

ONE FOR THE AGES

Vozinha and Cape Verde go down fighting

Defending champion Argentina scrapes past the debutant with a 3-2 win in extra-time

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On the cusp of big upgrade, CERN collider faces hard question

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What did the U.S. top court rule on birthright citizenship?

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Aung San Suu Kyi: a symbol of resistance

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INSIDE



Delhi court denies bail to Khalid, Imam

NEW DELHI
A Delhi court on Saturday dismissed the bail applications of Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam, accused in the larger conspiracy case related to the 2020 northeast Delhi riots. The court said it was bound by the Supreme Court's January order, which had imposed certain conditions on bail for the two who have been languishing in jail for over five years. » PAGE 3



Centre asks Telegram to take anti-piracy action

NEW DELHI
The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting "has demanded that Telegram take proactive action in taking down pirated content on its platform," a senior official said. The platform has been asked to reply to the Ministry's notice within 15 days. The move is a fresh escalation of issues between the government and the messaging app. » PAGE 3

India navigated West Asia crisis efficiently, says Modi

Fuel rationing, LPG disruptions, and price surges avoided with refineries upping production and public OMCs bearing the losses, says PM; politically motivated rumour-mongering failed, he adds

Saptaparno Ghosh
NEW DELHI

India successfully weathered the challenges triggered by the West Asia conflict through effective assessment and strategic, timely decision-making while efficiently using its domestic resources and strong diplomatic ties, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Saturday.

The country avoided fuel rationing, ensured cooking gas supplies, and shielded consumers and farmers from global price spikes, with state-run oil marketing firms (OMCs) bearing the losses, he said, adding that certain politically motivated entities which had engaged in rumour-mongering during the crisis had failed and "may be dwelling in an abyss of disappointment".

'Effective strategies'
"India took potent decisions, made correct evaluations, charted effective strategies, used its domestic resources effectively and constructively leveraged its diplomatic power to successfully weather the challenges," Mr. Modi said. Speaking at the inauguration of the HPCL Rajasthan Refinery Ltd. (HRRL) in Balotra, the country's first greenfield integrated



Crucial sector: PM Narendra Modi during the inauguration of the HRRL petrochemical complex in Balotra, Rajasthan, on Saturday. PTI

refinery-petrochemical complex, Mr. Modi credited domestic refineries for helping the country wade through the crisis by upping their production of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG). India is currently the world's fourth-largest refiner and would continue expanding its refining capacity, Mr. Modi said.

"India has consistently increased its refining capacity and has emerged as the world's fourth-largest refiner... However, we will not stop here, and will continue to increase capacity in the coming years," he added.

The Prime Minister insisted that there had not been any major supply disruptions during the crisis, even in remote areas, barring certain minor hurdles. He pointed out that India had not adopted any ra-

tioning measures for petrol and diesel, unlike certain other countries.

With regard to cooking gas, Mr. Modi told the gathering that prices of domestic LPG – which could have gone up to ₹2,000 per cylinder – were shielded and restricted to less than ₹950 per cylinder and ₹650 per cylinder for Ujjwala beneficiaries.

India also continued to provide urea for ₹300 per bag, though the fertilizer could have been priced at ₹3,000 per bag if it had followed the global price surge after the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

While customers were thus protected, state-owned oil marketing companies absorbed losses of about ₹75,000 crore in the June-end quarter, the Prime Minister said. "This is equivalent to the cost of

Modi inaugurates semiconductor facility in Gujarat

AHMEDABAD
Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the CG Semi Outsourced Semiconductor Assembly and Test facility at Sanand in Gujarat on Saturday. Semiconductor clusters are coming up across India and these will create large-scale employment, he said. » PAGE 5

building one refinery," he noted.

'Delayed completion'
Mr. Modi accused the previous Congress government of Rajasthan of delaying the completion of the Balotra refinery, claiming that the party had not extended the necessary cooperation. "We signed the MoU for the refinery in 2017. But from 2018 to 2023, Rajasthan had a Congress government. Due to their lack of cooperation, the work here was nearly stalled," he said, adding that the Bharatiya Janata Party's return to power in the State in 2023 had helped revive the project.

The refinery was initially scheduled to be inaugurated on April 22, but was delayed due to a fire that broke out in its crude distillation unit a day earlier.

Chinese investment influx good for wider ties, says India's envoy

Ananth Krishnan
BEIJING

Greater investment from China into India will be good both for the economics of the relationship and for broader bilateral ties, Ambassador to China Vikram Doraiswami said on Saturday. The Indian envoy also made a pitch for greater Indian exports to China, especially in areas such as pharmaceuticals, where India is globally competitive.

"Obviously, we would like to be able to export more to China. There is nothing unreasonable about suggesting that," he said, speaking at the World Peace Forum, an annual foreign policy forum in Beijing.

India's trade with China has expanded despite the political freeze on relations since 2020. Both sides have begun the process of normalising relations following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping in October 2024, in the wake of disengagement along the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

However, trade remains lopsided, with a ballooning deficit. According to Commerce Ministry data, China was India's largest trading partner in 2025-26, with bilateral trade growing to \$151.1 billion, while the deficit stands at \$112.16 billion.

"Particularly in areas where we believe we have



Vikram Doraiswami

a competitive advantage, like pharmaceuticals. For instance, we're one of the world's big exporters of pharmaceuticals to advanced markets. We hope Chinese partners will work with us to ensure that Indian production firms, producing high quality generic medicines, being the same products that have been exported to the U.S. and elsewhere, can be exported to the Chinese market. We think there is a balance of advantage for both countries, including value for China and of course, value for the relationship," the Indian envoy said at a panel on global economic governance during the forum.

'To find ways'
Mr. Doraiswami noted that trade had gone up "regardless of the ups and downs of the larger political relationship". India's exports to China had also increased recently. "That means that the market opportunity is there. We need to find ways of making it easier," he said.

Bengaluru man among 23 designated as 'terrorists'

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

An engineer hailing from Bengaluru is among six Indians and 17 Pakistanis designated as "terrorists" by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) on Saturday under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.

The 23 individuals, who are no longer in India, are accused of roles ranging from recruitment, training, infiltration and logistics support to financing, arms supply, drone-based weapons delivery and planning or facilitating terrorist attacks in India. With the latest additions, the individuals designated as terrorists under the UAPA now stand at 80.

Mohammed Shaheed Faisal, 40, has been identified by the National Investigation Agency as the handler of the "terror module" that carried out an IED explosion at The Rameshwaram Cafe in Bengaluru on March 1, 2024. He is currently residing in Rawalpindi, Pakistan, and associated with Pakistan-based terrorist outfits Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed, an MHA notification said. Wanted by the NIA since 2012, he carries a reward of ₹10 lakh and is alleged to have handled three terror modules in Karnataka in the past 14 years.

UPDATED TERROR LIST
» PAGE 3

Only talks can bring peace, says Manipur CM at funeral for MLA who died in Feb.

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

Late Manipur Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MLA Vungzagin Valte, a victim of a mob attack in May 2023, was laid to rest near his residence in Churachandpur district on Saturday, more than four months after he died in a Gurugram hospital.

