

Holi SALE
UP TO **50% OFF**

25th to 28th February
On All Online,
Pendrive Courses & Test Series

Download Drishti Learning App

Drishti IAS

Connect Now to Avail the Discount

87501 87501

Cases stall as judicial officers busy with SIR in West Bengal

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

Judicial work in the district and metropolitan courts across West Bengal has been severely affected after hundreds of judicial officers were deployed to process nearly 50 lakh claims and objections under the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls ahead of the February 28 deadline.

Except for urgent matters and bail hearings, trials and regular proceedings – including in special courts such as those dealing with Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) cases – have been affected as judges undertake verification work.

Committees have been formed at the Calcutta High Court and district levels to reassign urgent cases to alternative courts, but litigants and judicial officers remain uncertain about

Judicial crunch

SC has directed judiciary to verify about **50 lakh** claims and objections in West Bengal

- Calcutta HC has deployed **294 judicial officers** for verifications
- Trials as well as other hearings before district courts and metropolitan courts in the State have stalled following the deployment



when normal functioning will resume. Now that it has fallen to the judiciary to examine claims and objections, judicial officers have reached out to administrative complexes for the verification work.

CONTINUED ON
» **PAGE 12**
RELATED REPORTS ON
» **PAGE 13**

India 'stands firmly' with Israel, Modi tells Knesset

Prime Minister addresses the Israeli parliament as he begins visit to the West Asian country; India has an uncompromising policy of zero tolerance for terrorism with no double standard, he adds

Kalol Bhattacherjee
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in his address to the Knesset on Wednesday, extended a firm hand of friendship to Israel and condemned the Hamas attack on October 7, 2023 as a "barbaric terrorist attack".

Speaking at the Israeli parliament, the Prime Minister supported the Gaza Peace Initiative saying it was necessary to "sustain" the process of peace building in the region.

"The Gaza Peace Initiative that was endorsed by the UN Security Council offers a pathway. India has expressed its firm support for the initiative... We believe that it holds the promise of a just and durable



Prime Minister Narendra Modi being greeted by Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu at the Knesset in Jerusalem on Wednesday. ANI

peace for all the people of the region, including by addressing the Palestine issue," he said.

Bilateral relations

Mr. Modi said India and Israel were working to enhance bilateral relations across sectors such as water management, agricul-

shattered in the barbaric terrorist attack by Hamas on October 7," said Mr. Modi, adding that India stands with Israel "firmly, with full conviction".

In his second visit to Israel as Prime Minister, Mr. Modi reminded the members of the Knesset about India's own struggle against terrorism and cited the 26/11 terror attack in Mumbai that killed citizens of India as well as multiple other countries, including Israel.

"Like you, we have a consistent and uncompromising policy of zero tolerance for terrorism, with no double standard," the Prime Minister said.

"I also carry with me the deepest condolences of the people of India for every life lost and for every family whose world was

CONTINUED ON
» **PAGE 12**
RAHUL TARGETS PM'S TRIP
» **PAGE 13**



'COUNTERVAILING DUTY'

U.S. slaps 126% tariffs on Indian solar cells

BUSINESS » PAGE 15

TIRELESS CAMPAIGNER

Communist veteran Nallakannu passes away

NEWS » PAGE 13



DECISIVE WIN

New Zealand knocks out co-host Sri Lanka

SPORT » PAGE 17

Colours and cheers



Vibrant hues: Revellers at the Lathmar Holi celebrations at Barsana, Uttar Pradesh, on Wednesday. As part of the celebrations, women playfully hit men daubed in colours with bamboo sticks. Elaborate security arrangements were made for the festival. REUTERS

IN BRIEF

NCERT apologises for 'inappropriate textual material'

NEW DELHI
The NCERT on Wednesday issued a statement apologising for "inappropriate textual material" hours after the apex court registered a *suo motu* case over the inclusion of a section on "corruption" in the judiciary in a new textbook published by it. » **Page 12**

Three Youth Cong. members held in Shimla

NEW DELHI
The Delhi police on Wednesday arrested three more Youth Congress members in connection with the protest on February 20 at the AI Impact Summit in New Delhi. They were nabbed from Shimla. The total number arrests in the case has risen to 11. » **Page 2**

Rajasthan scraps two-child norm for local body, panchayat polls after three decades

Mohammed Iqbal
JAIPUR

Ahead of civic polls in Rajasthan, the State Cabinet on Wednesday approved the removal of three-decade-old legal provisions prohibiting persons with more than two children from contesting panchayat and urban local body polls.

The restriction was introduced in 1995 during the government led by former Chief Minister Bhairon Singh Shekhawat.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Jogaram Patel said after the Cabinet meeting that it approved bringing Bills for amending Section

Two Bills will be introduced in the Assembly's ongoing Budget Session to amend the rule, the State Parliamentary Affairs Minister said

19 of the Rajasthan Panchayati Raj Act, 1994, and Section 24 of the Rajasthan Municipalities Act, 2009.

Mr. Patel said the legal provisions had become "outdated" following considerable change in the sociopolitical sphere over the years. He said the two Bills will be introduced and passed in the Assembly's

ongoing Budget Session.

"The two-child norm was introduced as a population control measure. It has lost its relevance now as the fertility rate has declined to 2, against 3.6 during 1991-94," he said.

Criticising the decision, State Congress president Govind Singh Dotasra said, "The BJP government should clarify whether it supports population control or follows the RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh) diktat."

RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat had recently suggested that Hindu families should consider having at least three children.

Several social organisations and public representatives had sought removal of the two-child norm in the past, contending that it was "discriminatory and inconsistent with democratic principles".

The State Cabinet also approved the formation of a Directorate of Revenue Intelligence and Economic Offences, establishment of an ayurvedic, yoga and naturopathy university in Ajmer, and adoption of an industrial park promotion policy. It cleared a revised financial model for the proposed Rajasthan Mandapam and Global Capability Centre project in Jaipur.

Raising the Bar in Legal Discourse

An impactful discussion forum featuring India's finest legal minds

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

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

Join us for a day of inspiring conversations and meaningful perspectives.

Date: 28 February 2026
Time: 10:30 am onwards
Location: New Delhi

For Registrations

Scan the QR code or visit newsth.live/THVITJU

'Chose self-interest over saving life': HC denies 2 contractors pre-arrest bail in biker death case

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday rejected anticipatory bail to two contractors in connection with the death of 25-year-old Kamal Dhyani on February 6 after his motorcycle fell into a pit dug by the Delhi Jal Board in Janakpuri to lay sewer lines.

Earlier this month, a trial court had dismissed the anticipatory bail pleas of the two contractors — Himanshu Gupta and Kavish Gupta.

Dismissing the pleas for pre-arrest bail, Justice Swarna Kanta Sharma said, "A message must also go to the community that a person or entity awarded a public contract undertakes it with responsibility, and if such responsibility is abdicated, accountability and the law must follow."

She termed the "apparent attempt" by the two contractors and their sub-

contractor to shield themselves after the incident as "shocking", saying the evidence showed them "hurriedly placing signage and barricades" at the spot instead of helping the victim.

"It is most disturbing to note that even after the accident, no medical assistance was arranged, the police were not informed, and no emergency response was sought despite knowledge that the victim lay in the pit struggling for his life. The reckless disregard for human life, as reflected from the material on record, suggests that for accused persons, self-protection from the hands of law was more important than saving a human life," the court noted.

'Death traps'

Justice Sharma added, "Public roads cannot be allowed to turn into death traps and reduce human life to collateral damage of contractual work."

Couple accused of racial abuse arrested, sent to 14-day judicial custody

Police add SC/ST Act charges to FIR; no place for hate, discrimination, intimidation in Delhi: CM; strong action will be initiated, we'll ensure no one ill-treats people from the Northeast, says Rijuji

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Delhi police on Wednesday arrested the couple — Harsh Singh and Ruby Jain — accused of racially abusing three women from Arunachal Pradesh at their Malviya Nagar residence on February 20.

The two were presented before a court, which remanded them in 14 days' judicial custody. The police have added charges under the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 to the FIR registered under various Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita sections, including those pertaining to criminal intimidation, outraging the modesty of women, and promoting enmity between groups, said a senior police officer.

An Assistant Commissioner of Police-rank officer has taken over the probe, the officer added.

Union Minister Kiren Rijju and Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Wednesday said atrocities against people from the Northeast will not be tolerated and expressed solidarity with the victims.

'Offer full support' Meanwhile, Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta met



Ruby Jain (left) and her husband Harsh Singh are accused of hurling racial slurs at three women from Arunachal Pradesh. Delhi CM Rekha Gupta interacting with the women at her office on Wednesday. ANI



the three women and assured them of her full support. "Today, I met our young friends from the North East who were affected by the recent distressing incident in Delhi. They are resilient, courageous, and full of promise. I have assured them of my full support during this difficult time," she said on X.

The CM added, "I want to make it clear that Delhi is a city of diversity, respect, and mutual dignity. Strictest action will be taken against the miscreants involved in this incident. There is absolutely no place for hatred, discrimination, intimidation, or racial abuse in Delhi. Such behaviour is unacceptable and will not be tolerated under any circumstances."

Ms. Gupta urged everyone not to politicise the

issue and respect the privacy of the victims.

'In touch with police'

Mr. Rijju said he has been in touch with the authorities concerned since the day the incident was reported.

"I personally have spoken to the police officers and am following up on the action. Arrests have been made, and strong legal action will be initiated. We will ensure that no one ill-treats anyone from the Northeast," the Union Minister told reporters.

Later, in a post on X, he stated: "The lady who insulted and abused our 3 Arunachalee girls in Malviya Nagar, New Delhi has been arrested. Stringent action will be taken as per law. The male has also been booked. The char-

gesheet will be filed at the earliest."

Mr. Khandu said, "We stand firmly with our three sisters, and their safety, dignity, and justice remain our highest priority."

The incident

The incident occurred during the installation of an air conditioner in the women's fourth-floor residence.

During the process, dust and debris reportedly fell onto the lower floor where the couple resided, triggering a sharp reaction.

What began as an argument over the repair work soon escalated into a heated verbal exchange, during which the couple allegedly made derogatory and racial remarks against the women, as per the police.

(With inputs from PTI)

Three Youth Cong. members held in Shimla; H.P. Police detains Delhi team

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Delhi police on Wednesday arrested three more Youth Congress members in connection with the "shirts off" protest on February 20 at the AI Impact Summit in New Delhi. With this, the total number of Indian Youth Congress (IYC) members arrested in the case, including its president Uday Bhanu Chib, who was held on Monday and dubbed the "mastermind" behind the protest, has risen to 11.

Saurabh, Siddharth and Arbaz were nabbed from Shimla and produced before a local court, which granted their transit remand to the Delhi police. They are being brought to Delhi for further questioning, sources said.

However, high drama unfolded in the Himachal Pradesh capital with the local police objecting to the search operations by their Delhi counterparts without prior intimation.

Sources said the H.P. police intercepted three vehicles carrying the accused, who were said to be non-residents of the State, and detained nearly 20 people, including Delhi Police personnel. When reached for comment on the issue, the Delhi police did not respond.

A day earlier, H.P. Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu had criticised the Delhi police's "midnight



A court on Wednesday granted the transit remand of the three IYC members, arrested for the 'shirts off' protest at the Feb. 20 AI summit, to Delhi Police. PTI

raid" at Himachal Sadan in New Delhi on Saturday night amid reports that members of the Youth Congress who had taken part in a protest were provided accommodation there. He had termed the police action as "unfortunate" and "contrary to constitutional procedure".

Meanwhile, Judicial Magistrate Ravi of the Patiala House Courts on Wednesday extended by four days the police custody of five Youth Congress members — national secretary Krishna Hari, Bihar secretary Kundan Yadav, Uttar Pradesh president Ajay Kumar, along with Narasimha Yadav from Telangana and Jitendra Yadav from Gwalior — arrested earlier for the "shirts off" protest over the India-U.S. trade deal at the high-security event.

The police have said the protest was part of a "deep-rooted conspiracy". (With inputs from PTI)

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH

PVS Vencata Subramaniam
23.11.1964 - 25.2.2026

Cremation at Besant Nagar Crematorium between 10:30 am to 11:30 am on 26.2.2026.

No.10, Belvedere, Anna Salai, Palavakkam, Chennai-600041

Family & Friends

DEATH ANNIVERSARIES

10th DEATH ANNIVERSARY

Shri V.Narayana Rao Panth
(Retd. Audit Officer, AG's Office, Chennai)

Fondly Remembered by
Sons, Son in law, Daughter, Daughters in law, Grand sons, Grand Daughters & Great Grand Daughters.

EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY

OPEN E-TENDER NOTICE

OPEN E-TENDER NOTICE NO.- SEE-GSU-BLT-25-26-02

CAO/CON/RSP/MHX for and on behalf of the President of India invites Open E-Tenders for the following works. The last date of online E-tendering is 18.03.2026 up to 15:00 hrs. All information and tender documents related to E-tender is available on website - www.ireps.gov.in.

Name of works : At HJP & SEE :- Provision of Ballastless track at Line No. 1, 4 & 6 platform lines of Hajipur and line No. 3 & 6 in Sonpur. Approx Cost (In Rs.): ₹22,26,54,850.43, Earnest Money (In Rs.): ₹12,63,300/-

The above tender notice is available on website www.ireps.gov.in. RIGHT OF RAILWAY TO DEAL WITH TENDER: Railway Administration reserves the right to postpone/modify or to cancel any one or all the tenders without assigning any reasons.

Dy. Chief Project Manager
Gati Shakti/ECR/Sonpur
PR/1849/SEE/GS/Engg/T/25-26/32

CLASSIFIEDS MART

TO ADVERTISE VISIT
www.thehinduads.com
CALL: 011-43579738 || 011-43579797

PERSONAL

CHANGE OF NAME

I, L Jine Kom s/o Laishram Kunjahi Singh born on 20/11/1987 residing at Kiyam Siphai, Heibong Leirak, po. & ps. Thoubal, dist: Thoubal, Manipur, have changed my name to Laishram Jine vide affidavit dated 23/02/2026 at Mokokchung.

LEGAL NOTICE

IN THE COURT OF THE XI ADDL. CITY CIVIL AND SESSIONS JUDGE AT BANGALORE (CCH-8) O.S. No. 2578/2024

BETWEEN: SRI. B.M. SHANKARABAIH, S/o late B. Venkateswara, aged about 75 years, Residing at No. 5 (old 251) 19th Main Road, 1st 'W' Block, Rajajinagar, Bengaluru-560010 and Other ... PLAINTIFFS

AND: 1. SMT.SHANTHA, W/o Late T. Gowripathi, aged about 88 years, Residing at Tejasvi, 145, 2nd Main Road, Kengeri Upanagar, Bengaluru-560060 AND OTHERS ... DEFENDANTS

NOTICE TO THE DEFENDANT No.1(c)

1(c) Dr.T.G.CHANDRASHEKAR, S/o late T.Gowripathi, aged about 63 years, Residing at No.4-8/16, DLF Phase-2, Near Sikanderpur Metro Station, Gurugram-122002

WHEREAS, the Plaintiffs have filed the above suit against the Defendants for the Partition and separate Possession before the City Civil Court, Bengaluru (CCH No.08). Said case stands posted to 23/03/2026 at 11:00 A.M. for your appearance. You are hereby called upon to appear on that day before the said Court, either personally or through an Advocate. Otherwise, the case will be decided Ex-Parte.

SCHEDULE PROPERTY

All that, piece and parcel of the House property bearing Site No.20, Old No.2148, situated at 3rd Cross West Link Road, Malleshwaram, Bengaluru-560003, along with construction thereon, measuring East to West 60 feet North to South 40 feet, which is having following boundaries: East by - West link road, West by: Smt.Kamalmamma's House, 560003, along with construction thereon, measuring East to West 60 feet North to South 40 feet, which is having following boundaries: East by - West link road, West by: House of Shama Rao Scindhe, South by: Raja Rao Bhagade's House

Given under my hand and seal of the Court on this 09/02/2026

By order of the Court, Senior Sheristadar, City Civil Court, Bengaluru

SRI T. SESHAGRI RAO, Advocate
No.230, II Main, II Cross, Mahalakshmi Layout, Bangalore-560 086.

EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY

E-TENDER NOTICE No. SG-664-17-Tele-2025-26

E-tender is invited on Behalf of The President of India For The Under Mentioned Work:- (1) Name of the work: 1) Provision of Communication Media for working of Block, Axle Counter and other telecom circuits on wireless channel at Bukru Station (BUKR) 2) Shifting of MTRC subscribers working over Dhanbad division from N.R. (New Delhi) MSC to NFR MSC (Gowahati), 3) Provision of facility of communication recording station at different Stations over Dhanbad. (2) Approx. Cost of the work: Rs. 5,81,53,617.09 (3) Earnest Money: Rs. 4,40,800.00 (4) Date & time for closing of tender: 23.03.2026 (12:00 Hrs) (5) Any E-Tenders which is sent by Post/ Courier/ FAX or self. Manual proposals although the letter is on firms letter pad or received in time will not be accepted. The above E-Tenders, E-Tendering document along with full information is available on website i.e. <http://www.ireps.gov.in> Note -Tenders are requested to visit the website <http://www.ireps.gov.in> atleast 10 days before last date of closing for latest corrigendum / corrections etc. in response to this E-tender.

Sr. D. S. T. E.
East Central Railway, Dhanbad.
PR/1839/DHN/ST/T/25-26/36

EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY

E-TENDER NOTICE

E-Tenders are invited for execution of the following works by Divisional Railway Manager (Engg.), E.C. Railway, Dhanbad:- (1) E-Tender No.: 326-DHN-2025-26, Name of the work with its location & completion period: Provision of High level PF in BHN, NPJE, RAMAKUNDA, BLME, KSHR, DSME, YDD, LRB, YGM & BNSL in connection with the work of "Raising of speed to 160Kmph on existing New Delhi-Howrah route (Including Kanpur-Lucknow) in GC (PKA-MPO)" in the jurisdiction of Sr. DEN/2/DHN. 12(Twelve) Months. Approx. cost of work (In Rs.): 29,11,55,768.99. (2) E-Tender No.: 327-DHN-2025-26, Name of the work with its location & completion period: Repair and construction of road of different colony under IOW/2/DHN in the jurisdiction of ADEN/1/DHN. 12(Twelve) months. Approx. cost of work (In Rs.): 2,01,28,495.62. (3) E-Tender No.: 328-DHN-2025-26, Name of the work with its location & completion period: (1) Dhanbad Division TTR(CS+CMSC) - 04 Sets: KRLR-NCL-3 Sets, GHD-CPU-1 Set. (2) Dhanbad Division TTR 4 Sets: GHD-BXLL - 4 Set (DS). (3) Dhanbad Division TTR (TWS+CMSC) 32 Sets: GHD-BXLL 14 Sets, BXLL-CPU 2 Sets, BXLL-KRLR -09 Sets, KRLR-KAT-05 Sets (1 in 12) & KRLR-NCL-01 Set, KRLR-KAT-01 Set (1 in 8.5) and TTR (TWS)-02 Sets: KRLR-NCL-01 Set, SLBN-MHDA-01 Set (1 in 12) in the jurisdiction of SR/DEN/4/DHN. 12(Twelve) months. Approx. cost of work (In Rs.): 1,25,30,100.54, Earnest Money (In Rs.): Earnest Money is applicable as shown in <http://www.ireps.gov.in> portal, closing Date & Time for opening of e-tender: 17.03.2026. Date of opening of e-tender from 12:30 hrs. on 17.03.2026. Website particulars: <http://www.ireps.gov.in> No manual tender will be accepted against e-tendering.

Divisional Railway Manager (Engineering)
East Central Railway/Dhanbad
PR/1840/DHN/ENG/T/25-26/56

Woman, 3 daughters killed in Siraspur; husband absconding

Alisha Dutta
NEW DELHI

A man allegedly murdered his wife and three minor daughters at their house in north-west Delhi's Siraspur village, the police said on Wednesday.

Several teams have been constituted to nab the accused, Munchun Kewat, who has not been seen since Wednesday morning, said the police. An FIR has been registered under Section 103 (murder) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita.

Neighbours and relatives alerted the police at the Samaypur Badli police station around 8 a.m. on Wednesday, said an officer. A police team rushed to the spot, where they found four bodies on the ground floor of the house.

The woman was identified as Anita, aged 25, and the minor girls were aged



House of horrors: Neighbours outside the house from where four bodies were recovered on Wednesday morning. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

three, four and five.

Mr. Kewat worked as a vegetable seller at Azadpur Mandi. The family hailed from Patna and had moved into the area around two years ago, said an officer. He added that, as per preliminary investigation, Mr.

Kewat had allegedly intoxicated his wife and daughters before attacking them.

"My son wanted to go to the market with his uncle [Kewat] in the morning. But we couldn't reach him on the phone. I asked my son to go check on their

As per the police's preliminary probe, Kewat intoxicated his wife and three daughters before attacking them

house," said Sugnu Devi, Mr. Kewat's sister-in-law. Minutes later, her son returned home crying and screaming.

'Couple often fought'

"I last spoke to Anita yesterday when she called to ask if I had some vegetables. I didn't have any and conveyed the same," Ms. Sugnu told *The Hindu*.

Parul, a neighbour, said that the couple often engaged in fights.

"Anita had once confided that for over a month or so, her husband had given her only ₹500 to run the household. He would often

beat her," she claimed. However, none of their relatives or neighbours heard arguments or suspicious sounds from the Kewat household on Tuesday night.

The police said they are examining all angles in the case.

"No specific reason has come to light yet, but it has been learnt that they had a dispute around 9 p.m. last night," a police officer said.

'Examining footage'

"We are examining CCTV footage from the area and have sent a team to check if Kewat has gone back to his native village," said the officer.

Crime and forensic teams have inspected the scene and collected evidence. The bodies have been sent for post-mortem examination.

(With inputs from PTI)

Reply to plea by Lamba in assault case: HC to police

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday asked the Delhi police to reply to a plea by Congress leader Alka Lamba challenging an FIR and charges against her in a case related to an assault on police personnel during a protest at Jantar Mantar in 2024.

Ms. Lamba has sought a direction to quash the FIR and all consequential proceedings, including the chargesheet and the framing of charges. The prosecution has accused her of obstructing the police and blocking a public road during a protest in support of women's reservation on July 29, 2024.

DU student challenges month-long ban on protests; HC to treat it as PIL

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

A law student from the Campus Law Centre on Wednesday approached the Delhi High Court to challenge Delhi University's month-long prohibition on public meetings,

processions, demonstrations and protests on its campuses over concerns of obstruction of traffic, threats to safety and disturbance of public peace. Justice Jasmeet Singh made the Delhi police a party to the proceedings and directed that the petition be

treated as a public interest litigation (PIL).

DU Proctor Manoj Kumar Singh issued the order imposing a ban on protests on February 17, four days after clashes at an event at the Arts Faculty in support of the University Grants Commission's equity rules.

Turkman Gate violence case: six more accused granted relief

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Wednesday granted bail to six persons accused of involvement in the violence that took place during a Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD)-led anti-encroachment exercise near the Faiz-e-Ilahi mosque in Turkman Gate on the intervening night of January 6 and 7. Additional Sessions Judge Bhupinder Singh granted relief to the accused persons.

A total of 21 arrests have been made in the case so far, the police said. Of those, 12 were granted bail on February 17 while one got relief last month. The accused's counsel



According to the prosecution, a mob of around 150-200 people threw stones at police and MCD teams, injuring six policemen. FILE PHOTO

told the court that his clients could not be seen as part of the crowd in the CCTV footage furnished by the police, but appeared in corners of the street close to their respective homes.

In response, Additional Public Prosecutor Atul Shrivastava presented video evidence of one of the

accused calling people to join the mob, and said the clip was "instigatory".

According to the prosecution, a mob of around 150-200 people hurled stones and bottles at the police and the civic body personnel, injuring six policemen, including a Station House Officer.

Discoms in debt again, says INLD leader

The Hindu Bureau
GURUGRAM

Former Haryana Finance Minister and national patron of the Indian National Lok Dal (INLD), Sampat Singh, on Wednesday appeared before the Haryana Electricity Regulatory Commission and demanded immediate withdrawal of fixed charges, increased electricity tariffs and fuel surcharge.

He said the State government in 2015 took over ₹25,950 crore in loan from the power distribution companies. However, the utilities have once again fallen into a cycle of debt and losses.

He also referred to financial irregularities and demanded transparency and accountability in the functioning of the power utilities.

Timings
DELHI

THURSDAY, FEB. 26	RISE 06:49	SET 18:19
	RISE 12:55	SET 02:44
FRIDAY, FEB. 27	RISE 06:48	SET 18:19
	RISE 14:01	SET 03:45
SATURDAY, FEB. 28	RISE 06:47	SET 18:20
	RISE 15:10	SET 04:37

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	30	12
Safdarjang	30	12
Palam	28	14

Delhi Palam Today
30°C Morning will be very cool with mist and haze. Day will be slight warm. Night also will be very cool. Dry weather to prevail.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
31°C Rise in temperature. The weather will be dry. Day will be slight warm. Night will be very cool.

© Copyright Skymet Weather 2026
All rights reserved.

ACB raids residence of J&K Dy. CM's kin

The Hindu Bureau
JAMMU

The Jammu and Kashmir Police's Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) conducted searches on Wednesday at

multiple locations linked to a police officer in connection with a disproportionate assets case. The officer, Inspector Vijay Choudhury, is the brother of Deputy Chief Minister Surinder

Choudhary. Meanwhile, Mr. Surinder alleged that his brother was being victimised "because of internal rivalry within the police department".

BANANA BRANDWORKS / VAJIRAM

INBRIEF



Kejriwal backs ongoing stir against land use rule in Goa

Aam Aadmi Party national convener Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday extended his support to the ongoing agitation against alleged misuse of land-use rules in Goa, demanding that they be abolished immediately. Revolutionary Goans Party MLA Viresh Borkar has been protesting at Azad Maidan in Panaji against Section 39A of the Town and Country Planning Act, alleging that it is being misused to convert certain land into "settlement zones", where construction activity is allowed. Addressing a gathering during the inauguration of an e-library in South Goa's Benaulim Assembly constituency, Mr. Kejriwal said that Section 39A provides an opportunity for corruption. PTI

Assault on student: Tripura CM speaks to Haryana counterpart

Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Wednesday said his Haryana counterpart Nayab Singh Saini has assured justice in connection with the alleged assault of a student from Tripura in Gurugram. The student, studying biotechnology in Gurugram, was allegedly subjected to physical assault by her live-in partner, triggering outrage among people in the northeastern State. "Today, I spoke with Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini Ji, regarding the Gurugram student victim. The CM assured me that he will look into the matter personally and take all necessary steps to ensure justice for the victim," Mr. Saha said in a Facebook post. PTI

PM Modi's frequent visits to T.N. will backfire on Oppn. alliance, says Stalin

Describing upcoming Assembly election as "Tamil Nadu vs NDA, CM says PM has done nothing for the State; questions about steps taken to protect fishermen from arrests by the Sri Lankan Navy

The Hindu Bureau
NAGERCOIL

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and DMK president M.K. Stalin said on Wednesday that the more frequently Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Tamil Nadu, the bigger would be the margin of defeat of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). He was speaking at an event held in Nagercoil to distribute welfare assistance.

"As it is the election season, the Prime Minister will visit Tamil Nadu more frequently, and he has already begun doing so," Mr. Stalin said, noting that Mr. Modi's allies were anxious about his visits. "The more frequently he comes here, the bigger will be the NDA's margin of defeat."

The Chief Minister said the people of Tamil Nadu would remember that the Prime Minister had done nothing for the State. "Even yesterday [February 24], the [Union] Cabinet approved a metro rail pro-



Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin handing over scooters to beneficiaries in Nagercoil on Wednesday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

ject for Gujarat, but nothing for Tamil Nadu. Even with the election approaching, nothing was allocated for the State in the Union Budget either," he said.

Describing the upcoming election as "Tamil Nadu vs NDA", he said, "Tamil Nadu must be ruled from Fort St. George. A situation in which it is ruled from Delhi should not arise. The election is meant to decide that."

He said the BJP wanted

ing on a substandard engine called the BJP, and the BJP is relying on a sinking ship called the AIADMK".

"The Dravidian model government is a superfast engine, with a double-digit growth of 11.19%, and it is moving forward at a pace that no one could catch up with. We will be back with Dravidian Model 2.0, and in our second innings, we will surpass our own achievements," Mr. Stalin said.

Seat-sharing talks Meanwhile, the DMK has been unable to fix a date for holding seat-sharing talks with the Congress for the Tamil Nadu Assembly election, as the Congress leadership has refused to scale down the number of seats it has been demanding.

"All I can say is that the stalemate continues. The Congress wants 40 seats - one seat for each Lok Sabha constituency - a number that is impossible for us to accommodate," a DMK source said.

Speaking about the AIADMK-BJP alliance, he said the AIADMK "is rely-

BMC unveils ₹80,952 cr. budget with plans to raise green bonds

Snehal Mutha
MUMBAI

Marking a first-of-its-kind move, India's richest civic body, Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), on Wednesday unveiled plans in its budget to issue municipal green bonds to finance sustainable infrastructure initiatives. This aligns with Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's recent announcement of a ₹100-crore incentive for a single municipal bond issuance of ₹1,000 crore.

The ₹80,862-crore budget is the first after the end of administrative rule and the BJP-led alliance coming to power in the BMC.

The municipal green bonds aim to finance projects, including wastewater treatment and desalination. According to the BMC, the bonds will help achieve Mumbai's Climate Action Plan, attracting Environmental, Social and Governance-focused institutional investors.

