to a **3%** discount.

South Western Railway - SWR | SWRRLY | SWRAILWAYHQ | sw_railways

BENGALURU WEST CITY CORPORATION
Malleshwaram Zone,
Office of the Executive Engineer, Special Division,
BWCC Building, No.161, 2nd Floor, 19th Main, 2nd Block,
Near Old Navarang Bus Stop, Rajajinagara, Bengaluru - 560010.

No: BWCC/EE/SPL/TEND/05/2025-26 **Date: 23-03-2026**

INVITATION FOR TENDER (IFT)
(Two Cover System) (Through GOK KPP Portal only)

The Executive Engineer, Special Division, BWCC, Bengaluru invites Tenders from the registered Service Provider / Contractors of GBA - BWCC or equivalent registration with CPWD / KPWD / Railways / MES or any State Government Organizations for the Services detailed below.

Sl. No.	Name of the Work
1	Establishing Control Room in Malleshwaram Zone-2 (Supplying Man Power and Other Equipments) for 12 Months. **Amount Put to Tender (Excluding GST) (Rs. in Lakhs): 112.85, EMD Amount (in Rs.): 2,00,000/-**

Calendar of Events: 1) Tender documents may be downloaded from the GOK Karnataka Public Procurement Portal Website: **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in from 24-03-2026, 17.30 Hours onwards. 2)** Last Date for Receipt of Queries: **30-03-2026 upto 16.00 Hours. 3)** Pre Bid Meeting will be held on **30-03-2026 at 16.00 Hours in the Office of the Executive Engineer (Special Division), Malleshwaram Zone-2. 4)** Last Date and Time for Uploading the Tender Documents: **04-04-2026 upto 16.00 Hours. 5)** Date of Opening of Technical Bid: **06-04-2026 at 16.30 Hours. 6)** Date of Opening of Financial Bid: **Will be intimated to the Technically Qualified Bidders.** Further details can be had from the above office.

Sd/- Executive Engineer
Special Division, Malleshwaram Zone, BWCC.

THE HINDU IN SCHOOL PRESENTS SCHOOL BUZZ
A Newspaper exclusively curated for School Students

LEADERSHIP AWARD

Olive Tree Group of Schools Correspondent Dr. Joy Leena Isaac was awarded 'Inspirational Leader in Education' by Global Educators Crew for exceptional dedication, creativity and transformative contributions to Early Years Education.

KINDERGARTEN ANNUAL DAY CELEBRATED

Dayasadan Agarwal Vidyalaya celebrated their Kindergarten Annual Day and Convocation with pride. Chief Guest Ms. Vijaylakshmi Seshan and Guest of Honour Ms. Archana Yedanapalli attended the programme. It was held in the presence of President Shri Gopalji Agrawal, Correspondent Shri B. P. Jhunjhunwala, Cultural Secretary Smt. Shilpa Tulsian and Principal Smt. Latha B. The ceremony included prayer, lamp lighting and Annual Report presentation. UKG students received certificates, while Ms. V. Pranitha was felicitated. Cultural performances added vibrancy, and the programme concluded with appreciation from the management and the National Anthem.

STEM CHALLENGE WINNERS

Babaji Vidhyashram emerged winners at the British Council and Formula 1 All India STEM Future Challenge, securing the top prize among 200 schools nationwide. Collaborating with partner school Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Llangynwyd, Wales, students addressed global safety concerns. Their innovation, a discreet 3D-printed butterfly-shaped "Safety Pendant", provides instant help during emergencies. Programmed using Arduino and linked via Bluetooth to a custom app, it activates a blinding beam, alerts emergency contacts and shares live location. By integrating STEM concepts, the team developed an accessible life-saving wearable, marking a significant achievement for the school.

For Subscription related queries, please contact Subramaniam P: Handphone:+91 98408 98088 | Email: subramaniam.p@thehindu.co.in

Battle of Bengal

The TMC is fighting off anti-incumbency sentiment

The West Bengal Assembly election, to be held in two phases on April 23 and 29, is shaping up as a two-party race between the incumbent All India Trinamool Congress (TMC) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The Left and the Congress have been pushed to the margins in the intense combat. The Bharatiya Gorkha Prajatantrik Morcha (BGPM) is contesting the three Darjeeling hill seats as an ally of the TMC. The TMC, which has been in power for three terms, has replaced 74 sitting Members of the Legislative Assembly to deflect anti-incumbency and bring in fresh faces to the field. In 2021, the TMC won 215 seats with a 48.02% vote share while the BJP secured 77 seats with 38%, a sharp rise from when it bagged just three seats and a 10.2% vote share in 2016. Chief Minister and TMC leader Mamata Banerjee is facing off against Leader of the Opposition Suvendu Adhikari, from the BJP, in Bhabanipur, where she is the sitting MLA. In 2021, she had lost to Mr. Adhikari in Nandigram by a margin of 1,956 votes, even while the TMC won yet another term. The run-up to the election in 2026 has been marred by controversies around the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the voter list. West Bengal's final electoral roll, which was published on February 28, saw the electorate shrink from 7.66 crore to 7.04 crore, with over 62 lakh names deleted. A further 60 lakh names remain under adjudication even as campaigning is underway, creating unprecedented uncertainty.

The standoff over SIR has overshadowed other debates. Having been in power for three terms, there is much that the TMC should be held accountable for, but SIR turned out to be a gift for Ms. Banerjee, which she has used to amplify her charges against the BJP that it is a party hostile to West Bengal and its voters. The BJP began 2026 with a reasonable case in its favour – the rape and murder of a trainee doctor in Kolkata, in 2024, had shaken public confidence in the Mamata government. But the party's limitations – and even refusal – to negotiate the cultural and linguistic diversity of India are markedly visible in the State, and it is placing its hopes on the trimmed voter list and the manoeuvrability of the electoral process. Its State unit is a house divided, while the TMC appears to have consolidated itself further, with Ms. Banerjee and her nephew Abhishek firmly in command. The BJP's upward trajectory may have hit the ceiling. The Congress is contesting without any alliances. The Left is not a power contender, but its vote share in select seats could influence margins in a tight race. In a long campaign period, there may be some surprises in store in West Bengal, as the BJP and the TMC both fight a battle for survival.

Grim future

India's economic fundamentals need a realistic reassessment

The economy has recently been yielding some discomfiting data, even before the war in West Asia began. The most recent of these was the February 2026 data on the Index of Eight Core Industries. This release showed that growth in the overall Index had dropped to a three-month low in February, half the rate of what it saw in January. This was not a case of a high base effect, either, with growth in February 2025 having been just 3.4%. The sector-wise data reveal further issues. The domestic crude oil industry has been contracting for six consecutive months. In fact, the sector has contracted in 20 out of the last 24 months. The natural gas sector, too, has contracted for the last 20 consecutive months. As context, from about the middle of last year, it had been increasingly clear that there would be some sort of escalation between the U.S. and Iran, even if the exact nature of the war now could not have been predicted then. It is no secret that India is highly dependent on energy imports, especially from the region that would have faced the brunt of any such escalation. As a matter of fact, a large part of the contraction in domestic production was likely because imports were coming cheap. Yet, as tensions increased, it might have been more prudent to have increased domestic oil and gas production over the last eight months so as to at least build reserves, if not to also temporarily reduce import dependence. Permanently reducing such dependence will take time, but a temporary domestic production push – as is belatedly underway – might have considerably alleviated the current supply crunch. Hindsight is 20-20, but that does not excuse a lack of foresight or an inability to learn. The Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana of 2016 should have triggered a concerted policy to secure LPG supplies and reserves.

This poor core sector performance comes on top of the new series of GDP data showing that the Indian economy is actually smaller than previously thought. Further, between 2022-23 and 2025-26, the contributions to GDP of key engines such as private consumption, capital formation, exports and imports have all fallen. The share of 'change in stocks' has nearly doubled, however, meaning that there is production but not enough sales. Soon, that production too will reduce to fall in line with the subdued demand. All of this leads into the impact of the current crisis. With commercial fuel sources curtailed, oil prices at more than $100 a barrel, and global economic uncertainty at a high, economists and rating agencies are already downgrading India's growth outlook to about 6.5%. Perhaps, India's much-vaunted macroeconomic fundamentals and resilience need a more realistic assessment.

A curated selection of articles on the Editorial and Opinion pages for World TB Day, March 24

The evolving diagnostic landscape for tuberculosis

Dr. Soumya Swaminathan

is Chairperson of the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation and National Science Chair, Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF)

Two weeks ago, in the run-up to World Tuberculosis (TB) Day (which falls on March 24), the World Health Organization (WHO) formally recommended the use of new near point-of-care (NPOC) molecular tests for diagnosing TB. WHO also endorsed the use of tongue swab samples for TB testing and sputum pooling strategies to potentially improve testing efficiencies at scale. These are the latest developments in what has been an unusually remarkable decade for the TB diagnostic landscape, a decade when new technologies have not only emerged but have also been tested, swiftly recommended and utilised to advance global efforts to eliminate TB.

Probably the best example is the rapidly expanding use of portable chest X-ray (CXR), in tandem with artificial intelligence (AI) solutions for TB screening. In India, the National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme (NTEP) has made available hundreds of portable CXR machines that are being utilised for the Pradhan Mantri TB Mukt Bharat Abhiyaan, in an effort to take active TB screening into the community.

Until recently, X-ray access was limited to hospital settings and dependent on the availability of technicians and radiologists to record the X-ray and interpret the findings. Today, active case-finding efforts are in full swing through mobile vans equipped with portable CXR with AI, making it more convenient. While this takes diagnostic services into the community, we must ensure on-the-spot collection of sputum samples for those with any CXR findings to significantly reduce attrition in the diagnostic cascade. Further, those with CXR lesions other than TB (for example, lung cancer) must get the referral and treatment services they need. Systematic microplanning will also help to refine these screening efforts to focus on those who are most vulnerable, particularly in urban and tribal settings.

The use of AI also presents a credible option for opportunistic screening. Tens of thousands of X-rays are performed daily across India in public and private clinics and hospitals for various reasons. Installing AI algorithms in digital X-ray machines that can swiftly identify suspicious lesions, whether for TB or other respiratory disorders, can reduce delays in diagnosis. Building health system capacity, particularly at the service delivery level, to use AI effectively is an important first step.

The diagnostic landscape is shifting

India has long relied on sputum smear microscopy as the primary test for diagnosing TB, despite its low sensitivity and inability to identify drug-resistance. In 2016, India began scaling up molecular testing – starting with the Cartridge-based Nucleic Acid Amplification Test (CBNAAT) and later adopting the indigenous Truenat in 2020. Today, many more Indian products are available, and decentralised access to molecular testing is central to the TB programme.

> Strengthening the tuberculosis testing infrastructure with an expanded diagnostic toolbox will improve outcomes and support TB elimination efforts

However, access to up-front molecular testing remains uneven. To achieve 100% testing through NAAT prior to treatment initiation, we must also strengthen sputum collection and transportation mechanisms, especially for the elderly, people with disabilities, and those who live in hard-to-reach areas. To complete the diagnostic cascade swiftly, we must reduce delays in first-line and second-line drug resistance testing and work with the general health system to leverage diagnostic human resource capacity. Minimising test turnaround time will ensure that people with drug-resistant TB are started on the correct treatment regimen at the earliest.

With WHO's endorsement of near point-of-care Nucleic Acid Amplification Tests (nPOC-NAAT), there are now more options for molecular testing at the primary-care level that are not heavily dependent on infrastructure. The use of non-sputum samples, such as tongue swabs, are especially useful for those who find it difficult to produce a good sputum sample, including children.

It is important to acknowledge that none of these tools is a complete solution in itself. What this growing collection of new tests offers is a comprehensive toolbox for TB diagnosis. Diagnostic network optimisation can help identify which tools to best use, individually and in combination, and where they should be located, to establish a diagnostic cascade that is accessible, affordable and person-centered. India must field-test these tools through robust implementation research that matches the pace of innovation, so that solutions can be tested in specific settings and decisions taken for scale-up.

Indian innovators have made a significant contribution, bringing to the market screening and diagnostic tools for global use, and will continue to play an important role in taking them to scale across the country. Over the years, we must examine the evidence to evolve clear diagnostic algorithms that are operationally feasible, involving the use of both AI-enabled CXR and molecular tests for diagnosing TB and identifying any antibiotic resistance.

Research and innovation priorities

Simultaneously, we must streamline innovation assessment and procurement pathways so that all evidence is rigorously reviewed by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), comprehensive health technology assessments address clinical, social, economic, and ethical concerns, and only recommended tools are procured and distributed in both public and private sectors. Several areas still require research and innovation.

First, as India is scaling up testing for TB infection and access to TB preventive therapy (TPT), we need more cost-effective and easy-to-use biomarkers that can identify and predict those at high risk for disease progression. Studies have shown that 'test and treat' approaches are more likely to convince people with TB infection to start on TPT, if they are at higher risk for disease, particularly in the private sector.

Second, the National TB Survey shows that asymptomatic TB is a serious issue, making symptom-based screening alone insufficient. Increased access to chest X-ray is a step in the right direction but we also need faster, less invasive diagnostic tools that use saliva and other non-sputum samples. More feasibility studies are required to understand utility and performance in real-world settings, particularly among individuals with low bacterial load.

Third, diagnosing TB in children remains challenging. Children cannot produce sputum as they often have low bacillary levels. Testing using stool samples has been tried in some countries and we need more implementation research in this area. We need far greater investment – and urgency – in finding the right new tools for diagnosing TB in children.

Finally, diagnosing extra-pulmonary TB (EP-TB) – which is almost a quarter of India's TB burden – remains difficult, often inaccessible and very expensive. Misdiagnosis as well as delayed diagnosis of EP-TB contributes to both catastrophic costs for families and poor outcomes for individuals. There are some pilots being done globally using AI-enabled portable ultrasound devices alongside molecular testing using new tools; we need India-specific evidence on this, including on cost-effectiveness.

Investing in strengthening the diagnostic landscape can be the greatest return on investment for the public health system. The sooner a person with TB is diagnosed, ideally before they are very ill, the more likely they are to recover fully, with fewer long-term post-treatment morbidities. Early diagnosis can not only improve treatment outcomes and long-term lung health but also dramatically reduce transmission within communities. A careful but swift and streamlined public sector expansion of diagnostics can also significantly reduce out-of-pocket expenditure for families affected by TB. An evidence-based, strong and expanded diagnostic toolbox can be a powerful lever to accelerate pathways to TB elimination in India.

A decade of building India's TB Champion movement

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In early 2017, at a workshop in New Delhi, Cedric Fernandes, a tuberculosis (TB) survivor and advocate from Maharashtra, said to a room full of other TB survivors, "It has been very lonely having this disease. I am fed up with the loneliness and I hope all of you are too." Addressing the organising team at the workshop, he gently admonished us: , "I am so glad that someone is finally bringing us together … but what took so long?"

India diagnoses and treats over 25 lakh people with TB every year, which means that there are hundreds of thousands of individuals such as Cedric, who are coming to terms with the disease and fighting to overcome it. Their path, from diagnosis to cure, is often fraught with challenges in an ecosystem where stigma and social exclusion continue to thrive within communities. TB remains one of the most stigmatised illnesses in both urban and rural India; stigma and discrimination uniquely impact women, men, transgender communities, children and adolescents, the elderly and other socially vulnerable groups.

Challenging the belief

One of the early criticisms of the global TB response was that it remained stubbornly biomedical, focusing solely on clinical interventions whilst excluding communities and devaluing lived experience. Back in 2016, when we first began to imagine and build our wish list for how TB-affected communities – people with TB, TB survivors and their families – could play a greater role, there were many sceptics. Most of all, we were told that TB survivors, unlike people living with HIV, would want to move on with their lives once they had completed treatment, and would not be interested in becoming peer supporters or advocates. Ten years later, the evolution of the TB Champion movement in India has firmly dispelled this notion. TB Champions are survivors who are passionate, motivated and committed individuals, firm in their conviction that they have an important role to play in India's response to TB.

India's National TB Elimination Programme (NTEP) provides access to high-quality free diagnostics and treatment. Over the last few years, diagnosis and case-finding have accelerated, and treatment outcomes have steadily improved, which means that more people are being cured and mortality has reduced, with fewer people dying of TB. Newer strategies – Artificial Intelligence-enabled screening, active case-finding within communities, shorter and less toxic treatment regimens, expanded nutrition support, differentiated care approaches – have been adopted. But even the most robust health system cannot achieve elimination of any disease on its own, without active community participation. This is where TB Champions are uniquely poised to draw on their own personal experiences of TB to be powerful communicators and advocates for changes.

'Empower, support, educate'

In the early years of working with TB survivors, our focus was on developing the 'Survivor to Champion' training curriculum, which has since been formally adopted by the NTEP.

The involvement of TB Champions has reaffirmed a conviction that we have held from our inception – that a person with TB needs emotional support and motivation to get them through the treatment period, as much as they need high-quality clinical care. TB Champion-led peer counselling, through both one-to-one communication and support groups, has helped to improve treatment literacy and empowered people with TB with the knowledge they need. We have found a greater level of confidence and comfort among people with TB who have been supported by TB Champions and a significant reduction in self-stigmatisation.

Even today, myths and misconceptions about TB persist. TB Champions have played a critical role in dispelling these and in improving knowledge of TB, the symptoms of the disease and where to seek care. They literally reach the last mile through regular community meetings, where they talk about the disease, share their own stories and reassure people that TB is a treatable and curable disease. This has been a powerful anti-stigma strategy, enabling people to come forward to seek diagnosis and treatment.

> Survivors become 'TB Champions', supporting treatment, awareness and community engagement

Building networks, looking ahead

In addition, over the last decade, TB Champions in several States have come together to form survivor-led networks. These collective entities are naturally designed to be a powerful bridge between those seeking care and those providing services, especially among social vulnerable groups. Importantly, networks have become a source of strength for TB survivors, many of whom continue to experience the physical, social and economic toll of the disease even after being cured. However, the long-term future and sustainability of networks remains uncertain, given that they are dependent on external resources for funding. The next challenge is to test and build self-sustaining socio-economic models for survivor-led networks.

Over the last 10 years, we have been humbled by the trust that thousands of TB Champions from across the country have placed in us. They have travelled long distances to attend our workshops, sharing their TB journeys and stories, their pain and successes. They have become empowered local leaders, unafraid to use the TB Champion moniker to refer to themselves. They remain staunchly committed to working with their communities – supporting people with TB and their families, talking about stigma, meeting their panchayat leaders – and doing all of this for one simple, powerful reason – 'so that no one else should suffer like I did'.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Erratic policy

The dramatic post by U.S. President Donald Trump, on a 'five-day ceasefire of sorts', must have stunned Benjamin Netanyahu's Israel. The 'second coming' of Mr. Trump has been marked less by strategic doctrine and more by disruptive impulse. Alliances once seen as bedrock as NATO, have been treated as transactional, their value weighed against immediate domestic optics rather than long-term geopolitical balance. Trade agreements and multilateral pacts have been entered and exited with disconcerting ease, reinforcing a perception of the U.S. as an uncertain partner. In conflict theatres, this inconsistency has been stark. Support extended to Ukraine appeared forceful yet episodic, leaving allies unsure of endurance. Europe, once a strategic anchor, has often been addressed with impatience rather than partnership. Even Israel, a beneficiary of unequivocal backing, has found that patronage can pivot abruptly.

R. Narayanan,
Navi Mumbai

PNG transition issue

I wish to draw the attention of government officials to a troubling issue being faced by many consumers registered for piped natural gas (PNG) connections with GAIL (India) Limited. Under the recent government mandate (LPG Amendment Order 2026), households with functional PNG connections must surrender their domestic LPG cylinders. However, GAIL officials and distributors are reportedly asking consumers to surrender their LPG connections before the PNG line has been installed or activated.

Parthasarathy P.,
New Delhi

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

From disease-specific to person-centred care

By using TB as an entry point, integrated healthcare delivery can optimise and improve public health efficiency

Anupama Srinivasan
Deputy Director of REACH

Dr. Ramya Anantha krishnan
Director of REACH

Tuberculosis (TB) rarely presents as a standalone disease in an individual. Many people with TB have other comorbidities or disease conditions that they must simultaneously cope with, while being on treatment for TB. Therefore, treating TB alone is not enough. Adopting integrated care approaches by transitioning from disease-specific to person-centred care can accelerate India's efforts to achieve both universal health coverage and TB elimination. Simply put, we must treat the person and not the disease.

Take the example of Divya (name changed), a 48-year-old woman who was diagnosed with TB in 2023. She had been living with diabetes and hypertension for several years and it is highly likely that her diabetes played a role in her contracting TB. Crucially, she had poor glycemic control with a HbA1c over 10, which had a direct impact on her treatment for TB.

Infectious diseases like TB; non-communicable diseases such as diabetes and chronic respiratory diseases; malnutrition; and social and economic vulnerabilities inevitably intersect in individuals and families, adversely impacting outcomes and the overall quality of life. Recognising the interconnected nature of these multiple vulnerabilities is the first step towards delivering integrated care.

Treating TB and diabetes

As in the case of Divya, an important opportunity for integration is between TB and diabetes, given India's growing diabetes burden. Over 15 years ago, the National TB Elimination Programme (NTEP) identified diabetes as a key comorbidity for TB, and rolled out formal bidirectional screening guidelines for TB-diabetes. Every person with TB must be screened for diabetes and people with diabetes must ideally be screened for TB once a year. Studies have shown that people with diabetes are more likely to develop active TB disease than those without; equally, people with TB who also have diabetes are more likely to have poor TB treatment outcomes.

In Chennai, in a cohort of over 9,000 people with TB for three years, the authors found that over one-third (34%) had diabetes, and of this group, 41% had poor glycemic control which is the biggest challenge. Monitoring the blood sugar levels of a person with TB and diabetes throughout the TB treatment period is therefore essential, as is expanding clinical management and the counselling that is provided from TB-specific guidance to also focus on overall lifestyle, physical activity, diet and nutrition etc.

TB patients seen inside the Govind Ballabh Pant Hospital on March 24, 2025. ANI

Integrating respiratory care

Another important opportunity for integration is at the intersection of TB and Chronic Respiratory Diseases (CRD) such as asthma or Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), at the screening stage itself. Only a fraction of people with respiratory symptoms are eventually diagnosed with TB – the rest are likely to have viral flu, bronchitis, asthma etc. In REACH's ongoing TB-CRD integrated care pilot in two districts each of Bihar and Tamil Nadu, nearly 3,000 people with COPD and asthma were identified and linked to care, among the 26,000 people who were screened for TB but found TB-negative. In addition, integrated care can also change the course of post-treatment follow-up, given that many people who complete TB treatment continue to have respiratory impairments.