Chief Minister Y. Khemchand Singh attended Valte's funeral service, marking the first visit by a Chief Minister to the district since the ethnic conflict broke out on May 3, 2023, even as certain Kuki groups called for a boycott, demanding a permanent solution to the crisis.

Speaking at the funeral service, Mr. Singh noted his association with Valte since 2017, when he became the Speaker of the 60-member State Assembly.

Recalling the tense situation in May 2023 and the assault on Valte, Mr. Singh



Manipur Chief Minister Y. Khemchand Singh pays tribute to the late BJP MLA, Vungzagin Valte, in Churachandpur on Saturday. PTI

said that he regretted not having been beside his "friend" when the incident happened. Later, he told journalists that dialogue was the only way forward to restore peace, which was essential for development in Manipur. "Your smile is the way for peace," he said, responding to the manner in which a reporter sought the road map to peace in the State.

"Valte's family is like my family. His friends and close ones are my friends, too. I will always extend any support to all of them

when or if the need arises," the Chief Minister said.

A former Minister and three-time MLA, the late Valte, represented the Thanlon Assembly constituency. He was one of 10 Kuki-Zo MLAs in Manipur and an adviser to former Chief Minister N. Biren Singh when he was brutally attacked on May 4, 2023, a day after violence swept large swathes of the State.

He never recovered from the assault, which left him with multiple fractures and in need of ventilator support. He died in a Gurugram hospital on February 21 this year, days after he was airlifted from Imphal.

Members of his family and the Zomi Council, the Churachandpur-based apex body of eight tribes, put the last rites on hold after his body was brought back home. The body was shifted to the morgue in the Churachandpur Medical College.

The Zomi Council refused to inter the body until New Delhi entrusted the investigation into his 2023 assault to a central agency and facilitated a separate administrative structure for the Kuki-Zomi people. The council also sought the arrest of those who assaulted the former MLA.

The council, however, relented a few days ago. One of its members said the decision to inter the former MLA's body was made to honour the wishes of his ailing widow.

SECURITY REVIEW
» PAGE 4

India's essential medicine list lags behind global benchmark; unrevised in 4 years

Bindu Shajan Perappadan
NEW DELHI

India's roster of essential medicines has not been updated in nearly four years, even as the World Health Organization (WHO) has revised its own list twice in the same period, says a civil society network of activists and organisations working for affordable healthcare.

The collective – Working Group on Access to Medicines and Treatments – has written to the government demanding an urgent revision of the National List of Essential Medicines (NLEM), so that such drugs are available at affordable prices. The NLEM is a curated list of medications compiled by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. It prioritises drugs that satisfy the critical healthcare needs of India's population based on safety, efficacy, and cost-effectiveness. Medicines on this list – 384 at present – are

Outdated prescription

The National List of Essential Medicines prioritises drugs that satisfy the critical healthcare needs of India's population



POINTS RAISED BY THE COLLECTIVE

- The NLEM, last notified in 2022, contains 384 medicines while the WHO list runs to 523 drugs
- At least 17 active cancer-treating agents, 4 supportive cancer-care medicines, and 9 monoclonal antibodies feature on the WHO list but not on the NLEM

generally dispensed free of cost by government hospitals. The government uses the NLEM to instruct the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) to enforce a strict price ceiling on them. The list was last overhauled in 2022.

The WHO Model List of Essential Medicines, meanwhile, was revised in 2023 and again in 2025, and contains 523 medicines – leaving India's list trailing well behind the global benchmark, said the group in its letter on Friday.

"The prolonged delay results in medicines being denied to millions of citizens – who could have had free access to newly recognised essential medicines within the public health system, while also restricting affordable access in the private sector," the letter said, adding that the delay was not merely a bureaucratic lag but a matter with "profound constitutional and human rights implications".

The consequences, the Working Group argues, fall hardest on patients bat-

ting cancer and diabetes. Its letter identifies 17 active cancer-treating agents and four supportive cancer-care medicines that feature on the WHO list but not the NLEM. Also missing, it says, are nine monoclonal antibodies none of which currently appear on India's list. "We urge immediate initiation of a transparent, time-bound, and conflict of interest-free process to revise the NLEM, ensuring that it reflects the latest evidence, public health priorities, and the WHO Model List of Essential Medicines. Timely action is essential to safeguard the constitutional guarantee of the Right to Life for it ensures equitable access to essential medicines for all citizens," said K.M. Gopakumar, co-convenor, Working Group on Access to Medicines and Treatment, which comprises patient advocates, patient groups, civil society organisations, academics, lawyers and journalists.

INBRIEF



TRS acronym tussle: EC wants Kavitha to submit alternatives

Election Commission of India (EC) has written to Telangana Rakshana Sena (TRS) to change the party's name in view of objections raised by outfits with similar names over the acronym. Founder K. Kavitha has apparently received two such objections, and the TRS has been asked to submit three alternative names in 15 days. If not, their application for registration may be closed. However, sources said Ms. Kavitha has sent a reply as sought, rebutting the objections raised.

Bengaluru Central Jail unveils new apparel brand 'Free Bird'

The Parappana Agrahara Central Prison in Bengaluru, Karnataka, has launched 'Free Bird', a new brand of premium linen shirts stitched by prison inmates as part of a skill-development initiative. A group of inmates underwent training by HCL, a Delhi-based company, in partnership with the department. The shirts carry the State emblem, Gandaberunda, as the brand's insignia. Under an MoU with the Prison Department, the HCL will also train inmates in bakery production.

IIT Hyderabad student falls to death on college campus

A 20-year-old engineering student at the International Institute of Information Technology, Hyderabad, was found dead on the campus on Saturday. The deceased was identified as Abhiroop Pulepu, a second-year CGD student. Preliminary probe revealed that he ended his life by jumping from a campus building. He is suspected to have taken the extreme step due to personal reasons. *(Those in distress can seek help at Tele Manas 14416.)*

Adani's Vizhinjam port share transfer suspicious: Pinarayi

LoP says Adani Group told SEBI of proposed share transfer without govt's nod, making it legally untenable; this violates concession deal, raises questions over govt's handling of issue, he adds

The Hindu Bureau
KANNUR

Leader of the Opposition in Kerala Pinarayi Vijayan on Saturday alleged that the proposed transfer of a 49% stake of the Adani Vizhinjam Port Private Limited (AVPPL), the concessionaire and operating company for the Vizhinjam International Seaport, by the Adani Group to Mediterranean Shipping Company (MSC) violates the concession agreement and raises serious questions over the government's handling of the issue.

He said the Opposition would challenge the move



MSC acquiring a huge stake could alter the ownership structure of the port and eventually create monopoly, says Pinarayi Vijayan. PTI

both legally and politically.

Addressing a press conference, he said the concession agreement mandates prior approval from the government before any transfer of shares. However, Chief Minister V.D. Sath

eesan had informed the Assembly that no application seeking such approval had been received.

Mr. Vijayan alleged the Adani Group informed market regulator Securities and Exchange Board of In

dia (SEBI) about the proposed share transfer without first obtaining the government's approval, rendering the move legally untenable.

Questioning the government's response, Mr. Vijayan said the Chief Minister who also holds the Ports, Law and Finance portfolios was directly responsible for ensuring compliance with the agreement. He said any change in ownership required strict legal scrutiny.