Aiming to raise ₹500 crore, BMC commissioner Bhushan Gagrani said, "BMC never invested in capital markets. Raising green bonds is incentivised and subsidised by the Government of India. There is a possibility in future that



BMC commissioner Bhushan Gagrani (right) with Standing Committee chairman Prabhakar Shinde on Wednesday. EMMANUAL YOGINI

we can claim the carbon credits."

Mr. Gagrani presented the budget to Standing Committee chairman Prabhakar Shinde. The budget presented for the financial year 2026-27 proposes a total outlay of ₹80,952.56 crore, marking an increase from ₹74,427.41 crore allocated in 2025-26.

Capital expenditure Out of the total budget, 60% has been allocated for capital expenditure and 40% as revenue expenditure.

The highest allocations have been made to water supply projects (₹6,231 crore), followed by STP projects (₹5,690 crore), Mumbai Coastal Road project (₹4,950 crore), and concretisation of roads (₹5,520 crore).

Maharashtra mute spectator to repressive tactics of Karnataka in border areas: MES

Vinaya Deshpande Pandit
MUMBAI

The Mahayuti government has let down Marathi-speaking people residing in disputed areas on the Maharashtra-Karnataka border, the Maharashtra Ekikaran Samiti (MES) said on Wednesday. "There won't be a political resolution to the issue. We expect the Supreme Court to give us justice," MES leader Vijay Devane told *The Hindu*.

Mr. Devane alleged that the Maharashtra government is a mute spectator to the Karnataka government's "repressive tactics" against Marathi speakers in the border areas, citing instances like Marathi boards being torn down and cases being registered for not speaking in Kannada in government offices.

He said Maharashtra Ministers Chandrakant Patil and Shambhuraj Desai, appointed by the government



Maharashtra government has decided to request the Supreme Court for an urgent hearing in the matter and appointed a strong legal team

CHANDRAKANT PATIL
Maharashtra Cabinet Minister

to coordinate with the legal team on the border dispute case being heard in the apex court, have not addressed their concerns.

"Lawyers should hold meetings with the Maharashtra Ekikaran Samiti, which has been fighting this battle for three generations now," he said.

The Maharashtra government said a meeting will be held before the end of the ongoing Budget Session of the Assembly to address the concerns of Marathi-speaking people in the border areas. "For the last four months, we did

not hold any meeting because the model code of conduct was in force for the local body elections," Mr. Patil told *The Hindu*.

The border dispute between the neighbouring States dates back to 1956, when States were reorganised on linguistic lines. Maharashtra has staked claim to 865 villages in Karnataka, asserting that they comprise majority Marathi-speaking population.

"The Maharashtra government has decided to request the court for an urgent hearing in the matter and appointed a strong le-

gal team," Mr. Patil said.

Meanwhile, the high-powered committee appointed by the Maharashtra government to address the border dispute, comprising senior leaders across party lines, hasn't met in several months. "Only one meeting was held initially, but it did not address any of the core concerns," Congress leader Prithviraj Chavan, who is a member of the committee, said.

Advocate Shivaji Jadhav, representing the Maharashtra government in the Supreme Court, told *The Hindu* from Delhi that an application filed by the Karnataka government is yet to be heard by the court. He said the Karnataka government contends that under Article 3 of the Constitution, only Parliament has the authority to redraw State boundaries. "Depending on the outcome of this application, the suit will be heard."

Kurukshetra University's UIET students to be trained by STEP and Naveen Jindal Foundation

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Students of the University Institute of Engineering & Technology (UIET), Kurukshetra University, will soon undergo a structured English and employability training programme under a new partnership with STEP (the English language assessment and training initiative of *The Hindu* Group) and the Naveen Jindal Foundation (NJF).

The initiative follows the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between STEP and NJF. The MoU was signed by Dr. Maneesh Mishra, vice-president and head - Skills, NJF, and Pundi Sriram, business head - STEP Division on February 24 in New Delhi.

Under the programme, the UIET students will begin with a computer-based



Maneesh Mishra of Naveen Jindal Foundation and Pundi Sriram of STEP after signing of the MoU in New Delhi.

baseline assessment to evaluate their current English proficiency levels. Based on the assessment outcome, they will access STEP's self-paced interactive e-learning modules, supplemented by instructor-led classroom sessions. The programme will conclude with a certification assessment to measure progress and outcome.

The initiative is designed to strengthen students' English language proficiency, workplace communication skills, and overall employability. By bringing structured language training and professional skill development to campus, the UIET continues to enhance career readiness and industry preparedness among its engineering students.

No stray cattle on M.P. streets after 2 years, says State govt.

Press Trust of India
BHOPAL

The Madhya Pradesh government on Wednesday assured that no stray cattle will be seen roaming on the streets in the State after two years once new cow shelters are built and other necessary arrangements are put in place.

The government's assurance came after some Congress MLAs expressed concerns over road accidents caused by the stray cattle.

Congress MLA Ajay Singh and Kailash Kushwaha raised the issue through a calling attention motion and said the problem of stray cattle has become serious in Madhya Pradesh.

They said that despite the government spending crores of rupees, approximately 10 lakh stray cattle are roaming the streets in the State.

Education outlay in Haryana shows downward trend as debt, welfare expenditures rise

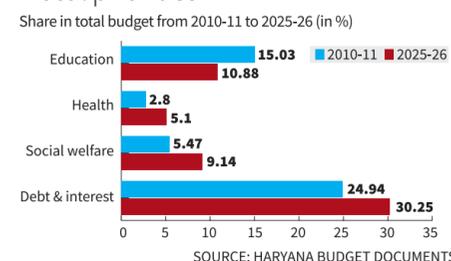
Ashok Kumar
GURUGRAM

Budgetary trends in Haryana over the past 15 years reveal that the allocation for education has steadily declined as a share of the total budget, even as provisions for social welfare have grown significantly. At the same time, the share of debt and interest payments in total expenditure has also seen a sharp rise.

The government spends more than half of the total budget for social welfare on two populist schemes - the Old Age Samman Allowance Scheme, implemented in 1966, and the Deen Dayal Lado Lakshmi Yojana, promised by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) ahead of the 2024 Assembly election.

Of the total budget of ₹18,751.78 crore towards social empowerment, nu-

Fiscal priorities



trition and welfare of Scheduled Castes and Backward Classes in 2025-26, the two schemes together were allocated ₹10,210 crore. The total allocation for education was ₹22,312.46 crore.

In 2010-11, the expenditure on education was ₹5,946.29 crore out of the State's total expenditure of ₹39,554.83 crore, whereas ₹2,176.15 crore was ear-

marked for social welfare programmes.

The allocation for education also includes the capital and revenue outlay on sports, arts and culture.

0.77% GSDP on health

Though the health budget has seen an increase over the past 15 years, it is still below the national average of 5.7%, according to a Reserve Bank of India (RBI)

report - State Finance: A Study of Budgets of 2025-26. Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Delhi fare better than Haryana on the health front with spending percentages of 5.8%, 6.1%, 7.6%, and 12.9% respectively.

As per the performance audit on Public Health Infrastructure and Management of Health Services, 2022-23, Haryana spends 0.77% of its Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) on health.

The total number of beneficiaries under the Old Age Samman Allowance Scheme in February this year stood at 20,05,367 - 10,44,069 men and 9,61,298 women.

The monthly pension has recently been hiked to ₹3,200 per month.

Similarly, 8 lakh women from families with an annual income of less than

₹1.80 lakh are given ₹2,100 per month under the Lado Lakshmi Yojana.

The BJP, in its Assembly election manifesto, had promised the monthly assistance to all women. As per electoral data, there are 95 lakh women in the State.

As per the RBI report, the national average for expenditure on education, sports and arts and culture as a percentage of the total expenditure is 13.1%.

Except Punjab, which allocated 9.3% towards education, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Delhi have higher spending rates at 17.5%, 13.0%, 16.4%, and 19% respectively.

The allocation for technical education, skill development and industrial training, as a percentage of the total expenditure, has also decreased in Haryana

from 1.08% to 0.6% over this period.

State of institutions

Compared with high-income States such as Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra, none of the universities and higher educational institutions in Haryana figure in the QS World University Rankings 2026 or find a mention in the top 150 higher educational institutions in the NIRF ranking, according to the Haryana Vision Document, 2047.

In contrast, Tamil Nadu was home to 18 of the NIRF 2024's top 100 institutions while Maharashtra had 10 universities in the QS World University Rankings for 2025.

The vision document, released in December last year, also highlights a 4.9% secondary-level (Classes 9-12) dropout rate and notes the adverse impact on mar-

ginalised communities.

It also contrasts the proportion of government schools with Internet - 69.3% - with that in private schools - 94.5%.

As per an RTI reply, around 50% regular teaching posts are vacant in government and government-aided colleges in Haryana.

On the technical education front, the Vision-2047 document calls for the need to address the high vacancy rate of ITI instructors, which currently stands at 50%.

Experts voice concern

Rupamanjari Sinha Ray, Associate Professor, Economics & Public Policy, Management Development Institute (MDI), Gurugram, said: "The capital outlay for education is a cause for concern for Haryana."

She said the govern-

ment could, in order to meet the needs of the health and education sectors, consider raising funds for social expenditure through corporate social responsibility funds.

For infrastructure projects, the State could aim for public-private partnerships as it has done in the power transmission sector, she added. Ms. Ray, along with Sunil Ashra, Professor, Economics & Public Policy, MDI, had prepared a report titled 'Evaluation of Finances of State of Haryana' at the request of the Sixteenth Finance Commission last year.

Haryana spends significantly less on education and health as a percentage of its social service expenditure than other high-income States despite having a much higher per capita income than the national average, the report stated.

Over 625 cow smuggling cases in Gujarat in 2 years; 1,810 held

The Hindu Bureau
AHMEDABAD

As many as 1,810 persons have been arrested and nearly 1,800 cows rescued in Gujarat over the past two years in connection with 629 cases of alleged cow smuggling and illegal beef transportation, the State government informed the Assembly on Wednesday.

Replying during the Question Hour of the ongoing Budget Session, Minister of State for Law and Justice Kaushik Vekariya said about 54,000 kg beef was seized during the period. Authorities also confiscated 433 vehicles allegedly used in such offences, of which 339 have been auctioned.

He said 184 individuals were detained under the Prevention of Anti-Social Activities Act, while 50 persons were externed. Additionally, 39 properties linked to the accused were demolished.

Mr. Vekariya was responding on behalf of Deputy Chief Minister Harsh Sanghavi, who holds the Home portfolio.

Amit Shah begins three-day visit to Bihar's Seemanchal

Union Home Minister holds review meeting with local authorities, security agencies over concerns regarding 'demographic changes'; decisive step towards ensuring a strong future for the State: BJP

Amit Bhelari
PATNA

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday commenced his three-day visit to Bihar's Seemanchal region, comprising Purnia, Katihar, Kishanganj, and Araria districts.

Mr. Shah arrived at Purnia airport and departed for Kishanganj by helicopter. He held a review meeting with local authorities and security agencies, including the Sashstra Seema Bal, over concerns related to "demographic changes". Union Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai and Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary, who holds the Home portfolio, were also present at the meeting.

On Thursday, the Home Minister will visit Araria, where he is scheduled to attend a meeting at 11 a.m. at the Letti border outpost.

He will also hold a meeting with Superintendents of Police and officials from border districts at the Ara-



Taking stock: Amit Shah (centre) chairing a review meeting along with Union Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai and Bihar Deputy CM Samrat Choudhary, in Kishanganj on Wednesday. ANI

ria Collectorate. After a review meeting on issues related to the India-Nepal border, he will participate in a function related to the launch of the second phase of the Centre's Vibrant Villages Programme for the comprehensive development of strategic villages along the country's international land borders.

On Friday, Mr. Shah will preside over a high-level review meeting with officials in Purnia on matters related to border districts in the State before returning to the national capital.

Former MLA and BJP State spokesperson Prem Ranjan Patel said the Union Home Minister's tour of the Seemanchal region is "not merely an administrative visit, but a decisive step towards ensuring national security and a strong future for Bihar".

"Maintaining security, vigilance, and a balanced population structure is essential in Seemanchal, a strategically sensitive region of Bihar bordering Nepal and Bangladesh. The Centre is committed to effectively controlling illegal

infiltration, smuggling, and anti-social activities across the border," Mr. Patel said.

Modern surveillance systems, enhanced capabilities of the armed forces, and strengthened intelligence networks in border districts will increase local citizens' confidence in security, he said. Illegal infiltration is not only a security issue but also a matter of social and economic balance, and uncontrolled infiltration can increase pressure on local resources, competition for jobs, and social tensions, he added.

'Concrete strategy'

"A concrete strategy will pave the way for stability and long-term development in the Seemanchal region. Along with ensuring security, new initiatives will also strengthen Seemanchal's infrastructure: roads, health, education, and employment. Only when the border is secure and administrative control is strong, investment and industrial activity will increase," Mr. Patel said.

I-T raids on BSP MLA draw sharp reaction from U.P. Minister

The Hindu Bureau
LUCKNOW

The Income Tax Department on Wednesday conducted searches at the Lucknow and Ballia residences of the lone Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) MLA Uma Shankar Singh, triggering a sharp response from State Minister Dinesh Pratap Singh.

The department did not disclose the reasons for the searches or their outcome till Wednesday afternoon. Mr. Uma Shankar, 55, represents the Rasra Assembly constituency in Ballia district.

Mr. Dinesh Pratap, who is related to the BSP legislator, objected to the action through posts on social media. "The house of Shri Uma Shankar Singh, where my daughter is married, is being raided today by the Income Tax Department. Politicians across the country and State, including the Income Tax Department, know that Mr. Uma Shankar has been battling for his life for more than two years," Mr. Pratap said.

wrote on X.

"In the current circumstances, the MLA is spending all his time and resources on medical treatment, not on earning money. All his businesses have virtually shut down. He is living in isolation at his residence," Mr. Dinesh Pratap said.

'Health condition'

He added that despite the ongoing Assembly session, Mr. Uma Shankar had been unable to attend due to his health condition. "At this time, even nurses or doctors are not allowed to visit his house. If any harm is caused to his life, these insensitive organisations will be responsible," he added.

Drawing a comparison with judicial leniency in exceptional cases, the Minister said that even in the "rarest of rare" crimes, courts consider mercy petitions.

"But in such difficult times, which insensitive politician or organisation would think of causing pain? May God grant wisdom to such people and organisations," he said.

Illegal dairy 'busted', says AAP; Mayor denies charge

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Wednesday claimed that it "conducted a raid" exposing "cattle mafia" operations under a drain in south Delhi, and rescued 43 cows being exploited.

The action, led by AAP Delhi president Saurabh Bharadwaj, prompted the MCD and the police intervention, after which the animals were sent to a *gaushala* (cowshed), the party said in a statement. "Police were present for about an hour, but no MCD officer was willing to answer calls. If an MCD officer arrived, they would be compelled to take these cows away, which would disrupt their arrangement with the cow mafia," Mr. Bharadwaj alleged.

However, Mayor Raja Iqbal Singh denied the allegation and said the case is "misleading, factually incorrect, and politically motivated". The Mayor, in an official statement, said action against illegal dairies and efforts toward animal welfare are priorities of the MCD.

CPI(M) leader doubts AIADMK's role in NDA seat-sharing talks

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Communist Party of India (Marxist) Tamil Nadu secretary P. Shanmugam on Wednesday said it appeared that the BJP would allocate seats to the AIADMK and not the other way around in the NDA alliance.

In a post on X, he said AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K. Palaniswami had been saying that his party was leading the NDA in Tamil Nadu. However, some NDA constituents had indicated that they would hold seat-sharing talks only with the BJP, a claim that the national party had not denied, he added.

"In such a scenario, it appears that only the BJP would allocate seats to the



CPI(M)'s Tamil Nadu secretary P. Shanmugam. FILE PHOTO

AIADMK. It is time for the followers of Jayalalithaa, who once asked, 'Modi or Lady', to think about this," he said.

He was referring to the slogan raised by the former Chief Minister during the 2014 Lok Sabha election, when she said, "Who is a better administrator? Is it Gujarat's Modi [Narendra Modi was then Gujarat Chief Minister] or this Tamil Nadu lady?"

Meghalaya has the highest HIV caseload in India, says Minister

Rahul Karmakar
GUWAHATI

Meghalaya currently has the highest human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) caseload in the country, State's Health Minister Wailadmiki Shylla told the Assembly on Wednesday.

Replying to a question by National People's Party MLA Mehtab Chandee A. Sangma, he said 10,293 people living with HIV were receiving antiretroviral treatment. "The government has sanctioned a ₹25-crore intervention programme for the next five years to address the alarming rise in HIV/AIDS cases," Mr. Shylla said.

He said 949 deaths linked to the virus have been recorded in the State over the past decade, with the East Khasi Hills district

reporting 435 of these cases.

Mr. Shylla, however, clarified that all reported deaths were attributed to opportunistic infections and not directly to HIV/AIDS. He cited the provisions of confidentiality in the HIV and AIDS (Prevention and Control) Act of 2017 and prevailing social stigma as the major challenges in addressing the issue. "Early detection and intervention get complicated because testing requires consent and treatment cannot be forced."

Mr. Shylla said the department has been intensifying awareness campaigns to improve testing and treatment. He said the government has been collaborating with community stakeholders to encourage testing and treatment.

HC confirms acquittal of Veerappan's 'aides' in Kannada actor Rajkumar's abduction case

Mohamed Imranullah S.
CHENNAI

The Madras High Court on Wednesday dismissed a State appeal against the 2018 acquittal of nine individuals, suspected of being

members of forest brigand Veerappan's gang, which abducted Kannada actor Rajkumar on July 30, 2000, and held him hostage for 108 days.

A Division Bench confirmed the order passed by

the third Additional District and Sessions Court in Erode district on September 25, 2018, and held that it did not find any reason to interfere with the verdict. In his verdict, Sessions Judge K. Mani had pointed

out that the FIR was registered about 24 hours after the incident, and that too on the basis of a complaint lodged by Village Administrative Officer Gopal, who was not an eye-witness to the incident.

Eurasian diving duck's presence in Kaziranga National Park triggers climate change concern

Rahul Karmakar
GUWAHATI

The seventh waterbird count at the Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve in Assam released on Wednesday has spotlighted a new avian guest – a diving duck from the Eurasian taiga breeding grounds. However, the cheer for ornithologists and wildlife officials has come with some concern related to climate change.

"The smew (*Mergellus albellus*) signals wetland health in India, but its vagrant status flags climate-driven range shifts and the need to protect refuelling stops amid hunting and oil pollution threats," said ornithologist Nilutpal Mahanta, a part of the waterbird census held from January 4 to 11.

A striking diving duck, the smew is a rare visitor to India. Sightings are sporadic and localised, mainly in northern or central Indian wetlands, including Haiderpur in Uttar Pradesh. During the census, the smew was recorded at Rowmari-Donduba beels



Smew, a Eurasian diving duck, spotted in Kaziranga National Park during the waterbird census in January 2026. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

in Laokhowa, part of the Kaziranga landscape covering 1,302 sq. km., and in the core areas of the park that are better known for its one-horned rhinoceroses.

The diving duck favours fish-rich, sheltered waters during winter, singly or in a small flock. Globally, there are an estimated 130,000 smews, but their number has been declining due to habitat loss and human activities.

Fewer waterbirds

The enumerators recorded 105,540 individual waterbirds belonging to 107 species. The number was 6,522 individuals and 17 species fewer than what

the sixth waterbird count yielded in 2025.

Officials downplayed the numerical dip. They said the arrival of the smew "underscores floodplain resilience for flyway migrants, guiding anti-encroachment efforts in the two Important Bird Areas (IBAs) in the Kaziranga landscape – the Kaziranga National Park and two wildlife sanctuaries, Laokhowa and Burhachapori, together.

"The first-ever sighting of the smew has stolen the spotlight in a record-breaking census of 105,540 birds. This spectacular debut reaffirms Assam's wetlands and vital biodiversity hotspots," Forest, Environ-

ment, and Climate Change Minister Chandra Mohan Patowary said.

This year's survey, conducted by 120 enumerators and 50 volunteers, spanned 166 wetlands across 10 ranges of the tiger reserve. The recorded species included ducks or geese, waders, herons or egrets, and marsh birds. The top abundant species were the bar-headed goose, northern pintail, and lesser whistling duck. The census report highlighted targeted conservation needs with 18 critically endangered, endangered, vulnerable, and near-vulnerable species on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) watchlists.

The top five wetlands by count were Laokhowa's Rowmari Beel (15,661 birds), Donduba Beel (14,469), Katakhal (4,979), Sohola (3,612), and Khalihamari (3,463). The top five wetlands by diversity were Rowmari (77 species), Donduba (71), Sohola (69), Kawoimari-Bhoisamari-Diffulu (57), and Ververi (53).

Women's Day

Special Issue

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Timeline of Women's Rights Movement**
- First Indian Woman to...**
- How you can celebrate Women's Day**
- Women inventors**
- Student reflections on the woman who inspired them and the impact she had on their lives.**
- Activity sheet**

Collector's Edition @ Rs. 20 Per Copy

PRE-BOOK YOUR COPY WITH YOUR NEWSAGENT TODAY

For further queries, call 1800 102 1878 | For bulk bookings, email reach.youngworld@thehindu.co.in

For Print Subscription, visit www.thehindu.com/youngworld

IN BRIEF



Rahul to lay foundation stone for landslide victims' homes

Rahul Gandhi, Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha, is scheduled to lay the foundation stone for the new houses to be built by the Congress for the survivors of the 2024 Mundakkai-Chooramala landslide in Wayanad, Kerala, on Thursday. Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, MP, will be present at the event at Kalpetta. The event has been scheduled for 2.30 p.m. A release said that Mr. Gandhi will land on Thursday morning at the Kannur airport.

Peace meet held after Dalit couple denied temple entry

A day after an agriculturist from Tumakuru district in Karnataka was arrested for preventing a newly-wed Dalit couple from entering a temple on February 19, the district administration convened a peace meeting and escorted the newly-wed couple to perform puja. A peace meeting was convened in Goni village of Turuvekere taluk following alleged humiliation of a newly-wed Dalit couple who were asked to leave the Arasamma Devi temple.

Street dog bites nine-year-old boy on face in Vijayawada

A nine-year-old boy suffered serious injuries after a street dog bit him on his face at One Town in Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh, on Tuesday. The boy had accidentally fell on the dog after losing balance on his bicycle, CCTV footage showed. Doctors reportedly said the child needed two more days of observation. As per B. Somasekhar Reddy, Veterinary Assistant Surgeon, Vijayawada Municipal Corporation, the dog that attacked the boy was recently sterilised and vaccinated.

Kerala Minister injured in scuffle; CPI(M) launches stir

The episode occurred amid protests against the Health Minister by KSU activists at Kannur railway station; she has been admitted to a hospital where a team of experts will assess her condition

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Protests by the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and its affiliate groups erupted across Kerala after Health Minister Veena George sustained injuries to her neck and hand during a scuffle between black-flag-wielding Kerala Students Union (KSU) activists and the police at the Kannur railway station on Wednesday.

The Minister, who was scheduled to leave for Thiruvananthapuram, was admitted to the ICU of the Kannur District Hospital. A medical bulletin from the



Chaotic chapter: Police officers shield Veena George during the KSU protest at the Kannur railway station on Wednesday. S.K. MOHAN

hospital stated that an expert team had been assigned to assess the severity of the Minister's neck injury.

The police arrested five KSU workers over the incident and charged them with attempted murder.

The episode occurred amid widespread protests against the Minister by the Opposition in recent days, who have alleged a collapse of the public health sector. It sparked strong reactions and protest

marches by Leftist and Left-leaning outfits across the State, leading to effigy-burning and confrontations with Congress workers.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan visited Ms. George at the hospital and described the incident as "a heinous attack" on a woman holding public office. "The incident reflects the inherent villainy of the Congress leadership," he said. He said Kerala's public health system was renowned and had emerged as the best in the country, according to surveys and audits by various agencies, including the NITI Aayog.

A.P. diarrhoea outbreak leaves 1 dead

Harish Gilai
SRIKAKULAM/VISAKHAPATNAM

Srikakulam district in Andhra Pradesh is on high alert after the death of a 43-year-old man and the hospitalisation of 76 others owing to a diarrhoea outbreak reportedly caused by contaminated drinking water.

Among those hospitalised, two elderly patients are critical.

The district administration has suspended municipal water supply to the affected neighbourhoods and has intensified sanitation measures in these areas. Medical camps have been set up at two loca-



Srikakulam Collector Swapnil Dinkar Pundkar visits a patient at a hospital in Srikakulam.

tions, and three ambulances are on standby. A door-to-door survey has also begun to assess the health condition of the residents.

The incident came to light on Monday, when a

few patients were admitted to hospitals with diarrhoea. The number of cases gradually rose by Tuesday, and the death on Tuesday triggered panic among the residents.

Gondur Shankar, MLA, and District Collector Swapnil Dinkar Pundkar visited the family of the deceased and handed over a cheque for ₹10 lakh.

The residents blamed the outbreak on water contamination, and alleged that in certain areas, municipal water pipelines ran close to or intersected drainage canals. They said they noticed a change in the colour of the water

supplied on Saturday and Sunday. There was a foul smell too, they said.

The Collector said water samples were collected from six locations and sent to the Water Testing Laboratory in Srikakulam. The initial reports indicated no contamination. However, he noted that additional biological and chemical analysis reports from samples sent to Visakhapatnam were still awaited.

Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu on Wednesday reviewed the situation following the diarrhoea outbreak and the reported milk contamination in Rajamahendravaram.

Body-worn cameras must for passport verification in Bengaluru

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

In a bid to ensure transparency and accountability in passport verification, the Bengaluru Police Commissionerate has issued fresh directions mandating the compulsory use of body-worn cameras by officers during the entire verification process.

According to a circular issued by Bengaluru City Police Commissioner Seemant Kumar Singh on Wednesday, all police officers and staff must mandatorily visit the residential address provided by the passport applicant and gather necessary inputs from neighbours and local residents. Officers have been strictly instructed not to summon applicants to police stations for verification under any circumstances.

The order further states that adverse reports must not be filed without clear and substantiated evidence. Officials have been warned against expecting any favour, gratification, or engaging in harassment with the intention of demanding bribes. Unnecessary delays or causing inconvenience to applicants have also been expressly prohibited.

As per the new guidelines, applicants must be informed at least 24 hours in advance – through SMS or phone call – before officers visit for verification.

Any relaxation of the norms will require prior written approval. The memorandum makes it clear that failure to adhere to the guidelines will invite disciplinary action.

Scrum in the mud



Heat of contest: A cattle race on at the week-long Ennakulam-Kakkur Kalavayal Agricultural Fair in Kerala on Wednesday. R.K. NITHIN

Telangana govt. plans elaborate Iftar dinner events in Hyderabad

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

The Telangana government has put in place elaborate arrangements for Ramzan Iftar dinners, identifying 448 locations across Hyderabad and its surroundings.

To ensure citywide reach, the Minorities Welfare Department will organise Iftar dinners at two mosques in each of the 150 wards under the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation limits. Additionally, four mosques in each Assembly constituency within the GHMC area have been identified for the programme.

A Right to Information (RTI) query revealed that, to ensure inclusivity, the government has decided to organise Iftar dinners in mosques belonging to minority denominations and sects, including those associated with the Shia and Mahdavi communities.

Orphanages have also been included among the 448 identified venues.

Outside the GHMC limits, a total of 378 mosques across 98 Assembly constituencies have been selected for similar programmes. Senior officials have been entrusted with overseeing arrangements across clusters of constituencies.

Pinarayi inaugurates Ayurveda research centre in Kannur, calls for support for its global recognition

The Hindu Bureau
KANNUR

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Wednesday inaugurated the International Research Institute of Ayurveda (IRIA) at Kalliad in Kannur, declaring it the country's first comprehensive research centre for Ayurveda research and calling for collective support to elevate it into a globally recognised institution.

Mr. Pinarayi said the State had secured several "firsts" in the country, including establishment of India's Digital University, the upcoming Digital Science Park, and the transshipment port at Vizhinjam. He added similar vision and public backing



Pinarayi Vijayan and other dignitaries at the opening of the IRIA in Kannur on Wednesday. @PINARAYIVIJAYAN

were essential to develop IRIA into a world-class research hub in traditional medicine.

He said that Kerala must advance confidently in the scientific era by integrating traditional knowledge with modern research infrastructure. Referring to institutions such as the Gra-

phene Innovation Centre, Water Metro, Genome Data Centre, Space Park (K-Space), and the upcoming Fire Force Academy, he added the State's transformation was rooted in a knowledge-driven approach.

He underscored the need to recognise and collaborate with skilled tradi-

28 bonded labourers rescued after raid on brick kiln in U.P.

Shrimansi Kaushik
NEW DELHI

Twenty-eight bonded labourers, including 13 children as young as six, were rescued from a brick kiln in Uttar Pradesh's Baghat on Tuesday night following a joint operation by the local administration and police.

The labourers, belonging to seven families, were kept at KGF Krishna Brick Field in Nethla village, located a short distance from Delhi, where they were forced to work for over 12 hours a day without wages.

The conditions of the workers were brought to the notice of the District Magistrate by the National Campaign Committee for Eradication of Bonded Labour (NCCEBL). The rescue operation was carried out with the assistance of the local police.

"I had sent my children to the kiln in October on the promise that they would earn ₹10,000 per month. For four months, they have been living in hell, with no food and no warmth," said Harun Ali, whose three children were among those rescued.

According to the complaint submitted to the District Magistrate, some members of the families had been working at the kiln since October 2025 while others were brought there in December. The committee noted that the labourers were not allowed to leave the premises unsupervised or seek work elsewhere.