Other areas of intersection include undernutrition and risk factors such as smoking and alcohol use. This multi-disease approach is already envisaged in the framework of the Ayushman Arogya Mandirs for delivering comprehensive care at the community and primary care levels.

Delivering integrated care at scale can have its share of challenges. At the health system level, it is a likely stressor on already strained human resources, with the brunt of the workload falling on community health workers. In addition, many of India's large health programmes are vertical and not always designed to talk to each other, in terms of both human resources and data; this will require both creative and pragmatic solutions. Integrated care delivery will require adequate and additional human resources, a careful readjustment of the health worker to care recipient ratio and investment in periodic training.

Holistic wellness

Given that the NTEP is among India's more robust, well-structured public health programmes, using TB as an entry point to identify and address closely associated morbidities such as diabetes, CRDs, undernutrition etc. will help optimise healthcare delivery and improve public health efficiency. More importantly, it could reduce delays in diagnosis, minimise the need for visits to several health facilities, and help overcome barriers to accessing a continuum of care. With empathetic person-centred design, integrated healthcare delivery can be a win-win for health systems, individuals and families affected by TB.

The need to integrate nutrition in TB care

For most patients with TB who are severely underweight, nutritional support is an essential and not optional part of treatment

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In 2026, India still has the highest number of new cases of Tuberculosis (TB) globally and a decreasing but still unacceptable number of about three lakh deaths due to TB. Almost 10% of successfully treated patients have recurrence within two years. An answer to all these challenges may partly lie in addressing a leading cause and consequence of TB in India, which is undernutrition, closely related to poverty, food insecurity and a predominantly cereal-based diet with deficient protein intake.

On the occasion of World TB Day, evidence from the Reducing Activation of Tuberculosis by Improvement Of Nutritional Status (RATIONS) trial could offer insight into the importance of nutritional interventions. RATIONS was done in Jharkhand with support from the Indian Council of Medical Research and was the first such trial of a food-based intervention. It aimed at reducing new TB cases in TB-affected families, and improving treatment outcomes for patients with TB.

Ramlal, a 19-year-old tribal boy in the trial, weighed only 26 kg and was almost bed-bound at the time of his diagnosis of lung TB. Along with TB drugs, he received a monthly food basket. Over the next few weeks, he started walking and could cycle to work at the end of the treatment, weighing 42 kg. Laxmi, weighing 34 kg, had TB two years ago and had stopped medication after she developed jaundice within two weeks of starting anti-TB drugs. Now, as a result of the trial, she could adhere to the medications and also breastfeed her four-month-old.

Preventing deaths due to TB

Undernutrition, especially severe undernutrition, is common in patients in India. It is a major reversible risk factor for death, drug toxicity, and recurrence after successful treatment. For most patients with TB who are severely underweight, nutritional support is an essential and not optional part of treatment. Poor families are food-insecure and become even more so due to the disease. In the RATIONS trial, a monthly 10 kg food basket of cereals, pulses, milk powder, and oil led to a weight gain of almost 4.5 kg in patients. Even a 5% weight gain in the first two months was protective against death, reducing the risk by more than 60%.

PM TB Mukt Bharath kits, which include basic nutritious food items, distributed to patients in Chittoor, Andhra Pradesh in 2023. FILE PHOTO

In India, the National TB Elimination Programme's (NTEP) initiatives in addressing undernutrition in TB care are welcome. For example, the monthly direct benefit transfer under the Ni-Kshay Poshan Yojana increased from ₹500 to ₹1,000 and similarly the Ni-Kshay Mitra Yojana, although not universal, provides in-kind support to patients with TB. However, the plan to introduce energy-dense nutrition supplements for two months to underweight patients with TB needs to be considered with caution, given higher expenses, and the mystification of an adequate balanced diet apart from the risk of monotony and poor acceptability. One in 7 patients with TB in India may have diabetes which also needs to be taken into consideration.

A new avenue

While infection with the TB germ is necessary to develop the disease, it is not sufficient to produce active TB. Almost 90% of those infected, with good immunity, never develop the disease in their lifetime. Undernutrition is the most common cause of poor immunity in India and globally. It contributes to nearly 40% of new cases in India, and improved population-level nutritional status offers an alternative approach to reducing TB incidence.

Diets of the poor in India are particularly deficient in quality protein. TB-affected families experience vulnerabilities of poverty, food insecurity, and undernutrition. The 1.5 kg per month of pulses per family member, along with extra rice, worked like a vaccine in the RATIONS trial, with new TB cases in these families coming down by almost half.

The World Health Organization released new guidelines last year recommending nutritional interventions in settings of poverty and undernutrition, drawing significantly from the evidence of the RATIONS trial.

Improving nutrition security by including pulses in the public distribution system, and expanding the Ni-Kshay Mitra scheme to include TB patients' households will have long-term benefits in reducing the TB burden in India.

The way ahead

India is a global leader in implementing comprehensive nutrition assessment and support initiatives through the NTEP. Research and evidence from India have influenced global policy. Some of the next positive steps will be to record and report nutritional assessment at diagnosis; at two months; and at the end of treatment. This will help to identify those at risk of death, monitor early weight gain, and assess nutritional recovery. A differentiated TB care model in line with the TN-KET intervention in Tamil Nadu can identify and prioritise severely underweight patients. This will require local contextualisation of food baskets, with due attention given to comorbidities, supported by transport and inpatient care for the sick.

The inverse care law also works in TB and nutrition – the most vulnerable among us such as those in difficult-to-reach areas, the tribals, and the migrant workers, should not be left out.

The views expressed are personal.

Mental health of TB patients should not be overlooked

Studies from India have shown that at least one-third of people with TB experience symptoms of depression or anxiety

Dr. R. Thara
Co-Founder and Vice-Chair of the Schizophrenia Research Foundation (SCARF)

At least one in seven Indians experience a mental health condition at some point in their lives. In people with infectious diseases like Tuberculosis (TB) or HIV, this increases to anywhere between one-third to a half of those affected. TB takes a toll on not only physical but also mental health, either in the form of definite diagnosable conditions like depression, anxiety or psychoses or as emotional suffering worsened by social stigma. TB is fundamentally a disease of inequity, perpetuated by poverty and simultaneously contributing to increasing poverty. Unemployment, the lack of livelihood, food insecurity and malnutrition are social drivers for both TB and mental health conditions.

Studies from India have shown that at least one-third of people with TB experience symptoms of depression and anxiety, which often occur together as well. The mental health burden is estimated to be even higher among people with drug-resistant TB, with upto two-thirds having mental health issues. There are anecdotal accounts from TB survivors on suicidal ideation as well as documented instances of people with TB dying by suicide. There is not enough evidence about the prevalence of severe mental illnesses such as schizophrenia or bipolar disorders in people affected by TB.

The stigma associated with TB remains pervasive, and includes self-stigma, stigma within families, at workplaces and within communities. Many TB survivors have spoken of the guilt and shame they feel on being diagnosed with TB, despite knowing that it is an airborne disease that can affect anyone. For those with pulmonary TB, the guilt is driven primarily by the fear of transmitting the disease within their families, particularly to children. Those with depression or anxiety and TB must cope with an increased burden of stigma associated with both conditions, which can further worsen mental health.

TB and mental health

Given the high prevalence of common mental health disorders in the general population, it is possible that depression or anxiety could have been pre-existing and unidentified, even prior to the TB diagnosis; there have not been enough studies on this aspect. Depression or anxiety could delay care-seeking for TB. Long-standing untreated depression can also weaken the body's immune responses which in turn could lead to active TB disease – this is yet again another under-researched aspect.

A doctor offers flowers to a TB patient in Agartala on World TB day. PTI

Post diagnosis, untreated mental health conditions can adversely affect TB treatment outcomes. A person with TB who is depressed, and has not received mental healthcare, is more likely to take TB treatment irregularly or discontinue treatment prematurely. This can lead to treatment failure, relapse, or drug-resistance.

Co-existing alcohol and tobacco use, in the absence of access to de-addiction programmes, are also crucial factors affecting the treatment for TB.

Screening and identifying

Integrating routine screening for all people with TB for depression and anxiety is the starting point. Building awareness about common mental health disorders among healthcare workers, equipping them with the knowledge and skills to provide mental health first-aid and ensuring early screening at the right point in the TB care cascade are the other essential steps. Primary healthcare workers and community supporters, who are often the first to notice any psychological distress, should be trained to elicit information about sleep, appetite, mood, stress etc. which can help early identification of mental health conditions.

Given that TB itself could trigger depression, mental health screening must ideally be done at multiple time points during the TB treatment period.

From an individual perspective, being treated for TB and depression at the same time can be a stressful experience. While India's TB programme already provides decentralised access to free anti-TB drugs and financial aid for nutrition, strengthening the availability of drugs to treat depression or anxiety through the district mental health programme is vital. While antidepressants or antipsychotics can be used alongside anti-TB drugs, clinicians must monitor for any adverse drug reactions or interactions. Psychological interventions, including cognitive-behavioural therapy and participation in peer support groups, can also help reduce isolation. To provide these services, qualified and trained mental health professionals are needed, particularly in rural and tribal areas.

Looking out for everyone

Mental health interventions cannot be limited to people with TB. The task of caring for people with TB can place considerable strain on families. Studies in India have shown that up to 80% of caregivers may exhibit high levels of Expressed negative Emotions (EE) and high stress levels due to their caregiving responsibilities. Often, high EE leads to increased caregiver burden and poorer treatment outcomes. In India's family-centred ecosystem, where most of the caregiving needs are met by family members, this can lead to critical or over-involved caregiving because of emotional, financial, and social strains.

Psychoeducation is important not just for persons with TB but also for their families and caregivers.

A blended and syndemic TB-mental health approach that considers mental healthcare as an essential part of TB care, rather than a standalone service, can significantly improve TB outcomes, reduce the burden on caregivers and improve long-term mental health.

From Page One

Trump pauses strikes on Iran, says deal is possible

"Our people demand the complete and humiliating punishment of the aggressors. All officials stand firmly behind their Leader and people until this goal is achieved", the Iranian Speaker said in a social media post on Monday.

In recent days, friendly countries sent messages indicating that the U.S. had requested talks to end the war, but Iran had not responded, Iran's state news agency *IRNA* quoted its Foreign Ministry spokesperson as saying. "Yes, there have been initiatives from regional countries to reduce tensions, and our response to all of them is clear: we are not the party that started this war, and all such requests should be directed to Washington," state-run *Mizan*agency cited the Foreign Ministry.

'Constructive conversations'

"Based on the tenor and tone of these in-depth, detailed, and constructive conversations, witch [which] will continue throughout the week, I have instructed the Department of War to postpone any and all military strikes against Iranian power plants and energy infrastructure for a five day period, subject to the success of the ongoing meetings and discussions," Mr. Trump wrote in his post.

"All I am saying is, we are in the throes of a real possibility of making a deal... We are dealing with the man who I believe is the most respected and the leader," Mr. Trump said in Washington, without saying who the U.S. was speaking with but added that it was not the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei. "Look at Venezuela, how well that's working out... Maybe we find somebody like that in Iran," he said, adding that the U.S. wants Iran to abandon any nuclear ambitions and give up its enriched uranium stockpiles.

Women's quota: Centre mulls early delimitation

As per Article 82 of the Constitution, the next delimitation exercise was to be done based on the first Census after 2026, but these amendments could mean that the 2011 Census data will be applied and the remaking of constituencies can proceed without the current Census exercise being concluded. The proposals may include the expansion of State Assemblies as well.

The Act originally passed in September 2023 envisaged the conduct of the Decadal Census, followed by delimitation of seats. The 2021 Decadal Census, which got delayed because of COVID, beginning next month. As per the current timelines, implementation of the Act could be pushed beyond 2030. However, by bringing in fresh amendments, the government is now seeking to bring forward the implementation of the Act.

Government managers, including Union Home Minister Amit Shah, met with leaders of several Opposition parties on Monday, including the Nationalist Congress Party (SP)'s Supriya Sule, YSR Congress Party's P.V. Midhun Reddy, the All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen's Asaduddin Owaisi and the Shiv Sena (UBT)'s Arvind Sawant, among others. Trinamool Congress and the Left skipped the meeting.

A separate meeting of NDA partners was held later on Monday evening. The government managers had consulted the Congress and Samajwadi Party earlier. The Congress will be holding a meeting of Opposition floor leaders on Tuesday morning to go through the proposals put forward by the government.

"The amendments will require a two-thirds majority of both Houses, which is why extensive consultations are being held with the Opposition...," said a government source.

The Women's Reservation Act, 2023, known as the Constitution (106th Amendment) Act, 2023, mandates a 33% reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies.

Impact of West Asia war likely to be felt for long time, PM tells Lok Sabha

Country should be prepared and united, says Modi as he condemns attacks on commercial ships and obstruction of Strait of Hormuz; India has 5.3 million tonnes of petrol reserves, and govt. is working towards increasing this to 6.5 million tonnes

Sandeep Phukan
NEW DELHI

The situation in West Asia is "deeply concerning", and the impact of the war is likely to be felt for a long time, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Monday, while briefing the Lok Sabha on the steps taken by his government to secure India's energy needs.

The country should be prepared and united, Mr. Modi said, urging all members to ensure the Indian Parliament sends out a "united and unanimous voice on the issue".

The government should hold a proper discussion so that other members can put forth their views, Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said after the Prime Minister's speech.

Earlier, making a statement in the Lok Sabha, Mr. Modi said he had spoken to the heads of most West Asian countries, all of whom had assured the safety of Indians.

Every Indian in the war-affected region is being given every possible help, Narendra Modi informed in Parliament on Monday. SANSAD TV

"India has always raised its voice for peace in the interest of humanity. Dialogue and diplomacy are the solutions to this problem. Our efforts are aimed at reducing tensions and ending this conflict," Mr. Modi said, amid the thumping of desks by ruling party members.

"I myself have spoken with all relevant leaders in West Asia. I have urged them to reduce tensions and end the conflict. India has opposed attacks on civilians, energy, and transport-related infrastructure. Attacks on commercial ships and obstruction in international waterways like the Strait of Hormuz are unacceptable. Through diplomacy, India is continuously working to ensure safe passage for Indian ships even in this war environment," he added.

The government was in constant touch with suppliers from various countries to ensure that oil and gas supplies continued from wherever possible, he said, addressing apprehensions of fuel shortages. All power plants in the country have adequate stocks of coal, he added.

India has 5.3 million tonnes of strategic petroleum reserves, and the government was working towards increasing this to 6.5 million tonnes, he told the House. "The reserves maintained by our oil companies are separate. In the past 11 years, our refining capacity has also increased significantly," Mr. Modi added.

The country's farmers had filled the food grain reserves, so India is well prepared in terms of food security, he said, speaking on the war's impact on agriculture.

"We are also making efforts to ensure that kharif sowing takes place properly. For this, the government has made adequate arrangements for fertilizers to deal with any emergency...," he said.

As summer has begun in India, the demand for electricity has increased, but all power plants in the country have adequate stocks of coal, he said.

West Asia is important to India as nearly one crore Indians live and work in the Gulf countries, the Prime Minister added.

Every Indian in the war-affected region was being given every possible help, and more than 3.75 lakh Indians, including 1,000 people from war-torn Iran, had been safely evacuated, Mr. Modi said.

However, several lives had been lost, and some people had been injured during the conflict, the Prime Minister said, adding that their families were being given the necessary help.

India tracking developments, says Centre on Trump pause

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

India is closely monitoring developments, External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said on Monday shortly after U.S. President Donald Trump announced that he would postpone attacks on Iran's power infrastructure for five days.

Another senior official termed the move "positive", while emphasising that the government was keeping an eye on the developments.

On Monday evening, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar held talks with the Ambassadors of the GCC countries, namely Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE. He said he "thanked them for their continued support to the Indian community in the region". He also spoke over the telephone to Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Vijitha Herath about developments in the war.

Former AAP Minister's arrest triggers credit war

The Hindu Bureau
CHANDIGARH

Former Minister in the Aam Aadmi Party government in Punjab, Laljit Singh Bhullar, was arrested on Monday in connection with the death of a State warehousing corporation official, who allegedly died by suicide last week.

Mr. Bhullar will be produced in a court on Tuesday. Gagandeep Singh Randhawa, district manager of Punjab Warehousing Corporation in Amritsar, allegedly died by suicide on Saturday after consuming what appeared to be a poisonous substance as seen in a purported video linked to the incident. In the video, he had accused Mr. Bhullar of harassing him by pressuring to award a tender to the former Minister's aide.

Opposition parties asserted the arrest came following the pressure built by them on the AAP government, even as the AAP claimed credit for its decisive action against its own Minister in the interest of justice.

(Those in distress can seek help at 011-40769002)

Two more Indian vessels carrying 93,000 tonnes of LPG cross Strait of Hormuz

M. Kalyanaraman
CHENNAI

Two Indian-flagged LPG carriers, *Jag Vasant* and *Pine Gas*, have transited through the Strait of Hormuz on Monday evening. They are together carrying nearly 93,000 tonnes of LPG, as per the inter-Ministerial briefing held on Monday. In addition, a flurry of LPG import shipments that came in the past few days and scheduled for the upcoming week may have eased the cooking gas crisis somewhat.

In a sign of the easing crisis, the government had announced a 20% increase in commercial LPG allocations, taking it to 50% of pre-war levels even while saying the LPG situation continues to be worrisome.

Jag Vasant and *Pine Gas*, owned by Great Eastern Shipping and Seven Island Shipping respectively, are likely to reach Indian ports between March 26 and 28. The government had said that domestic LPG production had increased by 40%, which would mean an additional 18,000 tonnes production a day, bringing down the approximate daily import requirement from 55,000 tonnes. At normal times, India would need at least one Very Large Gas Carrier of some 55,000 tonnes to dock at one of its ports every day and discharge the cargo.

People in a queue with empty LPG cooking gas cylinders to avail refilled ones in Prayagraj.

Two foreign-owned and foreign-flagged LPG carriers, *Hellas Gladiator* and *Gas Jupiter*, each carrying 24,000 tonnes are expected to reach Visakhapatnam on March 30.

Hellas Gladiator had loaded in Netherlands. Port sources say that this shipment is part of the strategic decision to source LPG from European markets to bypass the ongoing supply constraints in West Asia. *Gas Jupiter* loaded its cargo in the U.S.

The cavern project of SA-LPG at Visakhapatnam, which is one of India's two long-term LPG storage locations, had handled two ships carrying LPG after February 28. Each ship carried and unloaded about 24,000 tonnes. The total capacity of the cavern is 60,000 tonnes and is one of two long-term LPG storage facilities in India.

Globe Polaris, carrying cargo from Houston, Texas, is expected to reach Sandhead, Kolkata, on March 24, according to an official in Haldia port.

It will berth the following day and discharge more than 20,000 tonnes in all.

BW Birch, carrying LPG taken from *Nanda Devi* in Vadinar Port in Gujarat through ship-to-ship transfer, is expected to dock at Haldia on March 29 and discharge cargo.

Gas Jupiter is also expected on April 3 at Haldia. *(Inputs from Sumit Bhattacharjee, Sunita Sekar, Anil Kumar Sastri, Satyasundar Barik, Dhinesh Kallungal and Lalatendu Mishra)*

Anil Ambani bank fraud case: 'CBI, ED showed reluctance'

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday said the Directorate of Enforcement (ED) and the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) must probe the financial fraud allegations linked to Anil Dhirubhai Ambani Group (ADAG) and promoter Anil Ambani in a "transparent, fair and credible manner", while making a note that the probe agencies' previous conduct had shown "reluctance" and lack of discipline or structure.

"...your investigative agencies, the way they have shown reluctance and allowed things to go whichever way... that is not acceptable. The investigation should be done in a transparent, fair and credible manner," Chief Justice of India Surya Kant, heading a three-judge Bench, addressed Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta.

"Your investigation must inspire confidence not only of the court, but of every stakeholder. People should be convinced that you have done a fair and completely independent investigation," the Chief Justice told Mr. Mehta. The Supreme Court observed that "probe agencies must join hands and make rigorous attempts to unearth the irregularities, illegalities or connivance of the public functionaries, especially financial institutions, if any".

Anil Ambani

"We are making no opinion on the merits of allegations. The CBI and the ED have to complete the probe in a most dispassionate, fair, transparent and independent manner, and take it to a logical conclusion in a time-bound manner... All financial agencies have to extend full cooperation to the ED. In case of any delay or reluctance, the ED must make a submission to this court," the Supreme Court advised.

'U.S.-led Pax Silica is a step towards digital colonialism'

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Senior Congress MP Digvijaya Singh on Monday warned the Union government against joining Pax Silica, terming the U.S.-led project a step towards digital colonialism.

The U.S.-led initiative is aimed at building resilient supply chains for critical minerals and Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies. India joined the coalition in February 2026, during the AI Impact summit held in New Delhi.

Raising the matter during Zero Hour in the Rajya Sabha on Monday, Mr. Singh asked the government to make the terms and conditions of the agreement public.

BJP hails Modi for becoming India's longest-serving head of government

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Monday hailed Prime Minister Narendra Modi for becoming India's longest-serving head of government, surpassing the 8,930-day record earlier held by former Sikkim Chief Minister Pawan Chamling.

At a press conference, on the party's behalf, Union Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan expressed gratitude to the Prime Minister for India's powerful representation in the changing global landscape, stating that Mr. Modi has taken the country to new heights.

"Narendra Modi *ji* is not just a leader, but also a visionary and an institution in himself, who has consistently worked for national interest both as the Chief Minister of Gujarat and as the Prime Minister of India," he said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has taken the nation to new heights, Shivraj Singh Chouhan said at a press conference on Monday. PTI

'Took key decisions'

Recounting Mr. Modi's contributions in Gujarat, the Union Minister spoke about initiatives such as redevelopment of earthquake-hit Bhuj and Kutch, Narmada water management, agricultural development, and Vibrant Gujarat. As the Prime Minister, he has spearheaded reforms and numerous landmark decisions involving infrastructure projects, start-ups, self-reliance, Make in India campaign, agriculture, comprehensive public welfare, women's empowerment, education, healthcare, and national security.