Mr. Vijayan warned that allowing MSC to acquire a substantial stake could alter the ownership structure of the port and eventually create a monopoly.

Senthilbalalji, his brother summoned in MLA bribery case

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

The Greater Chennai Police have issued summons to former Minister and DMK MLA V. Senthilbalaji and his brother V. Ashok Kumar in connection with a case involving an alleged attempt to bribe a TVK MLA as part of a conspiracy to topple the ruling government led by Chief Minister C. Joseph Vijay.

They were directed to appear before the investigating officer of the case on Monday.

Personnel from the Triplicane police station, where the case was registered, served the summons on the duo through their parents at Rameswarapatti in Karur district.



V. Senthilbalaji

with other work and ended the call.

Subsequently, Thirunavukkarasu again contacted the MLA and allegedly said a resolution would soon be moved in the Assembly against the Speaker. He allegedly urged the MLA to cooperate during the voting on the proposed no-confidence motion, irrespective of his affiliation with the ruling party, and offered him up to ₹35 crore in return.

Shocked by the proposal, Mr. Ilayaraja firmly declined the offer, stating that he had no interest, and told Thirunavukkarasu not to contact him again. Thereafter, Thirunavukkarasu allegedly threatened him that if the conversation was disclosed, the MLA and his family would face serious consequences.

On June 29, the MLA lodged a complaint with the GCP against Thirunavukkarasu for allegedly attempting to bribe and influence him. Based on the complaint, a case was registered at the Triplicane police station.

Eight persons have been arrested in the case so far.

Port will be accessible to all: Adani group

Dhinesh Kallungal
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Limited (APSEZ) has written a second letter to the Kerala government, seeking to clarify its position on the proposed deal to sell 49% stake in the Vizhinjam port to the Switzerland-based Mediterranean Shipping Company (MSC).

The State government is treading cautiously, as Adani Vizhinjam Port Private Limited (AVPPL), the concessionaire of the port, has not yet provided a copy of the agreement it signed

with MSC. Under the concession deal, the government has granted mortgage rights over the port and its assets to the latter for the concession period.

An empowered committee is already in place to take decisions related to the Vizhinjam International Seaport. The State is also exploring the possibility of constituting a new panel of experts, hand-picked from various sectors, to study the deal and assess its ramifications, a source said.

Assurances by group
In its second letter, the APSEZ sought to assure that,

under no circumstances would MSC enjoy a monopoly at the port. It also stated that the port would continue to function as a common-user facility, accessible to all users without discrimination, citing similar acquisitions at other ports in the country.

The AVPPL also reiterated its commitment to work with the State on the 'Mission Samudra' project, a maritime development initiative announced by the Kerala government to transform the State into a global economic hub.

But questions arise from various quarters on wheth

er the agreement would give an undue advantage to MSC by allowing it to appoint its subsidiaries to handle seaside and land-side logistics, potentially leading to the dominance of a global shipping line at the port. All these aspects will be examined by the State before granting its final approval, sources said.

A month ago, a brief report on the proposed transaction appeared in a daily published from the north. That was the only information available to the State about the development before the deal came to light, the source said.

Bengaluru creche abuse case: another caregiver held

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Bengaluru Police on Saturday arrested Sujatha, a former caregiver at the creche operating on the premises of the IT firm Capgemini in Brookefield, in connection with the alleged physical abuse of children that has sparked widespread outrage.

She is the second person to be arrested in the case after caregiver Vijayalakshmi, 55, was arrested on Friday.

According to the police, Ms. Sujatha, who was dismissed from her job at the day care centre, allegedly orchestrated the recording of videos showing the abuse, by using an accomplice who was still employed at the centre. Investigators said her name does not figure in the original FIR.

Police have booked Ms. Sujatha under provisions of the IT Act and other relevant laws. She has been booked for not reporting the incident earlier and also for circulating child abuse videos, the police said.

Police said Ms. Sujatha had developed a financial dispute with Ms. Vijayalakshmi within a month of joining the day care centre and was subsequently terminated from service.

Investigators suspect that, allegedly seeking revenge against Ms. Vijayalakshmi, she arranged to obtain video recordings of the alleged abuse inside the centre.

The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights has taken *suo motu* cognizance of the case.

A ripple effect



In full stroke: Participants in India's first ASMITA South Zone Canoeing and Kayaking League 2025-26 paddle their kayaks during the K-4 1,000-metre Sub-Junior Girls event at the Gambeerammedda Reservoir in Visakhapatnam on Saturday. K.R. DEEPAK

'Liquor on wheels' lands driver in soup

The Hindu Bureau
THRISSUR

An autorickshaw, acting as a mobile liquor outlet, catering to late-night football fans, was seized by the Excise department in Thrissur, Kerala, leading to the arrest of a 34-year-old man, popularly known as the "Abkari Auto" operator.

The accused, Vishnu, was arrested by the Thrissur Excise Special Squad while allegedly selling liquor from his autorickshaw on Friday night. The squad seized six bottles of Indian Made Foreign Liquor (IMFL), ₹1,500 suspected to be sales proceeds, and

the autorickshaw.

According to Excise officials, the accused had been under surveillance for a week as part of Operation Thunder, a night-time enforcement drive. Acting on a tip-off, the team intercepted the vehicle. Investigators said Vishnu, who had previously worked as a private bus conductor and cleaner, allegedly turned to illicit liquor sales after finding it more lucrative.

Excise officials said demand for the mobile liquor service had surged since the start of the FIFA World Cup, with football fans reportedly calling him for doorstep liquor deliveries during late-night matches.

AMMA crisis: complaints mount against Shwetha

The Hindu Bureau
KOCHI

In a hard-hitting press conference, a group of women actors has levelled serious allegations against Association of Malayalam Movie Artistes (AMMA) president Shwetha Menon and some of her committee members, accusing them of attempted communal polarisation and advancing corporate and political agendas.

Actors Ansiba Hassan, Maala Parvathy, and Usha Haseena addressed the media on Saturday, just hours after Ms. Menon secured a stay from the Ernakulam Munsif Court against the functioning of an ad hoc committee that followed her announce

ment of resignation, along with that of the entire executive committee, last month.

Actor and legislator Ramesh Pisharody has since resigned as convener of the ad hoc committee, expressing dismay over what he described as the "release" of his telephone conversation with Ms. Menon.

Communal strokes

Ms. Parvathy accused Ms. Menon of attempting to create communal divisions among members and of labelling Ms. Hassan "jihadist".

She also played an audio clip purportedly featuring the voice of a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader claiming that a major busi



Shwetha Menon

ness group would have donated ₹15 crore to AMMA had Ms. Menon remained at the helm.

"AMMA does not need corporate funding. While members may hold political beliefs, they cannot impose party agendas within the organisation. Ms. Ansiba was targeted for questioning this. She was even

YSRCP built its office on my family's land: Goa Governor

K. Srinivasa Rao
VIZIANAGARAM

Construction of the new YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) office at Dasannapeta in Vizianagaram has stirred a controversy with Goa Governor Pusapati Ashok Gajapathi Raju objecting to it and alleging that the officials have "tampered with the records and showed his family property as government land."