Mr. Ali said his two teen-

age daughters and 11-year-old son were taken to the kiln by a relative. "I came to know about what they endured only after they were rescued. The kiln owner and his men would threaten to kill them if they tried to leave or asked for wages. They were given raw rice, which they boiled and ate once a day. On some days, even that was not available. Even during Ramzan, the children were made to work while observing fasts," he told *The Hindu*.

Advance money

In October 2025, kiln owner Vijay Pal Pandit paid advance money to heads of several labourer families and brought entire families, including women and children, to work at the site. Mr. Pandit and his accountant, Rahul, allegedly forced them to work long hours under harsh conditions.

"He told the workers that he had a strong influence and that the administration was 'in his pocket', which intimidated them. They feared retaliation and remained silent," said Nirmal Gorana, national convener, NCCEBL. Mr. Gorana asked the district administration to issue release certificates to all rescued bonded and child labourers and provide immediate financial assistance of ₹30,000 each.

Lawyers with the rescue team said rehabilitation would be key to prevent the families from being exploited again.

Chennithala releases official letter on alleged SPARK data leak, questions Pinarayi's role

The Hindu Bureau
PATHANAMTHITTA

Congress leader Ramesh Chennithala on Wednesday accused the Kerala Chief Minister's Office (CMO) of orchestrating a massive collection of personal data from government employees, calling it a "blatant case of data theft" and a major political conspiracy.

At a press conference, he released a letter revealing that the Chief Minister's Office on Special Duty (OSD) had directed departments to hand over sensitive information, including data from SPARK (Service and Payroll Admi-



Ramesh Chennithala

nistrative Repository for Kerala), a web-based system for government employees.

According to Mr. Chennithala, "shocking details" have emerged from the correspondence, sent by Seeram Sambasiva Rao, the Chief Minister's OSD,

on December 31, 2025.

"The letter directed all government departments to compile Excel sheets through the K-SMART application and submit complete details of officials by February 12, 2026. It sought comprehensive personal information, including names, phone numbers, and job details of government employees," he pointed out.

Meanwhile, the CMO has rebuffed the allegation.

The CMO said the data collection spearheaded by the State's IT Mission was a precursor to the creation of a centralised notification hub for government services.

that the institute's herbal garden would be expanded substantially, even utilising additional land if required.

Highlighting the secrecy surrounding traditional medical knowledge, he said valuable formulations were lost over generations because they were not documented. Integrating such inherited wisdom with scientific validation would strengthen Ayurveda in the modern era, he added.

The government has decided to establish a framework within the institute to accord special recognition to traditional practitioners and indigenous systems of medicine, he said.

Mr. Pinarayi also launched the IRIA website on the occasion.

लोकप्रिय गोपीनाथ बरदलै शैलीय मान्यतिक स्वास्थ्य संस्थान
तेजपुर: अस्सम पिन: 784001
LGB REGIONAL INSTITUTE OF MENTAL HEALTH
(An Autonomous body under Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Govt. of India)
Website: www.lgbrimh.gov.in, e-Mail: mail@lgbrimh.gov.in
Post Box No. 15; FAX No. (03712) 233623
TEZPUR: 784001 :: ASSAM

LGB/NAZ/4052/P-7/26/910 Dated:- 19-02-2026

Corrigendum
With reference to the NIQ no. LGB/NAZ/4052/P-7/26/513 Dated: 03/02/2026 for Design, Fabrication, Printing and Installation of an Institutional Timeline Wall Display of small to medium length, the last date of NIQ submission is extended upto 3:00 PM of 26-02-2026.

Director
LGBRIMH

cbc17179/12/0029/2526

छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल
पर्यावास भवन, सेक्टर-19, नवा रायपुर अटल नगर, जिला- रायपुर (छ.ग.)

// सर्व संबंधित को सूचना //

भारत सरकार, पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय द्वारा जारी ई.आई.ए. नोटिफिकेशन, 2006 (यथा - संशोधित) के तहत सर्व संबंधित को सूचित किया जाता है कि मेसर्स अग्रसेन स्टील एंड प्रोडक्ट लिमिटेड, ग्राम- देवरी एवं घुलघुल, तहसील - विल्वा, जिला- रायपुर (छ.ग.) में प्रस्तावित Greenfield project for implementation of DRI based steel plant to produce Sponge Iron - 3,85,000 TPA, Iron Ore beneficiation - 12,00,000 TPA, Iron Ore Pellet - 12,00,000 TPA, Rotary Hearth Furnace to produce nugget/ briquet of Sponge Iron - 2,10,000 TPA, Mild Steel Billets- 5,14,500 TPA, Rolled Steel Products - 8,00,000 TPA (through Hot Charging - 5,00,000 and thru BRP (based on Coal Gasifier - 15 Nm³ / HR) - 3,00,000 TPA; SAF 12 MVA x 2 No to produce SiMn - 1,08,000 TPA and/or FeMn 1,35,000 TPA and/or FeS₂ - 59,000 TPA and/or Pig Iron - 2,16,000 TPA), Captive Power of 50 MW (32 MW through WHRB and 18 MW through FBC); GI Pipe - 2,00,000 TPA; GI Wire - 2,00,000 TPA and Fly Ash Bricks - 75,700 TPA के पर्यावरणीय स्वीकृति बाबत लोक सुनवाई दिनांक 27/02/2026 को प्रातः 11:00 बजे से स्थान-ग्राम- घुलघुल, प.ह.नं. 18, तहसील- विल्वा - नैवरा, जिला- रायपुर (छ.ग.) के खसरा नंबर 481 का रकबा 9.1800 हे. भूमि में नियत की गई स्थिति परियोजना प्रस्तावक द्वारा दिनांक 27/02/2026 को आयोजित लोक सुनवाई को स्वीकृत करने का अनुरोध किया गया है। कार्यालय कलेक्टर एवं जिला दण्डाधिकारी, रायपुर (छ.ग.) से प्राप्त पत्र क्रमांक 132 / अ.जि.द. / स्ट/नो / 2026 रायपुर, दिनांक 13/02/2026 के तारखत में लोक सुनवाई को आगामी आदेश पर्यन्त तक स्थगित किया जाता है।

सदस्य सचिव
छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल,
नवा रायपुर अटल नगर, रायपुर (छ.ग.)

लोकप्रिय गोपीनाथ बरदलै शैलीय मान्यतिक स्वास्थ्य संस्थान
तेजपुर: अस्सम पिन: 784001
LGB REGIONAL INSTITUTE OF MENTAL HEALTH
(An Autonomous body under Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Govt. of India)
Website: www.lgbrimh.gov.in, e-Mail: mail@lgbrimh.gov.in
Post Box No. 15; FAX No. (03712) 233623
TEZPUR: 784001 :: ASSAM

LGB/NAZ/4052/P-9/26/935 Dated:- 20-02-2026

Corrigendum
With reference to the NIQ no. LGB/NAZ/4052/P-9/26/571 Dated: 30/01/2026 for Conceptualization, Printing, Framing and Installation of a "Memory Hall" Photo Exhibition depicting the Journey of LGBRIMH, the last date of NIQ submission is extended upto 3:00 PM of 27-02-2026.

Director
LGBRIMH

cbc17179/12/0030/2526

GOVERNMENT OF PUNJAB
TENDER NOTICE

SR. NO.	NAME OF DEPARTMENT	NAME OF WORK/ NOTICE/ TENDER	OPENING DATE CLOSING DATE	AMOUNT/ EMD (APPROX.) IN LACS	NODAL OFFICER/ CONTACT/ EMAIL
1.	Principal Resident Commissioner, Punjab Bhawan, New Delhi	Supply of fresh chicken, charcoal, paper napkin, fresh egg, bread	02/03/2026 16/03/2026	0.00 Lac	9958032535 punjabbhawan@gmail.com

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION AND CORRIGENDUM & ADDENDUM IF ANY, KINDLY VISIT:
<https://eproc.punjab.gov.in/>, www.punjab.gov.in

RO Number: 1001/12/2025-26/8789

THE HINDU
DISCLAIMER: Readers are requested to verify and make appropriate enquiries to satisfy themselves about the veracity of an advertisement before responding to any published in this newspaper. THE PUBLISHING PVT. LTD., the Publisher & Owner of this newspaper, does not vouch for the authenticity of any advertisement or advertiser or for any of the advertiser's products and/or services. In no event can the Owner, Publisher, Printer, Editor, Director/s, Employees of this newspaper/company be held responsible/liable in any manner whatsoever for any claims and/or damages for advertisements in this newspaper.

New Okhla Industrial Development Authority
Main Administrative Building, Sector-6, Noida, G.B. Nagar, (U.P.)
Website: www.noidaauthorityonline.in

E-TENDER NOTICE
E-Tenders are invited from firms/contractors registered with for the following jobs against which bids can be uploaded and same shall be opened / downloaded as per schedule mentioned. The details and conditions of all tenders are available on Noida Authority's official website: www.noidaauthorityonline.in & <https://etender.up.nic.in>. Please ensure to see these websites for any changes/ amendments & corrigendum etc.

S. No.	Job no/Work name	Amount (Rs. in Lacs)
1.	25/D(H)/DD(H)-II/2025-26, D/o RSP Sector-39, 40 drain site opposite Sector-38 Central Verge, Sector-38 to Sector-40 with two year maintenance.	68.18
2.	26/D(H)/DD(H)-II/2025-26, D/o Park Near Sector-50 Club, Sector-115 & 108 Community Center & RSP Flyover Near Botanical Garden & Near Mahamaya Fly Over (SH: Beautification)	76.39

Which can be uploaded by date 12/03/2026 upto 5.00 PM. Pre-qualification shall be opened/downloaded on date 13/03/2026 at 11.00 AM.

Director (H)
Noida

CLEAN, GREEN, SAFE & SECURE NOIDA

SAMRAT VIKRAMADITYA
VISHWAVIDYALAYA, UJJAIN
S.No./Store/Exam/Tender/2026/367 Date : 24.02.2026

TENDER NOTICE FOR DIGITAL EVALUATION SYSTEM OF ANSWER BOOKS

E-tenders are invited for of Digital Evaluation System of Answer Books from turn key solution provider. Tender document and other tender terms and conditions can be downloaded from the website of Government of Madhya Pradesh tender portal (<https://mptenders.gov.in>) and (www.vikramuniv.ac.in) on the online payments of Rs. 2000/- (Non-refundable) as cost of tender form and documents.

M.P. Madhyam/124625/2026 **REGISTRAR**

लोकप्रिय गोपीनाथ बरदलै शैलीय मान्यतिक स्वास्थ्य संस्थान
तेजपुर: अस्सम पिन: 784001
LGB REGIONAL INSTITUTE OF MENTAL HEALTH
(An Autonomous body under Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Govt. of India)
Website: www.lgbrimh.gov.in, e-Mail: mail@lgbrimh.gov.in
Post Box No. 15; FAX No. (03712) 233623
TEZPUR: 784001 :: ASSAM

LGB/NAZ/4052/P-10/26/937 Dated:- 20-02-2026

Corrigendum
With reference to the NIQ no. LGB/NAZ/4052/P-10/26/821 Dated: 13/02/2026 for supply of Sports, Events, Press Conference and Miscellaneous Items, the last date of NIQ submission is extended upto 3:00 PM of 27/02/2026.

Director
LGBRIMH

cbc17179/12/0031/2526

GOVERNMENT OF PUNJAB
Municipal Corporation Amritsar
Tender Reference No. E-Tender Notice No. 172 Date 24.02.2026

The Department of : Municipal Corporation, Amritsar Invites Bid for "Construction of Heritage Entrance Gate around Walled City Amritsar" (Amt. Rs. 6,08,05,561/-)

Closing Date and Time : 12.03.2026 upto 03:00 PM
EMD : 2% of Estimate Amount
For Detail log onto : <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in>
Note : Any Corrigendum(s) to the tender notice shall be published on the above website only.

Superintending Engineer(c)
Municipal Corporation,
1596/12/2025-26/8763 Amritsar.

READ
SPORTSTAR
EVERY FORTNIGHT.
TO SUBSCRIBE,
VISIT
www.thehindugroup.in/subscribe

Kalyan Singh Super Speciality Cancer Institute
C.G. City, Sultanpur Road, Lucknow-226002
Website: <https://cancerinstitute.edu.in>, Email: jdmm.sscii@gmail.com

GeM Bid Notice
It is hereby informed that a bids No. is as follows:-

Sr. No.	Name of Service	Bid No. & Date	Pre-bid Meeting Date & Time
1.	Operation And Maintenance of Fire Fighting System-Complete System	GEM/2026/B/7289402 Dated 25.02.2026	27.02.2026 15:00 P.M.

The Bid uploaded on GeM Portal for Procurement of Service Bid at KSSSCI. All interested service providers/bidders are required to submit their bids on GeM Portal in accordance with the terms and conditions of the GeM bid documents. The Director reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids at any stage without assigning any reason thereof.

The Tender documents are available on the website of the Institute www.cancerinstitute.edu.in

AdvT No:- KSSSCI/Tender-27/2025-26 Director

ODISHA STATE AGRICULTURAL MARKETING BOARD (OSAMB)
(A Statutory Organization of Govt. of Odisha)
Plot No.1800 (P), Baramunda, Post-Khandagiri, Near Indian Oil Petrol Pump, Bhubaneswar.
Ph.No.0674-2952410, Email: osambboard99@yahoo.com

Corrigendum
No.762 Date:24.02.2026
Bid Identification of e-Procurement Notice No -1 of 2025-2026, Tender Call Notice No. - 622 Dated:11.02.2026
"Construction of World Largest Grain Storage in Co-operative Sector" QUALIFICATION CRITERIA, 3.2 (b)

XVI. Experience: Contractor having Successfully completed 500 MT Godown or above in a Single Agreement during the last 3 Financial Years.

Read as
Experience : Contractor having Successfully completed 1000 MT Godown or above in a Single Agreement during the last 3 Financial Years for the Work of TENDER CALL NOTICE No. - 622 Dated : 11.02.2026, Sl. No. 1, 2, 3 & 4
All other Terms & Conditions will remain unchanged.

Sd/- General Manager, OSAM Board, Bhubaneswar
OIPR-39001/39024/1/25-26/0004

जल संसाधन विभाग
कार्यपालक अभियंता का कार्यालय
बाढ़ नियंत्रण प्रमंडल, काढ़ागोला।
पत्रांक-506/काढ़ागोला

अल्पकालीन निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना संख्या-06/2025-26
(केवल ई-टेंडर पद्धति के अनुसार वेबसाइट www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in पर)

1. कार्य का विवरण:-

युप सं०	कार्य का नाम	प्राक्कलित राशि (लाख में)	अग्रघन की राशि (लाख में)	परिमाण-विपन्न का मूल्य (लाख में)	बेल्डॉन का देय प्रोसेसिंग फी (अप्रत्यक्ष मूल्य) (लाख में)	कार्य समाप्ति की तिथि
01	02	03	04	05	06	07
1.	Anti Erosion work at Village Mohzan, Panchayat - Chohar under Sameli Block of Katihar District. (Agenda No.-243/06/2026)	75.89	1.52	10000.00	3540.00	15.05.2026

1. निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना निर्गत करने की तिथि : दिनांक 24.02.2026
2. निविदा कागजात डाउनलोड करने एवं अपलोड करने की अवधि : दिनांक 05.03.2026 से 09.03.2026 समय 3:00 बजे अपराह्न तक (सिर्फ वेबसाइट www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in पर)
3. प्री-बिड मीटिंग का समय, स्थान एवं तिथि : दिनांक 07.03.2026 समय 3:00 बजे अपराह्न में मुख्य अभियंता, बाढ़ नियंत्रण एवं जल निस्सरण, जल संसाधन विभाग, कटिहार।
4. तकनीकी बिड खोलने की तिथि एवं समय : दिनांक 11.03.2026 समय 3:30 बजे अपराह्न में (सिर्फ वेबसाइट www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in पर)
5. वित्तीय बिड खोलने की तिथि एवं समय : सक्षम पदाधिकारी द्वारा बाद में घोषित की जायेगी (सिर्फ वेबसाइट www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in पर)
6. निविदा खोलने का सीमा : वेबसाइट www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in पर
7. निविदा की वैधता की अवधि : 120 दिन
8. निविदा की वैधता अवधि : 120 दिन
9. विज्ञापनदाता का पदनाम एवं पता : कार्यपालक अभियंता, बाढ़ नियंत्रण प्रमंडल, काढ़ागोला।

विशेष जानकारी प्राप्त करने हेतु वेबसाइट www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in एवं www.prdbihar.gov.in पर देखा जा सकता है।

कार्यपालक अभियंता
बाढ़ नियंत्रण प्रमंडल, काढ़ागोला
मोबाईल नं०:-7463889260
PR- 025004 (WRD) 2025-26
बिस्तृत सूचना www.state.bihar.gov.in/prdbihar पर भी देखी जा सकती है।

नशे से बचने का है एक ही उपचार, दृढ़ संकल्प और परिवार से प्यार

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA - ST & SC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE PROJECT ADMINISTRATOR, ITDA, NILGIRI
e-Procurement Notice
e-procurement Notice Bid Identification No. ITDANGR-02/2025-26
Notice No. 95/ ITDA, Date:- 23.02.2026

The project Administrator, ITDA, Nilgiri on behalf of Governor of odisha invites Percentage Rate bids in online mode for construction of the work detailed below:

1. Nature of the work : Const. of 1st floor of Auditorium Building of SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar & 2nd & 3rd floor of PVTG building of SCSTRTI, Bhubaneswar, etc.

2. Total No. of work : 2 (Two) nos. (Approximately)

3. Estimated Cost : Rs. 1,49,61,400/- to Rs. 2,99,96,400/- (Approximately)

4. Class of Contractor : "B" Class & "B" & "A" Class.

5. Period of Completion : Eleven Calendar Months

6. Availability of Bids : 10.00 AM of 02.03.2026 to 5.00 PM of 16.03.2026.

7. Date of opening & scrutiny : 11.00 A.M of 17.03.2026, to technical bid

The bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. The details will be available in the website www.tendersorissa.gov.in from 10.00 AM of 02.03.2026 to 5.00 PM of 16.03.2026.

Project Administrator, ITDA, Nilgiri
2600/14/2526 OIPR-2600/126055/1/25-26/0001

बिहार सरकार
जल संसाधन विभाग
कार्यपालक अभियंता का कार्यालय
बाढ़ नियंत्रण प्रमंडल, मोतीहारी
अल्पकालीन निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना संख्या - 03/2025-26
(केवल ई-टेंडर पद्धति के अनुसार वेबसाइट www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in पर)

पत्रांक 151

1. कार्य का विवरण -

युप सं०	कार्य का नाम	प्राक्कलित राशि (लाख में)	अग्रघन की राशि (लाख में)	परिमाण-विपन्न का मूल्य (अप्रत्यक्ष मूल्य) (लाख में)	बेल्डॉन का देय प्रोसेसिंग फी (अप्रत्यक्ष मूल्य) (लाख में)	कार्य समाप्ति की तिथि
1	A.E. Work for Puchariya Village Tiwari Tola near Champaran Embankment at km 104.00 (Agenda No.-242/26/2026)	91.40	182800.00	10000.00	3590.00	15.05.2026

2. निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना निर्गत करने की तिथि : दिनांक: 23.02.2025
3. निविदा कागजात डाउनलोड एवं अपलोड करने की तिथि एवं समय : दिनांक: 07.03.2026 10:30 बजे पूर्वाह्न से दिनांक-12.03.2026 के 03:00 बजे अपराह्न तक की अवधि (सिर्फ वेबसाइट <https://eproc2.bihar.gov.in> पर)
4. प्री-बिड मीटिंग का तिथि एवं समय, स्थान : दिनांक: 09.03.2026, 11:00 बजे पूर्वाह्न में, मुख्य अभियंता का कार्यालय, बाढ़ नियंत्रण एवं जल निस्सरण, जल संसाधन विभाग, मुजफ्फरपुर।
5. तकनीकी बिड खोलने की तिथि एवं समय : दिनांक : 14.03.2026 समय 03:30 बजे अपराह्न। (सिर्फ वेबसाइट <https://eproc2.bihar.gov.in> पर)
6. वित्तीय बिड खोलने की तिथि एवं समय : सक्षम पदाधिकारी द्वारा बाद में घोषित की जायेगी (सिर्फ वेबसाइट <https://eproc2.bihar.gov.in> पर)
7. निविदा खोलने का स्थान : सिर्फ वेबसाइट <https://eproc2.bihar.gov.in> पर
8. निविदा की वैधता अवधि (निविदा प्राप्ति की अंतिम तिथि से) : 120 दिन
9. विज्ञापनदाता का पदनाम एवं पता : कार्यपालक अभियंता, कार्यालय बाढ़ नियंत्रण प्रमंडल, मोतीहारी।
10. विशेष जानकारी प्राप्त करने हेतु वेबसाइट <https://eproc2.bihar.gov.in> एवं वेबसाइट <https://wrdbihar.gov.in> पर देखा जा सकता है।

कार्यपालक अभियंता
बाढ़ नियंत्रण प्रमंडल, मोतीहारी

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

PR. No. 24960 (WRD) 25-26
नशामुक्त हो जाए बिहार, सुरक्षित रहे घर परिवार।

जल संसाधन विभाग
कार्यपालक अभियंता का कार्यालय
बाढ़ नियंत्रण प्रमंडल, सालमारी
अल्पकालीन राष्ट्रीय स्पर्द्धा निविदा आमंत्रण
अल्पकालीन निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना संख्या 02SBD/2025-26
(केवल ई-टेंडर पद्धति के अनुसार www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in)

कार्य का विवरण :-

युप सं०	कार्य का नाम	प्राक्कलित राशि (लाख में)	अग्रघन की राशि (लाख में)	परिमाण-विपन्न का मूल्य (अप्रत्यक्ष मूल्य) (लाख में)	बेल्डॉन का देय प्रोसेसिंग फी (अप्रत्यक्ष मूल्य) (लाख में)	कार्य समाप्ति की तिथि
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	A.E. Work for protection of Bhaiband village in between KM 2.00 to KM 3.00 of Bagdow Jhaua Mahananda Left Embankment. (Agenda No. 242/238/2026)	231.94	4.639	10000.00	3540.00	15.05.2026

2. निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना निर्गत करने की तिथि : दिनांक -24.02.2026
3. निविदा कागजात डाउनलोड एवं अपलोड करने की अवधि : दिनांक 05.03.2026 से दिनांक 09.03.2026 के 3:00 बजे अपराह्न तक (सिर्फ वेबसाइट www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in पर)
4. प्री-बिड मीटिंग का समय, स्थान एवं तिथि : दिनांक-07.03.2026 के 3:00 बजे अपराह्न में, मुख्य अभियंता बाढ़ नियंत्रण एवं जल निस्सरण, जल संसाधन विभाग, कटिहार (कैम्प पूर्णिया) के कार्यालय कक्ष में
5. तकनीकी बिड खोलने की तिथि एवं समय : दिनांक 11.03.2026 समय 3:30 बजे अपराह्न। (सिर्फ वेबसाइट www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in पर)
6. वित्तीय बिड खोलने की तिथि एवं समय: सक्षम पदाधिकारी द्वारा बाद में घोषित की जायेगी (सिर्फ वेबसाइट www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in पर)
7. निविदा खोलने का स्थान : www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in पर
8. निविदा की वैधता अवधि : 120 दिन
9. विज्ञापनदाता का पदनाम एवं पता : कार्यपालक अभियंता, बाढ़ नियंत्रण प्रमंडल, सालमारी मो नो: 7463889255

विशेष जानकारी प्राप्त करने हेतु वेबसाइट www.eproc2.bihar.gov.in एवं www.wrd.bih.nic.in पर देखा जा सकता है।

निविदा की विस्तृत जानकारी state.bihar.gov.in/prdbihar से प्राप्त की जा सकती है।
कार्यपालक अभियंता,
बाढ़ नियंत्रण प्रमंडल, सालमारी
फोन-7463889255

PR- 024995 (WRD) 2025-26
नशे से बचने का है एक ही उपचार, दृढ़ संकल्प और परिवार से प्यार।

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER::P.W.D::SILCHAR
BUILDING CIRCLE,SILCHAR

No-SBC/CS/2025-26/11/669

PRESS NOTICE
The Superintending Engineer, PWD, Silchar Building Circle, Silchar, Assam on behalf of the Governor of Assam, Re-invites Bids of approximate Bid price Rs. 60,24,000.00 (Rupees sixty lakh twenty four thousand) only for the work "Construction of 1000 capacity Auditorium at R.K.Nagar, Karimganj, Assam (Auditorium seat@ 6024 for 1000 nos)" from reputed registered firms/manufacturer/authorized Dealer having GST registration for supply of Furniture having experience in similar nature of work and also from Firm/Pvt. Limited co. of Class-I(A,B,C) and Class-II (Registered under Silchar Building Circle). Details of the Bid and Details Notice inviting Bid may be seen in the office of the Superintending Engineer PWD Silchar Building Circle Silchar as well as P.W.D. portal www.assamtenders.gov.in.

The bidders must be registered with the E-tendering system (ETS) of the Govt. of Assam. (website: <http://www.assamtenders.gov.in>).

The Press Notice will be a part of the bidding Documents.

Note:-

- NIT value may be changed during uploading of tender in the website, which may be seen in Detailed NIT of the bid document .
- A show room of Furniture must be owned by the Bidders at any Town/City within the State of Assam and submit the ownership documents and photographs of showroom etc as prior proof of show room. Bid without prior proof of show room may be treated as disqualify for the work.
- Product Display of the materials (Furniture) at the PWD Silchar Building Circle, Silchar before opening of the Financial Bid of the qualified bidder for the work .
- Bidder must submit a completion certificate of a 100% completed similar nature of works in in Assam for the work.
- Contractor must complete the work within the stipulated time irrespective of payment received or not.
- Bidder must submit Financial Turnover of at least Rs 1.00 Crore in any financial year within the required periods of Financial Years mentioned in the Technical Bid.

Superintending Engineer PWD
Silchar Building Circle Silchar

DIPR/CF/HIND /918/26-Feb-26

GOVT. OF ASSAM
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ENGINEER, PWD (BORDER ROADS), ASSAM,
CHANDMARI, GUWAHATI-3.

No.CE/PMGSY/01/2025-26/4

SHORT NOTICE INVITING TENDER
The Chief Engineer, PWD (Border Roads), Assam on behalf of Governor of Assam invites Item Rate bids in electronic tendering system for Construction of Roads under Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana, PMGSY-IV, Batch-I, for the year 2025-26, for 691 nos. of roads (Length = 1403.18 KM) and 52 nos. of Bridges in 23 nos. of Groups and 621 nos. of individual packages in the districts of Barpeta, Bongaigaon, Cachar, Darrang, Dhemaji, Dhubri, Dibrugarh, Goalpara, Golaghat, Haikandi, Jorhat, Kamrup Rural, Karbi-Anglong, Karimganj, Lakhimpur, Morigaon, N.C.Hills, Nalbari, Nagaon, Sibsagar, Sonitpur & Tinsukia with an estimated cost of Rs. 1,46,344.06 Lakhs (Approx, excluding GST) including Routine Maintenance for five years from eligible contractors registered with Assam Public Works Department (Roads) or contractors registered with other State/Central Government Departments, institutions, Undertaking and Authorities.

Further details like last date and time of bid submission, date and time of bid opening and other details may be seen and detailed tender document can be downloaded from <http://pmgsvtendersassam.gov.in/> from 06.03.2026, 10:00 hours.

Chief Engineer, PWD (Border Roads), Assam
Chandmari, Guwahati-3.

DIPR/CF/HIND /4209/26-Feb-26

KARNATAKA INDUSTRIAL AREAS DEVELOPMENT BOARD
(A Government of Karnataka Undertaking)
No.2, 2/1 and 2/3, Kalidasa Marg, 1st Main Road, Gandhinagar
Bengaluru - 560 009. Phone No. 080-22265383, website: www.kiadb.in

No. IADB/ENGG/ETND-EP-89/3763/2025-26 Date: 25.02.2026

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

Item rate Tender under two cover bid system is invited as per the Karnataka Transparency in Public Procurement Act 1999 and Rules 2000 through electronic procurement from eligible Civil Contractors who have got adequate financial resources, suitable construction equipments, technical man power & sufficient past experience for the work mentioned below:

Name of the Work : Re-construction & Strengthening of 24m, 18m, 12m, 9m wide Roads, construction of RCC Side Drain, RCC Cross Drainage, HDPE Water Supply Line at Jigani Industrial Area 1st & 2nd Phase, Bengaluru South District.

The last date and time of receipt of tender is : 16.03.2026 upto 04:00 pm.

Applicants May Download Bidding Documents from the Karnataka Public Procurement Portal <https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in>.

Sd/-
Chief Engineer-1, KIADB Bengaluru

DIPR/CP/5862/Zen/2025-26

ଓଡ଼ିଶା ବିଦ୍ୟୁତ୍ ଶକ୍ତି ସଂଚାର ନିଗମ ଲିମିଟେଡ୍
(ଓଡ଼ିଶା ସରକାରଙ୍କ ଏକ ଉପକ୍ରମ)
Regd. Office: OPTCL Tech Tower, Janpath, Saheed Nagar, Bhubaneswar-751007

ODISHA POWER TRANSMISSION CORPORATION LIMITED
(A Corporation of Odisha Undertaking)

NOTICE INVITING E-TENDER

E-Tender No.	Tender Description:	Estimated Cost
CPC-57/2025-26	Design, engineering, supply, erection, testing & commissioning of work towards Construction of 400kV D/C (Quad) line from proposed NTPPT, NLC, Talabira to 400/220/132/33kV Grid S/S, Lapanga (Line Length=6.8 KM Approx.) in Sambalpur District of Odisha on EPC Contract Basis in e-tendering mode only. Last Date & Time of Submission of Bid: 25.03.2026 upto 12:45 PM.	Rs. 1,00,07,25,521.00/-

Complete set of bidding documents are available at www.tenderward.com/OPTCL and www.optcl.co.in.