"Working tirelessly for a larger purpose, reaching the pinnacle of hard work, and constantly pushing the limits of effort such an example has been set by Prime Minister Narendra Modi that it fills one with pride and satisfaction," he said, adding that he had known Mr. Modi for about 35 years.

"I have worked alongside him as an organisational *karyakarta*, witnessed him in action as Chief Minister, and later seen him as Prime Minister while I myself became a Union Minister. In all these roles, the fundamental motivation Narendra Modi *ji* displayed has always been patriotism, putting the nation above all, and prioritising the country first," said Mr. Chouhan.

'Biotech industry driving both human and animal nutrition'

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Biotechnology graduates are the architects of the next animal science revolution in the country, experts said at a webinar on "Biotech Careers: Food and Nutrition" on Sunday.

The webinar was jointly organised by the Vellore Institute of Technology, Chennai, and *The Hindu* as part of the series titled "Biotechnology: Role in Industry 5.0 – Sustainable Future Pathways".

"While the growth rate of the food processing market is estimated at 13%, India's bio-economy rate is projected to be much higher. This means biotechnology students will have enough career opportunities to steer the growth over the next decade," Anand

K. Jadi, general manager and plant head, ICML Medak, ITC Ltd., said.

G. Jayaraman, Professor and Dean of the School of Biosciences and Technology at VIT, Chennai, spoke about biotechnology's increasing influence in various sectors, including agriculture, food, healthcare, and research-driven innovation. He said the biotech industry was driving both human and animal nutrition. "It is enhancing the quality and quantity of food."

Chakkaravarthi Saravanan, Associate Professor at the National Institute of Food Technology, Entrepreneurship and Management in Kundli, Haryana, pointed out that with an ever-increasing population, shrinking land space, and rising food prices, the significance of biotechnology for food was growing.

Speaking on the role of biotechnology in the livestock industry, R. Balaguru, technical director at V.K. Palappa Nadar Poultry Farms Pvt. Ltd., said 70% of the rural poor in the world depended on livestock. The panellists advocated for establishing a solid foundation for learning new-age technologies.

The webinar can be viewed at *https://newsth.live/THVITFNY*

ASSEMBLY POLLS

Gaurav Gogoi enters electoral fray from Jorhat

Assam Congress president Gaurav Gogoi filed his nomination papers for the Jorhat Assembly constituency on Monday, marking his debut in the State polls.

A three-time Lok Sabha member — twice from the delimitation-devoured Kaliabor and once from Jorhat — he is the chief ministerial face of the Congress-led six-party Opposition alliance. The alliance has been dubbed the "Three-Gogoi Group", the others being Raijor Dal president Akhil Gogoi and his Assam Jatiya Parishad counterpart, Lurinjyoti Gogoi.

"The April 9 election is an opportunity to cleanse Assam politics, dirtied by the polarising BJP-led alliance. A Congress-led government will ensure equitable access to welfare schemes, particularly for women," he said.

Assam Congress president Gaurav Gogoi on his way to file nomination papers. ANI

JMM to go solo, releases list for Assam election

On the last day of filing the nomination, the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha on Monday released the list of 21 candidates for the Assam Assembly election after its talks with the Congress failed. The JMM is contesting the Assam Assembly polls solo. However a regional outfit Jai Bharat Party is backing JMM.

Out of 19 seats reserved for the Scheduled Tribes, it fielded candidates in just one constituency — Bokajan, where the party has fielded Pratap Singh Rongphar.

Around 15 constituencies have tea tribe populations which are sizeable in numbers and many have social-cultural links to Jharkhand. Earlier, Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren had written to his Assam counterpart Himanta Biswa Sarma expressing concern about the plight of tea tribes.

We are very satisfied with the 27 seats, we will sweep the elections as the people of the State are fed up with CM Stalin and Udhayanidhi Stalin

PIYUSH GOYAL
BJP leader

AIMIM to ally with Humayun Kabir's AJUP

All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) leader Asaduddin Owaisi said that his party will contest the West Bengal Assembly elections in alliance with Humayun Kabir's Aam Janata Unnayan Party. The announcement assumes significance as it indicates a new political grouping of minority forces in the State.

It is not just about saving Bengali Hindus. It is about saving Bengal from turning into Pakistan or Afghanistan. Only BJP can save it

SUKANTA MAJUMDAR
BJP leader

Electoral diet: BJP candidate from Bidhannagar, Sharadwat Mukherjee, canvassing with a fish in West Bengal on Sunday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

With a catla, BJP candidate has a bone to pick with Trinamool

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

Sharadwat Mukherjee held a catla, a freshwater fish, in his hand as he campaigned in Bidhannagar on Sunday. The BJP candidate for the seat has been trying to tell people that the party will never put any restrictions on non-vegetarian food if voted to power in West Bengal.

In a State where fish and meat are a staple, the Bharatiya Janata Party has been trying to convince voters that the party is not opposed to fish eating, fighting the popular notion that it promotes a vegetarian diet.

"Lies are being spread against us. We eat fish and meat. I have come out with fish today to stop this propaganda," Mr. Mukherjee said. He said the Trinamool Congress had pushed people to such economic distress that they did not have money to buy fish.

BJP State president Shamik Bhattacharya has said on several occasions that Bengalis can continue with their dietary preferences and the party has no plans to promote vegetarianism. "Swami Vivekananda has said that Mother Kali will eat mutton. All Bengalis and Biharis will eat mutton. If anyone comes to stop me, I will break and crush it [the restriction]," he said.

He made the remarks in response to comments by Deputy Chief Minister of Bihar Vijay Kumar Sinha about restricting sale of non-vegetarian food.

The Trinamool Congress leadership has often warned the electorate of the State that if the BJP comes to power, it will stop people from eating fish and meat. Chief Minister and party chairperson Mamata Banerjee said on February 21, "Bengal cannot be occupied by those who come from Delhi. They say that they will stop the consumption of fish and meat because they do not know the culture of Bengal." February 21 is observed as International Mother Language Day.

Trinamool Congress spokesperson Kunal Ghosh, who is contesting the Manicktala seat, said the BJP candidate campaigning with fish in hand showed that the party was suffering a "panic attack".

"Their [BJP] Delhi leaders are saying we won't allow people to eat fish and in Bengal the leaders who are certain of defeat, their candidates are campaigning with fish in hand," Mr. Ghosh said.

Among the several challenges faced by the BJP in West Bengal, the biggest has been the perception that the party is alien to the culture, traditions and food preferences of Bengalis. Mr. Mukherjee and Mr. Bhattacharya are attempting to challenge this perception. BJP leaders often claim that the founder of Jana Sangha, the predecessor to the BJP was Syama Prasad Mookerjee, a dhoti-kurta clad Bengali and the Trinamool cannot paint the party as a 'party of outsiders'.

It is not only during elections that the debate on food preferences dominates West Bengal politics. In January, a vendor was assaulted in Kolkata Brigade Parade Ground for selling chicken patty during a religious event organised by a Hindutva organisation. The BJP leaders of the State came out in support of those behind attack. Those responsible for the assault were arrested by the Kolkata Police.

Incidents of fish vendors being asked not to sell fish and meat during Navaratri in different parts of the country created political ripples in West Bengal.

People will assess governance failure, corruption and favour UDF: KPCC chief

Sunny Joseph dismisses concerns of internal dissent within the Congress over granting electoral berth to former CPI(M) leaders; he says the UDF's decision to support such leaders will strengthen the coalition; results of local body elections indicate strong anti-incumbency sentiment, he adds

IN FOCUS

S. Anandan
C.P.Sajit
PERAVUR

Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) president and Peravur MLA Sunny Joseph has said that the United Democratic Front (UDF) will make the Sabarimala gold theft case and alleged irregularities linked to the Global Ayyappa Sangamam the central issues in the April 9 Assembly election. He has accused the ruling Communist Party of India (Marxist) of shielding the accused and eroding trust in governance.

In an interview with *The Hindu*, Mr. Joseph alleged that despite a court-monitored investigation into the Sabarimala theft, the accused secured bail without even an interim chargesheet being filed. "This is not just a theft; it involves temple property and public faith. The Supreme Court has observed that even gods are unsafe in Kerala," he said, adding that the Congress would mobilise public opinion and organise protests on the issue. He further alleged financial irregularities in the government-backed Global Ayyappa Sangamam event and said such controversies, coupled with what he termed as selective targeting of Congress leaders, would be highlighted before voters.

Rejecting Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan's charge that the Congress and its leader Rahul Gandhi were acting as a "B-team" of the Bharatiya Janata Party, Mr. Joseph said the public would not believe the allegation. "It is the Congress under Rahul Gandhi that is leading the fight against the BJP nationally. The BJP's action against Rahul Gandhi and other leaders shows who their real opponent is," he said, alleging that the CPI(M) has a tacit understanding with the BJP, citing political development in places such as Palakkad.

Strong support

The KPCC chief said the UDF's decision to support leaders who defected from the CPI(M), including G. Sudhakaran, Aisha Potty, T.K. Govindan, and V. Kunhikrishnan, would strengthen the coalition. "These are mass leaders with strong grassroots support. Their entry reflects growing dissent within the CPI (M) against its functioning," he said.

Favourable outcome: Senior Congress leaders share sweets with KPCC president Sunny Joseph following the UDF's overall dominance in the State local body elections. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Dismissing concerns of internal dissent within the Congress over granting electoral berth to former CPI(M) leaders, Mr. Joseph said minor issues at the local level would be resolved through dialogue. "The party is united and committed to ensuring their victory," he added. He also said that the uncertainty surrounding senior Congress leader K. Sudhakaran had been resolved, with the latter actively campaigning.

Mr. Joseph highlighted his development track record over the past 15 years in Peravur, stating that administrative restructuring and infrastructure expansion were among his key achievements. He is taking on the Left Democratic Front's K.K. Shailaja in the constituency.

Track record

Mr. Joseph also claimed credit for the elevation of Iritty to a municipality, strengthening of health infrastructure and establishment of an 11-kV substation in Kelakam, facilitated by land donation from a local trust. He said the bifurcation of the Iritty police station and creation of the Muzhankunnu police station helped address law and order challenges in a large jurisdiction.

Mr. Joseph described human-wildlife conflict as one of the most pressing issues in forest fringe areas like Aralam and Kelakam. He said he had raised the matter multiple times in the Assembly and moved adjournment motions, but discussions were not permitted. "Despite repeated interventions, including adjournment motions in the Assembly, the issue was not discussed seriously. Funds allocated are insufficient and even Central assistance remains under utilised," he alleged.

'Mood for change'

Expressing confidence in the UDF's prospects, Mr. Joseph said the coalition's improved performance in local body elections indicated strong anti-incumbency sentiment. The UDF has expanded its presence in Corporations and local bodies. From being in power in one Corporation, the UDF now governs four Corporations, he said, adding that there is visible enthusiasm among workers and a clear mood for change.

On the possibility of the Kerala Congress (M) returning to the UDF fold, he said the decision rested with the party leadership, but noted that the KC(M) had suffered electoral setback in districts such as Kottayam, Idukki, and Pathanamthitta.

"The people of Kerala will assess governance failure, corruption allegation, and development stagnation. We are confident they will deliver a decisive mandate in favour of the UDF," he added.

Almost half of the SIR cases under adjudication settled in Bengal: CEO

Shrabana Chatterjee
KOLKATA

Almost half of the cases kept under adjudication after the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in West Bengal have now been settled, Chief Electoral Officer of West Bengal Manoj Kumar Agarwal said on Monday.

But the CEO did not specify how many of those cases were included in or excluded from the final voter list.

Before the list was published, Mr. Agarwal said that the whole process was centralised and that State officials do not have any additional information.

"At least 29 lakh cases have been disposed of till now [Monday evening]. That is what we can see on our dashboard. We do not have any information on how many have been included or how many left out," the CEO said. Around 31 lakh cases are still pending.

Political reactions

The development has drawn sharp reactions from political parties. Trinamool Congress spokesperson Kunal Ghosh said, "No legal and genuine voter should be left out. If the Election Commission anticipates that the supplementary voter list will cause law and order issues in the State, then they already know that people will be removed from the list without due cause."

Long process: People waiting in a queue for special intensive revision hearing in Kolkata. Nearly 700 judges from West Bengal, Jharkhand, and Odisha have been hearing the cases. PTI

Mr. Ghosh further added that the poll panel has transferred several top police and administrative officials across the State after the election schedules were declared, and now, in case of any unforeseen situation, the EC would be responsible.

"In the name of SIR, what is happening in Bengal may cause a huge amount of disenfranchisement of voters," veteran Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury said.

The West Bengal CEO has asked the State Chief Secretary to provide space where appellant tribunals can conduct their work and listen to people's appeals.

Hearing appeals

People who are excluded from the final voter list even after the hearing may appeal to the tribunal headed by former judges. The judges will hear their case and decide if they may be included in the list or not.

After months of the SIR process, the final voter list of West Bengal was published on February 28. It had 6.46 crore names, while 60 lakh names were kept under adjudication. The cases remained pending for 23 days even as political parties traded barbs.

Around 700 judges from West Bengal, Jharkhand, and Odisha have been hearing the cases for the past three weeks.

Of the 1.6 crore people called for hearings, 1.3 crore were under the "logical discrepancy" category, and 32 lakh were classified as "unmapped" voters.

Earlier, when the draft voter list was published, 58 lakh people were removed under categories like deceased, absent, permanently shifted and duplicate. Around 5.5 lakh more were deleted when the final list was published.

West Bengal will go to the polls in two phases on April 23 and 29. The counting will be held on May 4.

Stage set for battle of the turncoats in high-stakes Dispur

Rahul Karmakar
GUWAHATI

The battle for the key Dispur constituency is turning out to be a contest of turncoats, amid a spate of defections ahead of the April 9 Assembly election.

Jayanta Kumar Das, who filed his nomination papers on Monday as an Independent after being denied ticket by the Bharatiya Janata Party, said, "I gave 35 years of my life to the party." He is one of the seniormost leaders of the saffron party.

Congress candidate Mira Borthakur Goswami and BJP nominee Pradyut Bordoloi follow in political seniority.

Congress and BJP leaders switching parties ahead of the election have given rise to a hybrid term – 'CongBJP', specially used by Gen-Z to describe those who have crossed over. At least 30 leaders switched to the BJP after long stints in the Congress, including Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma.

"I came quietly to file my papers to avoid being heckled, attacked or slapped with a case. I am relieved after leaving the party of 'CongBJP' leaders, who are torturing people with their brand of politics," Mr. Das said.

Congress and BJP leaders switching parties ahead of the election have given rise to a hybrid term – 'CongBJP

He said he would soon form a new party, "Trinamool BJP", and hoped to defeat his rivals with "both BJP and Congress in their DNA".

'Greed for power'

Ms. Goswami said she had her reasons to leave the "polarisation specialist" BJP in 2018. She said the people of Dispur would trust her more than Mr. Bordoloi, who secured the BJP ticket "overnight".

"People do change parties, but his crossover was driven by greed for power," she said, asserting that people would vote for her because of her consistent welfare work.

Mr. Bordoloi defended his decision to leave the Congress, dismissing claims that rebels would upset the BJP's applecart in Dispur. "I have been given the respect I lost toward the end of my time with the Congress," he said.

INBRIEF

Did not seek bribe in Aryan Khan case: ex-NCB official

Former Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) Zonal Director Sameer Wankhede on Monday informed the Bombay High Court that he did not demand a bribe from actor Shah Rukh Khan in connection with the 2021 Cordelia cruise ship drug case involving the actor's son, Aryan Khan. The submission was made during the hearing on Mr. Wankhede's petition seeking to quash a First Information Report (FIR) filed by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) against him and four others. The FIR which is based on a report by a Special Enquiry Team alleges a demand of ₹25 crore as bribe was made from those arrested in the cruise case, including Mr. Aryan Khan.

SC disposes of Wangchuk's pleas against NSA detention

The Supreme Court on Monday disposed of petitions filed by climate activist Sonam Wangchuk and his wife, Gitanjali J. Angmo, challenging his detention under the National Security Act (NSA) after being informed that he had been released from confinement on March 14. A Bench headed by Justice Aravind Kumar closed the case on Monday after multiple hearings that spanned over a month. The activist, represented by senior advocate Kapil Sibal, argued that malice on the part of authorities was at the bottom of his detention, which was evident from the fact that they chose to "hide" his public messages calling for peace after the protests seeking Statehood for Ladakh led to violence.

Centre launches AI skilling drive with Google, YouTube

Part of initiatives unveiled by Ashwini Vaishnaw to boost creative economy; a citizen creator platform, and in-built satellite tuners in television sets for access to DD Free Dish launched

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw on Monday unveiled three new initiatives aimed at strengthening India's media, broadcasting, and digital sector and promoting the "orange economy", or the creative economy.

The creative economy includes industries where economic value is generated primarily from creativity, culture, technology, and intellectual property.

The three initiatives are named the National AI Skilling Initiative in partnership with Google and YouTube through the Indian Institute of Creative Technologies (IICT); MyWAVES, a citizen creator platform on WAVES OTT; and the rollout of advanced Electronic Programme Guide and in-built satellite tuners in television sets for enhancing access to DD Free Dish services.

Key media and entertainment industry representatives, the head of YouTube India along with senior Ministry officials took part in the event.

Underscoring Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of democratising technology, Mr. Vaishnaw said the initiatives will make technology more affordable and accessible. He said that with in-built satellite tuners and an advanced programme guide, citizens can now access content easily without additional equipment.

Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw says the initiatives will make technology more affordable and accessible. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

He described MyWAVES as a powerful platform for content creators, enabling them to create, upload, and share content.

Referring to the Union Budget announcements, he underlined the government's commitment to promoting the "orange economy" and supporting the creative sector.

The Union Minister said under the National AI Skilling Initiative, being implemented with the support of YouTube, about 15,000 youth will be trained without levying any fee.

He spoke about the "Creators' Corner" scheme and urged content creators to actively use Doordarshan and platforms such as MyWAVES to showcase India's rich culture and regional diversity.

Speaking about the partnership's impact, YouTube India managing director Gunjan Soni said: "We believe that AI has the potential to open up remarkable opportunities for India's dynamic creative economy. Through our collaboration with the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting and IICT, we aim to equip creators and professionals with the skills required to master the tools of the future, leverage AI to tell more compelling stories... expand their reach to new audiences, and play a role in shaping the future of media."

The AI skilling programme will be conducted in two phases – Phase I from March 23 to June 30 2026, and Phase II from July to December 2026.

The first phase will focus on foundational AI learning at scale through Google Career Certificates and Google Cloud Generative AI learning paths. Participants will undergo courses such as AI Essentials, Prompting Essentials, Introduction to Generative AI, and Generative AI Leader Path.

The second phase will involve advanced, project-based specialisation for the creative industry. The curriculum will include modules on the art of storytelling, YouTube best practices, and advanced training using AI tools such as Gemini 3 and Vertex AI.

Centre to amend the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

The Bill proposes to reduce the maximum imprisonment for FCRA offences from five years to one year

The Union government is likely to amend the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act in the ongoing session of Parliament session. One of the key changes proposed is the appointment of a "designated authority" to take over, manage or dispose of assets created out of foreign funds by an NGO or association, which has had its FCRA registration suspended, cancelled, or not renewed.

Another proposed amendment is expanding the definition of "key functionary" of an NGO beyond an "office bearer/director" to include directors; partners; trustees; the *karta* (head) of a Hindu Undivided Family; office-bearers or members of the governing body or managing committee of a society, trust, trade union or association; and any other person who has control over or responsibility for the management or affairs of such an organisation.

The amendment also proposes to make key functionaries liable for offences under the FCRA.

Registration under the FCRA is mandatory for an NGO to receive foreign funds. Till now, the 2010 parent Act only had the provision to regulate the flow of foreign funds, and not the statutory framework to manage the assets created out of such funds.

The Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026 also proposes to amend Section 43 of the parent Act, which will require any law enforcement agency or State government to seek prior approval of the Central government for initiation of investigation into FCRA-related complaints.

The Statement of Objects and Reasons of the Bill circulated by Home Minister Amit Shah said that, at present, around 16,000 associations are registered under the FCRA and they receive around ₹22,000 crore annually.

The Bill proposes to reduce the maximum imprisonment for FCRA offences from five years to one year. It also proposes fixed timelines for the utilisation of foreign funds received under the "prior permission" category, unlike the open-ended provision under the 2010 Act.

Greater cooperation needed between India and Russia, says Jaishankar

Kallol Bhattacherjee
NEW DELHI

Against the backdrop of the war in West Asia, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar on Monday said the "evolving multipolar order" calls for "greater cooperation" between India and Russia both bilaterally as well as multilaterally through groupings such as BRICS, SCO, G-20, and the United Nations.

Mr. Jaishankar addressed a conference on India-Russia relations through video link and said Delhi-Moscow relations over the past decades helped in advancing "regional and global peace" and stability.

Speaking at the same event, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said India-Russia ties had "major significance" against the backdrop of the U.S.-Israel war on Iran and said Russia was "looking forward" to hosting Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the India-Russia annual summit, 2026.

Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar with Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov. FILE PHOTO

"India, during its BRICS chairmanship with a 'humanity first' and 'people-centric' approach looks forward to closely working with Russia to address shared challenges in a balanced and inclusive manner," Mr. Jaishankar said at the conference titled "India and Russia: Towards a New Bilateral Agenda".

Special ties

Talking about the "special and privileged strategic partnership" between India and Russia, Mr. Jaishankar said the relationship continued to "deepen" and reminded that during President Vladimir Putin's December 2025 visit to New Delhi, the two sides signed multiple agreements on areas such as mobility of skilled professionals, health and food safety, maritime cooperation, fertilizers, customs, and commerce.

"Over decades, our mutually beneficial cooperation has advanced regional and global peace, stability and progress," said Mr. Jaishankar. He expressed India's support for the Eurasian Economic Union Free Trade Agreement about which the two sides had expressed readiness during Mr. Putin's last visit to India. He described Russia as the "foremost partner" of India in the field of civil nuclear energy and referred to the Kudankulam nuclear project as a "stellar example".

Mr. Lavrov said India "steadfastly pursues strategic autonomy" in the current world scenario. He said that around 96% of India-Russia trade was now conducted in national currencies and expressed Russian support for India's BRICS chairship in 2026. He further said that bilateral relation between the two sides had "major significance" against the backdrop of the "acute military and political crisis in the Persian Gulf provoked by the United States and Israel".