The YSRCP government had allocated the land measuring four acres and 75 cents located in the Ring Road area to the party on May 18, 2022, on lease basis as it was classified as "government property."

According to Mr. Raju, the land had been recorded as "private" in the Town



Pusapati Ashok Gajapathi Raju

Survey Register of the Vizianagaram Municipal Corporation long ago. The authorities had not given notices to the legal heirs of Mr. Raju and showed the property as "government land" in 2021, when Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy was the Chief Minister, he alleged.

Mr. Raju had written a letter to the District Collector in 2025, urging him to restore the land in favour

of the Pusapati family since the "YSRCP government had tampered with the records."

Speaking to the media recently in Vizianagaram, Mr. Raju had requested the State government to order an inquiry against the officials who had "changed the records."

Meanwhile, YSRCP district president Majji Srinivasa Rao said the Revenue and Municipal officials had followed due procedure in the allocation of land to the party. He said it was unfair to raise the issue after construction of the new party office in 2022. He said the Pusapati family had not raised any objection during the allocation of the land and construction of the new building.

-X

Yet another setback for Mamata as key aide resigns from all Trinamool posts

"Will the Congress leadership have the courage to act against those who have publicly rebelled against the appointment of the Punjab Congress president? Or does discipline apply only to some, while open defiance is rewarded for others," Mr. Baliawal stated in the post.



Luck of the draw: Committee members blindfold a volunteer while drawing lots to determine the race order, before the bullock cart race in Pedgaon village.



Before the charge: A racing team helps a bull get off a transport truck after arriving at the Pedgaon grounds.



Pre-race ritual: Handlers walk a racing bull across the grounds at sunset, easing its muscles after the long journey and preparing it for the next day's race.



On edge: An aerial view captures the intense action of a traditional bullock cart race at Pedgaon, with thousands of spectators lining the dirt tracks as racers kick up dust in a thrilling display of speed and heritage.

Fastest hooves first on the track

Widely regarded as one of Maharashtra's most prestigious bullock cart races, the Hindkesari Bailgada Sharyat once again drew a massive turnout in Pedgaon



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The annual Hindkesari Pedgaon 'Bailgada Sharyat' (bullock cart race) once again showcased Maharashtra's deep-rooted rural sporting tradition, attracting more than 1,000 entrants and thousands of spectators from across the region. Pedgaon has earned a reputation as one of the most prominent and prestigious venues on the State's bullock cart racing circuit, drawing competitors and enthusiasts year after year who vie for unmatched glory.

The event began around 7 a.m., with competitors arriving well before sunrise to prepare their prized bullocks for the day's competition. As the morning progressed, a massive crowd gathered around the *madaan* (ground), while many spectators occupied a nearby hilltop that offered a panoramic view of the racing track.

The competition unfolded over multiple rounds, testing the speed, endurance and precision. Because of its standing as a highly prestigious race, the stakes were incredibly high; only one grand winner could ultimately claim the coveted top prize of ₹1,21,000 and the legendary honour associated with Pedgaon. Every single

run down the track was crucial. The atmosphere remained electric throughout the day as supporters cheered for their favourite teams and celebrated every strong performance.

The buzz on the ground reached a fever pitch as spectators eagerly anticipated the run of champion bull 'Bakasur'. Across the venue, people spoke of his legendary track record, with many calling him the "Sachin Tendulkar" of the bullock cart racing world for his unmatched speed and remarkable consistency.

Bakasur lived up to his reputation. As he crossed the finish line to win the race, the entire *madaan* erupted in celebration. The bull was instantly thronged by a massive, ecstatic sea of spectators and fans rushing to catch a glimpse, take photos, and celebrate the victory.

The contest of speed and skill proved once again why it is one of the most anticipated and revered events on Maharashtra's rural sporting calendar.

More than a race, it was a celebration of the State's agricultural heritage, the enduring tradition of Bailgada Sharyat, and the passion that continues to bring competitors and spectators to Pedgaon year after year.



Race ready: A participant guides his bull towards the starting line as spectators crowd the hillside in anticipation of the next round.



Full throttle: A participant races towards the finish line, with speed, endurance and precision.



Waiting game: Spectators gather beyond the finish line, cheering every strong performance throughout the day.



Holding steady: A racer balances on the narrow chassis as his decorated bulls thunder down the dusty track for the Hindkesari title.



Sudden scare: Moments after crossing the finish line, a team of racing bulls veers into the crowd, sending spectators scrambling for safety in a tense few seconds.



Sea of people: Thousands of spectators stream gather around and on the track between rounds. An enduring passion continues to bring competitors and the crowd to Pedgaon every year.

PROFILES

A symbol of resistance

Aung San Suu Kyi

The junta, which has made some territorial gains in the civil war and held a farcical election to legitimise its coup, seeks international recognition, but it lacks what the NLD leader, now under house arrest, has always symbolised – popular support

Srinivasan Ramani

When Thailand’s Foreign Minister Sihasak Phuangketkeow met Myanmar’s newly designated President Min Aung Hlaing in April 2026, he was told that the regime in Naypyitaw was “considering good things” for Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. This was the same general who, as chief of the dreaded junta, had deposed the country’s civilian government yet again in 2021, plunging Myanmar into a protracted civil war before refashioning himself into a “civilian” leader.

Ms. Suu Kyi – the former State Counsellor and the symbolic head of the pro-democracy movement – had meanwhile been jailed in a high-security prison in the capital, Naypyitaw, after a sentence of close to three decades was handed to her in a farcical trial that followed the coup. The junta sought to legitimise its rule through a stage-managed election, which was held with a low-turnout vote, largely in areas the military controlled, and handed victory to its proxy Union Solidarity and Development Party. After the “victory”, it reduced Suu Kyi’s sentence several times. Yet when ASEAN asked for access to her, it refused outright.

The 81-year-old is understood to have been moved to “house arrest” somewhere within Naypyitaw, though very few even among the junta know her whereabouts. This led to a “proof of life” campaign online demanding details of her detention. Ms. Suu Kyi’s limbo is symbolic of the state of the pro-democracy movement, which still regards her as its icon, even in an ethnically fractured country that has been at war with itself since the coup.

Ms. Suu Kyi, President Win Myint, released only recently, and other leaders of the National League for Democracy (NLD) were arrested in 2021, months after the party’s landslide victory in the 2020 elections. But the movement did not collapse with them. Ousted parliamentarians and party figures regrouped to form a government in exile, the National Unity Government (NUG), which took

up armed resistance against the junta by raising People’s Defence Forces in the Bamar-majority heartland and fighting alongside ethnic armed organisations that had renewed their own wars against the military.

Today, more than five years on, the civil war has claimed more than a lakh lives. While the junta has regained the initiative after heavy setbacks, the resistance remains formidable.

Hard-won authority

Ms. Suu Kyi’s authority as the symbol of the pro-democracy movement was hard-won, even if it was later tarnished by the stances she took as State Counsellor. The daughter of the independence hero Aung San, assassinated when she was two, she was educated in New Delhi and later at Oxford. She married a British academic and raised two sons abroad before returning in 1988 to a Burma going through a revolt against military rule. She soon led that uprising in a role that would cost her nearly 15 years of house arrest across two decades, and make her an international cause célèbre. She won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991 while confined. Her release in 2010 came only after the dictator Than Shwe staged a controlled election and began cautiously opening the country to Western investment and legitimacy. The NLD swept by-elections in 2012 and then won a genuine landslide in 2015.