©/®/optcl.odisha optcl_odisha HIPR-77/2025-26



A job well done

Following up of adverse events after immunisation is a must

India's move to introduce a nationwide Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination programme, for girls aged 14, strikes a strident note for science at a time when an anti-vaccination sentiment has perilously picked up favourable winds, globally. The impact of shunning vaccines is apparent in the United States where, currently, a measles epidemic is making its way across 26 States. The HPV vaccination will be conducted exclusively at designated government health facilities, and in the presence of trained medical officers, supported by skilled health-care teams equipped for post-vaccination observation and management of adverse events following immunisation (AEFI). A single-dose vaccine, a regimen recommended by the World Health Organization, will be deployed. Adequate evidence exists to show that almost all cases of cervical cancer are caused by persistent infection with high-risk types of HPV, particularly 16 and 18. These two types together account for more than 80% of cervical cancer cases in India. Evidence also points to the fact that cervical cancer is largely preventable through HPV vaccination and regular screening, and can be cured if detected early and treated promptly. Globally, over 90 countries are implementing single-dose HPV vaccination schedules. Several countries have demonstrated substantial reductions in HPV infection, precancerous lesions, and cervical cancer incidence following widespread vaccination. Cervical cancer remains a rare cancer where a vaccine has proven to be of great preventive value.

The sheer burden of cervical cancer in India is what makes this decision a critical life-saving intervention: The South-East Asia Region (SEARO) accounts for the second-highest cervical cancer incident (new cases) and death rate among WHO regions, with India contributing over 65% of the burden. The second most common cancer in women in India, it was estimated that the country had 127,526 new cases and 79,906 deaths from cervical cancer in 2022. National screening coverage remains alarmingly low, with only 1.9% of women aged 30-49 being tested. However, India's dark past with an HPV vaccine trial cannot be forgotten. Seven girls who were part of a trial in 2009-10 in Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat died. An ICMR investigation averred that the reasons "were most probably unrelated to the vaccine. However, the cause of death in all the cases cannot be established with certainty". It also flagged, as a key concern, the need to identify and investigate all AEFI. As the government embarks on this exercise that could lead to many health gains, it will do well to ensure a working cold chain to store the vaccines, complete transparency, and meticulous reporting of AEFI across the country.

Demagogue salesman

Donald Trump will need more than words to alter the bitter ground realities

In his 2026 State of the Union address, U.S. President Donald Trump chose to double down on the politics of his conservative support base by touting his second administration's achievements with regard to divisive, if not polarising issues relating to immigration, the cost of living, and foreign policy concerns including tariffs and the prospect of war in the context of Iran. The speech itself comes at a fraught moment for the Trump White House, days after the U.S. Supreme Court struck down its use of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act to slam a broad swathe of trading partners, including India, with punitive tariffs. An apparently undaunted Mr. Trump repeated his earlier remarks on social media hinting at disdain for the ruling, when he described it during the speech as "unfortunate" and argued, against evidence to the contrary regarding the burgeoning public debt, that the tariff revenues received by his government were "saving" the U.S. Similarly, he neatly avoided alluding to the two Americans killed in ICE raids in Minneapolis or the agency's other heavy-handed actions targeting "criminal aliens" and "drug lords". With regard to Iran, even though Washington has rapidly built up its force posture across West Asia following Teheran's crackdown on protesters, Mr. Trump appeared to be holding out hope for a *modus vivendi* when he said, "My preference is to solve this problem through diplomacy. But... I will never allow the world's number one sponsor of terror, which they are by far, to have a nuclear weapon."

If Mr. Trump's remarks in Congress sounded self-congratulatory, that might have been because they echoed a well-rehearsed campaign speech ahead of the critical mid-term elections. While it is true that inflation has gradually come down during Mr. Trump's second term, his description of the price trend as "plummeting" might have appeared to some to be an exaggeration, especially given that it was under his predecessor Joe Biden that prices came off their nearly 9% peak in mid-2022 to 2.9% by the time Mr. Trump entered the White House, leading to the current rate of nearly 2.4%. More concerning for the White House and Republican lawmakers, opinion polls suggest that most Americans are disenchanted with the tariff policy and its cost-escalating pressure on the economy, with the design and implementation of the current immigration policy, and with the perceived involvement of Mr. Trump in the Epstein scandal. While an upbeat address to a joint session of Congress might galvanise the faithful, it will take more than words to alter the bitter ground realities faced by the common people and they tend to express their frustrations in this context at the ballot box.

Balancing faith, dignity and constitutional rights

When a five-judge Bench of the Supreme Court of India delivered its verdict, in September 2018, in *Indian Young Lawyers Association vs State of Kerala*, opening the doors of Kerala's Sabarimala temple to women of all ages, it provoked a range of reactions. There were protests across the country, especially in Kerala, where many believed that the Court had overlooked, and even disrespected, religious creed. Others saw the verdict as transformative, as outlining a vision that enlivened the Constitution. Now, close to a decade later, the Court will hear final arguments on review petitions that seek to overturn the earlier verdict and the law it laid down.

Opinion, dissent and turning point

The original ruling was delivered through a 4:1 majority. There was an opinion from then Chief Justice of India (CJI) Dipak Misra, to which Justice A.M. Khanwilkar joined. There were separate, concurring opinions from Justices Rohinton Nariman and D.Y. Chandrachud and a notable dissent from Justice Indu Malhotra. But despite the cleavage in the rationales adopted, the majority's findings were clear.

First, the Court ruled that the devotees of Lord Ayyappa did not constitute a separate religious denomination; second, that the bar enforced on women between the ages of 10 and 50 from entering the temple violated the rights of women to freedom of religion; and third, that Rule 3(b) of the Kerala Hindu Places of Public Worship (Authorisation of Entry) Rules, 1965, on which the ban was grounded, violated not only the Constitution but also Section 3 of its parent law, which promised free access to temples for all classes of Hindus.

In her dissenting opinion, Justice Malhotra found, among other things, that fundamental rights in a secular polity needed harmonising, that a generic doctrine of equality cannot override the collective rights of individuals to practise their faith in line with their customs and ideals. She also found that, as a matter of custom, women of a certain age had been excluded from the temple's precincts, and this constituted a non-derogable "essential religious practice".

The latter finding represented the central axis on which the case turned. The Constitution recognises both the freedom of religion as an individual right and the rights of religious denominations to manage their own affairs in matters of religion. Both rights are subject to public order, morality and health, and in the case of an individual's right to freedom of religion also to other fundamental rights.

Balancing communitarian interests with individual conscience has long plagued our jurisprudence. Over the years, when it has been



Subhrit Parthasarathy

is an advocate practising in the Madras High Court

called to resolve tensions of this kind, the Court has used a test that has allowed it to virtually sit in theological judgment over religious practice. That is, it examines and arrives at a factual conclusion on whether a practice in question is essential to the religion or not. This has meant that the Court has effectively determined not only those areas where it might be constitutionally justifiable for the state to intervene but has also determined what kinds of practices are deserving of constitutional protection in the first place.

For example, in *Sastri Yagnapurushadji vs Muldas Bhudardas Vaishya* (1966), CJI P.B. Gajendragadkar deduced what was essential to the followers of the Swaminarayan sect through selective references to Hindu texts without so much as asking what the conscience of the followers, in fact, dictated. In one passage, he even concluded that the "genesis of the suit...is founded on superstition, ignorance and complete misunderstanding of the true teachings of Hindu religion".

A court sitting as a moral arbiter on religion ought to be anathema to secularism. Therefore, that we need a theory that departs from the essential religious practices test ought to be beyond doubt. As Justice Chandrachud wrote, in his judgment in *Indian Young Lawyers Association*, "The rationale for allowing a religious community to define what constitutes an essential aspect of its religion is to protect the autonomy of religions and religious denominations. Protecting that autonomy enhances the liberal values of the Constitution... By entering upon doctrinal issues of what does or does not constitute an essential part of religion, the Court has, as a necessary consequence, been required to adopt a religious mantle."

The test also suffers from other practical limitations. It calls upon a constitutional court to arrive at fully fleshed out factual findings without allowing parties to lead oral evidence or subject witnesses to cross examination. What is more, the doctrine also does not offer a clear solution for what is really an obvious problem: what must a court do when a practice it finds essential to religion also undermines, or is inimical to, the dignity of individuals?

On an 'anti-exclusion test'

It is for this reason that Justice Chandrachud proposed an "anti-exclusion test". In his formulation, this norm would allow for due deference to be shown to each religious group to determine for themselves what doctrines and tenets to follow. At the same time, should any such practice exclude an individual in a manner which impairs their dignity or hampers their access to basic goods, "the freedom of religion must give way to the over-arching values of a liberal constitution".

The Sabarimala review's final arguments will also centre on the broader architecture of India's religious freedom jurisprudence

Unpackaging the myth of safe bottled water in India

In contemporary India, bottled water has quietly shifted from an occasional convenience to an everyday necessity. Across railway stations, offices and restaurants, packaged drinking water is now routine, driven by declining trust in municipal supplies and the belief that water sealed in plastic is safer.

In recent years, however, scientific studies, including research conducted in India, have begun to challenge this perception. While bottled water is regulated and generally found to be microbiologically safe, concerns are no longer limited to bacteria and pathogens. Attention is now turning to less visible risks, including microplastic particles and trace chemicals that leach from plastic containers, and their potential long-term implications for human health and environmental sustainability.

Microplastics as top contaminant

Microplastics are plastic particles smaller than five millimetres. Bottled drinking water has become a direct and significant route of human exposure to these particles.

A study based in Nagpur, Maharashtra, detected microplastics in all sampled brands of bottled water, with concentrations ranging from 72 particles to 212 particles per litre. Locally bottled water showed higher contamination than national brands, pointing to possible gaps in bottling practices and quality control measures.

This pattern is not isolated. Studies examining bottled water from Mumbai and coastal Andhra Pradesh detected microplastics in every sample analysed, indicating that contamination occurs across regions and supply chains. Taken together, these findings indicate that microplastics in bottled drinking water is an emerging contaminant in India, not just confined to western markets.

The health effects of ingesting microplastics are still under investigation. However, these particles are known to carry toxic additives and pollutants. Emerging research suggests that smaller particles may cross biological barriers, raising concerns about the safety of bottled drinking water. The issue is further compounded



Rohan Singh

is an independent science and environment journalist



Venkatesh Dutta

is Professor and Head, Department of Environmental Science, Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar Central University, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh

Policy and regulatory authorities need to acknowledge the public health and environmental risks

by nanoplastics, which are even smaller particles, fall below current detection thresholds, and remain outside existing safety regulations.

This reveals a regulatory gap: while exposure through everyday sources such as bottled water is increasingly documented, safety standards remain focused on visible or short-term contaminants, leaving potential long-term risks largely unmonitored.

Bottled water is also vulnerable to chemical leaching from plastic containers. Additives such as antimony, phthalates and other plasticisers can migrate into water, particularly when bottles are exposed to heat or stored for prolonged periods – conditions common in India's supply chains.

Leaching may occur during transportation, warehouse or retail display, especially when bottles are stored in direct sunlight. Studies show elevated temperatures and ultraviolet exposure accelerate this leaching process.

While detected chemicals remain within regulatory limits, existing standards typically assess isolated substances over short durations. They fail to adequately account for cumulative, long-term exposure to multiple additives, in combination with microplastics, thereby creating a critical disconnect between daily consumption patterns and regulations oversight.

Regulations lag behind

In India, packaged drinking water is regulated primarily by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), which oversees licensing, testing and compliance under updated norms following the removal of mandatory BIS certification. While this framework has improved baseline quality, its scope remains limited. These standards do not include testing for, or limit on, microplastics, nor do they adequately address long-term exposure to plastic-derived chemicals under real-world storage conditions.

State-level surveys, including those conducted in Karnataka, have frequently identified bottled water samples that are unsafe or substandard, highlighting gaps in enforcement rather than the absence of regulations. This challenge is compounded by a fragmented industry of

At a doctrinal level, the test is not beyond complications. At first glance, it might well seem to replicate some of the difficulties that have long beleaguered the essential religious practices doctrine. To determine whether a particular form of exclusion impairs dignity or access to basic goods, a court must inevitably engage with the meaning and purpose of the practice in question. Such an inquiry cannot be carried out in the vacuum. It may have an impact on the normative content of faith itself. But where it differs is that the investigation remains grounded in constitutional terms rather than theological ones.

A crucial distinction

In other words, the anti-exclusion test does not ask whether a practice is essential to religion; it asks whether the consequences of a practice are compatible with the Constitution's guarantees of equal treatment and protection. This distinction is crucial. Under the essential religious practices test, constitutional protection turns on whether a court sees a practice as critical to the exercise of faith.

By contrast, under the anti-exclusion test a court accepts, as a starting point, the autonomy of religious groups to define their own tenets. It only intervenes to ensure that the exercise of that liberty does not lead to a systematic exclusion of individuals from places or benefits that are integral to their ability to lead a life of dignity.

When the nine-judge Bench begins its hearings, it will have the opportunity to reflect on the broader architecture of India's religious freedom clauses. The principles it lays down will have a bearing not only on the Sabarimala dispute but also on a host of other controversies as well – including the rights of Dawoodi Bohra community members against excommunication and of Parsi women to continue to practise the Zoroastrian faith upon marrying outside the religion.

As the framers of the Constitution recognised, religion and social life are inextricably connected in India. This makes it impossible for courts to remain entirely indifferent to the real-life consequences of religious practice. The anti-exclusion test acknowledges that faith must remain autonomous in its own domain, but its outward exercise must comport with the Constitution's commitment to equal moral membership.

If the individual is to remain the basic unit of constitutional concern, communitarian claims cannot override a person's right to access spaces and institutions that shape civic life. In placing dignity at the heart of the inquiry, the anti-exclusion test offers a framework that remains truest to the Constitution's transformative promise, by protecting belief without licensing discrimination in its name.

thousands of small bottling units, many operating with minimal oversight and drawing on already stressed groundwater reserves.

The public health risks of bottled water usage cannot be separated from its environmental footprint. India is already grappling with a plastic waste crisis, generating millions of tonnes annually, of which single-use water bottles form a large share. As plastic degrades in landfills, rivers and oceans, it fragments into microplastics that re-enter ecosystems and water sources, which ultimately contaminate water sources, including bottled water supplies themselves. This convergence of environmental degradation and human health risk underscores the inadequacy of treating bottled water merely as a consumer convenience.

Towards safer alternatives

Bottled water remains indispensable during emergencies, disaster relief and areas lacking reliable potable water infrastructure. The concern, therefore, is not prohibition but over-dependence and misplaced trust.

In the interim, exposure risks can be reduced through point-of-use filtration capable of removing particulate matter, avoiding prolonged storage of bottled water under heat, and expanding access to refill stations and public water dispensing systems.

At a systematic level, strengthening the municipal water supply system, ensuring transparent public disclosure of water quality, expanding access to affordable household filtration, and improving consumer awareness can help recalibrate public trust toward monitored and accountable public water systems.

Equally important is updating regulatory frameworks to include routine testing for microplastics and plastic-derived contaminants currently absent in FSSAI and BIS standards.

When harm is clearly documented and scientific evidence continues to accumulate, the issue is no longer whether the problem exists, but whether policy institutions and regulatory instruments are willing to acknowledge it, measure it honestly, and assign responsibility.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

'Kerala' to 'Keralam'

It could soon be official (Inside pages, "Union Cabinet nod for 'Kerala' to become 'Keralam'", February 25). Yet, I still think that 'Kerala' sounds infinitely more powerful and regal than 'Keralam'. It is much like Emperor Ashoka

is more royal sounding than the very docile docked tail 'Ashok'. The tag line for the delectable Onam Sadhya could now become 'Keral-yumm'. The addition of the m/'yemm' will, hopefully, change the confusion in North India over the vegetable (*Karela*)

and the State. Is this because of the superficial resemblance in shape?

Sudhir Philipose,
Bengaluru

In reality these are diversionary tactics which sidestep the more pressing problems such as

unemployment and governmental inefficiency.

'Kerala' becoming 'Keralam' is not an index of

Corrections & Clarifications

Saket Gokhale, National Spokesperson of the All India Trinamool Congress (TMC) and a Rajya Sabha Member of Parliament, was incorrectly referred to as a "Congress MP" in a report, "Parliamentary panel passes resolution praising AI summit; mention of protest stirs row" (Inside pages, February 25).

+91-44-28576347/28576300; E-mail: readerseditor@thehindu.co.in

development nor is it a panacea for all the ills that plague God's Own Country, where even gold that belongs to gods is not safe.
C.V. Aravind,
Bengaluru

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

Decolonising and de-Nobelising science

Every February 28, India celebrates National Science Day to commemorate C.V. Raman's announcement of the Raman effect in 1928, a discovery that won him the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1930. Such national rituals are said to be just acts of remembrance, but they are not; they also legitimise what the state says counts as science.

Three keywords

A new book about keywords offers a useful way to read this ritual itself as a word with a political life. *Decolonial Keywords*, edited by anthropologists Renny Thomas and Sasanka Perera, argues that some everyday terms can be treated as archives of history and power and that their definitions are often a political rather than a linguistic achievement. 'National Science Day' and 'Nobel Prize' can also be treated as such keywords: ones that organise India's public imagination of science. There is a reason we mark a date that can be narrated with a "world-class discovery" rather than a date on which, say, a public hospital improved maternal outcomes.

If decolonising science is to mean anything in India, it must include the need to de-Nobelise how the state understands and valorises science. Specifically, it must stop treating external prestige as the main proof of scientific worth and expand the cast of legitimate scientific actors and sites. Three keywords from the book — 'jugaad', 'poromboke', and 'laboratory' — help show how this recognition works through institutional infrastructures.

Researcher and author Pankaj Sekhsaria's essay on 'jugaad' begins by using the word's instability — it can plausibly be read as a virtue, a compromise, or corruption — to explain how it creates space for powerful actors to amplify the meanings that suit them and discard those that don't. He also shows how the word has been absorbed into managerial talk as a laudable synonym for frugal innovation while other



Vasudevan Mukunth

National Science Day should not just reproduce a story about genius and external validation. It should become an annual day of discussion of what counts as science, including the work of field staff, nurses, and others

resonances remain harder to hear or take seriously. This is how innovation tends to behave in the public theatre of National Science Day. It becomes a stage-managed synonym for ingenuity that the stage packages for elite consumption, preferably in English, preferably legible to global management culture, and preferably compatible with award narratives. Prof. Sekhsaria ends with a question that cuts through this template: what words do farmers, fishers, and craftspeople use to describe their own inventiveness? Answering this question forces our attention away from the elite markers of prestige and towards the vocabularies that people use to produce and name practical knowledge.

Professor Banu Subramaniam's chapter on 'poromboke' makes a parallel argument about classification, anchored in Tamil political ecology. The state often glosses over 'poromboke' as wasteland, or land that does not generate revenue for the state. Her point is that the revenue category has always been a social category in disguise because the state's accounting decides which landscapes count as productive and so which people's uses count as legitimate. Historically, the term also referred to land set aside for public use, whereas in contemporary practice it covers a range of commons that remain essential for marginalised communities precisely because they are not private property.

She also remarks on how the word has become a pejorative in common Tamil speech, meaning 'good for nothing'. When the state declares a landscape to be disposable, the people who depend on it become easier to declare disposable as well. In the same way, some kinds of inquiry are said to be 'national science' while others of less prestige are rendered 'routine work' or 'local practice'. This is why what we celebrate on National Science Day is not value-neutral but a way to sort the labour of science. Dr. Thomas focuses on

'laboratory' and his analysis begins by distinguishing between elite 'mega labs' and 'minor labs' ubiquitous in towns and villages, especially diagnostic centres ('pathology labs'). Raman's own story is inseparable from laboratory infrastructure — he announced the Raman effect while working at the Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science in Calcutta — but Dr. Thomas's point is that this recognisability is something we manufacture. When schools teach the laboratory as the place where great people work in isolation, the everyday diagnostic lab, where most Indians actually encounter scientific authority, becomes conceptually minor even though it is central to society.

And once we treat a 'lab' as a social institution, its politics become part of its definition. Dr. Thomas has found in his own work that lab-mates do science but also share rituals, gossip, and celebrate occasions together, and is often a space where people reproduce hierarchies of caste and gender. But in other settings, it is also a place where the authority of 'science' is routinely performed before the public.

The keywords thus clarify what a de-Nobelised imagination of science, paralleling the decolonisation of science, would require. It would force India to ask how Indians produce the thing called 'recognition' — through discoveries and papers as much as by institutions that sort labour into celebrated and hidden. National Science Day, then, should not simply reproduce a Nobel-shaped story about genius and external validation. It should become an annual day of discussion of what counts as science, including the work of technicians, field staff, nurses, lab attendants, data collectors, and others whose labour is essential to make new knowledge but is rarely commemorated.

What counts as science

Dr. Thomas focuses on

And once we treat a 'lab' as a social institution, its politics become part of its definition. Dr. Thomas has found in his own work that lab-mates do science but also share rituals, gossip, and celebrate occasions together, and is often a space where people reproduce hierarchies of caste and gender. But in other settings, it is also a place where the authority of 'science' is routinely performed before the public.

The keywords thus clarify what a de-Nobelised imagination of science, paralleling the decolonisation of science, would require. It would force India to ask how Indians produce the thing called 'recognition' — through discoveries and papers as much as by institutions that sort labour into celebrated and hidden. National Science Day, then, should not simply reproduce a Nobel-shaped story about genius and external validation. It should become an annual day of discussion of what counts as science, including the work of technicians, field staff, nurses, lab attendants, data collectors, and others whose labour is essential to make new knowledge but is rarely commemorated.

What counts as science

Dr. Thomas focuses on

mukunth.v@thehindu.co.in

The BJP's West Bengal gamble

Its strategy hinges on polarisation and support from former Left adherents

STATE OF PLAY

Nistula Hebbar
nistula.hebbar@thehindu.co.in



For a party that won just three Assembly seats in 2016 to being the principle Opposition in the West Bengal Assembly in 2021 with 77 seats, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has come a long way. Yet, according to senior party strategists, it still needs to identify its electoral base — not just the hard-core Sangh Parivar cohort, but also the anti-Trinamool Congress and Left Front voters, who cast their votes strategically.

As the BJP settles down to chart out a strategy for the upcoming Assembly elections, two approaches are gaining traction. The first seeks to appeal to Sangh Parivar-aligned voters and the second seeks to attract an anti-Trinamool and largely Left Front voter base.

The first approach focuses on polarisation, framed around the narrative of infiltration from Bangladesh. This promotes the idea that a porous border facilitates such movement and that the State government is not willing to cooperate with the Centre in controlling it as it wants support from minority voters.

This narrative is particularly popular in districts along the porous India-Bangladesh border, including parts of North Bengal and stretches of South and Central Bengal. And the recently concluded general elections in Bangladesh have helped bolster it. While the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) won the elections with 212 seats and promised to protect minority Hindus, the Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami (JeI) party-led coalition won 77 out of the 300 seats in Parliament, with the JeI itself winning a record

68 seats, making it the principle opposition party. Many of the JeI's seats are concentrated in the border regions, including the Khulna division. For the BJP, this fact adds weight to its narrative of infiltration and changing demographics in these areas, which will help polarise the electorate in its favour. The BJP performed well in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls in these regions, but did not perform as well in the 2021 Assembly elections.

The second point gaining traction is the party's realisation of which voters drove its surge in the 2019 Lok Sabha and 2021 Assembly polls. They were, surprisingly, largely former Left Front supporters.

In the 2016 Assembly elections, the Left-Congress alliance received a vote share of 38.1% and a seat share of 77. The BJP secured only 10.2% of the vote share and three seats. In the 2021 Assembly elections, the BJP's vote share increased significantly to 38.1%. It won 77 seats — the same number that the Left-Congress alliance had won in 2016. This showed that most of the anti-Trinamool Congress voters had shifted to the BJP.

What is more significant is that in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, the BJP got 18 seats and 40.2% of the vote share, which, if extrapolated to Assembly segments, translated into dominance in 121 of them. Yet, the 2021 Assembly elections showed that some of the anti-Trinamool votes that had

gone to the BJP in the Lok Sabha polls returned to the Left-Congress alliance. Recovering the vote share to the 2019 levels is part of the BJP's strategy now.

For example, in around 49 seats in the Greater Kolkata area where the BJP routinely performs poorly, the Left retained second place in several seats and held on to portions of its vote. BJP backroom strategists are now reaching out to local Left supporters, trying to convince them that, in the absence of a Left-Congress alliance, the only way to defeat the Trinamool is to consolidate their votes behind the BJP more than they did in the past.

The party is using the anti-incumbency narrative against the three-term Trinamool Congress government, to convince floating voters, not aligned at any level with the BJP, that the national party is their best bet to vote out the Trinamool government. This is what West Bengal BJP president Samik Bhattacharya said when he took over the post in July last year: "Leave all ideologies aside and come together to remove Trinamool from power. Then you can raise your flag and find your own path again. There will be a space for Opposition."

An election campaign and strategy involves many moving parts — a patchwork of narratives, demographics, and arithmetic. Winning over voters from an ideological rival to strategically block a third, more dominant force is not a new tactic, but it comes with challenges. It requires psychological operations and a covert communications strategy, which often fail. Yet, if executed well, this complex strategy can make even seemingly impossible outcomes possible. And that is precisely what the BJP hopes to achieve successfully in West Bengal.

Modi's Israel visit: Balancing ties amid West Bank tensions

The Prime Minister's visit to Israel comes after India aligned with more than 100 countries at the UN in criticising Israel's moves in the West Bank

DATA POINT

Devvanshi Bihani

Prime Minister Narendra Modi landed in Israel on Wednesday to discuss with his counterpart Benjamin Netanyahu a range of issues aimed at boosting bilateral ties, and key developments in the region. His earlier visit to Israel in 2017 was the first by any Indian Prime Minister.

The visit comes shortly after India aligned with more than 100 countries at the United Nations criticising Israel's moves in the West Bank. It signed a joint statement after initially staying away from a collective condemnation of settlement expansion.

India and Israel established full diplomatic relations in 1992. The relationship has deepened significantly over the past decade across defence, trade, technology and labour mobility. **Chart 1** shows trends in India-Israel bilateral trade from 2015-16 to 2024-25.

From about \$200 million in 1992, bilateral trade has expanded significantly, peaking at over \$10.7 billion in 2022-23. It declined to \$6.5 billion in 2023-24 and further to \$3.6 billion in 2024-25 due to war-related disruptions and trouble in the trade route. Since 2014-15, India has maintained a trade surplus with Israel. The surplus widened sharply to \$6.1 billion in 2022-23, before narrowing to \$2.5 billion in 2023-24 and further down to \$663 million in 2024-25.

Charts 2A and 2B show India's top five exports to Israel and imports from it. Each commodity's share in total imports and exports based on cumulative values from 2019-2025 is mentioned.

In the 2019-2025 period, refined products made from crude oil such as petrol and diesel accounted for nearly 44% of India's exports to Israel, followed by diamonds at about 22%. Diamonds dominated imports too, making

up about a third of India's total imports from Israel. Diamonds are imported as rough stones from Israel, cut and polished in India, and then exported back as finished products. Mineral or chemical fertilizers, electronic integrated circuits and radar apparatus are also significant imports from Israel.

Defense cooperation remains the cornerstone of the India-Israel strategic partnership. **Chart 3** shows India's share in Israel's arms exports from 1997-2024.

Over the past decade, India has emerged as one of the largest importers of Israel's arms and ammunitions. According to data from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, India accounted for over 38% of Israel's arms exports between 2014 and 2024.

Israel's cumulative foreign direct investment into India crossed \$347 million between 2000 and September 2025, according to government data. Israel has made over 300 investments in India, mainly in the technology domain.

Indian companies too have invested in Israeli technology firms, particularly in the cybersecurity, agriculture, water management, and electric mobility sectors. The cumulative overseas direct investment from India between April 2000 and April 2025 was \$443 million. The partnership also aligns with the 'Make in India' push, with Israeli firms increasingly collaborating with Indian companies to manufacture equipment locally.

Another key dimension of the relationship is migration and mobility. As of 2024, around 32,715 Indians travelled to Israel, up from about 27,196 in 2023. A significant portion of this movement is linked to employment. Official data show that there were around 32,000 Indian workers in Israel as of October 2024, many of whom were recruited after the outbreak of the Gaza conflict to replace Palestinian labour in the construction sector. There are also about 900 Indian students studying in Israel.