SC gives Centre four weeks to respond to plea against 'arbitrary' hikes in airfares

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday gave the government a four-week leeway to respond to a petition highlighting the need for accountability in the civil aviation sector for "arbitrary" airfare hikes and cancellations, saying "there are bigger problems the government is handling now", in an oblique reference to the potential blowbacks from the ongoing Iran-Israel conflict.

When the case came up for hearing before a Bench headed by Justice Vikram Nath, the government counsel said a draft response was being circulated, but "certain international events" had arisen in the meanwhile. The Bench advised the counsel appearing for petitioner, S. Laxminarayanan, to agree to an adjournment and listed the case for April 27.

The court gives leeway saying that "there are bigger problems the govt. is handling now".

The petition had sought regulatory intervention in the civil aviation sector to address fare fluctuation, fare transparency, and continuity of essential air services. It said the roller-coaster airfares resulted in denial of mobility and an unjust imposition of financial burden in violation of the Constitutional guarantees. "Air travel, being regulated by statute, cannot be subjected to predatory market mechanisms," the petitioner submitted.

It urged the court to direct the Centre and the Directorate General of Civil Aviation to employ their statutory authority to stabilise tariffs and enforce service obligations.

The Airports Economic Regulatory Authority (AERA) had in February submitted a response claiming it had no role in the relief sought by the petitioner. AERA said its sole statutory objective was the regulation of tariffs and other charges for "aeronautical services" rendered at major airports.

Jinnah, Iqbal to be dropped from Jammu varsity syllabi

Peerzada Ashiq
SRINAGAR

The Jammu University's move to consider dropping topics on Pakistan founder Muhammad Ali Jinnah, educator Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and poet Mohammad Iqbal from the post-graduate Political Science programmes on Monday evoked sharp criticism from the ruling National Conference, and Peoples Democratic Party.

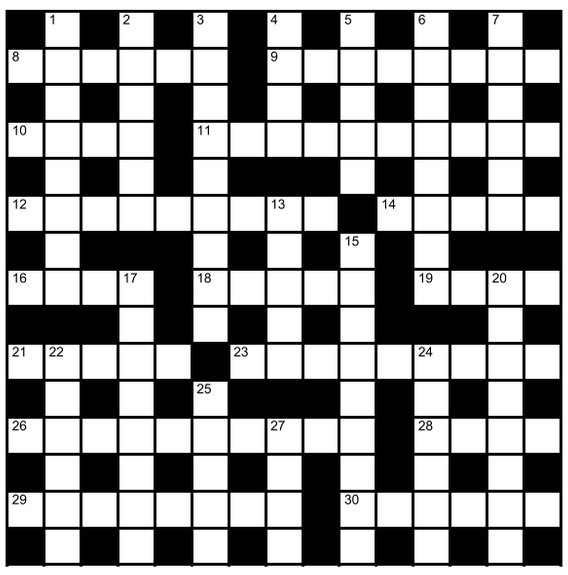
This move followed after protests by the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad on Friday. The activists demanded that a chapter on Jinnah be dropped following which the university's departmental affairs committee (DAC) chaired a meeting on Sunday. A fresh meeting will be held today "to further deliberate on the matter."

TH CROSSWORD + 14749

(set by Crossant)

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

SCAN TO PLAY



Across

8 Dream about getting money, love, bit of sunshine and drink (6)
9 Guys practised after Australian Open (8)
10 Backstage issue? (4)
11 Toppers of the English League may have lost lead perhaps (5,5)
12 Essentially stuffy, air conditioned, vacant lobby (9)
14 Roll Back Support - Amazon's bestseller basically (5)
16 Initially trekked around 50 kilometres say (4)
18 Model appears without clothes daily (5)
19 Somewhat lucky I visited European city (4)
21 Money returned around beginning of previous month (5)
23 Came across poem about a virtual world (9)
26 One sees ad about earning money in Asian region (4,6)
28 Reduce high speed (4)
29 Indian ascetic, for example, assuming new name on a small island (8)
30 One about to enter a far-off land (6)

Down

1 Drink with a bit of rum - Mai Tai perhaps (3,5)
2 Saw boy standing behind (6)
3 Spooner's emergency officers getting coffee and cocoa perhaps (4,5)
4 Indian tribal leaving island returns once more (4)
5 Yankee largely happy in African country (5)
6 Dance - it's easy (8)
7 Say difficulty swallowing morsel eventually comes up in later years (3,3)
13 Vacant space behind leg slip (5)
15 Largest English Academy sporting official Government stamp (5,4)
17 King and knight leaving without queen for recreational activity perhaps (8)
20 Talent's not obvious, needs discerning insight to begin with (8)
22 Alcaraz ditches car, cycles in extremely populous public squares in Spain (6)
24 Fiery McEnroe blowing his top once again (6)
25 Popular place for decorative work (5)
27 Plant inspectors review industrial safety primarily (4)

SUDOKU

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

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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

Solution to previous puzzle

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

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

FAITH

Food and the message

In our sacred literature, we find that there were people fortunate enough to serve food to God Himself, said Rama Kausalya in a lecture. Sabari waited patiently for Rama's arrival. But all that she gave Him were fruits that grew in the forest. She first tasted the fruits to ensure they were good enough for Rama. Imagine offering to the Lord food that had been tasted by a mortal! And yet this was exactly what Sabari did. Rama gladly ate what Sabari gave Him. Kuchela had studied with Krishna, but they had gone their separate ways after their years of study ended. Krishna became king and Kuchela was so poor that he could not provide for his large family. He decided to seek Krishna's help. But Krishna was now a king. How could he approach a king without taking some gift for the ruler? All that Kuchela had was a handful of rice flakes.

Would a king accept such a humble offering? That was a natural misgiving Kuchela had. But Krishna asked for the rice flakes and ate them with relish. Krishna refused to partake of food offered by Duryodhana. But He was happy to eat in Vidura's place, because Vidura's offering was motivated by bhakti and not by pride. The Lord never forgets the dedication of His devotees. After killing Ravana, Rama, on His return to Ayodhya, stopped over at sage Bharadwaja's ashram. He asked the sage to make all the trees on the road to Ayodhya bear fruit, even though it was not the season for the fruits. Bharadwaja granted Him His wish. Rama's request was for the sake of the monkeys, who had helped Him during the war against Ravana. The grateful monkeys ate the sweet fruits which had appeared on the trees, thanks to Rama's request to the sage.

INBRIEF

Oil plunges after strikes on Iranian power plants put off

Oil prices plunged by more than 13% on Monday after U.S. President Donald Trump said he would postpone any military strikes against Iranian power plants for five days, hours ahead of a deadline that threatened further escalation in the conflict now in its fourth week. Brent crude futures traded at about $104.1 a barrel, or down 7.2%, at 11.30 GMT after sliding as much as 15% to a session low of $96 a barrel. REUTERS

Centre restores RoDTEP benefits for exporters

The government has restored the complete benefits provided to exporters under the Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products (RoDTEP) scheme. In a notification it said the rates and values applicable on February 22 this year and were reduced by 50% are now being restored to earlier levels from February 23 to March 31. According to GTRI, while the DGFT decision is welcome, the initial reduction is hard to justify as RoDTEP is not a subsidy.

Avoid insinuations without any evidence, says SEBI chief

In the wake of the crisis at the HDFC Bank which was triggered by the sudden exit of Chairman Atanu Chakraborty, Securities and Exchange Board of India chairperson Tuhin Kanta Pandey said on Monday that insinuations without any evidence should be avoided. Speaking at a media briefing post the regulator's Q4 FY26 board meeting, Mr. Pandey highlighted the responsibilities of independent directors in matters of actual or suspected fraud.

Benchmark indices fall 2.5%, Nifty likely in 'bear grip'

NSE cash volumes dip 7%, sectoral indices hammered by brutal declines in consumer durables, metals, realty, PSU banks; Rupee slips past 94, stabilises on likely RBI intervention

Lalatendu Mishra
MUMBAI

Benchmark stock indices fell 2.5% on Monday owing to concerns over the ongoing West Asia conflict which has spiked crude prices, fuelling fears of high inflation.

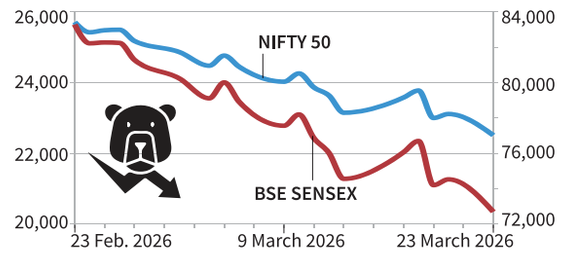
The BSE Sensex fell 2.46%, to 72,696 points. Mirroring the same sentiment, NSE Nifty 50 shed 600 points, or 2.6%, to 22,513 points, its lowest level since April 9, 2025.

The 600-point fall signals "deeper bear mauling", said Vinay Rajani, Senior Technical Research Analyst, HDFC Securities.

"Nifty 50 opened 300 points lower and extended losses throughout the session, closing near the day's low after registering a steep 15% correction from its all-time high of 26,373, now marching towards its 52-week low of 21,743," he said.

Markets in the trenches

Nifty 50 (left axis) and Sensex (right axis) extended their slump at the close on Monday



NSE cash volumes dipped marginally by 7% from the previous session, with HCL Tech, Power Grid, and ONGC emerging as the sole Nifty 50 gainers amid a sea of red; Titan, Shriram Finance, and Trent spearheaded the losses. All sectoral indices closed lower, hammered by brutal declines in consumer durables, metals, realty, financial services, and PSU banks.

Hariprasad K., SEBI-registered Research Analyst and Founder, Livelong Wealth, said, "The intensity of the decline indicates that the recent fragility in global cues has now translated into broad-based selling pressure across domestic markets."

On Monday, midcaps and smallcaps bore the brunt of the rout, with Nifty Midcap 100 tumbling 3.9% and Nifty Smallcap 100 falling 3.94%, while market breadth cratered with the BSE advance-decline ratio shriveling to a dismal 0.16.

"Nifty remains firmly in the bear grip, with every intraday recovery savagely sold off, particularly after breaching key support at 22,930," Mr. Rajani said.

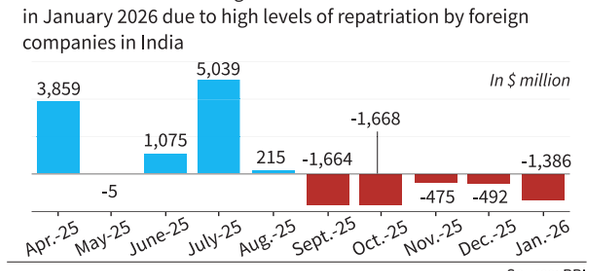
The rupee on Monday hit a record intraday low of 94.11 against the U.S. dollar battered by fears of an escalating West Asia conflict that amplified the sell-off across Indian assets.

Believed to be supported by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), which sold dollars in the market to arrest the excess volatility, the Rupee stabilised at 93.53 against the previous close of 93.53, closing flat on the Clearing Corporation of India Ltd. spot market.

"As long as disruptions persist over the next 2-3 weeks into mid-April, USD-INR could test the 96-97 zone in a worst-case scenario, with 95 and 96 acting as key resistance levels," said Anindya Banerjee, Head of Commodity and Currency Research, Kotak Securities.

Flowing out

Net FDI into India was negative for the fifth consecutive month in January 2026 due to high levels of repatriation by foreign companies in India



Source: RBI

Net FDI negative for fifth straight month

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

Net FDI into India contracted for the fifth consecutive month in January 2026, with outflows exceeding inflows by nearly $1.4 billion, a three-month high. The data shows this was because inflows into India fell nearly 7% while the amount repatriated out of the country nearly doubled.

According to data released by the Reserve Bank of India on Monday as part of its monthly bulletin, the total amount of money entering India as direct investment, or gross FDI, stood at about $5.7 billion in January 2026.

This was 7% lower than in January last year, and only two-thirds of the amount that came in December 2025. The RBI, however, looked at a longer time period to draw some positive conclusions.

"During April 2025 - January 2026, gross FDI inflows remained strong, higher than the corresponding period a year ago," the central bank noted in its report. "Sectorwise, manufacturing received the highest share of equity inflows, followed by computer services, electricity and other energy, and financial services – these sectors together accounted for over 60% of total inflows."

With regard to outflows, the outward FDI by Indian companies increased by 5.4% in January 2026 to $2.1 billion. This was, however, nearly 30% lower than the outward FDI in December 2025.

"Around 75% of the outward FDI flows were directed to the U.S., Singapore, the UK, and the UAE during the [April 2025 - January 2026] period," the RBI said. Repatriation and disinvestment by foreign companies doing business in India, on the other hand, increased by 97.3% to $4.9 billion in January 2026. But this was nearly 18% lower than the amount in December 2025.

As a result, net FDI stood at about -$1.4 billion, the lowest since October 2025.

The central bank noted that portfolio investments again flowed out more than they flowed in in March this year.

Gold futures dive over 10% amid global rout

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Gold prices plummeted sharply by more than 10% to ₹1.29 lakh per 10 grams in futures trade on Monday amid a global sell-off in precious metals driven by macroeconomic pressures.

On the Multi Commodity Exchange, the yellow metal dived by ₹14,897, or 10.3%, to ₹1,29,595 per 10 grams. The yellow metal has now declined by ₹63,501, or nearly 33%, from its all-time high of ₹1,93,096 per 10 grams recorded on January 29.

Analysts said the sharp fall was triggered by rising inflation fears and a surge in crude oil prices, which have clouded the global economic outlook.

Gaurav Garg, research analyst at Lemonn Markets Desk said, a stronger U.S. dollar and rising bond yields have led to liquidity-driven selling, overshadowing the traditional safe-haven appeal of gold.

Last week, gold had dropped ₹13,974, or 8.82%, to close at around ₹1.44 lakh per 10 grams in the domestic market.

Globally, gold futures for the April contract depreciated $474.9, or 10.4%, to hit an intraday low of $4,100 per ounce.

SEBI board okays conflict of interest panel's key recommendations

Ashokamithran T.
MUMBAI

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has decided to approve key recommendations of the High Level Committee on Conflict of Interest..

According to the board, the recommendations include bringing the chairperson and whole time board members within the definition of an 'insider', establishing digital systems for conflict-of-interest management and a new office of ethics and compliance to oversee public issues. SEBI also recommended notifying separate regulations for board members and an oversight committee on ethics to oversee board members.

Ease of doing business: FPIs will now be allowed to settle funds on a net basis for stock market transactions. REUTERS

Another major regulatory change approved was to simplify 'fit and proper person' norms for intermediaries, which include depositories, clearing houses and exchanges. Accordingly, members of intermediaries would be disqualified only on conviction for economic offences or securities law violation. However, grounds for disqualification would also include offences involving moral turpitude.

The board also decided Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) will now be allowed to settle funds on a net basis for stock market transactions viz. payment for a stock FPIs buy would be adjusted against the proceeds of the stock it sells.

Earlier, FPIs had to pay for the stock they bought in full and receive payment for the stocks they sold.

Cutting cost

When FPI outflows had crossed ₹88,000 crore in March alone, SEBI Chairman Tuhin Kanta Pandey assured new FPI registrations continued in response to steps easing their operations and cutting cost. The board also reduced minimum investment value for social impact funds in Alternative Investment Funds to ₹1,000 from ₹2 lakh to boost retail participation.

Lok Sabha sends Corporate Law Amendment Bill 2026 to JPC

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The government introduced the Corporate Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026 in the Lok Sabha following which the House adopted a motion to send the proposed legislation to a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) for detailed examination.

The JPC will comprise members from both Houses of Parliament for detailed analysis and recommendations, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said while proposing the motion for JPC reference. The motion was adopted by a voice vote.

The Bill seeks further amendments to the Limited Liability Partnership Act, 2008 and the Companies Act, 2013 to facilitate ease of doing business and address the gaps identified by the Company Law Committee in its 2022 report.

Nirmala Sitharaman

The proposed amendments are expected to rationalise penalties, shift several minor procedural lapses from criminal liability to monetary penalties, and streamline regulatory processes to promote ease of doing business.

The FM said the Bill was aimed at promoting ease of doing business and ease of living for corporates by decriminalising more provisions.

'Diluting provisions'

When the Bill was introduced in Lok Sabha, Opposition members Manish Tewari (Congress), Saugata Roy (Trinamool Congress) and T. Sumathy (DMK) opposed the same claiming the legislation sought to dilute the provisions of law under which companies mandatorily had to pay 2% of profit towards corporate social responsibility (CSR).

The FM refuted the claim and said that the Bill had been introduced after two years of deliberations and the apprehensions of the members were unfounded as the proposed legislation sought to amend only the criteria for net profit, not the entire clause related to CSR.

Mr. Tewari also said since a Parliamentary Standing Committee on Corporate Affairs was already in place, the Bill must be sent there rather than setting up new JPC.

Home Minister Amit Shah, intervening, said none of the Opposition members talked about referring the Bill to a panel and now, when the FM has herself sought it, they were arguing as to which panel the Bill should be sent.

Wipro expands footprint in South Korea

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Wipro announced the expansion of its business operations in South Korea. This would include: an enlarged office footprint in Seoul, unveiling a new Innovation Lab as part of the Wipro Innovation Network (WIN), and continued investment in local talent to support South Korean clients locally and globally.

This reflected the growing importance of Korea in shaping global innovation and increasing demand from South Korean enterprises for AI-led transformation, said Wipro.

Local LPG output now at 50-60% of consumption requirement: official

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Local production of liquified petroleum gas (LPG) is fulfilling about 50-60% of domestic demand, Sujata Sharma, Joint-Secretary at the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (MoPNG) told reporters at the daily inter-Ministerial briefing on West Asia situation.

Responding to queries about the geographies India is procuring LPG from, Ms. Sharma held the country was picking up cargoes from wherever available.

"We require a whole lot of LPG now, and because earlier 90% of our imports were coming from West Asia," she stated.

Earlier 90% LPG was from West Asia, Ms. Sharma said.

The senior official emphasised domestic LPG supplies were 'normal as before.' "Panic bookings, which peaked to 88 lakh, has come down to about 50 lakhs. So, it has come to normal," she said.

Migration to PNG

She said about 1.90 lakh consumers had migrated from LPG to PNG. Cumulatively more than 3.5 lakh domestic and commercial PNG connections had been issued or activated in the first three weeks of March.

For perspective, amid the escalating tensions, the Union Government had been encouraging for a transition to piped natural gas (PNG) from the cooking gas cylinders.

'Techno-commercial'

On India potentially tapping into market for Iranian crude oil, she held, "I would like to state [that] these are techno-commercial decisions taken by oil marketing companies."

Fuel tanker charters

Separately, Rajesh Kumar Sinha, Special Secretary at the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, informed India-flagged vessel carrying liquified natural gas (LNG) was chartered by Petronet LNG. Further, state-owned OMCs Bharat Petroleum and Hindustan Petroleum chartered India-flagged vessels carrying LPG while IndianOil, RIL and BGN International chartered India-flagged vessels carrying crude oil.

'Prolonged war detrimental to broader global outlook'

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

Prolonged war and high uncertainty would be detrimental to the broader global outlook, which was already in a state of flux prior to the recent events, Reserve Bank of India (RBI) officials said in the March edition of RBI Bulletin.

External dependence

"For the domestic economy, given India's external dependence on crude oil, the evolving situation requires close monitoring and proactive measures to limit adverse spillovers even though it is mention worthy the capacity and resilience of the Indian economy to absorb external shocks have strengthened over time, buttressed by its strong growth, sound macroeconomic fundamentals and robust external sector buffers," they emphasised

Evolving situation requires close monitoring, officials said.

Stating that in terms of energy security, India progressively diversified its crude oil import sources and augmented domestic refining capacity, they said since the start of the conflict, several policy steps had been implemented to blunt the immediate impact of the disruptions in global fuel supply chains and achieve more effective use of domestic capacity to meet shortfalls.

The creation of an Economic Stabilisation Fund would further provide fiscal headroom and buffer to proactively respond to global headwinds, the officials pointed out.

ROME

Setback to Meloni as Italian voters reject plans to overhaul judiciary

AFP

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni conceded defeat on Monday in a referendum on justice reform with the "No" camp securing 54% of the vote. The referendum aimed to separate the role of prosecutors, judges, and change their oversight body to ensure impartiality. But critics say it attempts to exert control over independent judges. AFP

ISLAMABAD

Pakistan vows to root out terrorism as Afghan Taliban truce nears end

AFP

Pakistan's Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar said on Monday that the country remains committed to "eradicating the menace of terrorism", as the clock ticked down to the end of a temporary ceasefire with Afghanistan. Both countries last Wednesday agreed to a temporary ceasefire until midnight on Monday. AFP

WASHINGTON

Statue of Christopher Columbus installed on White House grounds

AP

The White House installed on its grounds a statue of Christopher Columbus in a bid by Trump administration to reshape depictions of U.S. history. During the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests, many U.S. cities took down statues of the Italian navigator, whose voyages paved the way for Europe's conquests of the Americas. REUTERS

LJUBLJANA

Slovenia headed towards coalition talks after tight election outcome

REUTERS

Slovenia's President urged parties to start talks on forming a new government after a parliamentary poll ended with no winner. Prime Minister Robert Golob's Freedom Movement party (28.6%) and the Slovenian Democratic Party led by ex-Prime Minister Janez Jansa (28.2%) failed to secure enough seats needed for a majority. AP

Gulf nations targeted in new attacks; Iran threatens to mine access routes

Israel launches new attacks on Iranian capital, saying it has 'begun a wide-scale wave of strikes' on infrastructure targets; Persian Gulf countries Saudi Arabia, the UAE respond to 'incoming missile threats'; Bahrain urges public to seek shelter

Agence France-Presse
RIYADH/DUBAI

Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates reported coming under fresh attacks on Monday morning, with explosions and sirens sounding over the oil-rich Gulf.

The Saudi Defence Ministry said it had detected two incoming ballistic missiles targeting the capital on Monday, "one of which was intercepted and the other fell in an uninhabited area".

The UAE Defence Ministry said it was "currently responding to incoming missile and drone threats from Iran", explaining "the sounds heard are the result of the Air Defence Systems intercepting missiles and drones".