The military, forever wary of her clout and her intent to widen the democratic space, had sought to keep her from the presidency through a clause in the 2008 constitution barring anyone with foreign-national children. But she outwitted the generals by getting the NLD to use its parliamentary majority to legislate a new office, the State Counsellor, placed above the president and serving as effective chief executive.

Working pragmatically within a parliament where the military still held a quarter of the seats, Ms. Suu Kyi contained the generals politically but her accommodation of them carried a heavy cost. When the military, then commanded by Min Aung Hlaing, led a genocidal campaign against the Rohingya in Rakhine State in 2017,



ILLUSTRATION: R. RAJESH

leading to an exodus of more than 7,00,000 and killing thousands, she did not condemn it. In 2019, she personally defended Myanmar against the genocide charge before the International Court of Justice.

This pragmatic accommodation did not benefit her. The junta did not want to share power and wanted all of it. As the veteran analyst Bertil Lintner argues, the military had expected the NLD to lose in 2020, convinced that it had shed support in the cities and ethnic-minority areas. It was proven spectacularly wrong and refused to accept the result when the NLD won another landslide. It manufactured claims of mass fraud and orchestrated

violent protests through its proxy USDP, using the “crisis” as a pretext to seize power in the coup.

After losing vast territory during the civil war in 2023 and 2024, the junta has now turned the tide, clawing back some of what it lost. Propitious circumstances made that possible – China’s changed stance in particular. Having earlier indirectly enabled the gains of ethnic armies in the north, Beijing swung behind the regime once prolonged war began to threaten its border stability and economic corridor. It pressured the Ta’ang National Liberation Army and the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army – two members of the

Three Brotherhood Alliance, the third being the Arakan Army – to accept ceasefires and pull back from crucial towns they held in Shan State and neighbouring areas.

With pressure easing in the north, and a forced-conscription law bringing new recruits, the junta could redirect its forces to other fronts, against the People’s Defence Forces and ethnic armies such as the Kachin Independence Organisation and the Karenni forces.

Seeking legitimacy

It is now trying to regain international legitimacy through the civilian-government route. On taking the presidency, Min Aung Hlaing installed loyalists in the high command, elevating former intelligence chief Ye Win Oo to commander-in-chief of the armed forces. Among his first visits as President was one to New Delhi, where he met Prime Minister Narendra Modi. India, wary of Beijing’s outsized sway over Naypyitaw and eager to revive its stalled connectivity projects and secure access to rare earths, has sought re-engagement with the regime. ASEAN nations, too, are slowly doing the same.

Does this mean Myanmar’s pro-democracy and pro-federal forces are facing defeat? Some developments suggest the military will not have it easy. The NUG and other Bamar democratic forces have joined with key ethnic organisations to form a Steering Council for the Emergence of a Federal Democratic Union (SCEF), which many observers term an improvement over the National Unity Consultative Council formed after the coup. It may be a key step to centralise the resistance against military rule and its proxies. Led by a battle-hardened younger generation of activists still inspired by Ms. Suu Kyi’s example, the initiative may still depend on fissures within the junta, and on the indulgence of a perennially frayed and somewhat insular ethnic resistance, for a genuine breakthrough. But it has something the junta lacks, and that Ms. Suu Kyi has always symbolised: the popular support of the long-suffering people of Myanmar.

THE GIST

Suu Kyi, 81, is understood to have been moved to “house arrest” somewhere within Naypyitaw, though very few even among the junta know her whereabouts

This led to a “proof of life” campaign online demanding details of her detention

Suu Kyi’s limbo is symbolic of the state of the pro-democracy movement, which still regards her as its icon, even in an ethnically fractured country that has been at war with itself since the coup

King of the North

Andy Burnham

The Labour leader, likely to succeed Keir Starmer as U.K. Prime Minister, has to steady the party and government while confronting the challenge from Reform UK

Joan Sony Cherian

On June 22, Keir Starmer stepped down as the U.K.’s Prime Minister via a teary speech in front of 10 Downing Street, just two years into his term. Elected with a landslide in 2024, he leaves office with abysmally low poll rates, having lost the confidence of both the public and his own party.

On the same day, Andy Burnham, the former Mayor of Greater Manchester, was sworn in as the new MP of Makerfield, a seat which he won on June 18 via a highly contested by-election. By taking his oath in Parliament, he is now being seen as the most likely successor to Mr. Starmer.

If elected by Labour to lead, Mr. Burnham will be the U.K.’s seventh Prime Minister in 10 years. He will also be the U.K.’s first life-long Catholic PM.

Mr. Burnham has had a long history with Westminster. Starting out as a researcher to an MP when Tony Blair first came to power in 1997, he climbed through the ranks and got elected as MP for the first time from his home town of Leigh in Greater Manchester in 2001. He served as a Junior Health Minister under Mr. Blair in his second Prime Ministership, and was later, under Prime



ILLUSTRATION: SREEJITH R. KUMAR

Minister Gordon Brown, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport and subsequently Health Secretary.

Mr. Burnham had previously run for Labour Party leadership twice, once in 2010 and later in 2015. Following the rejections over his bid for leadership, in 2017, Mr. Burnham made a curious shift in his political journey – he decided to run for the post of Mayor of Greater Manchester, which lies towards the north of the country. Politics in the U.K. has always been very London-centric, with the general logic being that one had to stay in Westminster for any sort of career progression.

Mr. Burnham went against this logic, stating that governments were too focused on London and did not give any attention to northern regions.

As Mayor, Mr. Burnham brought in various changes in the Greater Manchester region, which is now one of the fastest-growing city

regions in the U.K. He stands out for two of his main achievements – one was the decentralisation of bus services, where he brought public transport back under the local government, and the second was his fight against Westminster for the lack of support for the region during the COVID-19 pandemic.

His constant defence of the northern province and negotiations for higher financial support during the pandemic earned him the moniker “King of the North” after a character from the popular TV show, *Game of Thrones*.

Policy stances

Mr. Burnham’s stance on major policies has been pragmatic and one which changes with time, or as his critics call it, one which wavers and is dependent on who is in power. While during the Brexit referendum, he, along with major Labour party leaders, campaigned to remain in the EU, post Brexit, he has of-

ten played down his pro-European sentiment.

He had also voted for the 2003 Iraq invasion, which he later said in 2013 was the “worst foreign policy mistake in my lifetime.” Regarding the recent wars in West Asia, Mr. Burnham was one of the first people to call for a ceasefire after the Hamas attack on Israel on October 7, 2023. However, he has stopped short of calling Israel’s actions in Gaza genocide.

As Prime Minister, he will be up against a strong opposition in Nigel Farage’s far-right Reform U.K. party, which has a strong hold in the northern region due to its anti-immigrant rhetoric. Mr. Burnham has taken a diplomatic approach with respect to immigration, arguing for bringing down asylum applications, reducing net immigration and at the same time, also talking about the positive impact of immigration in the U.K.

One of the major policy shifts that Mr. Burnham is advocating for, is a “devolution of powers” to local-level governments. He has called the U.K. one of the “most over-centralised countries in the world”.