Walking a tightrope

The data were sourced from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), the Department of Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, the Ministry of External Affairs, and the Lok Sabha



CHART 1: Trends in India-Israel bilateral trade from 2015-16 to 2024-25 (in \$ billion)

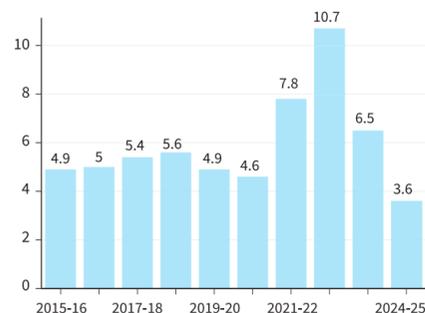


CHART 3: India's share in Israel's arms exports from 1997 to 2024 in %. India has emerged as one of the largest importers of Israel's arms and ammunitions

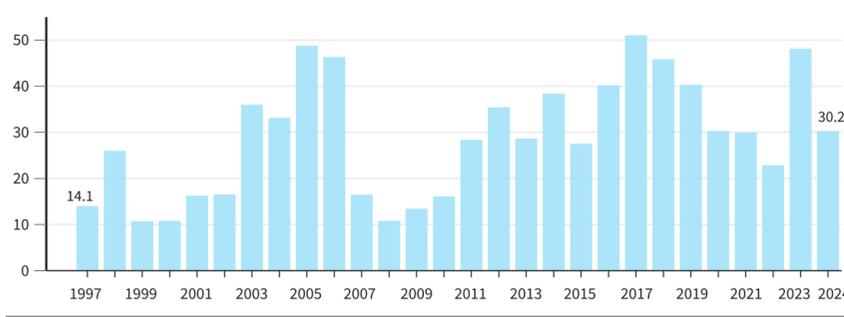


CHART 2A: India's top five exports to Israel and each commodity's share in total exports

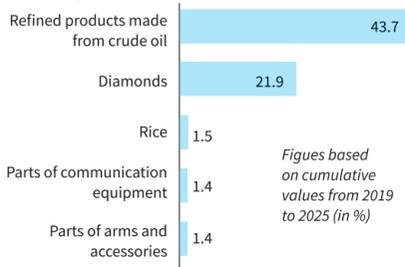
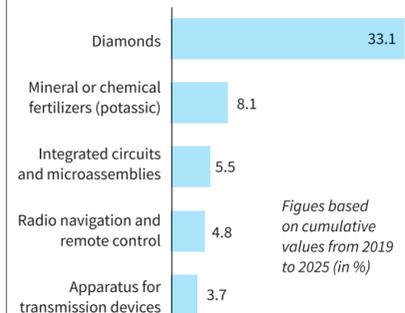


CHART 2B: India's top five imports from Israel and each commodity's share in total imports



FROM THE ARCHIVES

The Hindu

FIFTY YEARS AGO FEBRUARY 26, 1976

Noise pollution in Madras: study findings

Madras, Feb. 25: A pilot study on "noise pollution", conducted in four selected areas in Madras during peak hours, shows that the intensity of sound level is "highly irritating and uncomfortable" opposite the Anna Salai Post Office. However, the intensity of sound (73 decibels) registered in the areas falls well within the damaging noise level (85 decibels) and is lower than what is obtaining in other major cities like Bombay, Calcutta and Delhi. Frequent honking and engine vibrations, especially of motorcycles and scooters, are the loud irritants outside the Anna Salai Post Office. The area near the Central Station and the General Hospital comes second with 71 decibels, the Kothwal Market area third with 70 decibels and the Parry's Corner fourth with no decibels. The study is part of a noise pollution survey in different parts of Madras, Madurai, Coimbatore, Trivandrum, Cochin, Mysore and Bangalore, sponsored by the Department of Science and Technology of the Union Government. A team of ENT specialists and audiologists of the Institute of Oto-Rhino Laryngology at the Madras Medical College and engineers of the IIT, which conducted the study with the help of sophisticated sound level meters and analysers and by interviewing the people, has expressed the view that unless the increasing noise pollution was checked, the continuous exposure of the residents in the area for a prolonged period may end in permanent irreversible hearing loss.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO FEBRUARY 26, 1926

Malaria in Bombay

Bombay, Jan. 25: A sub-committee appointed by the Corporation have recommended drastic measures for combating malaria. They suggest the doing away with open roadside drains which should be replaced by underground stormwater pipes, the covering up of the stormwater pipes and tanks of mills rendering wells mosquito proof and filling in the low-lying lands in the city. The railway companies ought to be called upon to fill in the low-lying lands on either side of the railway lines within the railway limit and neither the Government nor anyone else be exempted from statutory obligation and liabilities, enforceable under the Municipal Law in matters affecting the health of the city.

Text & Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Number of tourists rescued after heavy snowfall in East Sikkim

2,736 Over 2,700 tourists stranded due to heavy snowfall near the Tsomgo Lake in East Sikkim were rescued. Heavy snowfall in the higher reaches of Sherathang and adjoining areas led to road blockages, leaving 541 tourist vehicles stranded. PTI

People released since amnesty law took effect in Venezuela

3,200 A special commission of Venezuela's National Assembly announced that over 3,200 people have been released since the amnesty law took effect four days ago. This group includes both former detainees and those previously under house arrest. PTI

HIV patients undergoing treatment in Meghalaya

10,293 Meghalaya has the highest HIV caseload in India with over 10,000 patients receiving antiretroviral therapy, Health Minister W. Shylla said. She stated that the State has already approved a ₹25 crore mission-mode programme. PTI

Displaced persons in South Sudan at risk due to funding gaps

1.9 million. The lives of more than 1.9 million displaced people in South Sudan are being put at risk due to aid funding shortages, the UN's migration agency said. South Sudan, the world's newest sovereign country, has been beset by civil war, poverty and massive corruption. AFP

Share of the pollution control budget which has been utilised

43 per cent. Around 43% of ₹300 crore allocated under pollution control and emergency measures in the Delhi budget for 2025-26 has been utilised till January 20. The environment department of Delhi stated that ₹129.83 crore was spent. PTI

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

Follow us facebook.com/thehindu X.com/the_hindu instagram.com/the_hindu

How are Indian firms training LLMs?

Why is training a Large Language Model on Indian soil with Indian capital a challenge? How has the IndiaAI Mission subsidised efforts to conduct training in India? Why is a Mixture of Experts (MoE) architecture inexpensive than other comparable models?

EXPLAINER

Aroon Deep

The story so far:

At the AI Impact Summit, the Bengaluru-based startup Sarvam AI released two Large Language Models (LLMs), which are the foundation for AI systems that power services like Google's Gemini and OpenAI's ChatGPT. The two models were trained on 35 billion and 105 billion parameters respectively, and were less power- and compute-intensive than comparable models, while demonstrating improvements over other models in Indian languages, Pratyush Kumar, a Sarvam co-founder said.

How are LLMs trained?

LLMs are trained and operated on clusters of Graphics Processing Units (GPUs). The combined cost of the GPUs and the electricity needed to run them long enough to train a model, run into millions of dollars. The grist for this mill is data, largely scraped from the Internet, where English, European languages and East Asian languages like Korean and Japanese are more richly represented than Indian languages.

This creates a twofold challenge for training an LLM on Indian soil with Indian capital: for one thing, with scarce data sources, many LLMs either perform worse when operating on Indian languages, or burn more "tokens" on inference to translate sentences into English (and translating responses back) to perform better. Since machine translation has improved dramatically for Indian languages, this remains the gold standard for many LLMs. Secondly, since capital is also scarce, efforts to train an LLM by Indian firms targeting Indian users can be challenging, especially if there is no immediate business use case for doing so.

Using translations as a fulcrum can be a



New innovations: Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Sarvam co-founder Pratyush Kumar at the AI Impact Summit, at Bharat Mandapam, in New Delhi on February 19. PTI

challenge for developers who want to leverage local LLMs – like Sarvam's 35 billion parameter model, which was shown off in a demo during the summit's research symposium working on a feature phone – where suboptimal performance in Indian languages can impact adoption and quality of performance.

Has there been government support?

The IndiaAI Mission has subsidised efforts to conduct training in India, by commissioning over 36,000 GPUs in data centres operated by Indian firms like Yotta, and allowing researchers and startups to run training and inference workloads at a relatively nominal fee. The government gave Sarvam access to 4,096 GPUs from its common compute cluster, and the subsidy so far is estimated at

almost ₹100 crore. The "bill of materials" for this cluster is ₹246 crore, though these GPUs can probably be continued to be used by others.

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology has encouraged domestic LLM development for many reasons. The main one is a belief that foreign-developed LLMs can't possibly find the capabilities or the business case to develop the capacity to work well with Indian languages. Additionally, encouraging talent that can train LLMs has been seen as important to foster the Indian AI ecosystem.

As such, Sarvam's announcement of its two models is a significant development in India's own quest to develop a powerful and relatively inexpensive LLM. When China's DeepSeek developed its R1

LLM, the entire AI industry quickly adopted its techniques, as it saved on cost for training and inference without compromising output quality. The government has sought to spark a similar cost advantage.

Mr. Kumar of Sarvam said that the LLM was trained "from scratch," and that the model would be made open source. However, while it has been made available on an app named Indus, it is not available on platforms like Hugging Face, making it difficult for outside experts to scrutinise the claims the firm has made.

What is the MoE architecture?

A key breakthrough for AI models seeking to function locally was the Mixture of Experts (MoE) architecture. When the first LLMs trained on hundreds of billions or even over a trillion parameters were launched, inference was typically run by "activating" all parameters, making queries expensive. But an MoE model only activates a fraction of the overall parameters of a model, making it run faster and also consume a lower level of computing resources.

Even 105 billion parameters, Sarvam acknowledges, "is significantly smaller than the frontier models powering global consumer chat applications today," and the firm says it is "intentionally focused on accuracy, usefulness, efficiency, and alignment for the Indian context before training bigger foundational models".

As such, the answers are not as in-depth as a response from paid versions of Gemini or ChatGPT. That part will come later, Sarvam says, when it has the necessary investments to put money into a larger training run.

Another LLM developed and trained on the common compute cluster was by BharatGen, the IIT Bombay-incubated firm that was able to train a "multilingual" 17 billion parameter model. That model, the firm says, is for use in sectors like education and healthcare. Gnani.ai, another firm, launched a small text-to-speech model.

THE GIST

LLMs are trained and operated on clusters of Graphics Processing Units (GPUs). The combined cost of the GPUs and the electricity needed to run them long enough to train a model, run into millions of dollars.

The IndiaAI Mission has subsidised efforts to conduct training in India, by commissioning over 36,000 GPUs in data centres operated by Indian firms like Yotta.

A key breakthrough for AI models seeking to function locally was the Mixture of Experts (MoE) architecture.

What are carbon capture and utilisation technologies?

How can such technologies reduce carbon dioxide emissions? What is the EU Bioeconomy Strategy and Circular Economy Action Plan? How can India scale-up CCU technology?

Shambhavi Naik

The story so far:

Carbon Capture and Utilisation (CCU) refers to a set of technologies that capture carbon dioxide emissions from industrial sources or directly from the air and convert them into useful products. This process removes carbon from the atmosphere and puts it into the economy as inputs for fuels, chemicals, building materials, or polymers. Unlike carbon capture and storage, where captured CO₂ is permanently stored underground rather than reused, CCU uses up the captured carbon.

Why does India need CCU?

India has consistently been the world's third-largest emitter of CO₂, with emissions driven largely by power generation, cement, steel, and chemicals.

While renewable energy may reduce future emissions, many industrial processes are inherently carbon-intensive and difficult to decarbonise. CCU offers a pathway to reduce emissions from these "hard-to-abate" sectors while simultaneously creating new industrial value chains. It also aligns with India's net-zero target for 2070 and its push to build a circular, low-carbon economy.

Where does India stand today?

India has begun supporting CCU through research funding from the Department of Science and Technology which has created a specific research and development roadmap for these technologies. The draft 2030 roadmap for Carbon Utilisation and Storage (CCUS) presented by the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas has identified projects that can be used for CCUS purposes. In the private sector, Ambuja Cements

(Adani Group) is working on an Indo-Swedish CCU pilot with IIT Bombay to convert captured CO₂ into fuels and materials. JK Cement is collaborating on a CCU testbed to capture CO₂ for applications such as lightweight concrete blocks and olefins. Beyond cement, Organic Recycling Systems Limited (ORSL) is leading India's first pilot-scale Bio-CCU platform, valorising CO₂ from biogas streams into bio-alcohols and specialty chemicals.

What are other countries doing?

The EU Bioeconomy Strategy and Circular Economy Action Plan explicitly supports CCU as a way to turn CO₂ into feedstocks for chemicals, fuels, and materials, linking it to circularity and sustainability targets. ArcelorMittal and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, Ltd. are working with a climate tech company, D-CRBN, to trial a new technology to convert CO₂ captured

at ArcelorMittal's plant in Gent, Belgium into carbon monoxide which can be used in steel and chemical production. The U.S. uses a combination of tax credits and funding to scale CCUs, particularly for CO₂-derived fuels and chemicals. The UAE's Al Reyadah project and planned CO₂-to-chemicals hubs leverage CCU with green hydrogen.

What are the risks ahead?

The foremost risk in scaling CCU in India is cost competitiveness. Capturing, purifying, and converting CO₂ is energy-intensive and expensive. Without policy incentives, CCU-derived products will struggle to compete with cheaper, fossil-based alternatives. A second risk lies in infrastructure readiness. CCU requires co-located industrial clusters, reliable transport of CO₂, and integration with downstream manufacturing, all of which are unevenly developed across Indian industrial regions. Finally, the absence of clear standards, certification, and market signals creates uncertainty for investors and limits demand for CO₂-derived products.

India has taken positive steps through the development of roadmaps to achieving CCU, and their appropriate implementation will be necessary for achieving India's goals.

Shambhavi Naik is chairperson, Takshashila Institution's Health & Life Sciences Policy,

THE GIST

Carbon Capture and Utilisation (CCU) refers to a set of technologies that capture carbon dioxide emissions from industrial sources or directly from the air and convert them into useful products.

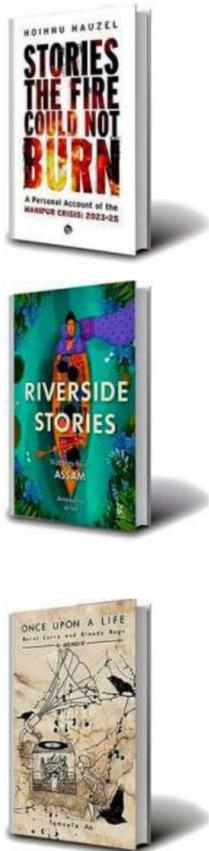
India has consistently been the world's third-largest emitter of CO₂.

The foremost risk in scaling CCU in India is cost competitiveness. Capturing, purifying, and converting CO₂ is energy-intensive and expensive.

BIBLIOGRAPHY



In remembrance: Women at a protest meet on the violence against the Kuki community at Churachandpur, Manipur on July 28, 2023. RITU RAJ KONWAR



FROM THE ARCHIVES

Know your English

S. Upendran

What is the meaning of “gonna”? “Gonna”, “wanna”, and “gotta” are all examples of Americanisms. Many Americans in their speech reduce “going to”, “want to”, and “got to” to “gonna”, “wanna”, and “gotta” respectively. The final “a” in all these words is pronounced like the “a” in “China”.

I wanna go home. You wanna come with me? I am gonna take the bus. Are you gonna walk home? I’ve gotta go. I’ve gotta finish my homework.

Although one finds “gonna” in informal styles of writing – comics, personal letters – it is not acceptable in formal writing.

Why are some TV programmes called “soaps”?

“Soap operas” or “soaps”, as they are sometimes called, existed even before television was invented. The original soaps were broadcast on the radio. These serials were broadcast in the afternoons on all weekdays and were targeted at housewives. Even today, in countries like America and Canada, soaps like “Bold and the Beautiful” and “Guiding Light” are broadcast in the afternoons, Monday through Friday.

As to your question, why such serials are called “soaps”, the answer is fairly simple. The companies that usually sponsored these programmes manufactured soaps and detergents! A good reason for calling such programmes “soaps”, wouldn’t you say? Since the plots in the soaps were rather sentimental and complicated, they reminded a lot of people of the “opera”. Hence the term “soap opera”. The term was adopted by the television industry when it started to produce and broadcast such programmes. Although not all “soaps” are sponsored by soap companies these days, the term continues to be used to refer to such serials.

How is the word “alias” pronounced?

The first “a” is pronounced like the “a” in “fate”, “ate”, and “date”. The “i” is like the “i” in “fit”, “kit”, and “bit”. While the final “a” is like the “a” in “amount”, “about” and “alike”, the “s” is pronounced like the “s” in “sit”, “sat” and “sip”. The stress is on the first syllable.

An alias is a false name under which someone – usually a criminal – travels. It can also be used to refer to one’s nickname.

Charles Sobhraj used several aliases. The alias he used was Surendran.

What is the difference between “envelope” and “envelop”?

The word “envelope” is a noun. It is the cover in which you put your letters. The “e” in the second syllable is like the “a” in “China” and the final syllable “lope” rhymes with “hope”, “cope”, and “rope”. The stress is on the first syllable.

I need to put all the papers in an envelope.

“Envelop”, on the other hand, is a verb. When you envelop something, you cover or surround it completely. Every morning the mist envelops the house.

Published in *The Hindu* on September 21, 1999.

When home becomes hostile: women of the Northeast write their stories

Manipur. Nagaland. Assam – many States in the region have never really known peace. In the ebbs and flows of violence, thanks to insurgencies, encounters with security forces and ethnic strife, it’s the women who have borne the brunt, living in the shadow of conflict

Sudipta Datta

A new government is in place in Manipur after two years of violence. In an attempt to represent the three major communities in the government, a Chief Minister and two Deputy Chief Ministers were announced. While Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh is a Meitei, Nemcha Kipgen, a Kuki, and Losii Dikho, a Naga, were named Deputy Chief Ministers. But Kipgen not only had to take the oath virtually, she has also not been able to set foot in the Meitei-dominated Imphal Valley due to security reasons. She has to work from Kuki-dominated Kangpokpi, trying to help her community heal and bridge the divide.

In her new book, *Stories the Fire Could Not Burn* (Speaking Tiger Books), journalist and writer Hoihnu Hauzel traces the reasons for the ethnic strife that erupted between the Meiteis and Kuki-Zomi people on May 3, 2023. “It is the Kuki-Zomi/Mizo people - my people - who have borne the brunt of the inhumanity unleashed in Manipur,” she writes in the Preface, “...hill communities [who] have lived under systemic neglect, routine violence, and constant threat” ever since the inception of the State in 1972.

But what unfolded in 2023 and beyond, says Hauzel, “shattered what little illusion of safety that remained.” Healing takes time, Kipgen said in an interview to *The Hindu*, urging the government to let the buffer zones between the Meiteis and the Kuki-Zo communities remain for now, particularly in areas where the violence was high,

because safety comes first.

‘No hierarchy of horror’

Hauzel poignantly writes about the night her family had to flee Imphal – “how silence hung heavier than the air, how we carried not just our belongings, but our memories, our dead, our dread. That night, we didn’t just leave behind homes. We left behind parts of ourselves we may never be able to reclaim.”

Many people were not as lucky. At least 250 people lost their lives in the violence, and over 60,000 people have been displaced. “There is no hierarchy of horror,” says Hauzel, “but each story demands to be told. Each name deserves remembrance.”

Hauzel asks a pertinent question that every marginalised person will identify with: What does one do when home becomes hostile? Manipur has seen waves of violence through the years due to insurgencies and ethnic conflagrations. Growing up in Manipur during the 1980s, violence wasn’t an exception, writes Hauzel - “it was part of the routine”, and she could tell the difference between the sound of a cracker and the pop of a pistol, “the way someone else might know birds by their calls.” In neighbouring Nagaland, no stranger to violence herself, schools would often accommodate students from Manipur fleeing the heightened tension.

When “fear became ordinary and survival instinctive”, Hauzel says she and others like her learned resilience, unwittingly preparing themselves for “a life lived in the shadow of conflict.”

How did Manipur reach this point?

Hauzel points out that to understand Manipur, one must begin with its

geography. While Imphal Valley is at the centre, its land covers just 10% of the State but is home to most of the population, particularly the dominant Meitei community. All around the valley are the hill districts which make up 90% of the terrain, not all hospitable. They are inhabited by at least 38 Scheduled Tribes, mostly belonging to the Naga and Kuki-Zomi/Mizo/Chin groups. The hill people have long argued that the valley has cornered a lion’s share of funds, leaving a huge developmental disparity between the valley and the hills.

Hauzel’s book is filled with stories about “voices that don’t make headlines”, and the long, hard road to truth and reconciliation.

Home fires

Women often have to stand up to gendered violence, patriarchal mindsets and other upheavals. Writer Temsula Ao underscores this in her memoir, *Once Upon a Life: Burnt Curry and Bloody Rags* (Zubaan), in which she writes about her “fractured childhood” which was ripped apart by a series of tragedies, not least the loss of her parents in quick succession. For her, an important reason for writing her account was a “sense of wonder” at being able to achieve “a measure of success” from being an “absolute destitute”.

The poet, novelist, short story writer and teacher went on to write several best-selling books including *Laburnum For My Head*, *These Hills Called Home*, *Book of Songs* and *The Tombstone in My Garden*. But before that, right after secondary school, due to the circumstances she was in, decisions about

her life were taken without taking into account what she wanted. Ao had dreamed of becoming a doctor, but who was going to pay for her studies? Forget education, she found herself stranded without a ‘home’ to take shelter in. The “obvious solution” the extended family arrived at was marriage. It was a “mad plunge into the unknown” for Ao, and her only weapons of self-defence were “natural instincts and a will to survive.”

Early on in her remarkable life, during her high school years in the mid-1950s, she encountered the violent fallout of the Naga freedom movement. Encounters between the insurgents and security forces made the hills of Nagaland, and her village, “almost inaccessible and extremely dangerous.”

Everyday struggles

In much of the Northeast, the central theme in literature has been conflict. As Banamallika writes in her Introduction to *Riverside Stories: Writings from Assam* (Zubaan), “...conflict features as a background, in the foreground, in dreams or rather nightmares” in the stories she chose to represent Assam through the decades.

In one of the stories, ‘Kaika Atomo’ (an everyday story) by Klirni Terangpi, a school teacher, Manai, who has not been paid in months, “buys the safety and perhaps lives of her family by giving away her last remaining pieces of bangles from her wedding. The boy from the forest with a gun, her ex-student, assures her it is for the cause of their community.”

This could be the everyday story for many women in the Northeast, carrying the burden of conflict and uncertainty.

THE DAILY QUIZ

Noted writer Victor Hugo was born on February 26, 1802. Here is a quiz on the French romantic writer, his life and works

Please send in your answers to dailyquiz@thehindu.co.in

Abhinava. K

QUESTION 1

After living in poverty for a year, 20-year-old Hugo secured a pension of 1,000 francs for his book from this King. Identify the book and name the King.

QUESTION 2

Hugo’s first play, which was never performed in theatre, came out in 1827. The preface to the text is widely considered as the foundation stone of French Romanticism. Name the text.

QUESTION 3

Hugo’s seminal text was translated to Malayalam as

Pavangal. Name the translator.

QUESTION 4

The text related to the previous question has been adapted on screen several times. The 2012 film adaptation of the book won several accolades including the Oscar. Who directed the 2012 version and who played the character of Madame Thénardier in the movie?

QUESTION 5

This essay by Hugo, written in 1864, is a work of literary criticism and examines the literary geniuses of history. Its title is also the name of a very popular English playwright. Identify the playwright.



Visual question:

Archdeacon Frollo, Captain Phoebus, Pierre Gringoire are characters in this Hugo novel which also prominently features a cathedral. A fire broke out at the cathedral a few years ago and it was subsequently restored. Identify the cathedral. When was the book published? AP

Questions and Answers to the previous day’s daily quiz: 1. Muhammad Ali defeated this boxer to win his first heavyweight title at this age. **Ans: Sonny Liston; 22 years**

2. The transitional name adopted by the boxer. **Ans: Cassius X**

3. The number of times Ali won the world heavyweight title. **Ans: Three**

4. Ali refused to join the U.S. Army to fight this country. **Ans: Vietnam**

5. Ali defeated George Foreman in 1974 in this country. **Ans: Zaire (now Democratic Republic of the Congo)**

6. After Iraq invaded _____ in 1990, Muhammad Ali played a key role in the release of U.S. hostages. **Ans: Kuwait**

7. Ali was featured in a 1978 DC comics publication in which he teams up with _____. **Ans: Superman**

Visual: Describe what is happening in the picture. **Ans: Muhammad Ali talks to a young, distressed man who threatens to jump off the ledge of a building. The two later walked out of the building together**
Early Birds: K.N. Viswanathan| Tamal Biswas| Tito Shiladitya| Sunil Madhavan| Sonali Das

Word of the day

Actuated:

moved to action

Synonyms: motivated

Usage: He is a man actuated by unworthy desires.

Pronunciation: newsth.live/ actuatedpro

International Phonetic Alphabet: /æktju.ert/, /æktju.ert/

For feedback and suggestions for Text & Context, please write to letters@thehindu.co.in with the subject ‘Text & Context’

Mamata says names of 1.2 cr. voters may be deleted after SIR

The Hindu Bureau
KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday expressed concern that the names of about 1.2 crore voters may be deleted following the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in the State. The final rolls are likely to be published on Saturday.

"In the first phase, 58 lakh names were excluded. Then they are secretly excluding [more] people again in the name of logical discrepancy. It will be 80 lakh, not 50 lakh. If we assume that 20 lakh voters have died, then the names of about 1.2 crore people will be excluded from the voter list," the Chief Minister said.

Speaking at an event in her Assembly constituency, Bhabanipur, Ms. Banerjee said that she had fought against the SIR exercise in the Supreme Court.

"I myself went and fought in the Supreme Court. The petition is still pending. Many days have passed since the court's order. I don't know what will happen to the list that will



Mamata Banerjee

be published on the February 28," she said.

The Trinamool Congress chairperson said that she would pray for those whose names might be deleted from the electoral rolls. Addressing members of the Jain community at the event, she said that her concerns were not about religious or political affiliations of the party.

"I am for humanity. It does not matter who is Trinamool, who is BJP, who is CPM. Who is Hindu, who is Muslim, who is Sikh, who is Jain, who is Christian. I just want to ensure that democracy in the country is protected and the rights of every citizen are upheld," she said.

Class 10 admit cards can be used in Bengal SIR: SC

Voters can submit the cards and pass certificates as they show details of both birth, parentage, Bench tells EC; the court had expanded judicial team on Tuesday to help speed up the process

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday clarified that the *Madhyamik* (Class 10) admit card may be submitted along with the *Madhyamik* pass certificate as proof of birth and parentage by electors during the verification of their claims and objections in the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in West Bengal.

A three-judge Bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant directed that verification documents which have not been uploaded so far, and received before February 14, should be submitted by the Election Registration Officers or Assistant Election Registration Officers by 5 p.m. on Thursday.

Justice Joymalya Bagchi, on the Bench, told the Election Commission that the *Madhyamik* admit cards in West Bengal comprehensively showed details of both birth and pa-



Document verification: People waiting in a queue for special intensive revision hearings in Nadia, West Bengal. PTI

rentage. The EC had sought the clarification in an oral mentioning.

Court intervention

The Supreme Court on February 20 had taken the "extraordinary" decision to involve the judiciary in the SIR exercise in Bengal, pointing to the persistent "trust deficit" between the Mamata Banerjee government and the EC, which had led to a "stalemate".

The court had on that day requested the Chief

Justice of the Calcutta High Court to deploy a force of serving and retired judicial officers of "impeccable integrity" in West Bengal to take over the quasi-judicial task of EROs and AEROs.

They would be hearing lakhs of voters who found themselves purged from the West Bengal draft roll, and had received hearing notices after the poll panel found them "unmapped" or detected "logical discrepancies" in their personal details. Subsequently, on

Tuesday, the court moved in quickly to swell the ranks of judicial officers deployed to aid in the completion of the SIR process, even alerting neighbouring Odisha and Jharkhand to spare their judges.

The court had instructed that the verification of objections and claims regarding logical discrepancies/unmapping would be based on documents listed in the EC's October 27, 2025 SIR notification.

The Supreme Court had underscored that Aadhaar and Class 10 admit card and pass certificate would be considered as proof during SIR verification. It had directed EROs and AEROs to cooperate with the judicial officers.

Most significantly, the court has allowed the poll body to publish a voter list in West Bengal on February 28.

However, supplementary lists would be published on a continuous basis till nominations are filed for the Assembly election.

Veteran Communist leader R. Nallakannu passes away at 101

B. Kolappan
CHENNAI

R. Nallakannu, freedom fighter and a towering figure of the Communist movement, passed away in Chennai on Wednesday. He was 101. He had been unwell and undergoing treatment at the Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital, where he breathed his last. He is survived by two daughters.

The body will be kept at the State headquarters of the Communist Party of India here for the public to pay homage. Following his wish, the body will be donated to Madras Medical College for medical research.

Fondly known as RNK in party circles, he chose to remain with the CPI when the Communist movement in India split in 1964 following the India-China war. He served as the Tamil Nadu State secretary of the CPI for three tenures since 1992.

A dedicated field worker and organisational man, Nallakannu led a tireless campaign against the mafia that was illegally mining sand from the Thamirabarani river basin. In 2010, he filed a PIL petition and personally argued the case in the Madras High Court, securing a stay order against sand mining.

Soft-spoken and affable, RNK embodied the values of sacrifice, idealism, and unwavering commitment to the Communist movement and social justice.

He shared with leaders such as Jeeva and K. Balachandrayutham a love for the poems of poet Subramania Bharati and the hymns of the Azhvars, particularly Andal and Nammazhwar.

Police torture

RNK was sentenced to life imprisonment in the Nellai conspiracy case, along with Balachandrayutham, P. Manikkam, I. Mayandibharathi, and many others. He spent many years underground during periods when the Communist Party was banned — first by the British, and later by the Congress government led by Jawaharlal Nehru. He endured severe police brutality; he was unable to grow a moustache thereafter, as a police officer had singed his upper lip with a cigarette butt.

"I was hiding in a



R. Nallakannu. N. RAM

friend's house when the police arrested me. After securing some bombs, they tied my hands and beat me. But I refused to reveal the names of Communist leaders," he had said in an interview.

Born in 1925 in Srivaikundam, Thoothukudi district, RNK joined the freedom movement as a school boy, in a region that was a nerve centre of the Independence struggle, nurtured by V.O. Chidambaram.