War fallout: An excavator clears rubble from destroyed buildings in Tehran. Explosions were heard in the Iranian capital on Monday. AFP

Israel also launched new attacks on Monday on the Iranian capital, saying it had "begun a wide-scale wave of strikes" on infrastructure targets in Tehran without immediately elaborating. Explosions were heard in multiple locations in the afternoon.

Iran warned that it would lay mines to all access routes in the Gulf waters.

"Any attempt by the enemy to target Iran's coasts or islands will, naturally and in accordance with established military practice, lead to the mining of all access routes ... in the Persian Gulf and along the coasts," Iran's Defense Council said in a statement.

Strait subject to risk

The widespread use of mines could imperil not only military vessels but scores of commercial ships waiting to pass through the Strait of Hormuz, and a cleanup would last long after the conflict ends.

In Abu Dhabi, authorities reported an Indian national had been wounded by falling debris from an intercepted ballistic missile.

Sirens were sounding in Bahrain, with residents instructed to seek shelter. "Citizens and residents are urged to remain calm and head to the nearest safe place," the Interior Ministry posted on social media.

Gulf nations that have long billed themselves as oases of safety and stability in the region have been drawn into the West Asia war as Iran retaliates against U.S.-Israeli strikes.

The Islamic republic has taken aim at U.S. assets as well as civilian infrastructure, including landmarks, airports, ports and oil facilities around the Gulf.

(With inputs from Associated Press)

Runway collision kills two pilots at New York airport

Agence France-Presse
NEW YORK

A plane carrying dozens of people collided with a fire truck on a runway at New York's LaGuardia airport, killing the pilot and co-pilot and causing "serious injuries" to others, authorities said on Monday.

Due to the crash late on Sunday, U.S. aviation authorities halted all flights at LaGuardia, and the port authority said the airport would stay shut until at least 2:00 p.m. (18:00 GMT) "to allow for a thorough investigation."

The closure follows the collision that left the Air Canada Express plane tilted back on its tail on the tarmac with a smashed cockpit.

The pilot and co-pilot were killed in the crash, Kathryn Garcia, the head of the city's port authority, said at a press conference.

An Air Canada Express plane sits on the runway after colliding with a fire truck at LaGuardia Airport in New York on Monday. AFP

Forty-one people were taken to the hospital, some with "serious injuries," though 32 have since been released, Ms. Garcia said.

The port authority said the aircraft operated by Jazz Aviation, a regional partner of Air Canada, struck one of its firefighting trucks on Runway 4 at around 11:40 p.m. on Sunday as the vehicle drove to a separate incident.

Jazz Aviation said the crash involved a CRJ-900 aircraft that had flown into LaGuardia from Montreal as flight AC8646. Emergency response protocols had been "immediately activated," it said.

A preliminary passenger list showed 76 people on board the flight, including four crew members.

Up in the air

An aerial view shows hot air balloons decorated with traditional motifs before their launch during the annual hot air balloon festival held to celebrate Id-ul-Fitr, which marks the end of the Islamic holy fasting month of Ramzan in Wonosobo, Central Java on Monday. AFP

IEA chief warns oil shock worse than 1970s crises

Associated Press
WELLINGTON

The head of the International Energy Agency (IEA) said on Monday that the global economy faces a "major, major threat" because of the Iran war.

"No country will be immune to the effects of this crisis if it continues to go in this direction," Fatih Birol said at Australia's National Press Club in Canberra on Monday.

The crisis in West Asia, he said, has had a worse impact on oil than the two oil shocks of the 1970s combined, and a worse effect on gas than the Russia-Ukraine war.

One major fear is that the war could knock out oil and gas production in West Asia for a long time, which would mean high prices could last a while and cause inflation to rip higher around the world. The U.S. stock market has a history of bouncing back relatively quickly from past conflicts in West Asia and elsewhere, as long as oil prices do not stay too high for too long.

The oil crises of 1973 and 1979, he said, lost together 10 million barrels per day, causing "major economic problems around the world, the recessions. And today, only as of today, we lost 11 million barrels per day – so more than two major oil shocks put together."

Fatih Birol

Growing shortage

After Russia's invasion of Ukraine, he said, the gas markets, especially in Europe, "lost about 75 billion cubic meters, 75BCM. And as of now, as a result of this crisis, we lost about 140BCM, almost twice (as much)."

Mr. Birol said 40 energy assets in nine countries across the region were "severely or very severely damaged."

"Some of the vital arteries of the global economy, such as petrochemical, such as fertilizers, such as sulfur, such as helium – their trade is all interrupted, which would have serious consequences for the global economy," he said.

He said the International Energy Agency, "in order to comfort the markets," earlier released 400 million barrels of oil, "which is historic. We have never released so much oil to the markets. ... The single most important solution to this problem is opening up the Hormuz Strait as things stand now."

Taiwan Opposition leader says talks with Xi a 'bridge' to peace

Agence France-Presse
TAIPEI

The leader of Taiwan's largest Opposition party said on Monday she hoped to meet Chinese President Xi Jinping and build a "bridge" to resolve disputes between China and the democratic island, which Beijing has threatened to seize by force.

Kuomintang (KMT) chairwoman Cheng Li-wun, who has been a strident critic of President Lai Ching-te's government, has insisted on meeting Mr. Xi before she makes an official trip to the United States.

While the KMT has long supported closer ties with Beijing, Ms. Cheng has been accused by Mr. Lai's Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) of doing Beijing's bidding by stalling the government's defence spending plans.

There are concerns inside the KMT that a Cheng-Xi meeting could trigger a voter backlash in Taiwan's district elections later this year.

But speaking to foreign media on Monday, Ms. Cheng said talks with Mr. Xi would carry "significant symbolic meaning" and could be a "foundation" to peaceful relations across the Taiwan Strait.

"I do not believe a single meeting can resolve all the issues that have been accumulating for nearly a century," Ms. Cheng said. "But... I hope I can successfully build such a bridge."

While the KMT has supported having stronger defences, Ms. Cheng said more military spending alone would not achieve peace with China. "There must also be political efforts. Political efforts are... the key," Ms. Cheng said.

North Korea's Kim reappointed as President of state affairs: state media

Agence France-Presse
SEOUL

North Korea's rubber-stamp legislature has re-elected Kim Jong-un as President of state affairs, state media reported on Monday.

Mr. Kim's reappointment as head of the authoritarian nation's highest policy-making and governing body, the State Affairs Commission, was announced by KCNA.

Critics argue that elections in North Korea are pre-determined and designed to give the country's leadership a veneer of democratic legitimacy.

"The Supreme People's Assembly of the DPRK re-elected Comrade Kim Jong-un as President of the State Affairs of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea at the First Session, the first state affairs activity of its 15th term, on March 22," KCNA reported.

Hall of power: The first session of the 15th Supreme People's Assembly in progress at Mansudae Assembly Hall in Pyongyang. AFP

The report said the decision to re-elect Mr. Kim to the "top post" reflected "the unanimous will and desire of all the Korean people".

Mr. Kim is the third-generation ruler of the nuclear-armed state founded by his grandfather Kim Il-Sung in 1948. He has ruled the country since his father's death in 2011.

The election is a "highly choreographed event with a pre-determined outcome", said Lee Horyung of the Korea Institute for Defense Analyses.

'Anachronistic' Japan

Meanwhile, Kim Yo-Jong, the powerful sister of the North Korean leader, said on Monday a summit between her brother and Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi will not happen if Japan sticks to "its anachronistic" approach.

Ms. Kim Yo-Jong's statement came after Ms. Takaichi told reporters last week that she had informed U.S. President Donald Trump during a summit in Washington that she had "a very strong desire" to meet Mr. Kim.

"But this is not the one that comes true, as wanted or decided by Japan," Ms. Kim Yo-Jong said. "In order for the meet, Japan should first be determined to break with its anachronistic practice and habit."

Ms. Kim Yo-Jong, who is also a senior official, did not explicitly say what Japan's "anachronistic practice and habit" are.

However, in 2024, she said in a statement that North Korea's acceptance of a reported offer for a meeting by one of Ms. Takaichi's predecessors would depend on Japan tolerating the North's nuclear weapons programme and ignoring its past abductions of Japanese nationals.

The meeting eventually did not occur.

(With inputs from Associated Press)

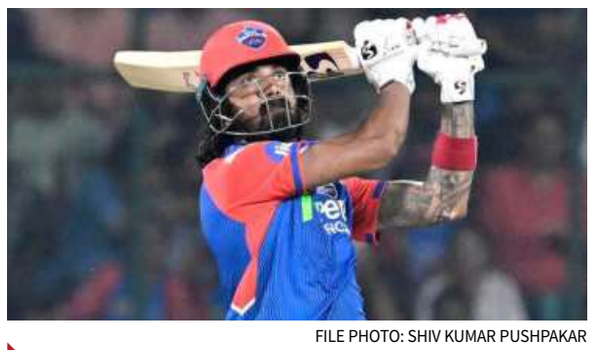
TELANGANA CO-OPERATIVE MARKETING FEDERATION LTD.
Email: proc.tsmarkfed2018@gmail.com, Ph.No: 040-2460 7108
Rc.No.P&M/Disposal of Maize/2025-26 Date:23.03.2026
TENDER NOTIFICATION FOR GODOWN-WISE ONLINE E-AUCTION FOR THE SALE OF MAIZE VANAKALAM 2025-26 PROCURED BY TG MARKFED.
Tender notification for godown wise online e-Auctions on disposal of Maize Vanakalam 2025-26 procured by TG MARKFED for the quantity of 3,77,669 **MTs** without a base price through **e-procurement.telangana.gov.in** or **https://auction.telangana.gov.in/** i.e. Telangana e-procurement (Applications in e-procurement portal will be available from 24.03.2026AN). **1.** Online e-auction-I starts on dated **01.04.2026**, from **10:30 AM to 12:00 AM, 2.** Online e-auction -II starts on dated **01.04.2026**, from **12:00 PM to 01:30 PM, 3.** Online e-auction-III starts on dated **01.04.2026**, from **01:30 PM to 03:00 PM, 4.** Online e-auction - IV starts on dated **01.04.2026**, from **03:00 PM to 04:30 PM.** For online registration and further technical support please contact Service providers Mobile No: 7337445545 / 6309339690 / 7337445546 /9912756216. For further details please contact. Ph: 7288879806 and 7288879829.
DIPR R.O.No.17447-PP/CL/ADVT/1/2025-26 Dt. 23.03.2026 **Sd/- Managing Director**

RAICHUR POWER CORPORATION LTD.
(Yermarus Thermal Power Station)
(Joint venture of KPCL and BHEL)
CIN : U40101KA2009PLC049582
No: KPCL/2025-26/AUCTION 134 Dated: 16.03.2026
SHORT TERM AUCTION NOTIFICATION
RPCL invites auction through GoK e-procurement portal **www.kppp.karnataka.gov.in** under "Auction" category for **Sale of Mill Reject Waste Coal (MRWC) for a period of Two years excluding monsoon period. EMD: Rs.13,20,345/-.** Last date & time for submission of the query: 26.03.2026 upto 17:30 hrs. Further details can be had from office of the **Executive Engineer (M-2)**, RPCL/ YTPS, Yermarus - 584 134, Raichur Dist., Karnataka. Mobile: +91 82775 02840.

GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH
ROADS & BUILDINGS DEPARTMENT
INVITATION FOR BIDS
IFB.No.1/ENC(R&B) MDR&NDB/PIU/2025-26 **Dt:16-03-2026.**
1. Online Bids are invited from eligible individual consultants for appointment as **(1) Finance Management Expert** & **(2) Environmental Expert** in the Project Implementation Unit (PIU) for the **APRBRP** and **APMCRCIP** projects, implemented with loan assistance from the **New Development Bank (NDB).**
2. The Request for Proposal **(RFP)** document can be downloaded from the Central e-procurement place i.e., "**https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app**" from **25.03.2026 from 3.00 PM** onwards. The last date and time of submission of bids is on or before **24.04.2026 up to 3.00 PM.**
3. Further details can be seen on Central e-procurement market place i.e.. "**https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app**".
DIPR 4928PP/CL, Dt:23/03/2026 **Sd/- for Engineer-in-Chief (R&B), MDR & NDB**

ROLE CLARITY

Rahul will open the batting, says Delhi Capitals captain Axar



FILE PHOTO: SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

Delhi Capitals captain Axar Patel said that the versatile K.L. Rahul will open the batting in the upcoming IPL season. "Last year, Rahul was playing in the middle-order because of our team combination. He has always been good in the opening slot, he has hit a lot of runs. I think we will keep him as an opener," said Axar on Monday.

TOUGH LUCK

Disappointed to lose a player of Curran's calibre: Sangakkara

AP

RR head coach Kumar Sangakkara expressed disappointment at Sam Curran missing IPL 2026. "We are disappointed to lose a player of Sam's calibre so close to the start of the season. Sam brings immense value with both bat and ball. However, we are pleased to have found an ideal replacement in Dasun Shanaka," he added.

READY TO FIRE

Fit-and-raring Rohit will really take it on in IPL 2026, reckons Ashwin

FILE PHOTO: R.V. MOORTHY

I think this is going to be a season where Rohit (Sharma) will really take it on. He is getting enough breaks. His mind is fresh. He is physically in a good space. He looks really fit. This could well be a season where Rohit is going to bring back his T20 batting in the IPL — R. Ashwin.

CELEBRATORY MOOD

Gujarat Titans sets the tone for the season ahead in a gala event

VIJAY SONEJI

Gujarat Titans set the tone for the upcoming IPL season as its players, staff, franchise owners, partners and fans came together for 'Shubharambh 2026', a gala event in Ahmedabad on Monday. Shubman Gill, the team's captain, was recognised keeping in mind the broader narrative of consistency, growth, and ambition.

Distinguished career: Thyagarajan joined *The Hindu* on June 6, 1962, rose through the ranks, and retired as the Deputy Sports Editor on December 21, 2013. THE HINDU ARCHIVES

S. Thyagarajan, doyen of sports journalism, passes away

Sports Bureau
CHENNAI

S. Thyagarajan, 85, veteran sports correspondent, who worked with *The Hindu* for more than five decades, passed away here on Monday.

A multi-sport writer, who eventually specialised in covering hockey, Thyagarajan, 'Thyagu Sir' for many, was the spine that held *The Hindu's* sports department together for many years.

He joined the organisation on June 6, 1962, rose through the ranks, and retired as the Deputy Sports Editor on December 21, 2013. For an additional year, he also worked as a consultant with *The Hindu* Group. Through his career, he wrote extensively in *The Hindu* and *Sportstar*.

Known for an alliterative style, Thyagarajan weighed his words, and reported sport, ranging from the hyper-local to the Olympics, with accuracy. He was a regular presence in most press boxes across the globe, and always ready with a quick repartee.

Having reported multiple Olympics and Asian Games, he also covered almost all hockey matches that involved India for decades. His analysis had depth and his criticism was always linked to the sport and the way it was played, and never got personal. Right from the junior athlete to a champion like Dhanraj Pillay, from a local club official to senior sports administrators, Thyagarajan's connections spanned a wide range and in all these circles, he was held in high regard.

S. Thyagarajan.

Even after retirement, he kept a watch on *The Hindu's* sports pages. If he liked a feature or report, he would text a warm message. And if there was a new byline, he would be curious to know about the writer. Accessible and a fount of innumerable anecdotes, he would often delve into the past and recount tales with gusto.

Thyagarajan is survived by wife and two daughters. Hockey India, the Sports Journalists Federation of India (SJFI) and the Tamil Nadu Sports Journalists Association (TNSJA) condoled his demise. He was the SJFI president in the 1990s. Thyagarajan was also one of the founding members of the TNSJA and served honourably as its president.

Playing with 'defending champion' tag the biggest challenge for RCB

Kohli headlines a formidable batting unit; uncertainty over the availability of Hazlewood and Dayal a concern in the pace-bowling department

IPL-19 COUNTDOWN

Royal Challengers Bengaluru

OVERALL NUMBERS

M	W	L	NR
271	134	133	4

BY OPPONENT

	M	W	L	NR
CSK	35	**13**	21	1
DC	33	**20**	12	1
GT	6	**3**	3	0
KKR	35	**15**	20	0
LSG	6	**4**	2	0
MI	34	**15**	19	0
PBKS	37	**19**	18	0
RR	33	**17**	14	2
SRH	25	**11**	14	0

Royal Challengers' remaining matches were against Deccan Chargers (11), GL (5), PWI (5), RPS (4) and KTK (2)

RCB'S 2026 LEAGUE CAMPAIGN*

March 28	vs. SRH	Bengaluru	7.30 p.m
April 5	vs. CSK	Bengaluru	7.30 p.m.
April 10	vs. RR	Guwahati	7.30 p.m
April 12	vs. MI	Mumbai	7.30 p.m.

**announced so far*

JACOB BETHELL

MIRACLE MAN

Jacob Bethell: A breathtaking 48-ball 105 from Bethell nearly helped England pull off an impossible chase against India in the T20 World Cup semifinal earlier this month. The knock showcased Bethell's immense value in the shortest format. The 22-year-old played only two games for RCB last season, but the southpaw is primed to lead RCB's PowerPlay charge this year.

THE SQUAD

Rajat Patidar (Capt.), Jordan Cox, Tim David, Virat Kohli, Devdutt Padikkal, Phil Salt, Jitesh Sharma, Jacob Bethell, Kanishk Chouhan, Venkatesh Iyer, Vihaan Malhotra, Mangesh Yadav, Krunal Pandya, Romario Shepherd, Abhinandan Singh, Satvik Deswal, Jacob Duffy, Josh Hazlewood, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Vicky Ostwal, Rasikh Salam, Suyash Sharma, Swapnil Singh, Yash Dayal, and Nuwan Thushara.

COMPILED BY G. PRASAD & ASHWIN ACHAL

The King takes strike again: Kohli will look to get going at the top for the Bengaluru outfit. K. MURALI KUMAR

Ashwin Achal

Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) steps into new territory with the start of IPL 2026. Having been the nearly men for the longest period, RCB now enters the arena wearing the coveted tag of 'defending champion.'

Unsurprisingly, RCB found no good reason to tinker with the proven template which led to the title last season. The majority of the squad has been retained while there has been a couple of notable inclusions – all-rounder Venkatesh Iyer and pacer Jacob Duffy – from the auction.

Strong middle-order

The side boasts of a powerful batting line-up, capable of maximising friendly home conditions at the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium. The depth in batting poses some welcome selection challenges for the team management.

Fan favourite Virat Kohli is a shoe-in as opener, with Phil Salt and Jacob Bethell in the race to take up the second slot. Captain Rajat Patidar, Devdutt Padikkal and Tim David form a strong middle-order. Patidar did not find form in the recent domestic season, and needs a quick turnaround when he puts on IPL colours.

It is a toss-up between Padikkal and Venkatesh for a spot in the eleven. Venkatesh does offer an additional bowling option, but with the impact player likely to be spinner Suyash Sharma, this may not tilt the scales in his favour.

Hometown batter Padikkal, meanwhile, has been in fine form for Karnataka in recent months.

Jitesh's crucial role

Jitesh Sharma, who came into his own in the previous IPL season, is a crucial presence as finisher and wicketkeeper. Romario Shepherd, Krunal Pandya and David can provide the fireworks in the death overs.

The fast-bowling department is an area of concern, given the uncertainty surrounding the availability of Australian Josh Hazlewood and left-arm seamer Yash Dayal.

If Hazlewood and Dayal are absent, the onus lies on Bhuvneshwar Kumar to lead the attack. At 36, Bhuvneshwar still has the goods, as seen in his good showing for Uttar Pradesh in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy a few months ago.

Uncapped left-arm speedster Mangesh Yadav, signed for ₹5.2 crore, could replace Dayal. Nuwan Thushara, who did not feature in Sri Lanka's recent T20 World Cup campaign, is another new-ball option.

Krunal and Suyash forged a successful bond in IPL 2025, and will continue to shoulder spin duties.

RCB will relish playing in front of its passionate home fans, now that the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium has been given the nod to host five matches. It is all systems go for the reigning champion.

SNAPSHOTS

Arundhati, Farhan win ICC Player-of-the-Month awards for February

India medium-pacer Arundhati Reddy won the ICC Player of the Month (women) award for her fine performances in the T20I series in Australia. Pakistan opener Sahibzada Farhan bagged the men's award for his record-breaking show in the T20 World Cup.

Arundhati.
FILE PHOTO: NIRMAL HARINDRAN

Stokes and McCullum to remain in charge

England coach Brendon McCullum will keep his job despite the team's Ashes debacle, with cricket chief Richard Gould insisting he can "adapt and evolve". The ECB promised a "thorough review" after Ben Stokes' team was demolished 1-4 on its five-Test tour of Australia.
Captain Stokes, McCullum, and England managing director of men's cricket Rob Key will all keep their jobs.

EBFC puts seven past Mohammedan

Amitabha Das Sharma
KOLKATA

East Bengal FC returned to winning ways with a commanding 7-0 victory over a 10-man Mohammedan Sporting Club in their ISL-12 encounter at the Salt Lake Stadium here on Monday.

Mohammedan Sporting struggled to cope with East Bengal's attacking intensity, and its defensive weaknesses were quickly exposed. The pressure resulted in three penalties as Sporting defenders repeatedly faltered inside the box.

East Bengal moved up to fourth spot with 11 points from six matches while Mohammedan Sporting remained rooted to the bottom without a point.

The result: East Bengal FC 7 (Anwar 7, 78, Ezzejjari 13-pen, 54-pen, Crespo 37-pen, Vishnu 74, Nandhakumar 90+3) bt Mohammedan Sporting 0.

'I had no option other than pulling out of Candidates'

C. Shyam Sundar
CHENNAI

India's top player Koneru Humpy said that she didn't have an option to explore for competing in the FIDE Women's Candidates tournament, scheduled in Cyprus from Saturday.

Having made the decision to pull out of the eight-player event on Sunday, Humpy stressed that she had no choice but to do so. "After having prepared so hard for the tournament, it was a tough call. I didn't have a choice, I had to withdraw," Humpy, who had safety concerns in the wake of the situation in West Asia given Cyprus' proximity to the conflict zone, told *The Hindu* on Monday.

"If it was held in some safe country, why would I do that (withdraw)?" the Grandmaster asked, adding that the FIDE could have postponed the tournament. Humpy is unfazed about the possibility of being penalised for choosing not to play in the marquee competition. "I am not worried about fines... they don't stop me from speaking out or expressing what I feel," Humpy didn't mince words.