As he prepares to take over as Prime Minister, the task before him is cut out: lead the party and the country out of its crisis of leadership and stagnancy.

A race to catch up

GLM-5.2

Researchers say Z.ai’s most advanced LLM can seriously challenge leading U.S. systems in specialised coding and cybersecurity tasks

Smriti Sudesh

“Won’t take that long.” That was Tang Jie’s response after billionaire businessman Elon Musk posted that Chinese artificial intelligence companies were still years away from matching the world’s leading AI models. Less than two weeks later, Mr. Tang, the 49-year-old co-founder of Zhipu AI, set out to back up his claim.

On June 16, Zhipu AI (Z.ai), listed in Hong Kong as Knowledge Atlas Technology, unveiled GLM-5.2, its most advanced large language model yet, alongside ZCode, an AI coding platform designed to write, edit and manage software. Early results suggest the model is now competing closely with Anthropic’s latest systems, including Mythos, adding momentum to China’s AI race with the U.S. The timing could hardly have been more significant. While American companies continue to dominate the frontier of AI, the U.S. has tightened export controls on advanced chips and AI technologies in an effort to slow Beijing’s progress. China, meanwhile, has doubled down on home-grown innovation. Over the past year, companies such as DeepSeek, Alibaba, Baidu and Moonshot AI have unveiled increasingly



REUTERS

capable models. Z.ai is now seeking to join the list.

Born in China, Tang Jie, also a professor of computer science at Tsinghua University, co-founded Zhipu AI in 2019 as a university spin-off and today serves as its chief scientist. Before launching the company, Mr. Tang was best known for creating AMiner, an academic search engine and knowledge graph platform used by researchers around the world.

Since its founding, Z.ai has steadily released successive generations of its GLM (Generative Pre-trained Language Models) family of language models, with each version edging closer to the capabilities of leading American systems. GLM-5.2 is the company’s biggest leap so far. Researchers say GLM-5.2 is among the first to seriously challenge leading U.S. systems in specialised coding and cybersecurity tasks.

In tests conducted by cybersecurity firm Semgrep, GLM-5.2 outper-

formed Anthropic’s Claude Opus 4.8 on certain software engineering tasks. In other evaluations, researchers found it could match the bug-finding capabilities of Anthropic’s frontier models. The model has also climbed into the top 10 most-used AI systems on OpenRouter, a platform that provides developers access to hundreds of AI models.

‘DeepSeek moment’

The launch has drawn comparisons with DeepSeek, the Chinese startup whose breakthrough model shook the global AI industry last year. According to *South China Morning Post*, some developers in Silicon Valley have described GLM-5.2 as another ‘DeepSeek moment’ for China’s open-source AI ecosystem, praising both its coding capabilities and its affordability.

According to *The Wall Street Journal*, unlike OpenAI’s ChatGPT or Anthropic’s Claude, GLM-5.2 has

been released as an open-weight model. In simple terms, developers can download, modify and run it on their own hardware rather than relying on Z.ai’s servers. Supporters say that makes cutting-edge AI significantly cheaper and more accessible. Critics, on the other hand, argue the same openness could allow hackers and malicious actors to deploy AI systems without the many safeguards imposed by commercial providers.

Alongside the model, Z.ai has also introduced ZCode, a coding assistant that can write, edit and manage software projects with minimal human input. Together, the company says, the two products are designed to make AI a more capable partner for software developers.

Yet, for all the excitement, GLM-5.2 is not without its critics. Researchers note that it still trails OpenAI and Anthropic on several complex reasoning and general-purpose tasks. Others point to the constraints Chinese AI companies continue to face because of U.S. restrictions on access to advanced semiconductor hardware.

According to Z.ai, however, the model delivers near-frontier performance at a fraction of the price charged by comparable proprietary systems.

China launches coast guard patrol east of Taiwan despite pushback



American identity under 'renewed attack', says Trump as U.S. turns 250



Jihadists, their separatist Tuareg allies hit Mali with new attacks



Alternative for Germany re-elects leaders as protesters, police clash



A window into how China sees a world in disorder

A total of 14,464 migrants have arrived in Italy by sea so far this year, according to UN Refugee Agency data.

We could not find our rhythm: Messi praises Cape Verde players



We showed our identity: coach Bubista on a memorable campaign



This game left the biggest mark on me as a coach, says Scaloni



My teammates were fantastic,
we realised the dream: Vozinha



Argentina dodges a bullet named Cape Verde

The dogged Blue Sharks fight back from a goal down twice before Borges turns the ball into his own net to save the holder's blushes; Messi's scoring form continues with another sublime strike

CM
VK

England chases glory against a marauding Australia

Skipper Sciver-Brunt, Knight and Wyatt-Hodge hold the key with the willow for the home team in the summit clash; Molineux & Co. have the edge in a clash between two unbeaten sides at Lord's

T20 WORLD CUP

P.K. Ajith Kumar
LONDON

The Globe Theatre is just five miles away from Lord's. Cricket's most famous ground has witnessed, in its long history, moments that could compare well with the drama of a Shakespearean play.

Most of them have involved men's cricket. Women haven't played as much cricket at Lord's. But times are changing. Remember, in Shakespeare's time, women were not even allowed to perform on stage, though he penned some of literature's greatest female characters.

Lord's, in fact, is going to host next week its first-ever Women's Test match, between England and India. The Englishwomen are unlikely to be thinking of that game yet, though.

They are focussed completely on a game played in a much shorter format: the Women's T20 World Cup final against Australia on Sunday.

For all the interest a final involving India would have generated, especially



When the titans meet: England and Australia, the two best sides in the tournament, will battle it out for the top prize. REUTERS



Rival captains gear up for a tough outing

P.K. Ajith Kumar
LONDON

Sophie Molineux grew up watching cricket with her father. Some 15 years ago, she said she would one day like to watch a Test at Lord's.

Molineux is going to do better than that. She will on Sunday lead Australia in the final of the Women's T20 World Cup at the home of cricket.

The Australian captain expects a tough challenge. "It is going to be a huge challenge," she said.

"They have played some really brilliant cricket over the last few weeks. Lottie (coach Charlotte Edwards) has got the team in a really good place, and they seem to be full of confidence. And you add on to that, 30,000 English fans here at Lord's."

Molineux, however, pointed out that her team matched up well against England.

"We don't look too far into the past, but we should be very confident heading into this," she

said. "And if we just look at how we want to play and what we can do."

Her counterpart Nat Sciver-Brunt is also relishing the challenge.

"Every time we come up against Australia, it is going to be a tough battle," said the England captain.

"Both teams have got players that have got massive experience, and also some youngsters who are hugely talented as well."

She is glad that her team is a nice blend of youth and experience.

"We have had some great performances from Freya (Kemp) and Dani (Gibson), obviously, with the bat, taking the game on in the last five-six overs," Sciver-Brunt said.

"And Kemp has been bowling really well and sticking to her skills."

Looking ahead to the summit clash with a most familiar rival, she said: "Finales like this don't come around that often."

Among those watching the final at Lord's will be Mark Molineux, Sophie's dad.