"Political leaders would travel to Thoothukudi through my native town of Srivaikundam. I would join the local leaders in organising meetings. You should have heard Pappankulam Chockalingam speak about the Jallianwala Bagh massacre — the entire crowd would weep uncontrollably," he recalled in a 2019 interview with *The Hindu*.

RNK was deeply troubled by the emergence of the RSS-BJP in the political landscape and always expressed concern over the undermining of public sector undertakings and trade unions. He was also in favour of unification of the Communist parties.

Vice-President's tribute

A tribute by Vice-President C.P. Radhakrishnan, who won against RNK in the 1999 Lok Sabha election from the Coimbatore constituency as a BJP candidate, speaks volumes about the Communist leader's character. "I was actually upset that a dignified leader like him could not win the election," wrote Mr. Radhakrishnan in a book on RNK, *Aravazhin Adayalam*, published by *The Hindu Tamil Thisai*.

Nallakannu won the *Thagaisal Thamizhar* award of the State government in 2022. But he contributed the prize money ₹10 lakh to the Chief Minister Relief Fund along with his contribution of ₹5,000

Gandhi family, Congress are compromised, alleges BJP

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Bharatiya Janata Party on Wednesday accused the Gandhi family and the Congress of being "completely compromised", claiming that they prioritised personal benefit over national interest.

At a press briefing in Patna, BJP president Nitin Nabin alleged that from the first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru to present Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, it was the story of a "compromised legacy". He alleged that during the Nehru rule, India's sovereignty was compromised.

Mr. Nabin listed allegations ranging from foreign interference and corruption to "compromises" made on matters of national interest during the prime ministership of Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi, and Rajiv Gandhi. He accused Congress leader Sonia Gandhi of running "a parallel government" during the UPA rule.

He said most of Mr. Gandhi's 247-plus foreign trips were "not disclosed to security agencies", and accused him of meeting "anti-India figures" abroad and visiting "sensitive border areas with George Soros-backed foreign citizens".

'Negative politics'

Union Minister Piyush Goyal also made similar accusations. "Mr. Gandhi has become the 'poster boy' of negative politics ... during foreign trips, he compromises the Yellow Book protocol [security guidelines for the protection of high-category VIPs and VVIPs] and engages in actions compromising the interests of India and its people," Mr. Goyal alleged.

He alleged Mr. Gandhi had links with "anti-national" forces. He cited Mr. Gandhi's meeting with U.S. Representative Ilhan Omar, who has been accused of being close to billionaire investor George Soros. "He is functioning like a puppet of foreign powers," he said.

Rahul targets Modi over trip to Israel and trade deal with U.S., brings up 'Epstein Files'

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Wednesday criticised Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Israel, with the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, asking "on whose orders the Prime Minister has gone to sign a deal against the country's interest".

In a post on X, Mr. Gandhi said he had challenged the Prime Minister to cancel the India-U.S. trade deal, but Mr. Modi had quietly left for Israel. "At least once, you've already 'danced and sung' in Israel at Epstein's behest — so this time, on whose orders will you return after striking a deal against the country's interests?" he said.

He was referring to emails released as part of the "Epstein Files", in which the convicted Amer-



Rahul Gandhi

ican sex offender, the late Jeffrey Epstein, claimed that U.S. President Donald Trump played a role in the India-Israel relationship was laid by Epstein. "Epstein is a notorious sex offender for the common people, but a hero for the Modi government's foreign policy," Mr. Kherra alleged.

Earlier, Congress leader Jairam Ramesh said India had taken a moral position on Palestine and claimed that it was a different era.

"Now the Indian Prime Minister is brazenly embracing the Prime Minister of Israel, who has reduced Gaza to rubble and dust and is orchestrating the expansion of illegal settlements in the occupied West Bank. When the entire world is critical of his 'dear friend' Benjamin Netanyahu, Mr. Modi will be displaying moral cowardice," he said.

Commission moots sharing of EVMs, electoral rolls and the ECINET digital platform

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Election Commission has proposed to work out mutually acceptable mechanisms and legally viable frameworks with all State Election Commissions across the country to synergise election-related processes, including the sharing of electronic voting machines (EVM), electoral rolls, and the ECINET digital platform.

At a national round table conference of the EC and State Election Commissioners, which concluded in New Delhi on Tuesday, a declaration was adopted stating that EC and SECs would work together to synergise the laws governing elections to Parliament and State legislatures, and strengthen cooperation to

further national and constitutional interest, according to an official statement issued by the EC on Wednesday.

The State Election Commissions from 30 States participated in the conference, chaired by Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar. The SECs affirmed that the preparation of pure electoral rolls formed the bedrock of democracy and that transparent and efficient conduct of elections strengthened democratic institutions.

Mr. Kumar too highlighted the importance of strengthening institutional coordination between the EC and SECs.

Manipur MLA's kin refuse burial till govt. announces new district and NIA probe

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

The family of Manipur BJP MLA Vungzagin Valte, who passed away at a hospital in Haryana on February 21, has refused to bury him until its demands — a separate district for the Zomi tribe and a probe by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) into his death — are met by the government, his family and community members said.

Valte belonged to the Zomi community and was assaulted by a mob on May 4, 2023 in Imphal, a day after ethnic violence erupted between the Kuki-Zo and Meitei people. He could not recover from the injuries sustained then.

Valte's body was flown from Delhi to Aizawl in Mizoram, at the request of the family. It was brought to his residence at Churachandpur in Manipur on February 24 via road from the Lengpui airport in Aizawl. As the convoy passed, people paid tributes.

Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh is learnt to have told

the family that arrangements would be made to the accord State honours to Valte.

List with Governor

However, Valte's son, Joseph, told *The Hindu* that the family members had handed over a list of demands to Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla, and that the burial will not take place till they are fulfilled.

A total shutdown was observed in Churachandpur district on Tuesday. The State government had declared official mourning from February 22 to 24.

Vumsuan Naulak, chairman, Zomi Council, said a postmortem was done on Wednesday. The community leaders will convene a meeting to decide the future course of action. "We have a list of demands and till the government accepts the condition, the burial is unlikely," Mr. Naulak said.

The three-time MLA was attacked when he was returning after attending a security review meeting. No arrests have been made in the case so far.

ADDITIONAL CHIEF ENGINEER PHED REGION-JAIPUR
Jyoti Nagar, Jaipur (Raj.) E-Mail-ace1jpr.phed@rajasthan.gov.in
No-ACE/PHED/Ar/Dausa/2025-26/Date

NOTICE INVITING BID (NIT No. 03/2025-26)

On behalf of the Governor of Rajasthan NIT No. 03/2025-26 online tender is hereby invited from eligible bidders for "Water Supply Scheme for Augmentation of UWSS Lalsot, Bandikui, Mandawar and Mandawari, District Dausa including 05 years O&M after 01 year Defect Liability period under AMRUT 2.0". Interested bidders may participate upto **06.00 PM** on dated **16.03.2026** as per criteria mentioned in the detailed NIT/Tender document available on website: <https://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in> & <http://sppp.rajasthan.gov.in>. Tenders are to be submitted online in electronic format on website <https://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in> as per prescribed schedule.

NIT No.	Particular	Estt. Cost (Rs. In Lakh)	UBN No.
03/2025-26	"Water Supply Scheme for Augmentation of UWSS Lalsot, Bandikui, Mandawar and Mandawari, District Dausa including 05 years O&M after 01 year Defect Liability period under AMRUT 2.0"	2640.73	PHE2526WLOB14606

NIB CODE- PHE2526A6764
Additional Chief Engineer
DIPR/C/4016

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA DEPARTMENT OF HORTICULTURE

INVITATION OF APPLICATIONS ESTABLISHMENT OF OIL PALM FACTORIES IN TELANGANA NOTIFICATION

Telangana is one of the biggest producers of Palm Oil in the Country. There is tremendous potential for Oil Palm development in Telangana. Government of Telangana has already allotted factory zones to 30 districts of the state for establishment of Oil Palm factories. Now the Government of Telangana has decided to invite applications for allotment of factory zones for Oil palm cultivation in the following Districts.

Sl.No.	District	Area identified (hectares)
1	Kumarambheem Asifabad	12221

Under Oil palm (Regulation of Production and Processing) Act 1993, Government is empowered to allot factory zones in favour of Agencies selected for Oil Palm area expansion and setting up of Oil palm processing units. Interested Firms / Companies / Co-operatives desirous of setting up of Oil Palm Processing unit may download the application form from the website <http://horticulture.tg.nic.in> from 26.02.2026. The filled-in application form to be submitted in the Oil Palm Section, O/o, Director of Horticulture, Public Gardens, Hyderabad - 500004 on or before 10.03.2026, 5.00 PM by paying an amount of Rs.20,000/- (Non-refundable) towards application fee and Security deposit of Rs.1,00,000/- through separate DDs in favour of Secretary, SHN, Payable at Hyderabad. Applications may also be obtained from Oil palm Section, O/o, Director of Horticulture, Public Gardens, Hyderabad - 500004 on all working days from 17.03.2026 onwards, between 10.30 AM to 5.00 PM, by paying an amount of Rs.20,000/- (Non-refundable) through DD in favour of Secretary, SHN, Payable at Hyderabad. Last date for submission of completely filled in applications is 10.03.2026, 5.00 PM.

Sd/- Director of Horticulture, Telangana State
DIPR R.O.No.4217-PPICL-AGENCY/ADVT1/10/2025-26 Dt:25-02-2026

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

RFP No. 41-RFP-Water Cannon -2025-2026 Date : 24.02.2026

Online Bids through e-Tender Portal <https://tenders.odisha.gov.in> are invited from the eligible bidders for Supply of Water Cannon for Odisha Police, Odisha, Cuttack, during the current financial year 2025-26 as per the schedule mentioned below.

Sl. No.	Name of Item	Approximate quantity
1.	41-RFP-Water Cannon - 2025-2026	02 Nos

Events	Date
RFP Issue Date	24.02.2026
RFP Submission Due Date and time	05.03.2026 at 11.00 AM
Date & Time of Opening of Technical Bids	05.03.2026 at 03.00 PM
Bid to RA enabled	Yes
Tender Document fee ((Non-refundable Rs.590/- (Rs.500/-+ 18% GST (Rs. 90/-))	In favour of A.I.G. of Police (Prov), Odisha, Cuttack payable at Cuttack, (Demand Draft)
EMD (Earnest Money Deposit) Rs: 2,48,000/- (Two Lakh forty-eight thousand only)	In favour of A.I.G. of Police (Prov), Odisha, Cuttack payable at Cuttack, (Demand Draft)

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

A.I.G. of Police (Provisioning), Odisha, Cuttack. (Tender Calling Authority)
12001/34/2526 OIPR-12001/12618/125-26/0004

Bhubaneswar Development Authority
Akash Shova Building, Sachivalaya Marg, Bhubaneswar -751001, Odisha. Ph: 0674-2396437

Notice No: 3701/ BDA
BDA-PPP-PLAN-0001-2026 (OSWAS) **Date : 18/02/2026**

Request for Proposal (RFP)
COMPOSITE COMMUNITY MARKET & HIGH-END RESIDENTIAL/COMMERCIAL FACILITIES over Prime land at Jharpada, Bhubaneswar on Public Private Partnership (PPP) - Call 2

The Bhubaneswar Development Authority (BDA) invites Private Developers for the development of a Composite Project including a "Community Market" and Residential and/or Commercial facilities over 0.78 Ha (1.932 Ac) of prime freehold land at Bhubaneswar on PPP mode. The site enjoys a frontage on both the 24 meters wide Jail Road and 9 meters wide Jharpada road. Additionally, the proposed 60 meters wide Jharpada Canal Road (CDP Road) will add greater proximity to the site.

Interested agencies may participate in this tender through the e-procurement portal of the Government of Odisha. The RFP documents will be available from **20.02.2026 to 23.03.2026** and can be downloaded from www.odishatenders.gov.in. The completed proposal, as per instruction in the RFP document, should be uploaded in the portal latest by **23.03.2026 up to 1600 hrs**. The Pre-Bid meeting is on **06.03.2026 at 1600 hrs**, at the Office of the BDA, Please refer to the RFP document for further details.

BDA reserves the right to cancel this invitation and / or invite fresh Bids / RFP with or without amendments to this invitation, without liability or any obligation for such invitation and without assigning any reason. BDA reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals without assigning any reason whatsoever.

Sd/- Secretary-cum-Member Estate, Bhubaneswar Development Authority
13001/369/2526 OIPR-13001/1130331/125-26/0037

IN BRIEF



SC halts case against Soren for skipping summons by ED

The Supreme Court on Wednesday stayed criminal proceedings initiated on a complaint filed by the ED against Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren for willfully disobeying summons issued by it in a money laundering case. A Bench of the Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi remarked these were “in *terrorem*” (threatening) proceedings started off by the Central agency with a design to intimidate.

Property worth ₹3,716 crore linked to Anil Ambani: ED

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) provisionally attached a residential property worth ₹3,716.83 crore, located in Mumbai’s Pali Hill, linked to businessman Anil Ambani in connection with the alleged Reliance Communications Limited (RCom) bank fraud case on Wednesday. The agency’s probe is based on a FIR registered by the CBI against RCom, and others. As alleged, RCom and its group companies had taken loans from domestic and foreign lenders, of which a total amount of ₹40,185 crore is outstanding.

Bill to replace UGC, AICTE is with Ministries, says govt.

Abhinav Lakshman
NEW DELHI

The draft Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan (VBSA) Bill, 2025, to overhaul the higher education regulatory framework in India, was circulated among 39 Union Ministries and departments as part of inter-ministerial consultations, the government has informed the Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) looking into the Bill, *The Hindu* has learnt.



The draft Bill seeks to overhaul the higher education regulatory framework. ISTOCK

The Bill proposes the setting up of a 12-member umbrella commission - the Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan - to replace the University Grants Commission (UGC), the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), and the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE).

Unlike the UGC, the new commission will not have the power to disburse grants. The Bill hands over the funding power to “mechanisms devised by the Ministry of Education”.

The 31-member JPC is headed by BJP MP D. Purandeswari. In a communi-

cation to the JPC ahead of its first meeting on Thursday, the government explained the background to the Bill and its provisions.

Separate councils
The Bill intends to substitute the UGC, AICTE, and NCTE, by repealing the laws under which these bodies were set up. The commission will include separate regulatory standards, and accreditation councils.

The VBSA Bill was introduced by Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan in Parliament in December 2025, even as

Loose connection made satellite miss orbit: panel

The apex committee says the signal meant to activate a key valve in the engine’s oxidiser line never reached it; this valve is crucial for firing the engine to raise the orbit of NVS-02

Jacob Koshy
NEW DELHI

After nearly a year’s delay, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) made public the report of a committee constituted to analyse why the NVS-02 satellite, which was launched aboard a GSLV rocket on January 29 last year, could not be placed in its intended orbit.

The apex committee, as it is called, concluded that the main reason for what happened was that the signal meant to activate a key valve in the engine’s oxidiser line never reached it. This valve is crucial for firing the engine to raise the spacecraft’s orbit.

Faulty connection
The committee said the most likely explanation was that at least one connection in the electrical connector - in both the primary and back-up lines



Off track: The NVS-02 navigation satellite aboard the launch vehicle GSLV-F15 in Sriharikota on January 29, 2025. ANI

— came loose or failed, preventing the signal from getting through.

NVS-02, the second spacecraft in the NVS series, was placed successfully into an ‘elliptical transfer’ orbit on January 29, 2025 at 00:53 UT but its subsequent transfer to a circular orbit was unsuccessful. This was also a special occasion being the 100th launch from the Sriharikota launchpad. The spacecraft was separated from

the launch vehicle (GSLV-F15) following which a series of autonomous activities on the satellite were carried out, including deploying the solar panel and stabilising the orientation for power generation.

The NVS-02 was to be the second satellite in the NVS series, and part of India’s Navigation with Indian Constellation (NavIC).

The committee, an ISRO statement said, gave a set of recommendations to

“enhance” the redundancy and reliability of pyro system operations for future missions. These were “successfully implemented in CMS-03 spacecraft launched on November 2, 2025 by LVM-3 M5, and the pyro systems performed satisfactorily placing the satellite in the intended orbit.”

The CMS-03, or GSAT-7R, is an indigenously designed and developed satellite, weighing approximately 4,400 kg - India’s heaviest communication satellite - and is critical to the Navy’s space-based communications and maritime domain awareness.

The Hindu reported this week that a committee that includes K. Vijayraghavan, former Principal Scientific Adviser, and S. Somanath, former Chairman, ISRO, will probe “systemic issues” underlying the successive failures of ISRO’s Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV).

Centre dismisses RTI plea for details of VB-G RAM G Act

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Union Rural Development Ministry has rejected a Right to Information (RTI) application that sought details of consultations the Centre held with the State governments before introducing the new rural employment law - the Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-G RAM G) Act, 2025.

Minister’s news article
The RTI application referred to an article by Union Rural Development Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, published in *The Hindu* on December 24, in which he stated that the Bill was “preceded by extensive consultations with State governments, technical workshops and multi-stakeholder discussions”.

He had also said that the core design features of the legislation were shaped by lessons from years of implementation as well as feedback from the States.

Chakradhar Buddha of the United Forum for RTI Campaign sought records of these pre-legislative consultations with States, along with details of technical workshops and multi-stakeholder discussions cited by Mr. Chouhan. He also sought internal notes showing how inputs from these consultations were incorporated into the drafting of the VB-G RAM G Act, 2025.

In its response, the Ministry said the information could not be shared because the scheme “has not yet been formally notified by the States/U.T.s and has not become operational in any State/U.T.”

The Ministry added that the implementation process was still under way and the matter had “not attained finality or completion”.

Disclosing the information at this stage, it said, would involve sharing records of “ongoing deliberations and decision-making relating to policy implementation”.

SIM-binding directions for platforms to stay: Minister

Aroon Deep
NEW DELHI

Communications Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia said on Wednesday that the SIM-binding directions for November 2025 would remain in force. This would require messaging apps such as WhatsApp to do two things: forcibly log out users on services such as WhatsApp Web every six hours and stop functioning if the user does not have the registered SIM provisioned on their device. February 28 is the deadline for compliance.

“As of now, there is no thought on an extension” for compliance with the rules, Mr. Scindia said during a press interaction. “The logout thing [after six hours] is only for multiple connections on the same instrument, when you go to your computer and so on and so forth ... The rules stand as is at this point, and the reasons for that are very well-founded not only from a fraud aspect, but also from a security aspect.”

‘Justice Unplugged’ to look at new challenges for law

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

‘Justice Unplugged 2026’, a joint initiative of *The Hindu* and VIT, Chennai, will be held on February 28 in New Delhi. The guests at the inaugural include Justice Ujjal Bhuyan, judge, Supreme Court; Abhishek Manu Singhvi, senior advocate, and G. Viswanathan, Founder and Chancellor, Vellore Institute of Technology (VIT).

G.V. Selvam, Vice-President, Vellore Institute of Technology (VIT), will be in conversation with L.V. Navaneeth, CEO of The Hindu Group, on the current state of legal education in India.

The first panel discussion addresses the seismic shifts caused by Gen-AI-induced technological transformation, featuring a diverse group of experts, including Garima Singh, Judicial Law Clerk-cum-Research Associate to Justice Ujjal Bhuyan; Neha Rathi, Advocate-on-Record, Supreme Court; and Jishnu J. R., Head of the Department, B.B.A. LL.B. (Hons), VIT School of Law (VIT-



The first panel discussion will be on Gen-AI-induced technological transformation

SOL), VIT Chennai.

In the afternoon is scheduled a session dedicated to ‘Fundamental Rights in the Digital Age’; The panel, comprising Shadan Farasat, Senior Advocate; Gopal Sankaranarayanan, Senior Advocate; and M. S. Sharmila, Head of the Department, Centre for Postgraduate Legal Studies (LL.M. Programme), VIT School of Law (VITSOL), VIT Chennai, will examine how India’s Constitution responds to the complex trends of a hyper-connected world.

This will be followed by a close look at the craft itself in a session exploring the art of constitutional thinking, where S. Muralidhar, Senior Advocate and former Chief Justice, High Court of Orissa, will elaborate on how great lawyers are made - through rigorous discipline, philosophical depth, and a commitment to justice. The final panel of the day, featuring Shreya Arora Mehta, District and Additional Sessions Judge, Delhi; Sanchita Ain, Advocate-on-Record, Supreme Court; Karuna Nundy, Senior Advocate; and Tania Sebastian, Head of the Department, VIT School of Law (VITSOL), VIT Chennai, takes a pragmatic turn toward ‘Improving Legal Access’, tackling the vital challenge of making justice truly accessible to every citizen.

Kapil Sibal, Senior Advocate, and N. Ram, Director of The Hindu Group, will engage in an in-depth conversation on constitutional morality and the Supreme Court.



2013 U.P. riots: 37 acquitted by court for lack of proof

Ishita Mishra
NEW DELHI

Citing lack of evidence, a Muzaffarnagar court recently acquitted 37 persons accused of killing eight people during the communal violence that rocked the Uttar Pradesh district in 2013.

The communal riots in Muzaffarnagar in August-September 2013 left over 60 dead. More than 500 FIRs were lodged against hundreds of identified and unidentified persons for crimes such as murder, gang rape, loot, and arson.

In one such incident, Mohd. Imran, a native of Kutba village, alleged that a mob of around 100 people, armed with sharp weapons, attacked houses belonging to members of the minority community. The police booked 37 persons, eight of whom died during trial.

On February 20, Additional District and Sessions Judge Manjula Bhalotiya acquitted all the accused, citing absence of proof against them.

THE CROSSWORD+ 14727 (set by Incognito)

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

SCAN TO PLAY

Across

- Approach new radar under construction (4,4)
- German submarines moving about stealthily at first (1-5)
- Toxic substance possessed by aggressive nominee (5)
- Tricycle going around Bali on tour’s a vehicle for rough terrain (5,4)
- Diary corrected by husband in Arabian city (6)

Down

- Bird starting to roost in port (5)
- In any case, no broken cane results in irritation (9)
- Mando composed for migrant (5)
- Insects found in elephant shed (4)
- Game poets giving shelter to sick ace (9)
- Goodbye from aide getting transferred by university (5)
- Kidnapped author’s progeny covering events organised (9)
- Sailor Peter sails to get ammonium nitrate (9)
- Observed covering occasion getting three less than a score (9)
- Fag breaks ice target (9)
- Gold with god? It, certainly, at last, gives power (9)
- Cosh Hector and nun badly (9)
- Bad bets after end of round result in amounts to be paid (5)
- Poster about conflict gets prize (5)
- Perhaps, an introvert left one, right? (5)
- Capital obtained from Barbados lodge (4)

SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

Solution to previous puzzle

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

Solution to yesterday’s Sudoku

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

FAITH

Tirukkachi Nambi

The guru or acharya is central to our system of philosophy. Even someone close to God cannot gain salvation if one does not have a guru, as exemplified by the life of Tirukkachi Nambi, said P. Swaminathan. Born in Poonamallee near Chennai in the Tamil month of Masi under the Mrugaseerisham star, he received a fair share of his father’s estate, but instead of wanting to multiply it, he bought a piece of land and grew flowers in them in order to offer them to Varadaraja Perumal in Kanchi.

People marvelled at his devotion, when he walked to Kanchi every morning, carrying fresh garlands made from fragrant flowers from his garden to the deity at the Varadaraja Perumal temple.

One day, standing near the sanctum sanctorum and gazing upon Varadaraja with total bhakti, he was startled by the beads of perspiration on the idol and was moved to tears at what he perceived as the Lord suffering from sweltering heat. Sensing His devotee’s emotions, Varadaraja invited Tirukkachi Nambi to step forward and fan him, much to the latter’s delight. This became a daily ritual. In due course, the two began to converse with each other. Once, when Nambi was walking to the temple, he was startled when a person bent down and smeared the earth on which Nambi’s feet had touched. Where you walk is sacred ground, and I will be blessed, claimed that man. A curious Nambi asked Varadaraja if the man would attain moksha for his act. The Lord confirmed the same. When Nambi wondered if he would also get moksha for his devotion to Perumal, the Lord said, “For that, we have been conversing with you. To attain moksha, first seek a guru.”

IN BRIEF



Yes Bank reports ₹2.55 crore unauthorised transactions

Yes Bank on Wednesday said fraudsters had conducted unauthorised transactions worth \$0.28 million (₹2.55 crore) using Multi-Currency Prepaid Forex Cards of 5,000 customers. These cards were issued in partnership with BookMyForex.com. Yes Bank said the transactions came to light after the private sector lender's fraud monitoring system declined an unusual increase in transactions conducted overnight at a Latin American country.

Facebook Overseas buys 30% stake in RIL firm for ₹257 cr.

Reliance Industries Ltd. (RIL) said Reliance Enterprise Intelligence Ltd (REIL), its step-down wholly owned subsidiary, allotted 85,31,75,000 equity shares of face value of ₹10 each, at par to Reliance Intelligence Ltd. (Reliance Intelligence), its wholly owned subsidiary and Facebook Overseas, Inc. (Facebook), a wholly owned unit of Meta Platforms, Inc. It said 25,65,52,500 equity shares aggregating ₹256.6 crore were allotted to Facebook Overseas Inc.

'Govt. mandates sale of E20 petrol with minimum RON 95'

The Centre has mandated the sale of petrol with up to 20% ethanol and a minimum Research Octane Number (RON) of 9 from April 1. The Oil Ministry, in a February 17 notification, said, "the Central government hereby directs oil companies to sell ethanol-blended motor spirit (petrol) with percentage of ethanol up to 20% as per Bureau of Indian Standards specifications and having minimum Research Octane Number (RON) of 95, in States and the Union Territories".

U.S. slaps 126% levy on Indian solar imports

Tariffs were slapped on India, Indonesia and Laos following an ongoing probe; In FY23, India exported \$1 billion worth photovoltaics to the U.S.

Jacob Koshy
NEW DELHI

The Trump administration slapped 126% levy on solar cell imports from India following a 'preliminary' determination that subsidised exports from Indian firms were hurting the competitiveness of U.S. solar firms and contravened World Trade Organization agreements on subsidies.

The tariffs were collectively imposed on February 24 on India, Indonesia and Laos following a probe by the U.S. Department of Commerce on a complaint by the Alliance for American Solar Manufacturing and Trade, a coalition of leading U.S. solar firms.

Indian firms under the U.S. Commerce Ministry's radar included Mundra Solar Energy Pvt. Ltd. and Mundra Solar PV Ltd. — both part of Adani Group — Premier Energies Photovoltaic Private Ltd., Waaree Energies Ltd. and Waaree Solar Americas. The department set initial rates of 86%-143% for Indonesia and 81% for Laos.

Framework deal

This levy comes after New Delhi and Washington agreed on a framework for the India-U.S. trade deal to cut tariffs on India's exports to 18% from 50% earlier. After this, the U.S. Supreme Court quashed Trump tariffs, calling them unconstitutional. Presi-



Dark days: Staff inspecting solar panels on assembly lines at an Adani Group factory in Gujarat's port city of Mundra. AFP FILE

dent Trump then came up with a new 15% baseline duty on several imports.

On February 24, per a notice on the U.S. Commerce Ministry site, it was Adani firms that were specifically named with a duty rates of 125.87% though these rates, as of now, apply to all Indian exporters.

May be impacted

The *Hindu* didn't receive comments from the firms as of press time. However, given the U.S. is the biggest export destination for solar parts, Indian exports could likely be 'impacted.' The implications of the order were still being studied, a spokesperson for Solex Energy Ltd., a Surat-based solar firm told *The Hindu*. "There will be an impact as the U.S. is a major export destination. How much... still needs to be determined. Some months sees a surge in exports and less in others, so

it could well be, we won't see an impact beyond the immediate quarter," the person explained.

Currently duties of up to 40% are imposed on such export of solar cells.

These duties are additional to existing tariffs. The final determination in the CVD investigations are now scheduled to be issued on July 6, 2026. The U.S. Commerce Department is conducting concurrent anti-dumping duty probe of solar cells from India, Indonesia and Laos.

According to data cited by U.S. authorities, Indian firms in 2022 exported 232 mega watts (MW) worth of solar cells which rose to 2049 MW in 2023 and 2297 MW in 2024.

In 2022-23 \$1,000 million worth photovoltaics were exported and that rose to \$1,939.92 million in 2023-24. Exports stood at \$954 million in April-December 2025.

PMO meets on CAFE-3 norms

Jagriti Chandra
NEW DELHI

The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) held a meeting on Wednesday to review the proposed carbon emission norms for passenger vehicles slated to take effect from 2027, though no final decision was reached.

A senior government official who was part of the high-level meeting said that there was "no final decision yet", on the contentious issue of draft Corporate Average Fuel Efficiency (CAFE)-3 norms which have divided small and big carmakers.

Officials of the Ministry of Power, Bureau of Energy Efficiency, and Ministry of Heavy Industries were part of the meeting.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a FICCI event, Minister for Heavy Industries H.D. Kumaraswamy said about the proposal, "We already had a meeting with stakeholders and Power Ministry. The Power Ministry, according to my information, sent the proposal to the PMO."

On contents of the proposal, he said, "whatever best way we have to encourage for electric mobility, we are going to take."

Revised draft

The Bureau of Energy Efficiency recently circulated a revised draft of the CAFE III norms to the industry after the earlier version released in September last year triggered divisions among automakers with larger vehicle manufacturers opposing certain relaxations extended to small-



No final decision was taken on CAFE-3 norms.

car makers.