Humpy isn't worried about being penalised by FIDE. PTI

She said that it wouldn't be "pleasant" to play an event in West Asia when there is so much happening there. "Many sporting events are getting cancelled. A poker tournament which was supposed to be held in Cyprus from April 25 has been cancelled. So, it makes sense to postpone it (Candidates). Or if you want to hold it on the exact dates, you have to shift to another country.

> The FIDE is the only body which is hosting a tournament now. They are saying that it is safe... that is the problem

"The FIDE is the only body which is hosting a tournament now. They are saying that it is safe... that is the problem," Humpy, who has been replaced by Anna Muzychuk in the Candidates, said. "Actually, I took time so that I could make the right decision because I know it's a very important tournament. But at the end of the day, it's important to take care of my family first."

Nominees for HI awards announced

Sports Bureau
NEW DELHI

The eighth annual Hockey India awards will be held here on Friday to recognise and reward outstanding performances during the 2025 season.

The nominations were announced on Monday. The men's team dominated most of the categories except those that had separate sections for men and women, in line with the National team's performances through the last year. Hardik Singh, Sukhjeet Singh, Sanjay and Abhishek are nominated for male Player-of-the-Year, while Navneet Kaur, Salima Tete, Lalremsiami and Savita Punia will vie for honours in the women's section.

Hardik, Sukhjeet, Sanjay and Navneet have been nominated in multiple categories. Prince Deep Singh has been nominated for both the goalkeeper and Upcoming Player-of-the-Year.

The event will also have special recognitions for Outstanding Achievement and Umpire/Umpire Manager-of-the-Year, among others. Asia Cup-winning men's team and the bronze medallist Junior men's team will be felicitated during the function.

The nominees: Player (men): Hardik Singh, Sukhjeet Singh, Sanjay, Abhishek; **Player (women):** Navneet Kaur, Salima Tete, Lalremsiami, Savita Punia; **Goalkeeper:** Prince Deep Singh, Krishan Bahadur Pathak, Bichu Devi Kharibam, Suraj Karkera; **Defender:** Sanjay, Amit Rohidas, Jugraj Singh, Harmanpreet Singh. **Midfielder:** Hardik Singh, Sumit, Raj Kumar Pal, Nilakanta Sharma; **Forward:** Sukhjeet Singh, Abhishek, Navneet Kaur, Shilanand Lakra; **Upcoming Player (men):** Prince Deep Singh, Manmeet Singh, Anmol Ekka, Arshdeep Singh; **Upcoming Player (women):** Sakshi Rana, Jyoti Singh, Sunelita Toppo, Kanika Siwach.

INBRIEF

Man City trumps Arsenal for League Cup honours

Pep Guardiola hailed Manchester City's 2-0 win against Arsenal in the League Cup final as a "special" moment after a difficult period that threatened to derail its season. Nico O'Reilly capitalised on a blunder from Arsenal goalkeeper Kepa Arrizabalaga to head City's second-half opener and he struck again moments later.

The result: Final: Arsenal 0 lost to Manchester City 2 (O'Reilly 60, 64).

Indian archers progress in Asia Cup Stage-1 tournament

Sukhchain Singh and Devaang Gupta (recurve men) and Chikitha Taniparthi, Raj Kaur, Tejal Salve and Swati Dudhwal (compound women) made the individual pre-quarterfinals in the Asia Cup Stage-1 archery in Bangkok on Monday.

Qualification round: Recurve: Men: Devaang Gupta (third, 663), Sukhchain Singh (eighth, 657). **Compound: Women:** Chikitha Taniparthi (fourth, 697), Raj Kaur (fifth, 695).

SDAT-Dolphin Swimming Academy's camp from today

The SDAT-Dolphin Swimming Academy will conduct a a two-month long summer camp from Tuesday as part of a talent-identification initiative under the Mission Olympic Scheme. Contact: 94449 06878, 94449 55878, 044-26534211.

ENGAGEMENTS

Cricket: TNCA I div. league, MRC-A vs. Globe Trotters (A.M. Jain); Nelson SC vs Alwarpet (Wahe Guru-A); Jolly Rovers vs. Sea Hawks (Tagore); Singam Puli vs. Vijay (Guru Nanak); Grand Slam vs. Young Stars (SRMC, turf); SKM vs. Jupiter SC (Vivekananda), day two, 9.30 a.m.

Vimal's century puts Rovers in command against Sea Hawks

The left-hander adds 116 with Andre for the fourth wicket as the team reaches 300 for six; Sasidharan strikes back after the Ganesh-Rahil show

TNCA FIRST DIVISION

Sports Bureau
CHENNAI

R. Vimal Khumar (133 batting, 263b, 10x4, 1x6) and C. Andre Siddarth (64) added 116 for the fourth wicket to put Jolly Rovers in command against Sea Hawks on the first day of the TNCA first division league at the Tagore Medical College ground on Monday. Rovers ended the day at 300 for six.

Left-arm spinners M. Ganesh Moorthi (five for 19) and Rahil Shah (four for 40) helped SKM CC skittle out Jupiter CC for 106 in its first innings at the RKM Vivekananda ground.

Exciting contest

However, Jupiter's left-arm tweaker R. Sasidharan returned figures of eight for 49 as SKM was bowled out for 105, thereby securing his team a crucial one-run first-innings lead.

Vimal (Rovers, 133 batting); Sasidharan (Jupiter, 8/49).

Ganesh (SKM, 5/19); Shoaib (Nelson, 5/55).

The scores:

At A.M. Jain: Globe Trotters 151 in 66.1 overs (A.B. Dhiyash 31, P. Saravana Kumar 4/33, Bhargav Bhatt 3/13) vs. MRC 'A' 74/2 in 16 overs (S.R. Athish 38 batting).

Toss: MRC 'A'.

At Wahe Guru-A: Alwarpet 136 in 42.4 overs (Manav Parakh 39, Parth Bhut 31, Shoaib Mohd. Khan 5/55) vs. Nelson 140/6 in 45 overs (Shivam Singh 48, P. Vidyut 4/41).

Toss: Alwarpet.

At Tagore: Jolly Rovers 300/6 in 92 overs (R. Vimal Khumar 133 batting, B. Indrajith 49, C. Andre Siddarth 64) vs. Sea Hawks.

Toss: Rovers.

At Guru Nanak: Singam Puli 223 in 81.5 overs (K. Aashiq 44, Ch. Jitendra Kumar 35, U. Mukilesh 63, M. Affan Khader 30, A. Aswin Crist 3/36, S. Mohamed Ali 3/26) vs. Vijay.

Toss: Vijay.

At SRMC: Young Stars 320/3 in 90 overs (M. Mithul Raj 39, S. Shrenik 68, Rahul Ayyappan Harish 69, J. Ajay Chetan 74 batting, Nidhish S. Rajagopal 50 batting) vs. Grand Slam. **Toss:** Young Stars.

At RKM Vivekananda: Jupiter 106 in 43.2 overs (T. Vijay Abimanyu 30, P. Khush Bardia 39, M. Ganesh Moorthi 5/19, Rahil Shah 4/40) & 8/1 in three overs vs. SKM 105 in 39.1 overs (Sudhan Sanjeevi Kandepan 39, R. Sasidharan 8/49).

Toss: Jupiter.

Vinicius-inspired Real edges Atletico; Inter slips at Fiorentina

Agencies
MADRID

Vinicius Junior struck twice as Real Madrid shaded Atletico Madrid 3-2 in a thrilling derby on Sunday to stay on Barcelona's tail at the top of LaLiga.

After the Catalan giant edged Rayo Vallecano 1-0, Real ensured the gap to the defending champion stayed at four points by beating Diego Simeone's side. In the Serie A, Inter Milan drew 1-1 at Fiorentina, as Cher Ndour scored a second-half equaliser to cancel out Francesco Pio Esposito's first-minute opener and dent the visitor's title charge.

Top results: LaLiga: Celta Vigo 3 (Jutgla 19, 37, Alvarez 27) lost to Alaves 4 (Martinez 45+3, 74, Perez 50, Rebbach 78); Bilbao 2 (Vivian 25, Sancet 45) bt Betis 1 (Fornals 75); Real Madrid 3 (Vinicius 52-pen, 72, Valverde 55) bt Atletico Madrid 2 (Lookman 33, Molina 66). **Serie A:** Bologna 0 lost to Lazio 2 (Taylor 72, 82).

Fiorentina 1 (Ndour 77) drew with Inter Milan 1 (Esposito 1); Roma 1 (Vaz 57) bt Lecce 0.

Bundesliga: Augsburg 2 (Rieder 57, Kade 71) lost to Stuttgart 5 (Undav 12, 58, Tomas 29, Nartey 31, Demirovic 83); St. Pauli 1 (Sinani 24) lost to Freiburg 2 (Matanovic 65, 78); Mainz 2 (Nebel 6, 89) bt Frankfurt 1 (Brown 20).

AROUND THE CITY

Arjun bowls Egmore RC to big victory

Off-spinner Arjun S. Nair scalped six for nine and bowled Egmore RC to a thumping 173-run win over Crombest in the TNCA second division league match held recently.

In a IV-C encounter, M. Thiyagarajan slammed an unbeaten 105 and guided Chatnath RC to an eight-wicket win over BRC.

Arjun (Egmore RC, 6/9); Thiyagarajan (Chatnath, 105 n.o.); Sathish (PUC, 5/16); Yukesh (MRC-B, 5/26); Nayef (UFCC, T. Nagar, 108).

The scores: II div: Egmore RC 247/9 in 50 overs (Arjun Senthil 49, M. Abhinav 50, K. Vijay Priyadarsan 31, I. Prabhakaran 4/49) bt Crombest 74 in 24.2 overs (Arjun S. Nair 6/9).

Pristine CC 131 in 36.3 overs (B. Sandeep 3/24) lost to MCC 132/5 in 13.4 overs (J. Karthikeyan 35, I. Syed Imran Ahmed 46, J. Gowjith Subash 32, Thasish Kannan 3/53).

UFCC (T. Nagar) 307 in 49.5 overs (Nayef Ahmed 108, R. Rohit 83, K. Veerraviswa 53, G.G. Harish Aadithiya 3/42, V. Rajinikanth 3/57) lost to Indian Bank 311/9 in 49.4 overs (Siddharth Mahadevan 31, M. Vishal 32, S. Sanjay Shrinivas 68, Mitchell Anthony Mannays 54, V. Rajinikanth 33 n.o, V. Parthiban 3/66, L. Pradheep Vishal 3/71).

India Pistons CC 304/7 in 50 overs (C.P. Akshath 41, G. Dilip 65, R. Javed Mohammed 94, S.T. Shri Dharun 86, A. Baskar 4/49) bt Southern Railway Institute 251/8 in 50 overs (S. Sanjay 53, S. Raghunath 68, R. Venkatesh 3/44).

Komaleeswarar 265 in 50 overs (Nitin R. Ramanan 74, G. M. Gokul 71, V. Abishek 38, Pratham Santosh Salunkhe 3/39) lost to Swaraj CC 268/7 in 49.4 overs (R. Anirudh Seshadhri 81, L. Ramnath 64, I.S. Akash 43).

Bunts CC 162 in 42 overs (Hunny 56, N. Aakaash Sharma 38, C. Sarath Kumar 37, Prashant Bhandari 3/13) lost to Coromandel SC 165/9 in 35.1 overs (Siddarth Prakash 74, B. Sivaramakrishnan 4/43).

IV-C: Unicorn CC 194 in 46 overs (P. Tamilarasan 49, C.S. Mithun 35, E. Jaivanth 4/43) bt SBI 159 in 44.5 overs (B. Mohan 41, Y. Tushar 3/44, A. Rithan Kumar 3/58).

KMC 113 in 30.5 overs (M. Sathish Kumar 5/16) lost to PUC 115/3 in 16 overs (K. Raja 31 n.o.).

Vigneswara CC 187 in 50 overs (P. Venkatesan 67, J. Vanchinathan 3/51) bt Kumbhat CC 124 in 38.2 overs (P. Venkatesan 3/10).

Book Sellers XI 228/9 in 50 overs (M. Abiseck 44, S. Prathamesh 79 n.o, C. Thivakar 3/68) lost to Chennai Port SC 231/5 in 45.2 overs (P. Girish Prabhu 87, C. Karthick Kumar 86 n.o.).

Bharat Petroleum 154 in 34.5 overs (V. Naveen Kumar 41, A. Prabudeva 65, A. Moksh Bhaiya 4/27) lost to Triplicane CC 156/1 in 38.4 overs (S. Sathyanandh 81 n.o., S. Akshay Barath 44).

BRC 241/7 in 50 overs (S.P. Ragul Rithick 66, G. Saran Prethium 41, B. Sachin 35, S. Gowri Sankar 33, S. Sanjith 31 n.o, T. Srijith 3/49, G. Selvakumar 3/55) lost to Chatnath RC 245/2 in 44.3 overs (B. Rahul 95, M. Thiyagarajan 105 n.o.).

V-C: MRC-B 198 in 48.5 overs (V. Harish Bharath 67, B. Ashok Kumar 57, K. Vishnu Kumar 4/32, R. Kiran 3/65) bt GTUC 164 in 45.2 overs (S. Ravikumar 33, E.R. Bharath Raj 35, B. Ravi Shankar 3/38, P. Yukesh 5/26).

Magnet CC 199/9 in 50 overs (R.M. Tharun 34, A. Vaithiyanathan 34, M. Jayadevan 32, Abhishek Kumar 3/50) bt Saidapet Gymkhana 141 in 39.2 overs (G. Sharma 41, R. Sarvin Raj 4/23).

Cherie Chevalier tipped for the Telangana Plate

HYDERABAD: The four-year-old Cherie Chevalier, who ended second in his last start, should make amends in the Telangana Plate, the chief event of Tuesday's (Mar. 24) races.

1 BUSINESS TYCOON PLATE (1,400m), 6-y-o and upward, rated 20 to 45 (Cat. III), 3.00 p.m.: 1. Catchme If You Can (6) Mukesh K 60, 2. Winning Attitude (7) Afroz K 60, 3. Take A Breath (2) Ajay K 59, 4. N R I Skypower (3) H.M. Akshay 58.5, 5. Smart Boy (5) B.R. Kumar 55, 6. Sadiya (4) P. Ajeeth K 53.5, 7. Exclusive Luck (1) Akshay K 52.5, 8. Sucker Punch (9) Rafique Sk. 52.5 and 9. Politics (8) G. Naresh 51.

1. CATCHME IF YOU CAN, 2. EXCLUSIVE LUCK, 3. SADIYA

2 RISING STAR PLATE (1,200m), (Terns) Maiden 3-y-o only (Cat. II), 3.30: 1. Advait (1) Antony Raj 56, 2. Ashwa Vivegam (11) P. Sai K 56, 3. Diamond King (12) B. Nikhil 56, 4. Excalibur (5) P. Ajeeth K 56, 5. My Way My Rules (4) Afroz K 56, 6. Ojas Maximus (6) I. Chisty 56, 7. The Last Avtar (9) Akshay 56, 8. Weseethesamesun (3) B.R. Kumar 56, 9. Wind Castle (2) Kuldeep Sr. 56, 10. Aakarshaka (8) Md. Ismail 54.5, 11. Kinship (10) Mukesh K 54.5 and 12. She's A Bomb (7) H.M. Akshay 54.5.

1. ADVAIT, 2. THE LAST AVTAR, 3. OJAS MAXIMUS

3 BRAVE HUNTER PLATE (1,200m), 4-y-o and upward, rated 40 to 65 (Cat. II), 4.05: 1. Emerald Touch (5) Ashad Asbar 60, 2. Calabasas (11) Ajay K 59.5, 3. Fly Tothe Stars (1) G. Naresh 59, 4. Top In Class (8) Md. Ismail 59, 5. Colt Pistol (12) Abhay Singh 58.5, 6. Turiya (9) Antony Raj 58.5, 7. Zuza (10) Kuldeep Jr. 57.5, 8. Greif (7) Akshay K 56, 9. Linda (4) Mukesh K 55, 10. Ayushman (4) Mukesh K 55, 11. Juramento (6) Surya Prakash 55 and 12. Nyanza (2) Rafique Sk. 53.

1. GREIF, 2. TURIYA, 3. CALABASAS

4 MEDCHAL PLATE (1,200m), 4-y-o and upward, rated 20 to 45 (Cat. III), 4.35: 1. Only My Way (13) Afroz K 60, 2. Sunny Day (1) P. Ajeeth K 60, 3. Onslaught (3) Ashad Asbar 59, 4. Una Paloma Blanca (10) Surya Prakash 57.5, 5. Nkalanzinzi (14) B.R. Kumar 55, 6. Arthisha (11) Mukesh K 53.5, 7. Caraxes (2) Md. Ismail 53.5, 8. Star Councillor (6) Kuldeep Sr. 52.5, 9. Konaseema (7) Santosh Raj 51.5, 10. Opera Queen (4) H.M. Akshay 51.5, 11. The Divinely (5) Rafique Sk. 51.5, 12. December Caspian (8) Md. Ekram 51, 13. Hoping High (12) B. Nikhil 51 and 14. Rate Of Interest (9) G. Naresh 51.

1. ARTHISHA, 2. ONSLAUGHT, 3. CARAXES

5 KHAMMAM PLATE (1,800m), 4-y-o and upward, rated 40 to 65 (Cat. II), 5.05: 1. China Town (5) P. Ajeeth K 60, 2. Bholi Punjaban (3) Surya Prakash 59.5, 3. Corte Madera (7) Akshay K 58, 4. Sangreal (6) Ajay K 55.5, 5. Andre (2) Antony Raj 55, 6. Perfect Light (1) B.R. Kumar 55 and 7. Pride Aside (4) B. Nikhil 50.5.

1. CORTE MADERA, 2. CHINA TOWN, 3. ANDRE

6 TELANGANA PLATE (1,600m), 4-y-o and upward, rated 80 and above (Cat. I), 5.35: 1. Truth (7) I. Chisty 65, 2. N R I Superpower (4) B.R. Kumar 55.5, 3. Reigning Beauty (6) Md. Ismail 52.5, 4. Cherie Chevalier (5) Neeraj 52, 5. Last Wish (3) P. Ajeeth K 52, 6. Silver Act (2) B. Nikhil 51.5 and 7. Brooklyn Beauty (1) Md. Ekram 50.

1. CHERIE CHEVALIER, 2. N R I SUPERPOWER, 3. TRUTH

7 MALVADO PLATE (1,100m), 4-y-o and upward, rated upto 25 (Cat. III), 6.05: 1. Char Ek Char (1) Surya Prakash 61, 2. Dali's Champion (6) Abhay Singh 61, 3. Noorian (8) Akshay K 61, 4. Pinatubo (3) Kuldeep Sr. 61, 5. Amboseli (10) Uday Kiran 59.5, 6. Dhanadeepa (5) Mukesh K 59.5, 7. Always Special (2) P. Ajeeth K 58.5, 8. D Extreme (9) H.M. Akshay 56.5, 9. Iconic Star (4) Rafique Sk. 52 and 10. Niloufer The Great (7) Afriz K 51.5.

1. NOORIAN, 2. CHAR EK CHAR, 3. AMBOSELI

Day's best: **CORTE MADERA**

Jackpot: 3, 4, 5, 6 & 7.

Mini jackpot: (i) 1, 2, 3 & 4, (ii) 4, 5, 6 & 7.

Treble: (i) 2, 3 & 4, (ii) 5, 6 & 7.

Tanala: All races.

Dyf completes a hat-trick of victories in the Golconda St. Leger

HYDERABAD: The seven-year-old grey horse Dyf, piloted by P. Trevor, etched his name in the record books by winning the Golconda St. Leger for the third time in a row at the Monday's (March 23) races here.

The winner is owned by Mr. K.N. Dhunjibhoy and Mr. Z.K. Dhunjibhoy rep. Five Stars Shipping Co. Pvt. Ltd., M/s. Jiyaji Bhosale, Rishikesh Bhosale & Rama Seshu Eyunni. Adhringajsingh Jodha trains the winner.

Jockey Mukesh Kumar rode three winners on the day.

Originally scheduled to be held in October 2025, this classic race had been delayed due to an equine disease outbreak.

Trevor confidently settled Dyf in fourth position over the gruelling 2,800m trip.

Turning for home, he asked his mount for an effort and Dyf responded well to surge ahead and win in style.

Memorable outing: Trevor, who rode Dyf to a third straight triumph, receiving his trophy from HRC chairman R. Surender Reddy in the presence of other officials. G. RAMAKRISHNA

1. OSMAN SAGAR PLATE (DIV. II) (1,100M): SHOOTING STAR (B.R. Kumar) 1, Cypress (Kuldeep Sr.) 2, Aquatone (Ashad Asbar) 3 and Pranava (B. Nikhil) 4. 1, 2 and 3-1/4. 1m, 07.39s. ₹47 (w), 11, 10 and 11 (p). SHP: 35, THP: 49, FP: 144, Q: 48, Tanala: 238. Favourite: Cypress. Owner: Mr. S. Pathy. Trainer: R.H. Sequeira.

2. YADADRI PLATE (1,100M): BUDDY (Mukesh Kumar) 1, Yali (Antony Raj) 2, Quattro (Santosh Raj) 3 and Trishika (Trevor) 4. 3-1/4, 2-1/4 and 2. 1m, 05.44s. ₹73 (w), 14, 12 and 19 (p). SHP: 43, THP: 42, FP: 149, Q: 34, Tanala: 722. Favourite: Yali. Owners: M/s. Subodh Kumar Ananthula & Prabhakar Chowdary Tripuraneni. Trainer: Magan Singh.

3. OSMAN SAGAR PLATE (DIV. I) (1,100M): PETRA ACT (Mukesh Kumar) 1, Clarity (Ajay K) 2, Briar Ridge (Surya Prakash) 3 and Quality Warrior (Md. Ismail) 4. Not run: The Purpose. 2, 2-1/4 and 5-1/4. 1m, 07.28s. ₹36 (w), 10, 12 and 14 (p). SHP: 37, THP: 41, FP: 210, Q: 73, Tanala: 650. Favourite: Roxxane. Owners: M/s. Chandrasekhar Reddy Challuri, Boppidi Sham Sunder Reddy, Srinivasa Rao Thota & Venkata Krishna Reddy Challuri. Trainer: Magan Singh.