Today's match

THE FINAL

 vs 

Lord's, 8.00 p.m. IST

HEAD-TO-HEAD

Played: 45

England 21 | Australia 23

NR 1

LIVE ON STAR SPORTS 1 & JIOHOTSTAR

tively, to draw inspiration from.

Bethell's blitz and Curran's spell do it for England



Game-changer: Bethell took advantage of some poor bowling by India. REUTERS

SCOREBOARD

INDIA

Abhishek Sharma c Banton b Curran 43 (24b, 8x4, 1x6), Vaibhav Sooryavanshi st. Buttler b Jacks 14 (10b, 2x6), Ishan Kishan c Dawson b Curran 49 (40b, 6x4), Shreyas Iyer c Banton b Dawson 37 (22b, 3x4, 1x6), Shivam Dube c Banton b Curran 5 (7b), Tilak Varma (not out) 24 (11b, 1x4, 2x6), Axar Patel run out 2 (3b), Harshit Rana c Buttler b Archer 6 (3b, 1x6); Extras (lb-1, w-9): 10; Total (for seven wkts. in 20 overs): 190.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-50 (Sooryavanshi, 4.5 overs), 2-65 (Abhishek, 5.6), 3-130 (Shreyas, 12.6), 4-146 (Dube, 15.6), 5-157 (Kishan, 17.2), 6-165 (Axar, 18.3), 7-190 (Harshit, 19.6).

ENGLAND BOWLING

Archer 4-0-40-1, Tongue 4-0-46-0, Jacks 3-0-22-1, Curran 4-0-33-3, Dawson 3-0-27-1, Rashid 2-0-21-0.

ENGLAND

Phil Salt c Kishan b Arshdeep 0 (1b), Jos Buttler c Varun b Arshdeep 0 (3b), Harry Brook c Kishan b Axar 39 (15b, 4x4, 3x6), Jacob Bethell (not out) 76 (46b, 5x4, 5x6), Tom Banton c Tilak b Arshdeep 39 (32b, 6x4), Will Jacks lbw b Varun 9 (8b, 1x4), Sam Curran c Sooryavanshi bt Harshit 7 (5b, 1x4), Jofra Archer (not out) 10 (7b, 1x4); Extras (lb-4, nb-3, w-4): 11; Total (for six wkts. in 19 overs): 191.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-0 (Salt, 0.1), 2-1 (Buttler, 0.5), 3-51 (Brook, 4.4), 4-118 (Banton, 12.6), 5-133 (Jacks, 15.2), 6-179 (Curran, 17.4).

INDIA BOWLING

Arshdeep 4-0-40-3, Harshit 3-0-30-1, Bishnoi 4-0-60-0, Axar 4-0-20-1, Varun 4-0-37-1.

Toss: India; PoM: Bethell.

England won by four wickets with one over to spare to lead five-match series 1-0.

Third T20: July 7, Nottingham, 10 p.m. IST.

INDIA IN ENGLAND

Press Trust of India
MANCHESTER

England rode on an unbeaten 76 from Jacob Bethell to beat India by four wickets in the second T20I and take a 1-0 lead in the five-match series here on Saturday.

Bethell smashed five sixes and an equal number of fours in his 46-ball knock as England chased down the target of 191 in 19 overs.

England was jolted early when left-arm pacer Arshdeep Singh dismissed the openers – Phil Salt and Jos Buttler – for ducks in a sen-

sational opening over.

However, skipper Harry Brook (39), Bethell and Tom Banton (39) rebuilt the innings before the left-hander steered the team home. Leg-spinner Ravi Bishnoi had a miserable day, bowling no-balls and witnessing the free hit deliveries getting smashed for sixes.

His spell (4-0-60-0) proved a turning point in England's chase.

Earlier, the visitors posted 190 for seven after Vaibhav Sooryavanshi made his much-awaited debut.

However, his innings lasted just 10 balls and he hammered two sixes before being stumped by But-

ler off Will Jacks for 14.

The extra bounce and cross-winds on a skiddy surface made batting difficult for the 15-year-old, who became the youngest man to play for India.

Sooryavanshi, however, provided a glimpse of what he was capable of during his short stay – a whip-scoop off Jofra Archer that sailed over the fence and a powerful shot off Josh Tongue that went into the stands over wide long-on.

Opener Abhishek Sharma (43, 24b, 8x4, 1x6), Ishan Kishan (49, 40b, 6x4) and skipper Shreyas Iyer (37, 22b, 3x4, 1x6) were the major contributors.

Just when the Men in

Blue looked set for a big total, left-arm seamer Sam Curran choked the run-flow with a superb spell (4-0-33-3).

Tilak Varma (24 n.o., 11b, 1x4, 2x6), whose batting approach has been heavily criticised, scored 17 off Archer in the final over of the innings to take India to 190.

Despite striking early, the visitors couldn't stop the hosts.

Incidentally, it would have been doubly sweet for Bethell, whose incredible knock almost took England to victory in a high-scoring thriller in the T20 World Cup semifinal against India in March.

Swiatek's title defence crumbles

WIMBLEDON

Agence France-Presse
LONDON

Reigning champion Iga Swiatek was dumped out of Wimbledon in the third round on Saturday as an inspired Alexandra Eala created more history for the Philippines with a straight-set victory on Centre Court.

Eala edged a dramatic 84-minute first set before powering to a 7-6(9), 6-2 victory over a stunned Swiatek to reach the last 16.

"It's difficult to describe I'm in the second week of a Slam and it's incredible for me," said Eala.

It is six-time Grand Slam champion Swiatek's earliest exit from a Major since another third-round defeat, by Yulia Putintseva, also at Wimbledon two years ago.

Eala will be bidding to become the first player from the Philippines to reach a singles Grand Slam quarterfinal since Felicisimo Ampon at the 1953 French Open.



Giant-killer: Eala can scarcely believe her win over Swiatek. AP

7(4), 1-6 to Elise Mertens. Rybakina, 27, also endured a disappointing early departure from the recent French Open, losing to Yulia Starodubtseva in the second round.

The Russia-born Kazakh

has failed to make it past the third round on her last two visits to south-west London.

Serena pulls out Meanwhile, Serena Williams pulled out of the dou-

bles with her sister Venus after failing to recover from a knee injury.

Men's French Open champion Alexander Zverev brushed aside American Marcos Giron 6-2, 7-6(4), 6-4.

IMPORTANT RESULTS

Men: Third round: 5-de Minaur (Aus) bt Svajda (USA) 6-2, 5-7, 6-2, 6-4.

9-Cobolli (Ita) bt 19-Khachanov 0-6, 7-6(4), 6-7(5), 6-2, 6-2; 13-Lehecka (Cze) bt Munar (Esp) 6-4, 6-4, 4-6, 6-4; 2-Zverev (Ger) bt Giron (USA) 6-2, 7-6(4), 6-4.

Women: Third round: Krueger (USA) bt Snigur (Ukr) 6-3, 6-2; 12-Kostyuk (Ukr) bt 23-Navarro (USA) 6-2, 4-6, 6-1; 13-Paolini (Ita) bt Sakkari (Gre) 6-1, 6-2; 29-Eala (Phi) bt 3-Swiatek (Pol) 7-6(9), 6-2; 21-Bouzskova (Cze) bt Samsonova 4-6, 7-6(3), 6-4; 25-Mertens (Bel) bt 2-Rybakina

(Kaz) 7-6(4), 6-1.