The latest proposal, shared with car manufacturers but not yet made public, has removed the 3 g CO₂/km waiver for cars weighing up to 909 kg and with engine capacity not exceeding 1200 cc. It has also made the emission slope flatter. Against the initial 0.002 value for all five years, the new proposal is 0.00153 in year one, followed by an annual reduction so as to reach 0.00128 in the fifth year. This means permissible emissions for heavier vehicles are lower than before, while small cars get some relief.

Addressing the third FICCI National Conference on Electric Vehicles, Mr. Kumaraswamy said, "electric mobility today is not merely a climate initiative, it is an industrial strategy, a manufacturing opportunity, supply-chain recalibration and a technological leap." Citing the progress of the ₹10,900 crore PM E-DRIVE scheme, he said as of February, over 28 lakh EVs have been sold under the scheme.

MARKETS

MARKET WATCH

	WEDNESDAY	% CHANGE
Sensex	82,276	0.06
US Dollar	90.91	0.04
Brent oil	70.60	-0.73

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Enter.	2231.70	48.70
Adani Ports	1528.70	-26.70
Apollo Hosp.	7783.00	62.50
Asian Paints	2416.40	3.30
Axis Bank	1403.00	15.40
Bajaj Auto	10097.00	268.00
Bajaj Finserv	2049.30	6.50
Bajaj Finance	1021.05	-2.50
Bharat Elec.	439.30	-4.25
Bharti Airtel	1913.40	-27.60
Cipla	1346.10	19.40
Coal India	438.60	-7.65
Dr Reddys Lab	1306.50	6.30
Eicher Motors	8008.00	79.00
Eternal Ltd.	250.20	-3.80
Grasim Ind.	2878.40	-9.90
HCL Tech	1378.20	39.00
HDFC Bank	907.60	-2.90
HDFC Life	735.25	0.50
Hindalco	937.40	14.55
Hind Unilever	2374.90	16.30
IICI Bank	1400.50	15.70
Int'l GlobeAvi.	4947.40	97.10
Infosys	1290.10	14.60
ITC	319.75	-3.75
JC Financial Service	256.95	-1.70
JSW Steel	1275.00	20.50
Kotak Bank	424.95	-2.75
L&T	4298.50	39.30
M&M	3491.30	58.10
Maruti Suzuki	15070.00	144.00
Max Healthcare	1088.10	1.70
NestleIndia	1323.40	3.40
NTPC	384.90	2.15
ONGC	277.45	0.95
PowerGrid Corp	307.25	2.45
Reliance Ind.	1398.50	-30.30
SBI Life	2073.60	-8.30
State Bank	1200.10	-23.20
Shriram Finance	1085.90	24.20
Sur Pharma	1764.20	32.40
TataConsumerProduct	1172.30	-5.70
Tata Steel	214.64	5.51
TCS	2629.30	55.60
Tech Mahindra	1361.80	16.40
Titan	4325.00	30.50
Tata Motors PV	381.85	4.30
Trent Ltd.	3922.00	-9.30
UltraTech Cement	13041.00	81.00
Wipro	201.92	1.78

Zendesk sets up innovation hub

Zendesk said it set up an Innovation Hub for Research and Development in Pune thus growing its footprint in India. The hub team of almost 300 is set to grow by 15% before the end of 2026, the company said.

'SECL, Chhattisgarh eyeing floating solar, coal gasification JVs'

Saptaparno Ghosh
NEW DELHI



Harish Duhan

South Eastern Coalfields Ltd. (SECL) is exploring joint-ventures with the State government of Chhattisgarh for floating solar and surface coal gasification projects, CMD Harish Duhan told *The Hindu*.

The miner aspires to institute 626 megawatt (MW) of solar energy capacity by FY2027-28. Further, the joint venture on gasifica-

tion is part of the design to pursue the method in a revenue-sharing mode.

Elaborating on the ongoing discussions about

floating solar, Mr. Duhan stated, "We have had discussions with the Chhattisgarh State Power Generation Company Ltd. to pursue floating solar projects considering the State is blessed with large reservoirs," adding, "At present, a guiding larger policy on the front is to be formulated [within the State], and discussions are ongoing."

Mr. Duhan stated SECL would also be looking to tap into closed mines to es-

tablish solar power projects alongside contributing to parent Coal India's ongoing projects in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh.

Gasification push

Mr. Duhan held discussions about a coal gasification JV with Chhattisgarh government and it is at the "conceptual stages".

"At present, the Chhattisgarh government is looking to incentivise coal gasi-

fication projects," he said, adding, "Positive discussions have been held [towards instituting one]. Then, we shall proceed further and make it formal." He underlined gasification as a process entailed establishing a dedicated set-up converting extracted coal into gas. "This is an additional cost," he said.

Responding to a question about a substantial increase in renewable power installations and coal conti-

nuing to command a dominant position in power generation, Mr. Duhan said coal is a "cheaper source, abundantly available and offers stability of power".

"Now, solar and wind-based electricity lacks consistency. Stability of power is imperative in a growing economy like ours, thus, coal would continue to essay an important role," he added. SECL is likely to spend ₹4,000 crore in capital expenditure this year.

'DRL semaglutide may make March debut'

Reuters
MUMBAI

Indian drugmaker Dr. Reddy's Laboratories (DRL) is likely to launch its generic semaglutide injection in the country in March under the brand name Obeda, according to two people familiar with the matter.

Patent protection for semaglutide expires in India

in March 2026, triggering a rush among Indian drugmakers to prepare lower-cost versions.

Dr. Reddy's plans to sell about 12 million injectable semaglutide pens in the first year and intends to price it competitively, potentially up to 60% below the branded product, co-Chairman and MD G.V. Prasad told *Reuters* last week.



Get going: Staffers have to get their hands dirty and build solutions using AI tools, says K. Krithivasan. REUTERS

'TCS ok with revenue cannibalisation via AI'

Ashokamithran T.
MUMBAI

Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) is "not afraid" of artificial intelligence, and is not worried about potential "cannibalisation" that AI deployment would entail, said K. Krithivasan, MD and CEO of the country's largest IT company.

The top boss of TCS said senior level staff are slower in building AI-based solutions compared with the "proficient" younger staff. "We encourage our associates to go out (to customers and use AI)... even if it means cannibalising our revenue," he said.

TCS was "insisting" that each of its more than six lakh staffers update themselves with AI, Mr. Krithivasan said, adding it had no fears of the company taking away livelihood.

AI motivation

Mr. Krithivasan said there was motivation to learn new AI skills but as they approached higher designations, they tend to read a lot but not do anything.

It is not about just giving a few prompts to a generational AI platform such as ChatGPT, he said, adding staffers have to get their hands dirty and build solutions using the AI tools.

Carbon credits for Maruti railway siding

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

Maruti Suzuki India Ltd (Maruti Suzuki) said its Gujarat in-plant railway siding has been registered as the world's first modal shift transportation project under the Verified Carbon Standard (VCS) programme of Verra, a global carbon credit registry.

The project is expected to achieve approximately 1.7 lakh carbon credits over a 10-year crediting period from FY24 to FY33, by shifting vehicle dispatches from road to rail, the company said in a statement.

Emission reduction

The emission reduction has been quantified under the AMO090 methodology prescribed under Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Following independent verification of carbon emission saving, Verra will issue 1.7 lakh carbon credits to Maruti Suzuki under its VCS program, it added. Hisashi Takeuchi, ma-



The railway siding eased road congestion, cut fossil-fuel use.

naging director & CEO, Maruti Suzuki India Ltd. said in a statement, "By transitioning vehicle movement from road to rail, the project demonstrates how scale, operational efficiency and environmental responsibility can seamlessly go hand in hand."

'Cut carbon footprint'

"Leveraging the inherent efficiency of rail transport, the Gujarat in-plant railway siding has significantly reduced the carbon footprint of our logistics operations, while also easing road congestion and lowering overall fossil fuel consumption," he said.

डॉ. सर्वपल्ली राधाकृष्णन्
राजस्थान आयुर्वेद विश्वविद्यालय, जोधपुर
प्राचार्यक कार्यालय, जोधपुर (फोन नं. 342037)
Web site: www.raujodhpur.org, E-mail: dsrrauao@gmail.com
क्रमांक - रा.अ.वि./राज/सेवा/विधि/2025-26/755 दिनांक - 19/02/2026

Notice Inviting Bid

Tenders are invited from interested bidders for Dr. S.R. Rajasthan Ayurved University, Karwad, Jodhpur. Whose details are as follows:-

- UBN No. AUJ2526WSOB00062 Tender for E-Procurement for Stengthing, Renewal of Internal Road Work at DSRRAU Campus
- UBN No. AUJ2526SLOB00064 Tender for E-Procurement of Request for Proposal of Interested Agencies for Computer based Recruitment Test

All particulars of the bid may be visited on the portal <https://sppp.rajasthan.gov.in/> and <https://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in/>

का.सं.वि./सी/25/21073 कुलसचिव

OFFICE OF THE PRINCIPAL S.M.S. MEDICAL COLLEGE & CONTROLLER OF THE ATTACHED HOSPITALS, JAIPUR
No-FIM/C/Store /2025-26/14230-34 Dated: 11/02/2026

Notice Inviting Bid

Bid for procurement of below mentioned items at SMS Medical College, Jaipur, are invited from interested bidders as per schedule in NIT Notice. Other particulars of the bid may be visited on the Procurement portal (<http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in>)/(<https://sppp.rajasthan.gov.in>) of the state; and SMS Medical College, Jaipur department website.

UBN SMS2526GLOB00665

DIPRC/3328 PRINCIPAL & CONTROLLER

READ

FRONTLINE
LEADING THE DEBATE SINCE 1981

EVERY FORTNIGHT.

TO SUBSCRIBE, VISIT
www.thehindugroup.in/subscribe

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
DEPARTMENT OF SPACE
CMG, SDSC - SHAR SRIHARIKOTA - 524124

Brief E- TENDER NOTICE: CORRIGENDUM-A [SALE EXTENSION]

No: SHAR:CMG CIVIL: MAINT: E-PublicTender-16(A)/25-26 Dt: 24.02.2026

Kindly refer to E-Public Tender-16/25-26 dated 29.01.2026 "AMC for Civil, PH, Water supply etc at PNN & SMN colonies for the year 2026-27" (T/C-25-059, Est. cost ₹188.38 Lakhs);

Sale period extended up to 09.03.2026

Interested tenderers may visit www.isro.gov.in or www.tenderwizard.com/ISRO for details.

Sd/- GROUP HEAD, CMG/SDSC SHAR

International Institute of Information Technology Bangalore (IIIT-B)

TENDER NOTICE

International Institute of Information Technology Bangalore invites Expressions of Interest (EOI) from eligible and experienced **Construction Firms** for Construction of Additional Campus Facilities.

EOI Ref: IIITB/EOI/2026/01
Date: 20-Feb-2026
EOI document available at: www.iiitb.ac.in/tenders
Last date for submission: 07-Mar-2026, 5:00 PM
Contact: cao@iiitb.ac.in | 080-2852-7627

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, PUBLIC HEALTH DIVISION, BALANGIR.
E-mail ID: eepbhgr@yahoo.co.in ; Ph.No.-(06652 - 234647)

NOTICE INVITING TENDERS - NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING THROUGH e-Procurement
Bid Identification No. ACEPHBGR 19/2025-26 Dt. 18.02.2026

01. Name of the Work : 06.No.
02. Estimated Cost : Approx. Rs.11.28 Lakhs to 688.91 Lakhs
03. Period of Completion : 1 Month to 12 Months
04. Date & Time of availability of bid document in the portal : From 11.00 AM of dt.26.02.2026 to 5.00 PM of dt.12.03.2026
05. Last date / time of receipt of bids in the portal : 5 PM of dt. 12.03.2026
06. Date & Time of opening of bids : At 11.00 AM of dt.13.03.2026
07. Name and Address of the Officer Inviting Bid : The Superintending Engineer, Public Health Division, Balangir, At-Tulasinagar, Po/Dist-Balangir, Pin-767001, Odisha, Phone:-06652-234647; E-mail:-eepbhgr@yahoo.co.in

Further details can be seen from the web site "https://tenders.ori.nic.in or www.tendersodisha.gov.in"

Addl. Chief Engineer, P.H.Division, Balangir.
13001/376/2526 OIPR-13001/130051/25-26/0002

MOSCOW

Ukrainian attack on Russian fertilizer plant kills four: governor



A Ukrainian drone attack on a fertilizer plant in Russia's western Smolensk region killed four persons and injured 10 others, the region's governor said on Wednesday. The plant, just outside the Russian town of Dorogobuzh, lies around 290 km from the Ukrainian border. The plant was also attacked in December. AFP

WASHINGTON

U.S. Defense Dept. gives Anthropic Friday deadline to drop AI curbs



The U.S. Defense Department has given AI company Anthropic until Friday to agree to unrestricted military use of its technology or face being forced to comply under emergency federal powers. The conflict centres around Anthropic's refusal to let its Claude models be used for the mass surveillance of U.S. citizens. AFP

NEW YORK

Israel committed two-thirds of record press killings in 2025: CPJ



A record 129 journalists and media workers were killed worldwide in 2025, the Committee to Protect Journalists said on Wednesday, blaming Israel for two-thirds of the deaths. More than 60% of the 86 members of the press killed by Israeli fire in 2025 were Palestinians reporting from Gaza, it added. AFP

DHAKA

Bangladesh's new govt. re-equips President with press wing at office



Bangladesh Prime Minister Tarique Rahman's new government on Tuesday re-equipped President Mohammad Shahabuddin with a press wing at his office. Mohammad Sarwar Alam was re-appointed as the press secretary. The President's press wing was abolished by immediate past regime of interim chief Muhammad Yunus. PTI

U.S. is 'winning so much', says Trump in longest State of the Union speech

U.S. President delivers record-breaking speech lasting 108 minutes; he touts an economic boom, claiming strong growth, falling inflation, and rising incomes to boost chances in 2026 midterms; on tariffs, he insists foreign countries pay the costs

Associated Press
WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump declared during a marathon State of the Union on Tuesday that "we're winning so much" – insisting he'd sparked an economic boom at home and imposed a new world order abroad in hopes it can counter his sliding approval ratings.

Mr. Trump's main objective was convincing increasingly wary Americans that the economy is stronger than many believe, and that they should vote for more of the same by backing Republicans during November's midterm elec-



Donald Trump delivers his State of the Union address during a Joint Session of Congress at U.S. Capitol, in Washington on Tuesday. AFP

In all, Mr. Trump spoke for a record 108 minutes, breaking – by eight minutes – the previous time mark from his address before a joint session of Congress last year.

The President largely avoided his usual bombast, only occasionally veering off-script – mostly to slam Democrats. As he did during such addresses in his first term, Mr. Trump re-

lied on a series of surprise special guests to dramatically punctuate his message. They included U.S. military heroes and a former political prisoner released after U.S. forces toppled Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro.

The President championed his immigration crackdowns and his push to preserve widespread tariffs that the Supreme Court just struck down. He drew applause only from Democrats while describing the high court's decision, which he called "an unfortunate ruling".

Mr. Trump vowed to plough ahead, using "alternative" laws to impose the taxes on imports and tel-

ling lawmakers, "Congressional action will not be necessary." Mr. Trump argued that the tariffs are paid by foreign countries, despite evidence that the costs are borne by American consumers and businesses. "It's saving our country," he said.

Mr. Trump struck a darker tone in large swaths of his speech to warn about the dangers posed by immigrants. He invited lawmakers from both parties to "protect American citizens, not illegal aliens".

On Tuesday, he also blamed his predecessor, former President Joe Biden, saying they were responsible for rising prices and health care costs.

Sri Lanka's ex-intel chief arrested over Easter attacks

Meera Srinivasan
COLOMBO

Sri Lanka's Criminal Investigation Department on Wednesday arrested former intelligence chief Maj. Gen. Suresh Sallay in connection with the deadly Easter Sunday bombings of 2019 that killed around 270 people and injured several hundred, police said.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, a senior official confirmed that the arrest was made under Sri Lanka's Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA), "based on adequate evidence". The official described the arrest of the former head of the State Intelligence Service (SIS) as "a major breakthrough" in the case, which has been ongoing for nearly seven years, even as victims' families relentlessly demand justice.

It is the first high-profile arrest in the case since President Anura Kumara Dissanayake assumed office in 2024. Securing justice for victims of the bombings was among his key pre-poll pledges.

On April 21, 2019, a network of nine suicide bombers – part of an Islamist radical group – carried out coordinated serial blasts targeting luxury hotels and churches in and around Colombo and the eastern city of Batticaloa on Easter Sunday.

The incident shook the relative peace on the island, a decade after the end of a gruesome civil war. Official documents and cases filed show a discrepancy in the death toll, with figures quoted ranging from 259 to 296.

Mr. Sallay was appointed head of the SIS in late 2019 after Gotabaya Raja-



Sri Lankan soldiers look on inside the St Sebastian's Church at Katuwapiya in Negombo in April 2019, following a bomb blast. AFP

paksa won the presidential election in November that year, on a plank of national security. Mr. Sallay was the first military officer to be made chief of Sri Lanka's main intelligence agency. His name came under sharp focus in 2023 after a documentary by British broadcaster Channel 4 linked him to the Islamist bombers, based on a whistleblower's testimony. Mr. Sallay denied the allegations, and Sri Lanka's Ministry of Defence then said it "categorically refutes" the "outrageous allegations".

Human rights activist Ruki Fernando, who has been advocating for victims' families, said that if there was sufficient evidence, Mr. Sallay must be held criminally accountable following due process. "Those of us closely following proceedings have always felt that the ongoing case, the main one before the Special Trial-at-Bar [set up for extraordinary criminal proceedings], does not address all dimensions of the case. Suresh Sallay's arrest shows us that the case apparently goes beyond the network of suicide bombers," he told *The Hindu*. So far, the case includes over 23,000 charges and 25 accused.

The Special Trial-at-Bar has been hearing the sensitive case – the deadliest terror attack in Sri Lanka since the end of the war in 2009 – five days a week under tight security. Last week, Mr. Fernando took to social media to express concern about being prohibited from witnessing the court proceedings, citing logistical and security reasons.

'Fair trial'

While some, including victims' families, in Sri Lanka have expressed disappointment over the pace of the case, Mr. Fernando said: "It is very important that there's no undue delay, but it is equally important that there is no haste. Only a fair trial and adherence to due process will ensure that the rights of the accused and the aggrieved parties are not compromised."

Further, underscoring his "principled opposition" to the PTA, Mr. Fernando, who was himself arrested under the law in 2014, said: "The PTA does not allow for due process. That is precisely why many of us are opposed to the legislation, regardless of whether it is an activist or someone else arrested under the law."

'Myanmar military strike kills at least 17'

Agence France-Presse
YANGON

A Myanmar military air strike on a village market in the country's westernmost state killed at least 17 people, two local sources said on Wednesday.

The junta's air force hit the village of Yoe Ngu in Ponnagyun township, around 33 km northeast of state capital Sittwe on Tuesday.

Arakan Army statements listed the names of 17 "innocent civilians", including three children, killed in the strike

Treaty on Chagos deal paused for holding discussions with U.S., says U.K. Minister

Sriram Lakshman
LONDON

A bill operationalising a U.K.-Mauritius treaty – which recognises the sovereignty of Mauritius over the Chagos Archipelago – is currently on hold in the British Parliament while London holds discussions with Washington. The Indian Ocean islands are home to Diego Garcia, which houses a joint U.K.-U.S. military base.

The treaty, signed in May 2025, would transfer sovereignty over the archipelago to Mauritius, while

the U.K. would be given a 99-year lease for Diego Garcia and pay Mauritius an average annual amount of GBP 101 million.

"We will bring that [legislation] back to Parliament at the appropriate time. We are pausing for discussions with our American counterparts," U.K. Foreign Office Minister Hamish Falconer said on Wednesday afternoon.

Trump's position

The treaty, negotiated over 11 rounds between Mauritius and the former Conservative U.K. government,

The treaty, signed in May 2025, would transfer sovereignty over the archipelago to Mauritius

has come into question after U.S. President Donald Trump, who had earlier backed the treaty, changed his position and publicly called for it to be reconsidered in recent weeks. As recently as last week, Mr. Trump said Diego Garcia should not be given away and suggested it may be needed in the event of a

U.S. strike on Iran.

"Nothing in the U.K.-Mauritius deal has changed since the U.S. administration approved it," Mr. Falconer said.

The British government's objective was to ensure that the base in Diego Garcia was secure in the long-term, Mr. Falconer told the House of Commons.

When the Labour government took office, it found that the U.K.'s ability to maintain control of the base was under threat and therefore it was compelled to act, as per the Minister.

Sport

Bodo/Glimt scalps Inter, makes the last 16

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Agence France-Presse
PARIS

Norway's Bodo/Glimt pulled off one of the most remarkable results in modern Champions League history on Tuesday, beating last season's runner-up Inter Milan 2-1 at the San Siro to reach the last 16 with a 5-2 aggregate triumph, while Newcastle United, Atletico Madrid and Bayer Leverkusen also went through.

Bodo/Glimt, the modest outfit from north of the Arctic Circle, was looking to follow up its stunning 3-1 win last week in the first leg of the knockout phase play-off tie.

Inter, the three-time European champion currently 10 points clear at the top



Killer blow: Evjen scores Bodo/Glimt's second against Inter. AP

of Serie A, was expected to pummel its visitor in an attempt to turn the tie around. But Bodo/Glimt survived at the back before finishing off the tie in the second half.

Bodo/Glimt is the first side from the country to go so far in Europe's elite club

competition since Rosenborg reached the quarter-finals in 1997. It will face either Sporting or Manchester City next.

Newcastle followed its 6-1 win away to Qarabag in Azerbaijan in last week's first leg with a 3-2 victory in the return at St James'

Park, as Eddie Howe's team ensured there will be six English clubs in the next round.

Atletico had been held to a 3-3 draw by Club Brugge in Belgium last week but it ran out a 4-1 winner in Tuesday's return to advance 7-4 on aggregate.

Diego Simeone's team will play either Tottenham Hotspur or Liverpool in the next round.

Meanwhile, Leverkusen followed a 2-0 win away to Olympiacos in Greece last week with a 0-0 draw at home in the return. It now faces a huge test next against either Arsenal or Bayern Munich.

The results:

Atletico Madrid 4 (Sorloth 23, 76, 87, Cardozo 48) bt Club Brugge 1 (Ordonez 36). Atletico won 7-4 on aggregate.

Bayer Leverkusen 0 drew with Olympiacos 0. Leverkusen won 2-0 on aggregate.

Inter Milan 1 (Bastoni 76) lost to Bodo/Glimt 2 (Hauge 58, Evjen 72). Bodo/Glimt won 5-2 on aggregate.

Newcastle United 3 (Tonali 4, Joelinton 6, Botman 52) bt Qarabag 2 (Duran 50, Jafarguliyev 57). Newcastle won 9-3 on aggregate.

Mohith excels as India overcomes Australia to end its barren run

FIH PRO LEAGUE

Press Trust of India
HOBART

The Indian men's hockey team ended a prolonged losing streak in the FIH Pro League upstaging World Australia 3-1 in a shoot-out after both sides were locked 1-1 on Wednesday.

It was a close battle in the first three quarters, which ended goalless but the win in their final game of the Hobart leg of the Pro League should be a confidence booster for the Indians.

Australia took the lead in the 49th minute through a penalty corner conversion by Jeremy Hayward. But the home team's joy was short-lived as Shila-



Great show: Mohith's heroics carried the day for India. FIH

nand Lakra equalised with a fine field goal two minutes later.

In the shoot-out, Lakra, Maninder Singh and Vishnukant Singh scored for India, while Australia's lone goal was scored by Hayward as India custodian Mohith Shashikumar Honenahalli produced a superb show under the post.

India is currently placed

eighth in the nine-team competition with just four points from eight matches.

India will next play against the Netherlands and Germany in the Rotterdam leg, starting with a match against the hosts on June 21.

The result: Australia 1 (Jeremy Hayward 49) drew with India 1 (Shilanand Lakra 51). India won 3-1 in shoot-out.

FULLY RECOVERED

Raza will 100% play against India, confirms Zimbabwe's Burl



B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

Ryan Burl confirmed that Zimbabwe skipper Sikandar Raza, who had an injury scare during the match against West Indies, is fit to play against India on Thursday. "Sikandar Raza is 100% playing. Good luck telling him that he's not going to play against India," Burl said at the MAC Stadium on Wednesday.

TEAM COMPOSITION

Kuldeep's inclusion at the expense of an all-rounder is difficult: Kotak



B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

India batting coach Sitanshu Kotak said it was difficult to include Kuldeep Yadav in the XI at the expense of batting depth. "I think it is difficult, because in T20s, you want batting till eight also. So, if you are thinking about a spinner at No. 8, then you will obviously think about an all-rounder. According to the situation, we will pick the XI."

SPECIAL PLAYER

'I have to give a lot more credit to Muzarabani than he has received'



B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

Zimbabwe all-rounder Ryan Burl heaped praise on lanky pacer Blessing Muzarabani. "I mean, being 6'9" does help. I have to give a lot more credit to Muzarabani than he has received, because he's been out for about four to six months before this tournament. I'm a lot happier knowing that he's in my team and not the opposition."

PROUD TEAM

Reifer believes WI has inspired its next generation of cricketers



VIJAY SONEJI

West Indies batting coach Floyd Reifer expressed confidence that the team's performance so far will inspire youngsters back home. "I think we have inspired the next generation of cricketers. Also, the people of the Caribbean are very happy with how we are playing, and obviously, we want to go for it in the tournament," said Reifer.

An off-colour Men in Blue in a battle for survival

The Suryakumar-led team seeks a quick turnaround as it faces Zimbabwe in a must-win clash; Samson expected to be drafted into the playing XI for the Super Eight contest

T20 WORLD CUP

K.C. Vijaya Kumar
CHENNAI

Under a blazing sun, Varun Chakaravathy wheeled his arm over. The local star had a tough outing against South Africa in Ahmedabad, and along with his India mates, wants to sparkle against Zimbabwe in the T20 World Cup Super Eight Group 1 match at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium here on Thursday.



Shoulder to lean on: Varun interacts with bowling coach Morkel during training. B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

Optional nets being the theme on Wednesday, Varun and batter Tilak Varma were among the few who turned up for some pre-game training. The Men in Blue are in a must-win situation while they also strive to live up to their defending champions tag. India's campaign has been a tale of a largely smooth cruise suddenly hitting a speed-breaker against the Proteas. Suryakumar Yadav's men would rather see the latest stumble as an aberration while they seek a second wind in a championship veering towards its final stretch. A top-order featuring Sanju Samson may happen

as the quest for a good start continues within the Indian ranks. Abhishek Sharma's sudden drought is bound to end at some point and the think-tank is publicly backing the opener. However, it is a fact that the host's batters are yet to fire in unison. There have been individual efforts but in the days ahead, more emphatic runs are needed. Among the bowlers, Jasprit Bumrah has been incisive, and it remains to be seen if vice-captain Axar Patel will get back his berth. Against South Africa, India dished

out its worst T20I performance in recent times, and a quick turnaround is needed. Placed low in the Net Run Rate sweepstakes, India needs its batting and bowling arms to be in sync. A semifinal berth is up for grabs, but a lot will also hinge on the encounter involving the West Indies and South Africa on Thursday. If the Windies causes an upset, the curtains may well descend on Suryakumar's troops. Zimbabwe's path too had triumph's flavour punctured by the drubbing

from the West Indies. Sikandar Raza's men ambushed Australia and co-host Sri Lanka. Brian Bennett (180) has been among the runs and seamer Blessing Muzarabani has 11 wickets in his kitty. India may remember the banana-peel effect that Zimbabwe dished out in the 1999 World Cup in England. Once a pedigreed unit that had Dave Houghton, and the Flower brothers, Andy and Grant, Zimbabwe is battling for relevance. India, though, would prefer the African nation being subservient.

New Zealand sends Lanka packing

Abhishek Saini
COLOMBO

Matt Henry silenced a full house at the R. Premadasa Stadium here on Wednesday when he breached Pathum Nissanka's gate with a nip-backer and castled him off the first ball of Sri Lanka's chase of 169. The host never really recovered from the morale-crushing fall of its in-form batter and eventually crashed out of the T20 World Cup with a 61-run loss to New Zealand, its second straight defeat in the Super Eight.



Shining brightest: Santner provided the perfect finish while Rachin's four-for sealed the win. AP & AFP

Failed recovery After Sri Lanka lost two early wickets, Kusal Mendis and Pavan Rathnayake attempted a recovery. But the end of their laborious 21-run third-wicket partnership off 36 balls sent Sri Lanka into a free fall. The twin dismissals helped left-arm spinner Rachin Ravindra achieve career-best figures of four for 27, with Dasun Shanaka and Dushan Hemantha also becoming his victims. Kamindu Mendis' reverse sweeps off Ish Sodhi and Cole McConchie came too late to really swing the contest in Sri Lanka's favour. He eventually pulled a half-tracker from Mitchell

Santner to deep midwicket and departed for a 23-ball 31 as Sri Lanka ended at just 107 for eight. The game slipped from Sri Lanka's grasp in the last four overs of the first innings, where it leaked 70 runs to the unfancied pair of Santner (47, 26b, 2x4, 4x6) and McConchie (31 n.o., 23b, 3x4, 2x6). Their seventh-wicket partnership got New Zealand

84 off 47 balls, salvaging it from a precarious 84 for six. Sri Lanka's capitulation was unexpected after its spinners controlled the tempo of the New Zealand innings. Maheesh Theekshana and Duthi Wellalage extracted grip and turn to bring the Kiwis crashing from 75 for two to 84 for six. But they had little in-

ning that Santner and McConchie were about to break free and cast a pall over their evening. **The scores:** New Zealand 168/7 in 20 overs (Rachin Ravindra 32, Mitchell Santner 47, Luke McConchie 31 n.o., Maheesh Theekshana 3/30, Dushantha Chameera 3/38) bt Sri Lanka 107/8 in 20 overs (Kamindu Mendis 31, Matt Henry 2/3, Rachin Ravindra 4/27). **Toss:** Sri Lanka; **PoM:** Rachin.