4. SEA BIRD PLATE (1,100M): N R I HIGH POWER (Mukesh Kumar) 1, Sharanga (Antony Raj) 2, Foxy Girl (Afroz K) 3 and Lazarus (Rafique Sk.) 4. 5-1/2, 1-1/2 and 3/4. 1m, 05.55s. ₹26 (w), 15, 14 and 19 (p). SHP: 37, THP: 37, FP: 105, Q: 46, Tanala: 201. Favourite: N R I Highpower. Owners: M/s. Ravinder Reddy Male, Suchit Jayraj Shah & Prabhakar Chowdary Tripuraneni. Trainer: D. Netto.

5. GOLCONDA ST. LEGER (GR. 3) (2,800M): DYF (COUGAR MOUNTAIN-SOAK) (P. TREVOR) 1, Ramiel (Win Legend-Angelique) (Antony Raj) 2, Get Lucky (Sedgefield-Santamarija Festa) (Mukesh K) 3 and Victor Hugo (Ampere-Edith Piaf) (Akshay K) 4. 3/4, 2 and 1-1/4. 3m, 07.66s. ₹19 (w), 12 and 32 (p). SHP: 49, THP: 68, FP: 108, Q: 84, Tanala: 1,191. Favourite: Dyf. Owners: Mr. K.N. Dhunjibhoy and Mr. Z.K. Dhunjibhoy rep. Five Stars Shipping Co Pvt. Ltd., M/s. Jiyaji Bhosale, Rishikesh Bhosale & Rama Seshu Eyunni. Trainer: Adhirajsingh Jodha.

6. DREAM GIRL PLATE (1,400M): KNIGHT REGENT (P. Trevor) 1, Blue Pantheress (B.R. Kumar) 2, Lifes Journey (G. Naresh) 3 and Sangreal (Ajay K) 4. 2-1/2, 1/2 and 4-1/4. 1m 27, 13s. ₹11 (w), 10, 18 and 16 (p). SHP: 43, THP: 32, FP: 36, Q: 47, Tanala: 116. Favourite: Knight Regent. Owner: Mr. C. Aryama Sundaram. Trainer: L.V.R. Deshmukh.

7. POCHARAM PLATE (1,600M): GENIE (Md. Ekram Alan) 1, Anemoi (Surya Prakash) 2, N R I Star (Trevor) 3 and Desert Sultan (Md. Ismail) 4. Not run: Secret Option. 2, 2-1/2 and 2. 1m, 42.59s. ₹50 (w), 12, 20 and 10 (p). SHP: 65, THP: 31, FP: 213, Q: 160, Tanala: 752. Favourite: Take A Breath. Owner: M.A.M. Ramaswamy Chettiar Of Chettinad Charitable Trust. Trainer: K. Satheesh.

Jackpot: 70%: ₹1,038 (436 tkts.) & 30%: 119 (1,620 tkts.).

Mini jackpot: 10, 316 (6 tkts.). Treble: (i) 913 (36 tkts.), (ii) 89 (444 tkts.).

IPL too good an opportunity to pass up

The Indian domestic T20 tournament is in a league of its own, so it's no surprise that players like Muzarabani and Shanaka have made last-minute shifts from the PSL; there will be no satisfactory conclusion to the debate of whether making such late moves is morally right

GETTY IMAGES & B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

R. Kaushik

Last year, it was Corbin Bosch, the South African all-rounder. This year, the list has grown longer by one, for now – Blessing Muzarabani, the towering Zimbabwean paceman who had a wonderful T20 World Cup, and Dasun Shanaka, the all-rounder who led Sri Lanka in the same tournament which concluded earlier this month.

We are talking about the late shift of players from the Pakistan Super League to the Indian Premier League. It isn't just a late shift, it's about severing one contract at the last minute to sign a more lucrative deal to be a part of inarguably the most visible franchise-driven T20 competition in the world.

From 2025 onwards, there has been an overlap in dates between the PSL and the IPL. Last year, that was necessitated by Pakistan hosting the Champions Trophy in February-March, though the tournament was also played in Dubai. This year, the PSL had to be postponed from its pre-2025 window owing to the T20 World Cup, which ran in India and Sri Lanka between February 7 and March 8.

The only window available for the Pakistan Cricket Board to conduct the PSL coincided with the IPL; the PSL is due to start this Thursday, two days before the IPL kicks off at the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium with defending champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru locking horns with 2016 winners Sunrisers Hyderabad.

Bosch, part of the Diamond category, had been picked up by Peshawar Zalmi for PSL 2025 before he moved to Mumbai Indians as an injury replacement for fellow South African Lizaad Williams. Understandably miffed at this late 'desertion', the PCB slapped a one-year ban on the now 31-year-old, making him ineligible to play in PSL 2026.

Not that it has made any real difference to the right-arm pacer and hard-hitting batter, considering he is part of the MI roster this year too.

Bosch did it first

Following in Bosch's footsteps are Muzarabani and Shanaka. Muzarabani was one of the standout players for Zimbabwe, who advanced to the Super Eight from a tricky Group B with an unbeaten record. Zimbabwe hadn't even qualified for the previous T20 World Cup, in the Americas in June 2024, but heralded their return to the competition with a stunning victory over Australia in their second group tie.

As if to show that the performance was no flash in the pan, they then subdued the home crowd and Sri Lanka's superstars in their final league clash to top their group and earn a shot at the West Indies, India and South Africa in the next stage.

Muzarabani took four for 17 against Australia, backed it up with two for 38 against the hosts and finished the competition with 13 wickets from just six outings. He was in the running to top the chart, and it needed the genius of Jasprit Bumrah and a solitary wicket for Varun Chakaravarthy in the final for the two Indians to get past him with 14 scalps apiece.

Long before the World Cup, Muzarabani had made a pitch for an IPL berth but went unsold at the auction. He had been a part of the RCB set-up during their title-winning campaign in 2025, signed up as a mid-tournament replacement for the WTC final-bound Lungi Ngidi, but did not play a game. Just as he was readying to extend his relationship with the PSL came a call from the Kolkata Knight Riders management, which sought his services instead of Mustafizur Rahman, the Bangladesh left-arm quick whom they let go in controversial circumstances earlier this year. There was no way Muzarabani was turning that offer down.

Shanaka has moved to Rajasthan Royals as a replacement for Sam Curran, the England all-rounder. In the closed season, Curran was one of two players – Ravindra Jadeja being the other – that five-time champions Chennai Super Kings traded out to Royals to acquire Sanju Samson, who would later go on to become the Player of the Tournament at the T20 World Cup.

Curran played a big part in England's march to the semifinals, but during the course of that campaign, he is learnt to have picked up a groin injury that ended his chances of representing a new IPL franchise.

Shanaka, 34, has limited IPL experience; he played three games for Gujarat Titans in 2023 and was a mid-season substitute for the injured Glenn Phillips last year without getting a match. Like Muzarabani, he too was ignored at the mini-auction ahead of IPL 2026 but a backdoor has opened up through Curran's injury and Shanaka has gratefully grabbed his chance.

Classed as an all-rounder, Shanaka is more of a hard-hitting batter who has been a reluctant bowler; he has a strike-rate of 143.13 in 283 20-over representative games (average 25.83) against 111 wickets, mainly because he averages only 1.2 overs per match.

Strong response expected

Like last year, the PCB hasn't taken kindly to these developments. Its chairman, the irascible Mohsin Naqvi, has again threatened legal action against the 'players who have left'. That the players left at very short notice itself would have been galling; their decision to dump the PSL for the IPL must be particularly infuriating, given the geopolitical tensions between India and Pakistan and the fact that Suryakumar Yadav refused to receive the T20 Asia Cup trophy from Naqvi, who is also the boss of the Asian Cricket Council.

As is often the case in such instances, opinion has been divided on whether Muzarabani and Shanaka this year, and Bosch before him, did the right thing. Their morals have been questioned when what is undeniable is that everyone's morals are their own outlook and no one else has the right to impose them on someone else.

From the players' perspective, and one is only guessing here, to pass up the chance of being a part of the IPL landscape would have been unthinkable. Without a shadow of doubt, the reach and clout of the IPL are beyond parallel in the cricketing universe. It has opened hitherto invisible doors; its profile is immense, and while the money isn't shabby, it also provides a great opportunity to learn and grow as an individual and a cricketer.

More than just money

The tendency to view the IPL through the prism of financial gains alone is both myopic and convenient. Where else do you have the chance to pick the brains of the best in the business, either occupying the same dressing room or sitting in the opposition dugout? Where else can you savour the experience of playing in front of at least 35,000 spectators? Of learning to cope with noise, pressure and expectations? Of furthering one's education as a cricketer?

It was once said that the English County firmament was the ideal finishing school but that has long passed into history. Admittedly, even till the start of the millennium, a tryst in England at the highest first-class level was an immense learning experience but that is no longer the case.

The IPL has become a finishing school of sorts, and while it is easy to dismiss that remark as facile because it is 'only' a 20-over tournament, let's not forget which format has come to be the flavour of the sport globally. While we can continue to romanticise Test cricket and hope that it survives the very genuine threat of T20 cricket, it is the latter which has caught the imagination of a larger audience.

It's a truism that can't be wished away; gradually, international careers are becoming shorter as more and more professionals are plunging into franchise leagues. Who's to blame them because while we might attach patriotic and nationalist mores, these are players trying their best to eke out a livelihood within the contours of their limited shelf lives.

Muzarabani and Shanaka, and perhaps a couple more who are still expected to make the cross-border move, might use this line of thought to justify their actions though they will also be aware of the risk they run of being called 'mercenaries' by those who hold a divergent point of view. To leave a team, any team, in the lurch at the last minute and therefore not honouring one's word is far from ideal unless the circumstances are pressing and the exit unavoidable.

Those so inclined will argue with justification that there was nothing pressing or unavoidable about their shift from the PSL to the IPL, and that their decision has been influenced merely by 'greed'. To misquote – for the sake of propriety – a popular saying, opinions are like a nose, everyone has one. And therefore, this is a debate that cannot be settled satisfactorily, one way or the other.

A change on the cards?

Perhaps, the PSL will smell the coffee and revert to its previous timeline that ensured the tournament ran ahead of the IPL and therefore there was no danger of late pullouts and moves to the bigger league. Or maybe it won't if ego comes in the way and the PCB continues to believe in the power of the PSL which, it has said, has become so big, vibrant and productive that the Pakistan board is no longer dependent on the International Cricket Council for financial clout.

The PCB has projected Marnus Labuschagne, Steve Smith and Glenn Maxwell, the Australian trio, as being the overseas poster boys of this edition, arguing that their presence has lifted the profile of the tournament. Maybe it has, but it must not be forgotten that former captain Smith went unsold at the IPL auction or that the underachieving Maxwell, perhaps reading the obvious writing on the wall, chose to not even throw his hat in the ring.

This isn't about which is the bigger, stronger, more influential and powerful league because that is not even a debate. But if one does want to debate the pros and cons of Muzarabani and Shanaka's decisions, they can do so till the cows come home and still not arrive at a satisfactory conclusion. Because that's how it is sometimes.

THE GIST

- From 2025 onwards, there has been an overlap in dates between the PSL and the IPL
- The IPL has become a finishing school of sorts, and while it is easy to dismiss that remark as facile because it is 'only' a 20-over tournament, let's not forget which format has come to be the flavour of the sport globally
- The PCB has projected Marnus Labuschagne, Steve Smith and Glenn Maxwell, the Australian trio, as being the overseas poster boys of this edition, arguing that their presence has lifted the profile of the tournament

New way helps superconductor break temperature record

While superconductivity is easy to achieve at extremely low temperature, bringing it to room temperature is a 'holy grail' of physics; researchers have achieved much higher temperatures in recent years, up to -13 °C, but only by applying pressure equivalent to that near the earth's core

Vasudevan Mukunth
CHENNAI

For more than a century, physicists have looked for a material that conducts electricity with zero resistance at room temperature – practical enough to transform how the world generates and uses energy. But for a long time, the highest temperature at which a material became superconducting at room pressure was -140 °C. Some other materials become superconducting close to room temperature, but only under extraordinary pressure.

In a study published in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* on March 9, scientists have reported raising the temperature by 18°C, and under only room pressure. They used a new technique called pressure quenching to achieve this.

The result has broken a record that had stood since 1993, when the same material the team used – a copper oxide called Hg1223 – first demonstrated superconductivity at -140°C, itself a landmark that launched decades of research.

Ching-Wu Chu holds a diamond anvil cell in a University of Houston lab. UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON

'Sounds reasonable'

Superconductors that work at room temperature and normal pressure could one day carry electricity through power grids without losing any energy to resistance – a problem that currently wastes billions of dollars' worth of power every year.

They could also enable faster MRI machines, more efficient electric motors, better transportation systems, and cheaper renewable energy infrastructure.

The team was led by physicists Liangzi Deng and Ching-Wu Chu at the University of Houston.

"The claim sounds reasonable to me," aid Sumit Mazumdar, professor of physics, chemistry, and optical sciences at the University of Arizona, in an email to *The Hindu*.

"The authors carefully study high-pressure structures, and when they find first order transitions (which involves latent heat), they do what they call pressure-quenching so that the changed high pressure structure persists even when the pressure is removed," he added.

Intense pressure

Since 1993, the record for ambient pressure superconductivity has been stuck at -140 °C. While superconductivity is easy to achieve at extremely low temperature, bringing it to room temperature is a "holy grail" of physics.

Researchers have achieved much higher temperatures in recent years, up to -13 °C, but only by applying pressure equivalent to that near the earth's core.

These high-pressure states have also disappeared the moment the pressure was released, making them useless for practical technologies like lossless power grids or high-speed trains.

The problem was not that scientists lacked the materials. Under extreme pressure, Hg1223 itself superconducts at -109 °C .

Some compounds rich in hydrogen have also shown hints of becoming superconductors at near room temperature. But they have all required intense pressure as well.

Reproducible data

The Houston team's insight was to stop looking for new materials and to focus on preserving a known high-pressure state in Hg1223.

For this, the scientists developed the pressure-quench protocol (PQP) – a three-stage process designed to freeze a high-pressure superconducting state in place by removing pressure fast enough and at a low enough temperature.

They loaded a small crystal of Hg1223 into a diamond anvil cell and compressed it to up to 30 billion pascals (GPa), raising its superconducting temperature to over -123°C , while keeping track of its superconducting properties. Then they cooled the sample to -269 °C , just above absolute zero.

Finally, they rapidly released the pressure. Because the material was so cold, the atoms lacked the energy to relax back into their normal structure, effectively trapping the material's desirable electronic properties at the normal atmospheric pressure.

Across five tests with different pressures and quenching conditions, the team consistently retained the transition temperature between -122 °C and -134 °C. They achieved the higher -122 °C by quenching from approximately 19 GPa at -269 °C. They could also reproduce it, a sign that it is likely real rather than an artifact in the data.

The 122 °C reading is 18 °C higher than the previous record held by the same material in its relaxed state.

The scientists also used synchrotron X-ray diffraction at the U.S. Argonne National Laboratory to find that while the material retained its original crystal structure after quenching, there were new defects in the structure and additional internal strain.

These defects helped lock the crystal into a state where it mimicked the effects of pressure even after the pressure was removed. The team confirmed that roughly 78% of the material's volume became superconducting, so it wasn't a surface or filamentary effect.

If superconductivity is filamentary, it means electricity is only traveling through microscopic channels, called filaments, within the material. These filaments can only carry a very small amount of electrical current before they break and return to a normal state.

If the bulk is superconducting, as the researchers reported, the material can be expected to reliably carry large currents, which is required to transport power on run high-speed trains.

The quenched phase was stable for at least three days when stored in liquid nitrogen. Warming above -73 °C reduced the effect while room temperature (23 °C) partially reversed it. One experiment also produced a hint of superconductivity at -101 °C but the team wasn't able to reproduce it.

'Woodstock of physics'

The study's lead investigator, Ching-Wu Chu, is a pioneer of high-temperature superconductivity. In 1987, Prof. Chu and his team made a landmark discovery when it synthesised a material called yttrium barium copper oxide (YBCO) that became a superconductor at -180 °C.

Until then, scientists only had materials that became superconducting below -269 °C, which meant they had to be cooled using expensive liquid helium.

However, -180 °C was above the boiling point of liquid nitrogen (-196 °C), which meant scientists could cool YBCO using this much cheaper coolant, paving the way for more research and potential applications.

That same year, the American Physical Society held a special session on high-temperature superconductivity that ran past midnight and drew thousands of attendees – an event that has since been called the 'Woodstock of physics'. Prof. Chu was one of the central figures there and presented his team's results to a packed and electrified audience. The session captured the excitement of a field that, in that moment, seemed to be on the edge of transforming technology.

> The method, if it works out in other cases, has great promise for a room-pressure superconductor. Not yet for room-temperature. The latter is not essential for technological applications
>
> **SUMIT MAZUMDAR**
> Professor at the University of Arizona

His work earned him numerous honours, including the National Medal of Science in 1994.

Now, beyond breaking a 33-year-old record, according to the new study's authors, their work may also open the door for scientists to 'stabilise' exotic electronic properties in other materials that arise under pressure and make them available at ordinary conditions.

"The method, if it works out in other cases, has great promise for a room-pressure superconductor. Not yet for room-temperature," according to Prof. Mazumdar. "The latter is not essential for technological applications. The entire issue therefore revolves around what the authors call pressure-quenching [and] whether structural changes that occur under pressure can really be retained post-quenching."

He added that while this issue is beyond his expertise, it is not impossible.

"This result will be widely noted in the superconductivity community, and I expect that many experimentalist groups will apply the same methodology to other candidate materials," Brookhaven National Laboratory, New York, physicist Ivan Božović, who wasn't involved in the study but reviewed it for the journal, told *Physics*.

The paper's authors themselves wrote: "We ... believe that the record-breaking results at ambient pressure reported here represent only the beginning of an extremely fruitful scientific journey."

Recent controversies

High-temperature superconductivity research has been shadowed by controversy for much of the past decade and understanding that backdrop has come to matter when evaluating new claims in the field.

These episodes have made the research community acutely sensitive to the claims of new studies, particularly whether a given material's resistance can really drop to zero – the hallmark of superconductivity – and if the data showing that is because the instruments are actually measuring the sample.

The most prominent case involved Ranga Dias at the University of Rochester in the U.S. Dias published papers claiming room-temperature superconductivity in carbonaceous sulphur hydrides in 2020 and nitrogen-doped lutetium hydrides in 2023. Dias and his team retracted both papers, published in *Nature*, after allegations that the magnetic susceptibility measurements had been manipulated to show signs of superconductivity.

Multiple independent labs also failed to reproduce the findings. Dias contested the retractions and the dispute has already become one of the most acrimonious data-integrity controversies in physics.

In 2023, a group of researchers from South Korea said they had made a lead-based material called LK-99 that was a superconductor at room-pressure and room-temperature.

The result generated intense public interest but soon, other scientists who recreated the experiment couldn't find signs of superconductivity in LK-99.

Later studies revealed that some of the measurements the South Korean team had made were 'polluted' by unexpected ferromagnetic behaviour in LK-99.

The episode further exhausted the public appetite for superconductivity news.

'Decades-old reputation'

Both Dias's work and the new University of Houston study use diamond anvil cells. However, unlike the materials in Dias's work, Hg1223 is well-understood and has a record going back to the 1980s.

The team also focused on a unique state of the material – one that arises under intense pressure – rather than claim a new phase, experts said.

The study also directly addressed the primary criticism of the Dias episode: whether superconductivity is a bulk property or filamentary.

As noted earlier, the team found that some 78% of the material was superconducting. Dias and others didn't perform these tests.

"The dubious claims ... came from people who were practically unknown prior to their claims of novelty," Prof. Mazumdar said. "The principal author Chu in this case came close to winning the Nobel Prize [and] is the recipient of the US National Medal of Science. His current paper's ref. 22 goes back to 1968.

"He is not going to risk his decades-old reputation writing fraudulent stuff."

mukunth.v@thehindu.co.in

A Hudsonian godwit in the Monomoy National Wildlife Refuge, Massachusetts, U.S. AFP

Hope builds for nations to save bird that flies 30,000 km

Agence France-Presse

Chasing an endless summer, one shorebird species undertakes a gruelling annual journey from the Arctic to the tip of South America and back -- a feat increasingly fraught with peril.

The Hudsonian godwit (*Limosa haemastica*) is one of the world's most remarkable travellers, but its population has plunged 95% in four decades due to a complex mix of environmental changes across multiple countries.

It is one of 42 species proposed for international protection at a meeting of parties to the UN Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS) that starts in Brazil on March 23.

Iconic creatures like the snowy owl -- of *Harry Potter* fame -- striped hyena and hammerhead shark are also on the list deemed in danger of extinction and needing conservation by the countries they pass through.

The Hudsonian godwit (*Limosa haemastica*) is one of the world's most remarkable travellers, but its population has plunged 95% in four decades due to a complex mix of environmental changes

Migratory birds are facing "rapid and dramatic declines," said Nathan Senner, an ecologist and ornithology professor at the University of Massachusetts Amherst who has studied the Hudsonian godwit for 20 years.

Scientists are still unravelling the mysteries of the shorebird, which can fly up to 11,000 km in one stretch without stopping to eat, drink or sleep.

And it is only part of the 30,000 km that the godwit travels every year from their breeding grounds in the Arctic to Patagonia where they spend the southern summer.

In order to do this "epic flight," they need "really predictable, abundant food resources" at every step of the journey, Senner told *AFP*.

That predictability is crumbling. In the Arctic, shifting spring timing attributed to climate change has created a mismatch between when chicks hatch and the peak availability of insects they feed on.

One of the puzzles Senner is currently working on is why Hudsonian godwits have begun migrating later by six days than they did a decade ago.

Something "has either disrupted the cues that they use to time their migrations or their ability to successfully and rapidly prepare for the migration," he said.

In southern Chile, a boom in salmon and oyster farming has led to a build-up of infrastructure and the presence of people in the intertidal zones where they feed. And in the United States, changes in farming practices are making the shallow water wetlands that the godwits rely on rarer and less predictable -– meaning they spend more time looking for a place to stop and feed.

"I think that is emblematic of lots of species, that most species can respond to one kind of change, but not a whole bunch of them all at the same time," said Senner.

"Climate change is taking a heavy toll on species that rely on a 'geological clock' for their survival; many are disappearing," Rodrigo Agostinho, president of Brazil's environmental agency (Ibama) said.

These are some of the issues CMS parties will tackle at their meeting in Brazil's biodiversity-rich Pantanal, one of the world's most important global meetings for wildlife conservation.

These countries are legally obliged to protect species listed as at risk of extinction, conserve and restore their habitats, prevent obstacles to migration and cooperate with other range states.

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Text&Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Rejection rate of Right to Information applications in 2024-25

3.26 in per cent. The rejection rate of Right to Information (RTI) applications has decreased to 3.26 per cent in 2024-25, the Centre has said. If an applicant receives no reply to an RTI within the prescribed time or is aggrieved by the public information officer's decision, they may file appeals before the CIC, Union Minister Jitendra Singh said. PTI

Number of people killed due to rains in Kenya in March

81 Torrential rains continued to pound Kenya as flash floods killed at least 81 people this month, authorities said Sunday. Flash floods also destroyed around 1,200 hectares of farmland and swept away crops. Over 3,000 families have been forced from their homes in the community of Nyakach, with some sheltering in eight evacuation centres, locals said. AFP

Number of AC e-buses to be deployed in 116 cities by 2027

10,000 On Monday, the government informed the Rajya Sabha that 10,000 air-conditioned e-buses would be provided to 116 cities across 26 States and UTs by the end of 2027 under the PM-eBus Sewa Scheme, and a new scheme would be launched thereafter to provide another 35,000 e-buses. . PTI

Number of airlines that exited India in the last decade

11 As many as 11 airlines exited the market in the last 10 years due to financial stress, non-availability of aircraft and other internal issues, according to the government. Minister of State for Civil Aviation Murlidhar Mohol told the Rajya Sabha on Monday that the aviation sector is deregulated, and airlines operate based on commercial considerations. PTI

Persons displaced in Ethiopia's Tigray over the past three years

1 In million. More than 1,300 people have died from hunger in displacement camps in Ethiopia's volatile Tigray region over the past three years, a local official told AFP on Monday. A civil war between the federal government and forces from the northern Tigray region in 2020-2022 killed at least 600,000 people according to African Union estimates. AFP

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Path ahead for Nepal's new leadership

After securing a historic mandate in Nepal's polls, Balendra Shah and the RSP face the task of navigating the West Asia conflict and managing ties with India, China and the U.S. While capitalising on old-guard fatigue proved an effective electoral strategy, the new leadership now faces a test in international relations

WORLD INSIGHT

Bibek Raj Kandel

In the noisy, crowded landscape of Nepali politics, the rise of Prime Minister-designate Balendra Shah and his party, the Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP), represents a rare political anomaly. While veterans of the 2008 republic traded barbs, the rapper-engineer-turned-mayor bypassed traditional campaigning for a "monastic" silence. His victory in Nepal's post-Gen Z parliamentary election on March 5 secured a historic mandate for an alternative force he joined a mere six weeks before the polls. Throughout the campaign, Shah spoke for barely thirty minutes, avoided media interviews and notably never once asked for a vote.

His unapologetic critiques of the political establishment during his tenure as Kathmandu's mayor, mirrored a generation exhausted by stale ideological party politics. In a nation with a median age of twenty-five, Shah's reputation as a disciplined, clean reformist promising better governance became a viral mandate. His calculated silence mirrored these frustrations, positioning him as the ultimate outsider for an electorate eager for results.

Beyond domestic politics

While capitalising on domestic old-guard fatigue served Shah as a winning electoral strategy, Nepal's hard geopolitical reality remains stubbornly unchanged. In Nepal, political shifts rarely remain purely domestic, often prompting debates about foreign influence given its geography wedged between the rivalries of India and China.

Yet, Shah, however has sought to counter this by projecting an image of a staunch nationalist. As mayor, his symbolism was deliberate: hanging a "Greater Nepal" map in his office as a direct retort to the "Akhand Bharat" mural in India's new Parliament House, and briefly banning Indian films. Simultaneously, he signaled caution toward Beijing by dropping a China-backed industrial park from his election manifesto. By distancing himself from large-scale geopolitical projects, Shah reframed the narrative, asserting a sovereignty that felt local, visible, and unapologetically independent.

Balendra Shah with children and supporters during a door-to-door election campaign in Nepal. AFP

Balancing ties with India and China

Historically, Nepal's politics followed rigid ideological scripts. The Nepali Congress, the country's oldest liberal force, leaned toward Delhi, while communist factions like CPN- UML maintained proactive affinities with Beijing. And at times, the ideological rhetoric from Kathmandu stretched far beyond the Himalayas, from debates over Venezuela's regime change to contentious political statements on the Ukraine war, issues largely peripheral to Nepal's own priorities. Under Shah, this era of predictable ideological signaling may finally be fading. His minimalist approach and by speaking less about the world's ideological battles, Shah's personality itself can be potent strategic asset to Nepal, but it is immediately replaced by a different kind of geopolitical pressure that needs sustained diplomatic communique.

India remains Nepal's most consequential partner, linked by an open border, "Roti-Beti" social bonds, and accounting for a significant share of its trade, supplying virtually all of its petroleum, and emerging as the primary market for Nepal's burgeoning hydropower exports. Meanwhile, China has deepened its footprint through major infrastructure financing, such as $216 million Pokhara International Airport. Intended as a regional gateway, its underutilisation is viewed in Kathmandu as a casualty of the broader India-China friction, particularly New Delhi's hesitancy to facilitate air routes for Chinese-financed infrastructure.

This is perhaps inaugural diplomatic crucible for Balendra Shah. Having invested heavily, Nepal cannot afford for such massive infrastructure to remain a "white elephant." The "monastic" outsider must now navigate a landscape where India is indispensable and China is influential. Meanwhile, Washington has pivoted from an aid partner to a high-stakes strategic interest partner, with recent post-election congratulations explicitly hinting at "shared security goals."

But the first "baptism by fire" for the Shah administration may well lie in the volatile West Asia. With millions of Nepalese migrants' lives and critical energy lifelines tied to the Persian Gulf caught in an escalating US-Israel-Iran War, India's logistical depth as a regional first responder offers an indispensable synergy for contingency planning to Kathmandu. This is where Balen's nationalist doctrine must meet the hard reality of strategic pragmatism. The new leadership remains untested in conventional diplomacy.

An opportunity for India

This moment offers a rare opening for New Delhi to recalibrate. India must move past the coercive shadow of the 2015 blockade and what is widely perceived in Kathmandu as outdated impulse for political micromanagement. New Delhi must recognise this transition as a new opening for modern partnership that respects the domestic rise of 'Nepal First' politics. Shah's mandate mirrors India's own tectonic shift in 2014; in Shah, Nepal has found its "strongman" archetype, a leader whose personal charisma and promise of technocratic reform have dismantled a decades-old establishment.

In the end, Nepal's geopolitical reality remains unchanged even as its politics transform at home. India's proximity will always matter most, China's influence will remain structural reality, and world powers like the U.S. will continue to pursue its strategic interests with renewed rigor. Ultimately, Nepal's voters were not adjudicating between global strategies, but seeking domestic renewal. For Balendra Shah and the RSP, bashing the "old guard" is a potent domestic strategy, but it carries zero currency in the cold-eyed theater of international relations.

(Bibek Raj Kandel is an analyst and AsiaGlobal Fellow at the University of Hong Kong and a graduate of Harvard Kennedy School.)

THE GIST

- In the landscape of Nepali politics, the rise of Prime Minister-designate Balendra Shah and the RSP, represents a rare political anomaly. His reputation as a disciplined, clean reformist promising better governance became a viral mandate
- Shah's personality itself can be potent strategic asset to Nepal, but it is immediately replaced by a different kind of geopolitical pressure that needs sustained diplomatic communique

Nepal's political shift opens a strategic window for India

The new government in Nepal extends an opportunity to fashion a forward-looking bilateral relationship

K.V. Rajan
Atul K. Thakur

The election results in Nepal have been described as a political earthquake. There has been an emphatic and comprehensive rejection of old leaders and established parties. A younger generation of professionals and tech savvy figures, enjoying the support of Gen Z activists is set to take over.

Challenges ahead

By giving the Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) a two thirds majority, Nepali voters have granted Balendra Shah and his government, a powerful mandate for Nepal's complete transformation. It now has a huge responsibility to answer wide-ranging expectations--enough jobs for the youth, reversing the migration for work abroad, stimulate economic growth, and ensure good governance. It needs to be noted, however, that while voters have demonstrated their impatience with the old order and its decades- old insensitivity to their aspirations, this is not a positive vote for a clear-cut new agenda for reform, political or economic, since it was never spelt out and placed before them.

There is a real possibility of frustration and disillusionment that the new government will have to deal with as it settles down. The first warning shots were fired by the caretaker Prime Minister Sushil Karki even before the election, when she reminded the political class that the agitations of September 2025 had erupted because of the frustrations of people insisting on good governance, and a recurrence was inevitable if the situation lapsed into the same old pattern.

Hopefully the people of Nepal will give the new leaders enough time to address the country's problems.

Restructuring India-Nepal ties

For now, Nepal deserves every encouragement possible. India has been quick to extend it, without being loud or patronising. India has not been an issue during the election campaign. Its relationship with Nepal in recent years has focused on the right priorities – development, infrastructure, digital connectivity, energy. It has played its cards well and can continue to capitalise on the existing goodwill as the new leaders in Nepal seek to respond to development needs of the people.

Restructuring of the India-Nepal relationship has been long overdue. For far too long it has been trapped in the shadows of the legacy of British India days. Hopefully India and Nepal will seize every opportunity to fashion a forward-looking relationship based on today's realities and the immense potential for expanding cooperation. For this it will be necessary for policy makers on both sides to discard old mindsets, address long standing irritants with fresh approaches, and prioritise people-centric policies which can be delivered to keep pace with people's expectations and needs.

India also needs to look at the recent developments in Nepal as part of a wider regional phenomenon since happenings in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and elsewhere also fall into the same pattern–agitations led by frustrated youth incidentally toppling pro-India political figures, demanding faster development and better governance. Labeling new political leaders being thrown up everywhere as anti-India just because of the legacies of the past does not seem justified, as seen from the pragmatic readiness shown in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka to cooperate with India, by parties and leaders once seen as unfriendly. Nepal could be a good partner for India in the evolving geopolitical scenario, if both countries try seriously to fashion a clear cut sub-regional strategy for rapid growth.

(K.V. Rajan is former Indian Ambassador to Nepal and Atul K. Thakur is a policy professional. They are the authors of 'Kathmandu Chronicle: Reclaiming India-Nepal Relations'. Views are personal.)

THE GIST

- The people of Nepal have granted Balendra Shah and the RSP a powerful mandate for Nepal's complete transformation. The government now faces the challenge of addressing the issues of unemployment and providing good governance
- India has been quick to extend encouragemnet to the new leadership. Hopefully India and Nepal will seize every opportunity to fashion a forward- looking relationship based on today's realities

ABSTRACT

How do we know climate science is credible?

On what aspects did a recent paper in the Science of Climate Change journal question the foundations of climate change, and how robust are its arguments?

Vasudevan Mukunth

On March 10, a journal called Science of Climate Change published a paper calling into question the foundations of climate change. The paper concluded that after accounting for some sources of uncertainty in the climate data, the 'correct' changes in the oceans' heat content and Earth's energy imbalance are practically zero. In other words, the oceans are not warming, Earth's surface is not accumulating heat, and global warming is not happening.

The paper is more sophisticated than it seems at first sight and makes three claims with different levels of merit.

There is value in addressing them in detail because doing so reveals how we know that climate science is credible.

How are changes in ocean heat measured?

The paper's foremost claim is that temperature is an intensive property – meaning its value does not depend on the mass of the material – and thus scientists cannot average it in a meaningful way when estimating the amount of heat oceans hold.

Scientists have already addressed this claim. First, by the same logic, we cannot measure average air temperature, average atmospheric pressure, average sea level rise, and so on.

Second, and more importantly, scientists do not just measure and average the temperatures of different water bodies to determine the heat content. They also calculate the thermal energy. Temperature is nothing but the average kinetic energy of the atoms or molecules in a body. And thermal energy is the total kinetic energy of the water molecules. This is an extensive quantity – it depends on the number of molecules – and can be averaged. Its value has been increasing over time as well, and it also clarifies that the way scientists are handling the temperature data is correct.

Next, the paper takes issue with the Argo floats data. According to the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, "Argo is an international program that collects information from inside the ocean using free drifting [devices called] profiling floats. These floats drift with the ocean currents and move up and down between the surface and a mid-water level. The floats are distributed over the global ocean to measure temperature and salinity in the upper 2,000 m."

According to the paper, the data the floats collect have some gaps, which has created uncertainties in the final processed data that have gone underreported. To the paper's credit, scientists have already raised and addressed the numbers it has cited on phenomena called mesoscale aliasing and deep ocean ignorance in the research literature. However, the paper's authors inflate these uncertainties and add them up in unscientific ways. For instance, some of the errors they add up have the same underlying cause, so adding them as if they were separate errors ends up counting the same causes more than once.

To avoid this pitfall, oceanographers run the whole calculation in different ways and check whether they keep getting roughly the same answer. They check whether the calculation predicts temperatures at locations where they actually have measurements to compare with – and whether the overall estimate holds up when they remove data from the calculations. This way, they make sure their methods are robust and do not over-count uncertainties.

Finally, if scientists have an independent estimate of total sea level rise (from altimetry satellites that use radar, say) and an independent estimate of how much new water has been added (from the GRACE satellites that use gravity), they can estimate how much the ocean has 'expanded'. Then they compare this figure with Argo data about the ocean's heat content. If the two match – as they do – it would mean Argo arrived at the same result as altimetry and GRACE (Gravity Recovery and Climate Experiment) satellites but from completely different starting points.

Thinning ice: A penguin stands on an iceberg in Yankee Harbour, Antarctica in 2018. REUTERS

What is 'Balancing' and 'Filling'?

Finally, the paper says the CERES-Argo cross-calibration is "circular". This is probably the most rhetorically effective piece for 'climate doubters' because it genuinely sounds damning. However, that is really because it misrepresents what a particular 'adjustment' does.

CERES is a suite of scientific instruments in Earth orbit operated by NASA. Its name stands for 'Clouds and the Earth's Radiant Energy System'. The instruments measure incoming solar radiation and outgoing shortwave radiation (which includes visible light) and longwave radiation (mostly heat) at the top of the atmosphere. By subtracting the incoming rate of energy from the outgoing rate, scientists can say how much heat is being 'left behind' in the planet's atmosphere and on the surface.

Now, the CERES instruments have been calibrated such that they are accurate to around 1% for shortwave radiation and 0.75% for longwave. This implies an absolute uncertainty of roughly 2 W/m2 in the net energy flux. The paper says the raw CERES uncertainty is around 3-5 W/m2, which is slightly inflated in favour of the paper's claims.

To address this, a process called EBAF – short for 'Energy Balanced And Filled' – makes a one-time change to shortwave and longwave fluxes at the top of the atmosphere to ensure the global mean net flux for July 2005 to June 2015 is consistent with the value measured by Argo: 0.71 W/m2.

'Balancing' and 'Filling' are separate adjustments. CERES instruments cannot see through clouds, so 'Filling' patches gaps in the map where data is missing. However, the paper treats the whole EBAF product as if it is just the adjustment for calibration, i.e. 'Balancing'.

Nonetheless, as things stand, the paper's circularity argument is partly correct: CERES data is 'corrected' using Argo data while Argo-derived estimates of the oceans' heat content are validated using CERES data.

What does CERES do?

But then the paper goes wrong. The 'Balance' of EBAF only adjusts the mean energy flux. It does not interact in any way with the increases and drops in the temperature data over time. That comes from the CERES instruments' raw data and is what contains evidence of the warming trend.

Specifically, the CERES instruments continuously measure the radiation coming from the Sun into the atmosphere and the outgoing longwave and shortwave radiation at the top of the atmosphere. Then computers produce a monthly global mean net flux value for every month from March 2000 to the present. These raw monthly data are off from the 0.7 W/m2 measured by Argo, so EBAF 'adds' or 'subtracts' some flux from every monthly value in the record to bring the long-period mean in line with the Argo estimate.

The monthly values after this adjustment are thus higher or lower than the raw values by exactly the same amount in every single month. This means the difference between any two months – March 2005 and March 2015, say – is unaffected by EBAF. For example, if EBAF adds 3.6 W/m2 to the measured values, the difference between 4 and 5 in the raw data is the same as the difference between 7.6 and 8.6 in the processed data, which is 1 W/m2.

The idea that Earth's energy imbalance has been increasing over the satellite record is based on these differences, which Argo data is unconcerned with. As a result, the circularity objection proves less than what the paper has claimed it does.

What sustains credibility?

For added measure, scientists have also estimated Earth's energy imbalance (outgoing minus incoming) using atmospheric reanalyses, deep ocean temperature records from research vessels, and physical models informed by observed surface warming – all of which have been consistent with the CERES-Argo figures. If the imbalance were actually zero, the independent estimates would all have to be wrong for independent reasons. And the odds of that are extremely low.

In fact, the answer to whether the paper could be right is not that one of its authors is a "clarinet instructor" (which he was at the time he worked on the paper), that its rhetoric is often obscurantist, that some of its other authors have done questionable things in the past or even that it has not passed peer-review by a "prestigious" journal. It is that the paper does not perform any independent tests of the data the way credible studies do.

That is in fact the bedrock of the credibility of climate science as a whole. And any efforts that claim to overturn that must also convincingly explain how independent checks arrived at the same result while being flawed in independent ways.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Know your English

S. Upendran

"What did you do on New Year's Eve? Did you have fun?"

"Oh, yes! I had a great deal of fun! My friends and I danced till 4:00 in the morning. And as you can imagine, I was dead beat after that. I found it...."

"....you were beat? Who beat you? And why?"

"Nobody beat me! All that dancing had me beat. You see, when you say that you're beat, it implies that you are extremely tired. It's one of the meanings of the word 'beat'."

"I see. It's an informal expression, I suppose?"

"That's right! It's not used in formal contexts. Here's an example. The college students were dead beat after the long trek."

"Vyomekesh looked dead beat after doing his karate exercises."

"That's a good example. Agarkar looked beat after bowling his tenth over."

"I don't really agree with you. He doesn't usually look beat after bowling ten overs. It's just that he always looks as if he wants to sit down and cry."

"That's true. He always looks sad, doesn't he?"

"Most of our cricketeers do. And the way they are playing, they are making everyone in the country sad, too. Tell me, is there another word which means 'tired'? An informal word, I mean."

"Sure, there is. 'Bushed' is another word used in informal contexts to mean 'tired'. After playing the third set, Ramdas was bushed."

"When Mala asked me if I was interested in going to the movies, I told her I was too bushed to go. How does that sound?"

"Sounds good."

"Hey, doesn't the word 'stressed out' mean the same thing as 'bushed'?"

"Not really. You see, ..."

"....what do you mean? Doesn't 'stressed out' mean tired too?"

"Well, yes. But there is a difference between being 'stressed out' and being 'bushed'. You see, when you say you are 'bushed' or 'beat', what you are implying is that you are physically exhausted."

"I see. And when you say that you are 'stressed ou'' it means that you are mentally exhausted. Am I right?"

"I guess you could say that. 'Stressed out' is more mental than physical. For example, studying for the GRE has really stressed out Sukesh."

"Talking to my uncle for five minutes stresses me out."

"I am sure my nephews say the same thing."

"When I was young, sitting in maths class used to stress me out."

"I still have nightmares thinking about my maths class."

"My friend Suresh gets asthma thinking about maths."

"Gets what?"

"A..s..t..h..m..a. Asthma!"

"The 'th' in the word 'asthma' is not pronounced."

"It isn't?"

"....the 'as' in the first syllable is like the word 'ass'. The final 'a' is like the 'a' in 'china', 'about', and 'amount'."

"The 'th' is not pronounced at all and the stress is on the first syllable. Correct?"

"Excellent. Some people pronounce the 's' in the first syllable like the 'z' in 'zip', 'zest', and 'zoo'."

Published in The Hindu on January 4, 2000

Word of the day

Boisterous: noisy and lacking in restraint or discipline

Synonyms: rambunctious, unruly

Usage: *The crowd grew boisterous as the match reached its final moments.*

Pronunciation: https://newsth.live/ZQEJN5

International Phonetic Alphabet: /ˈbɔɪstərəs/

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

On the anniversary of the execution of three young revolutionaries on March 23, 1931, revisit one of the most debated moments in India's freedom struggle

Prathmesh Kher

QUESTION 1

The execution of Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev Thapar and Shivaram Rajguru followed their conviction in which case related to the assassination of John Saunders in Lahore?

QUESTION 2

The assassination of Saunders was intended as retaliation for the police assault on which nationalist leader who later died of injuries sustained during a lathi charge?

QUESTION 3

In which prison were the three revolutionaries executed?

QUESTION 4

Which pact between nationalist leaders and the British government was signed shortly before the executions in 1931?

QUESTION 5

What was the title of the editorial published after the executions, by B. R. Ambedkar in the Marathi weekly Janata, on April 13, 1931?

Identify this Indian revolutionary, commander-in-chief of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association, who died in a gun battle with the British police at Alfred Park in 1931. PUBLIC DOMAIN

Questions and answers to the previous day's daily quiz: 1. The World Meteorological Organization is headquartered in this European city. **Ans: Geneva, Switzerland**

2. Expand GRIB, the concise data format commonly used in meteorology. **Ans: General Regularly-distributed Information in Binary form**

3. To a meteorologist, an 'okta', a scale of measurement is. **Ans: The amount of cloud cover at any given location**

4. The term for rain that falls from a cloud but evaporates before reaching the ground, seen as streaks under a cloud. **Ans: Virga**

5. Parts of Kerala witnessed 'blood rain' as recently as 2012. Name its prime cause. **Ans: Arial spores of the orange-coloured 'Trentepohlia' algae, often triggered by atmospheric conditions**

6. The everyday two-word term for strong, high-altitude wind band that pilots use to save time and fuel on long flights. **Ans: Jet Stream**

7. The recurring natural phenomenon characterised by fluctuating ocean temperatures in the equatorial Pacific is the ENSO. Expand ENSO. **Ans: El Niño-Southern Oscillation**

Visual: Name the Indian scientist who in his capacity as the chairman of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) received the Nobel Peace Prize, along with Al Gore, in 2007. **Ans: Rajendra Pachauri**

Early birds: Piyali Tuli | K.N. Viswanathan | Prem Nath Tiwari | Sukdev Shet | Ashok Tripathi