All good: India's batting coach feels there is no tension over Tilak's returns. B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

Including Samson in the mix has been discussed: Kotak

Sankar Narayanan E.H.
CHENNAI

Batting coach Sitanshu Kotak said that the Indian team, after its 76-run loss to South Africa, has been discussing Sanju Samson's inclusion in the playing XI to break the left-heavy top-order [Abhishek Sharma, Ishan Kishan and Tilak Varma]. "There can be changes, yes. It goes without saying that we discussed [team combination]. The opposition is bowling off-spin because our openers and No. 3 are lefties. I don't think that there is any problem there either. But because we lost the last game and we have lost a wicket in the first over [often], any team

would think [along those lines]," Kotak said on Wednesday, on the eve of India's Super Eight game against Zimbabwe at the MAC Stadium. On Abhishek's recent rut, the 53-year-old said: "I never liked overthinking about one individual as we are playing with two all-rounders and six batters." When asked if there was panic in the ranks, Kotak was quick to point out India's superb record in T20Is. "There is no tension of Tilak or Abhishek, or even of us losing one match. We shouldn't analyse that [SA loss] too much," he said. "All the matches are must-win for us. If you want to go and win the

World Cup, you expect to beat all the sides you play." On the Men in Blue's batting approach, Kotak added: "In T20s, if you worry too much about temperament and not play your shots freely, there will be other [problems]. Only if you lose a couple of wickets, you have to try and play normal cricket for the next six to eight balls." **Rinku update** Kotak said that Rinku Singh, who missed Tuesday's practice, was expected to reach Chennai on the eve of the match. "Rinku's father wasn't well, so he went back. I think he is coming back this evening [Wednesday]."

Pressure does funny things to teams: Burl

Sankar Narayanan E.H.
CHENNAI

That India and Zimbabwe desperately need a win is not lost on Ryan Burl. In fact, the Zimbabwe all-rounder wants his team to channel the energy and not get bogged down by the added pressure when the two sides meet in the ICC T20 World Cup Super Eight game at the MAC Stadium here on Thursday. "It's obviously a must-win game for us. It's also a must-win game for India. There's a lot at stake here, being a World Cup game," Burl said on Wednesday. "Playing India in India is a challenge in itself. They obviously got home-ground advantage, but there is the added pressure of both teams needing to win tomorrow's [Thursday's] match. Pressure does funny things to teams." **Key match-up** Asked about Indian batters' recent struggles against finger spinners, Burl said: "It's something that we have taken into account. We've done our homework, and it's something that we would be silly to ignore going into the game."

South Africa, West Indies hope to inch closer to the semifinals

S. Dipak Ragav
AHMEDABAD

In a format like T20 where despair could turn into delight and vice versa in a matter of a few overs, recent form might not mean much. Yet, in high-stakes ICC tournaments, momentum can play a key role. It is what South Africa and the West Indies, the only remaining unbeaten teams of the ongoing T20 World Cup, will look to maintain when they meet in a pivotal Super Eight Group 1 clash at the Narendra Modi Stadium here on Thursday. Both sides are fresh off emphatic victories – the Proteas defeated India by 76 runs at this venue, while the Caribbean outfit thrashed Zimbabwe by 107 in Mumbai – and the winner of this tie could potentially seal a semifinal berth. The Aiden Markram-led South Africa showed tenacity in its previous match, counter-punching its way out of trouble after being reduced to 20 for three. David Miller and Dewald Brevis led the recovery before Tristan Stubbs gave the final flourish. The bowlers then picked apart the Indian batting line-up with surgical precision. The morale-boosting win and familiarity with the conditions – it will be Proteas' fifth match at this



Game-changer: Hetmyer is in fine nick, having decimated Zimbabwe in the previous game. VIJAY SONEJI

SUPER EIGHT Today's matches

<p>Ahmedabad, 3 p.m. HEAD-TO-HEAD Played: 29 West Indies 15 South Africa 14</p>	<p>Chennai, 7 p.m. HEAD-TO-HEAD Played: 13 India 10 Zimbabwe 3</p>
--	---

LIVE ON STAR SPORTS 1, 2 & JIHOTSTAR

ground in this edition – should give the 2024 edition's runner-up the edge. At the same time, the Rain-bow Nation must be wary of the two-time champion. The West Indies, led by Shai Hope, appears to be in contention for the big prize again, a scenario not many would have predicted at the start of the tournament. Its strength lies in its batting, which packs a punch. The line-up is stacked with power-hitters, as evidenced by the

fact that the West Indies leads the sixes chart (55) in the showpiece. The afternoon match will be played on a red-soil surface that offers true bounce and produces big totals. In such a case, it could play into the hands of Hope's men. While both teams aim to extend their winning streaks, the contest will also be keenly followed by India, as the outcome could influence the Men in Blue's path to the last-four stage.

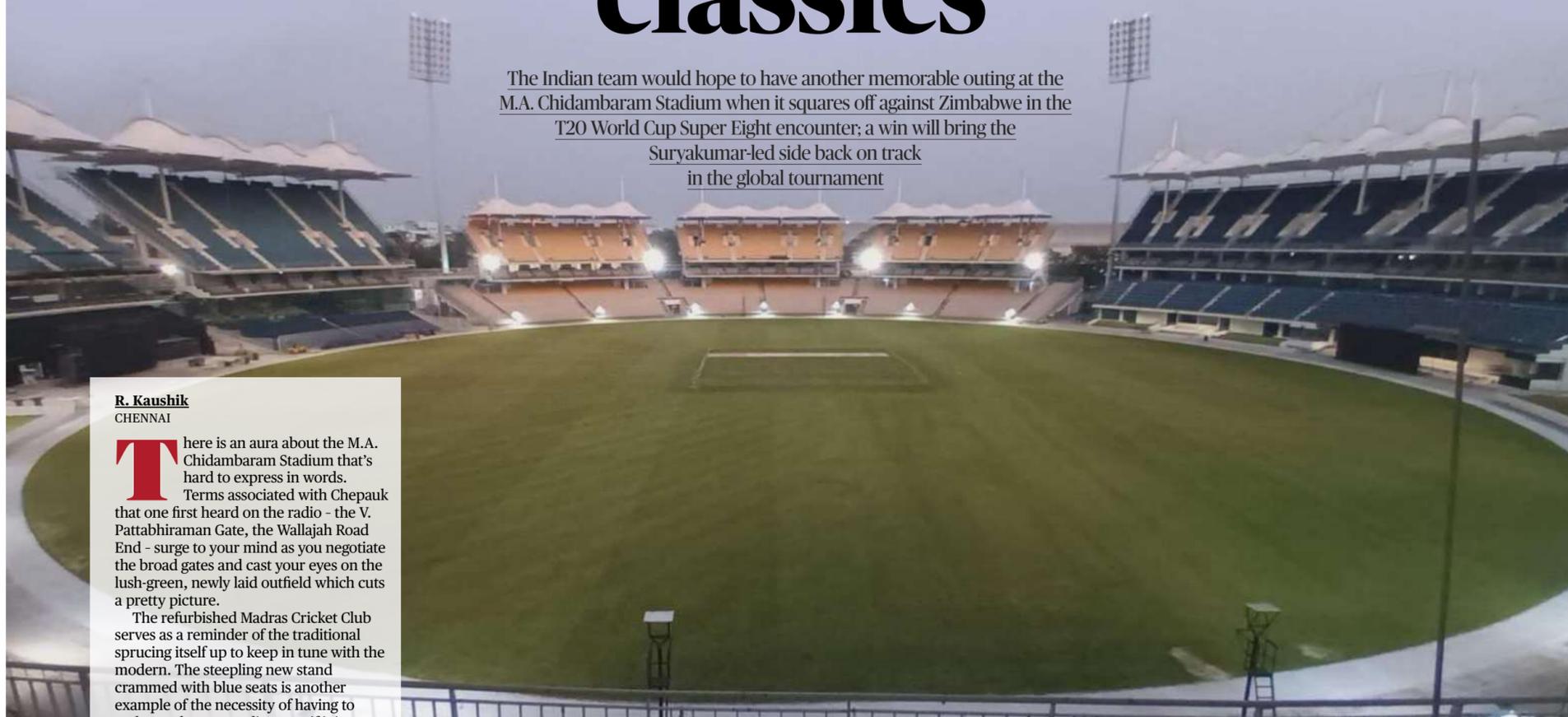
The victory over India boosted our confidence: Maharaj

S. Dipak Ragav
AHMEDABAD

South Africa spinner Keshav Maharaj felt that the win against India had given his team a huge dose of confidence. **Energy and buzz** "Coming back after the win against India, there was a real sort of energy and buzz to our camp. I mean, you probably beat the best side in the competition if you look at it," said Maharaj. "But we're not getting carried away. We still know that there's a lot of cricket to be played in this tournament. So, [we are] dusting ourselves off and doing things that we can do better from that game while focusing on the positives." A highlight of the Proteas' victory was their recovery from a precarious start, and the 36-year-old said it showed the team's spirit. "I think it speaks to the character within the line-up, and that's a huge thing for us. In previous World Cups, we never crossed over those small moments. If the character is strong in such situations, it propels us to go further on in this tournament," said Maharaj.

Chepauk and its colourful legacy of delivering classics

The Indian team would hope to have another memorable outing at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium when it squares off against Zimbabwe in the T20 World Cup Super Eight encounter; a win will bring the Suryakumar-led side back on track in the global tournament



R. Kaushik
CHENNAI

There is an aura about the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium that's hard to express in words. Terms associated with Chepauk that one first heard on the radio - the V. Pattabhiraman Gate, the Wallajah Road End - surge to your mind as you negotiate the broad gates and cast your eyes on the lush-green, newly laid outfield which cuts a pretty picture.

The refurbished Madras Cricket Club serves as a reminder of the traditional sprucing itself up to keep in tune with the modern. The steepling new stand crammed with blue seats is another example of the necessity of having to embrace the new reality even if it is somewhat at the expense of spectator comfort. Rows of seats almost tumble over each other and negotiating the narrow passage to reach one's perch towards the end of a row is a huge challenge.

The famous tied Test

Think Chepauk, and the first thought is of the tied Test of September 1986. Nearly 40 years ago, to have to score 348 in a single day's play, and that too on the final day of a Test, was almost unheard of. That's the target Allan Border set Kapil Dev's men on September 22. India made a game fist of it with Sunil Gavaskar, who has lit up the venue with several incandescent efforts, leading the way. The little master top-scored with 90 as each of the top five made at least 39, and at 251 for three, an improbable victory appeared imminent.

Ray Bright, the left-arm spinner, then got into the act alongside Greg Matthews, the maverick off-spinner who preferred bowling with his Baggy Green on. Ravi Shastri held firm and Chetan Sharma weighed in with 23 but when Shivalal Yadav was ninth man dismissed, India needed four for victory with Maninder Singh joining Shastri. The latter was a master at playing the situation. Instead of going for the glory shot that might have brought about his downfall, he first ensured that India would not lose the game, leaving Maninder on strike to Matthews with the scores level.

As the off-spinner pinged the No. 11 on his pad, umpire Vikram Raju's right index finger shot skywards, upholding the appeal and sending one side into paroxysms of delight. The other's immediate reaction was disappointment; to this day, Shastri and Maninder insist there was an inside-edge, Raju is adamant there was no contact between bat and ball.

It doesn't matter anymore, does it? With that one act which brought an end to India's chase and a riveting Test match, Raju had formalised only the second 'tie' in the history of Test cricket. Australia had been involved in both games where the match had ended with the teams dead level in terms of runs scored when the dust had settled and the final wicket had fallen.

Chennai's knowledgeable crowd

India have endured numerous heartbreaks here, including a one-run loss to Australia the following year in the 50-over World Cup, and a 12-run defeat to Wasim Akram's men in Pakistan's first Test in India in nearly a dozen years. Over the years, the Chennai crowd has earned the reputation of being one of India's most knowledgeable and sporting groups. It lived up to that billing by applauding Pakistan, a gesture the visitors reciprocated by going on a victory lap around the ground that was received with a standing ovation.

Among India's fonder memories is a magnificent two-wicket win over Australia in March 2001, fashioned by the right arm of Harbhajan Singh and the magical wrists

of V.V.S. Laxman which combined to orchestrate one of the greatest comebacks in the five-day game. Out for the count after a three-day walloping in Mumbai, India squared the series in a classic at the Eden Gardens - a Harbhajan hat-trick was matched and topped by Laxman's 281 and Rahul Dravid's 180 as they batted out the entire fourth day after the host trailed by 276 in the first innings.

India then completed a fightback for the ages at Chepauk, nailing a modest but tense chase as the shadows lengthened and hearts thudded furiously in one of the great advertisements for the format.

Platform for 50-over WC rampage

It's here that India kicked off their fabulous run in the 2023 50-over World Cup with a splendid six-wicket victory over Australia. Asked to scale down a modest 199, India were rocked by Mitchell Starc and Josh Hazlewood, who fired out skipper Rohit Sharma, Ishan Kishan and Shreyas Iyer, all for ducks, with just two runs on the board.

There is no gainsaying how the match would have panned out had Mitchell Marsh, at

square-leg, not put down Virat Kohli when the batter was on 12. Had the catch been completed, India would have been 20 for four. Kohli made Australia pay by putting on 165 for the fourth wicket with K.L. Rahul as India eventually cantered home with 52 deliveries to spare.

That escape to victory was the start of a spectacular charge through the draw that took the Indians to the final with an all-win record. The title proved elusive with Travis Head lording the Ahmedabad exchanges and casting a collective pall of gloom over the entire nation, which quickly regrouped to applaud Rohit's team for the exhilarating brand of cricket they had showcased throughout the month and a half of the tournament.

Now, India must again use Chepauk to resuscitate their campaign at the T20 World Cup. Justified favouritism conferred on them coming into the tournament for their consistently commanding run in the 20-over game over the last year and a half, India were untroubled in the league phase despite barely touching third gear. But now, they are within three and a half hours of going out before the knockouts.

Do-or-die game for Surya's side

The defending champions were dealt a hammer blow by last edition's finalists South Africa in Ahmedabad on Sunday. Now, another African challenger looms in the form of Zimbabwe, a dark horse if ever there was one, which has punched above its weight and taken down Australia and Sri Lanka in the first stage.

What makes Zimbabwe's fairytale run even more endearing and remarkable is that they failed to even qualify for the 2024 edition of this tournament in the Americas.

They weren't expected, understandably but as it turns out now, naively, to advance to Super Eights but they proved that their takedown of Australia was no flash in the pan with a convincing victory over the co-hosts in Colombo to top Group B.

Sikandar Raza has run a tight ship and led by example, while the engine rooms of their charge have been Blessing Muzarabani at the top of the bowling tree and the intrepid Brian Bennett at the top of the batting group. After unbeaten efforts in his three previous outings of 48, 64 and 63 respectively, the 22-year-old Bennett finally had an average (180) to boast when he was dismissed for five against the West Indies in their opening Super Eight encounter in Mumbai on Monday. Muzarabani, the towering 29-year-old quick, has 11 wickets, the joint second-highest in the tournament alongside Marco Jansen, and has gone for only 7.06 runs per over.

Men who could spoil the day

Bennett and Muzarabani are the most obvious threats but the captain is a wonderfully skilled competitor who will undoubtedly fancy his off-spin to wreak damage in the first over of the Indian innings - the hosts have lost a wicket within the first six deliveries four times in

their five encounters thus far. He can also give the ball a mighty whack, all of which means that India's task is anything but straightforward.

Suryakumar Yadav's men have had just one bad day in the office, but it was a horribly bad one, which has left them now dependent on other results going their way if they aspire to be in the hunt for the semifinals. Of course, the primary requirement for them, after the 76-run lashing at the Narendra Modi Stadium, is to win their two remaining games - the West Indies lie in store at the Eden on Sunday. Before the tournament, it was unthinkable that India wouldn't figure in the last four but that's now very much a possibility. The Super Eights is an unforgiving phase though unlike the knockouts, there is at least a nominal second chance.

India's batting has been the source of much debate and no little censure in the last few days. Much of it has to do with the unrealistic expectations from the outside, expectations that are not in sync with reality. Apart from the opening game against the United States where they found themselves in all kinds of trouble at 77 for six before scrambling to 161, they reached above-par scores, given the nature of the pitches, against Namibia (209), Pakistan (175) and the Netherlands (193).

Ahmedabad was a horror night. First, through defensive fields and bowling changes, India allowed South Africa to escape from 20 for three to 187 for seven. Then, the chase unravelled even before it started with Kishan and Tilak Varma perishing in the first seven balls and the luckless Abhishek Sharma also falling in the PowerPlay.

Hanging by a thread

Abhishek's travails are too obvious and well documented to bear repetition. Three ducks and a scratchy 15 have pushed him to the brink of losing his place in the XI, with Sanju Samson primed to open alongside Kishan. Abhishek might thus be deprived the chance of working his way back among the runs on what has consistently been the best scoring venue at the World Cup. But he will also understand that there is no place for sentiment and hand-holding anymore, not with India's campaign hanging by a slender, tenuous thread.

Even had they put it past South Africa, there would have been no scope for complacency or smugness against the Zimbabweans. Now, the Indians have even more reason to be fully switched on. Some two and a half weeks ago, Suryakumar had the opportunity to reprise the magic of Mahendra Singh Dhoni and Rohit and become only the third Indian captain to lift the T20 World Cup. Now, he is in danger of emulating Kohli from 2021 by helming a side that failed to reach the knockouts for the first time in three editions. That's how quickly things change in the 20-over game.



FILE PHOTO: R.V. MOORTHY

THE GIST

Think Chepauk, and the first thought is of the tied Test of September 1986

Among India's fonder memories is a magnificent two-wicket win over Australia in March 2001

It's at this venue India kicked off their fabulous run in the 2023 50-over World Cup with a splendid victory over Australia. Now, India must again use Chepauk to resuscitate their campaign at the T20 World Cup

FILE PHOTO: R. RAGU

Craig the elephant, and the promise and problem of wildlife 'superstars'

When a famous animal suffers, people call for it to be saved, sometimes followed by demands for its lifelong care; such interventions rarely hold any conservation value; unless a species is critically endangered, saving an individual rarely changes the trends that matter to its population as a whole

Ipsita Herlekar

Early this year, when Craig, one of Africa's "super tusker" elephants, died in Kenya's Amboseli National Park, tributes poured in from across the world. Photographs of his very large tusks, nearly brushing the ground as he walked with Mount Kilimanjaro in the background, resurfaced online. Tourists shared memories of sightings and safari guides recalled their encounters with the regal tusker, who was known for his patient, calm demeanour.

Craig was not just an elephant. He had become a global symbol of wilderness, survival, tourism, and wildlife conservation.

An elephant with tusks that size is extraordinarily rare today. Decades of ivory poaching have selectively removed individuals with large tusks, leaving behind animals with less ivory. Craig therefore represented a genetic lineage that is rapidly disappearing. But he was also something else: a source of livelihood for many. Safaris, lodges, photographers, and local communities all benefited from the tourists he attracted. People travelled across continents hoping for a glimpse of him.

Yet his story also reveals something people often overlook. While individual animals can inspire love and attention, conservation itself does not operate at the level of individuals. It operates at the level of populations, habitats, and ecosystems.

Power of a name

Craig's fame began with something simple: his name. Born into a closely observed herd studied for decades by biologist Cynthia Moss, he grew up in the public eye.

Naming wild animals transforms them from anonymous members of a species into characters in a story. Once an animal has a name, people follow its life, celebrate its milestones, and mourn its death. They return to a landscape hoping to see a familiar face again. Over time, public affection for an individual can, conservationists hope, grow into curiosity about the species and the ecosystem it inhabits.

Zoos have long understood this connection. 'Star' animals anchor public attention, drive visitor numbers, and help raise funds for conservation and education. A recent example is Pesto, the king penguin chick at the Sea Life Aquarium in Melbourne, Australia, whose extraordinary size made him a viral sensation. His popularity translated into a significant boost in visits, reportedly increasing visitor footfall by more than 30%. Other national parks and protected areas have also adopted the same paradigm through tourism, documentaries, and social media.

The practice of naming wild individuals became popular in the 1960s, when the noted primatologists Jane Goodall and Dian Fossey broke from scientific convention by naming chimpanzees and gorillas instead of assigning them numbers. David Greybeard, the chimpanzee who became famous worldwide after Goodall observed him using tools, is remembered as an individual, identifiable by the grey facial hair that gave him a characteristically wise appearance.

Similarly, Digit, a young gorilla with a missing finger, became known after appearing alongside Fossey in photographs. Naming created memory, memory created narrative, narrative created empathy. Even then, however, the science of conservation has remained firmly focused on populations.

Icons of tourism

India, too, has had its own version of Craig. Machli, the famed tigress of Ranthambore, became one of the most photographed tigers in the world. She appeared in documentaries, featured on magazine covers, and drew thousands of visitors to the park.

Tourism associated with her reportedly generated millions of dollars over her lifetime. Her descendants continue to carry forward her legacy, still drawing tourists to Ranthambore today.

Machli was not 'conservation' in herself but she did not undermine it either. She coexisted with conservation goals. Her presence helped sustain tourism, which in turn supported local livelihoods and park revenues. Visitors who came to visit Machli sometimes left with a broader appreciation for forests and wildlife.

But achieving this balance has not been easy.

Wildlife tourism built around celebrity animals often expands beyond ecological limits. Resorts mushroom near park



Wild fame: A photo of Craig the elephant in 2021, when he was 49 years old. KENYA WILDLIFE SERVICE

boundaries. Safari vehicles crowd sightings. Guides, who are under pressure to deliver tiger or elephant 'encounters', may focus narrowly on charismatic megafauna while overlooking the broader ecosystem. The wildlife biologist and conservationist Sanjay Gubbi has argued that such tourism frequently becomes a commercial enterprise rather than an educational one.

He pointed out that tiger sightings are often reduced to little more than selfie opportunities, offering visitors photographs and social media posts rather than a deeper appreciation of ecological needs.

Emotion versus ecology

The challenge lies in how the public interprets these icons of wildlife. Emotional attachment can blur the distinction between the welfare of individuals and protecting the species. In the wild, injury, starvation, and death are part of natural ecological processes. Predators may set out to hunt and return empty handed.

Young animals die of disease or are killed while their elders become frail. These losses help regulate animal populations over time, ensuring they don't exceed the resources available or the carrying capacity of the ecosystem.

Yet when a well-known animal suffers, people call for it to be saved and treated, sometimes followed by demanding its lifelong care. Such interventions can feel like a moral salve but rarely hold any conservation value. Unless a species is critically endangered, as with the great Indian bustard, where every individual truly matters, saving a single animal rarely changes the trends that matter to its population as a whole.

In his 2014 article in *The Hindu*, the conservation biologist and tiger expert K. Ullas Karanth argued that focusing too much on individual animals can misdirect



Elephants at Amboseli National Park in Kenya with mount Kilimanjaro in the background. AMOGH/AVARSHA JS (CC BY-SA)

Craig's death by natural causes is, in many ways, a conservation success. He survived decades in a landscape once ravaged by poaching. Unlike other famed 'super tuskers' that were killed for ivory, his life reflects the benefits of sustained protection, anti-poaching enforcement, and community involvement

limited resources. The survival of a species depends on protecting its habitats, making sure it has access to sufficient prey populations, keeping its populations genetically diverse, connecting it spatially to other populations nearby, and mitigating human pressures on its survival – and not on prolonging the life of one ageing tiger.

Dedicating money and human resources to high-profile rescues, he added, could in fact come at the cost of less visible but more important work necessary to sustain populations in the wild.

Therefore, from a conservation perspective, Craig's importance lay not in his fame but in his genes. As one of the few remaining elephants with exceptionally large tusks, he carried traits that poaching has nearly erased.

Yet dismissing individual animals entirely would also be a mistake.

"In human-dominated landscapes, certain animals can become ambassadors for coexistence," elephant researcher Ananda M. Kumar, of the Nature Conservation Foundation, said.

He pointed to the case of a female elephant named Singari in Tamil Nadu's Valparai plateau. Once wary of people, she began feeding calmly near settlements as old age limited her movement. And rather than drive her away, the villagers also grew protective. When she died, they gathered to mourn her.

Such relationships do not replace conservation science but they can soften attitudes toward wildlife and reduce conflict. Emotional familiarity can make tolerance possible in places where people live alongside large animals. For social species like elephants, understanding individual personalities can also help researchers predict behaviour and manage human-elephant interactions more effectively.

In such contexts, a well-known individual wild animal can help researchers track behaviour as well as communicate more effectively with local communities.

Celebrity as liability

Perhaps the risks are most visible when famous animals are involved in human deaths.

Public opinion has been known to fracture when a well-known tiger or elephant kills a person, and often along predictable lines: the animal's urban admirers demand that it be protected while the local communities demand that it be moved away, if not killed. Eventually

the forest department is caught between emotional campaigns and the need to maintain trust with the people who share space with wildlife every day.

The case of Ranthambore's Ustad (T-24), a large male tiger and descendant of Machli, illustrated this dilemma. After being linked to multiple human deaths in 2015, local authorities decided to remove him from the wild, only for protests to erupt and legal battles to follow. To many people outside the region, he was a beloved icon – but to the villagers, Ustad was a danger.

Scientists have warned that failing to act decisively in such cases can erode local support for conservation. Dr. Karanth also articulated this perspective in his writing, noting that in healthy tiger populations, a significant fraction of individuals die every year of natural causes, territorial conflicts or the risks associated with dispersal (including being killed in road accidents or being injured in fights over territory).

So attempting to 'rescue' every conflict animal may satisfy public sentiment but can undermine long-term conservation goals by alienating the people whose cooperation is essential to protect habitats. Dr. Gubbi also has, in other contexts, expressed similar concerns about how emotion-driven responses can clash with ecological realities on the ground.

What Craig stood for

Craig's death by natural causes is, in many ways, a conservation success. He survived decades in a landscape once ravaged by poaching. Unlike other famed "super tuskers" that were killed for ivory, his life reflects the benefits of sustained protection, anti-poaching enforcement, and community involvement. He was an exception.

Celebrity animals are powerful storytellers. They capture attention in ways that statistics never can. They open emotional doors through which conservation messages can enter. But they're not the full picture.

Conservation ultimately depends on less photogenic realities such as protecting habitats, enforcing laws, partnering with communities, securing corridors, using science-based management, and securing long-term funding – things that neither trend on social media nor inspire tributes.

Perhaps the role of iconic wildlife individuals is not conservation but to lead us towards it. Loving a single elephant or tiger is easy but translating that fascination to support for policies and commitments needed to protect entire landscapes is harder, but also more necessary.

If the global mourning for Craig remains focused on the death of one magnificent elephant, very little will have been achieved. But if it leads instead to sustained support for anti-poaching efforts, habitat protection, and saving elephant corridors, then his story will serve conservation.

(Ipsita Herlekar is an independent science writer. ipsitaherlekar@gmail.com)



Heat rises: Earth's average monthly temperature took a noticeable jump up in early 2023. FILE PHOTO

Temperature spikes lead to change in El Nino labelling

Associated Press

The natural El Nino cycle, which warps weather worldwide, is both adding to and shaped by a warming world, meteorologists said.

A new study calculated that an unusual recent twist in the warming and cooling cycle that includes El Nino and its counterpart La Nina can help explain the scientific mystery of why earth's already rising temperature spiked to a new level over the past three years.

Separately, scientists have had to update how they label El Nino and La Nina because of rapid weather changes caused by global warming. Increasingly

The change is likely to mean that more events will be considered La Nina and fewer as El Nino for warming tropical waters

hot waters globally have caused the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration this month to alter how it calculates when the weather pattern has flipped into a new cycle. It's likely to mean that more events will be considered La Nina and fewer qualify as an El Nino for warming tropical waters.

Earth's average monthly temperature took a noticeable jump up from the long-term upward trend connected to human-caused climate change in early 2023, and that increase continued through 2025. Scientists have many theories about what's happening, including faster global warming, less pollution from ships, an underwater eruption, and increased solar output.

In a new study in *Nature Geoscience* this month, Japanese researchers looked at how the difference in energy coming to and leaving the planet – called earth's energy imbalance – increased in 2022. An increased imbalance, or more trapped heat, then leads to warmer temperatures, scientists said. The researchers calculated that about three-quarters of the change in earth's energy imbalance can be attributed to the combination of long-term human-caused climate change and a shift from a three-year cooling La Nina cycle to a warm El Nino one.

El Nino is a cyclical and natural warming of patches of the equatorial Pacific that then alters the world's weather patterns, while La Nina is marked by cooler than average waters. In turn El Ninos tend to increase global temperatures and La Ninas depress the long-term rise.

From 2020 to 2023, earth had an unusual "triple dip" La Nina without an El Nino in between. In a La Nina, warm water sticks to a deeper depth, resulting in a cooler surface. And that reduces how much energy goes out into space, said study co-author Yu Kosaka, a climate scientist at the University of Tokyo.

She compared it to what happens when people have fevers: "If our body's temperature is high then it tends to emit its energy out, and the earth has the same situation happening. And as the temperatures increase, it acts to emit more energy outward. And for three-year La Nina, it's the opposite."

About 23% of the energy imbalance driving the recent higher temperatures comes from this unusually long La Nina pattern, with slightly more than half coming from gases from the burning of coal, oil and gas, the study authors said. The rest can be other factors.

For feedback and suggestions for 'Science', please write to science@thehindu.co.in with the subject 'Daily page'