26-Keys (USA) bt 6-Anisimova (USA) 3-6, 6-2, 6-3; 9-Noskova (Cze) bt 17-Cirstea (Rom) 2-6, 6-3, 7-6(9).

Fallen seeds: Men: 19-Khachanov.

Women: 2-Rybakina, 3-Swiatek, 6-Anisimova, 17-Cirstea.

Antonelli wins sprint race and takes pole

FORMULA ONE

Associated Press
SILVERSTONE

Kimi Antonelli returned to winning ways in Formula 1 with a sprint race victory and pole position for the British Grand Prix on a day of struggles for his title rival George Russell.

After overtaking Lewis Hamilton to deny the British star a crowd-pleasing victory in the sprint, Antonelli doubled up with pole position for Sunday's race.

He went fastest on his last lap by 0.175 of a second from Ferrari's Charles Leclerc, with Hamilton third.

Russell was fourth in the sprint and then again in qualifying, after contact



Perfect day: Antonelli denied Hamilton a victory in the sprint and doubled up with the pole. AFP

with the wall early on, and will start Sunday's race behind the two Ferraris.

Electrical power Hamilton started on pole and held off Antonelli until lap eight of 17, when the

Italian swept past with the help of electrical power.

"Let's go! Let's go!" Antonelli told the team over the radio after taking the win.

"It was a very fun first 10 laps with Lewis, we were both pushing very hard," Antonelli added later. "Obviously the momentum is there and we are doing a great job together with the team."

The race was a prime example of F1 in 2026, with the strategy of charging and deploying electrical power central to the battles on track.

It allowed drivers like Lando Norris to swap places with rivals lap after lap but also meant drivers lifting off through Silverstone's best-known fast

corners to recharge power.

Hamilton was back fighting for a win again after a breakthrough victory last month at the Barcelona-Catalunya Grand Prix, his first since moving to Ferrari last year.

Qualifying results:

1. Antonelli (Mercedes); 2. Leclerc (Ferrari); 3. Hamilton (Ferrari); 4. Russell (Mercedes); 5. Hadjar (Red Bull); 6. Norris (McLaren); 7. Verstappen (Red Bull); 8. Piastri (McLaren); 9. Lindblad (Racing Bulls).

10. Lawson (Racing Bulls); 11. Borteletto (Audi); 12. Gasly (Alpine); 13. Hülkenberg (Audi); 14. Bearman (Haas); 15. Sainz (Williams); 16. Albon (Williams); 17. Ocon (Haas).

18. Bottas (Cadillac); 19. Colapinto (Alpine); 20. Pérez (Cadillac).

21. Stroll (Aston Martin); 22. Alonso (Aston Martin).

Vingegaard takes Tour de France lead

Agence France-Presse
BARCELONA

Jonas Vingegaard took the first leader's yellow jersey of the 113th edition of the Tour de France as his Visma-Lease a Bike outfit won Saturday's opening team time-trial in Barcelona.

Vingegaard will wear the yellow jersey on Sunday for the first time since he last won the Grand Bou-

cle in 2023.

He finished the 19.6km course eight seconds quicker than Filippo Ganna for Netcompany Ineos, with reigning champion Tadej Pogacar earning third place for UAE Team Emirates at 12sec.

Throughout the stage, Visma had been almost neck-and-neck with Netcompany and the Lidl-Trek team of Spaniard Juan Ayu-

so. But Visma went quicker over the second half and Vingegaard made the difference on the final 800m uphill drag to the finish.

Pogacar ended like a rocket for UAE, who had been fourth at all three time-checks, to snatch third place from Ayuso, who was 16 seconds off Vingegaard's time.

World and Olympic time-trial champion Rem-

co Evenepoel also finished strongly to take fifth for Red Bull-Bora Hansgrohe at 19 seconds.

There was also an impressive debut at the Tour for teenage French prodigy Paul Seixas who took sixth place for his Decathlon CMA CGM team, which had been as low as 15th at the first time-check and still down in ninth at the third.

KERALA



Debilitating disability

Parents of children with chronic diseases are struggling to manage their lives and the medical treatment of their wards, finds C. Maya. Experts in the field highlight the need to evolve a societal support system for such families

Taking a toll: Most parents of children with chronic disabilities requiring lifelong medical care are exhausted physically, emotionally and financially. They are caregivers 24×7, sleep-deprived, and depressed. FILE PHOTO

It was a rain-drenched Thursday, and yet there was no let-up in the crowd thronging the corridors of the paediatric outpatient (OP) clinics at Sree Avittom Thirunal (SAT) Hospital, Thiruvananthapuram. Outside one of the clinics sat Vijay*, brooding, scrolling through the picture gallery on his mobile phone.

He points to the picture of a young girl, in pig-tails, smiling into the camera.

“The picture was taken when she was four years old. My little one would hop and skip, hang on to my hand and insist on sitting in front of my bike every time I took her out. Everything changed when she turned five and had to be hospitalised after a seizure,” he says as a lone tear streaks down his cheek.

Six-year-old Anusree* is today a ghost of her former self. She is mute, bedridden, on oxygen support at home and is fed through a Ryle’s tube. Last year, she had to be put on ventilator support at the hospital five times. Vijay, her father, who runs a small business, has run up a debt of over ₹50 lakh to treat his only daughter, hoping that someday he can again take her on a bike ride.

But her prognosis for cognitive and functional decline due to developmental epileptic encephalopathies with myoclonic seizures is poor.

Nilina Jacob*, a Kannur native, has been staying in a rented house in Thiruvananthapuram for two years, alone with her younger daughter aged two years, who suffers from Pompe disease, a rare inherited neuromuscular disorder, and is on continuous oxygen support.

She gave up her job, left her eight-year-old son in the care of her family, and came to the city to provide better, more affordable medical care at SAT Hospital. The child requires enzyme replacement therapy, a prohibitively expensive treatment, for survival. She had to be rushed to the paediatric Intensive Care Unit of the hospital several times during the past few months. Yet, Nilina refuses to give up.

“It has been financially and emotionally draining. I cannot even sleep at night because I fear that she might stop breathing. My husband is struggling to raise money for the treatment. My son cries over the phone at night because he misses me. The loneliness is terrible at times,” she says breaking into a sob.

Lifelong care

Vijay and Nilina are two representatives of the hundreds of parents who frequent the paediatric palliative clinic at SAT Hospital; people whose lives changed forever when they discovered that their precious child has chronic disabilities requiring lifelong medical care.

These parents are exhausted physically, emotionally and financially. They are caregivers 24×7, sleep-deprived, depressed and for whom a pack of diapers has come to be more valuable than anything else in life.

While Kerala takes pride in its low infant mortality rate, one of the lowest in the country, the celebrated Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICE) survival rates are now telling the other side of the story – a growing downstream burden of children with neurodevelopmental disabilities, musculoskeletal disorders, congenital deformities and other chronic diseases.

Lack of proper follow-up

The rigour of the health system of Kerala in ensuring the survival of every infant has not been matched by investment in ensuring proper follow-up and good developmental outcomes. A child saved in a NICU at 28 or even 24 weeks may go on to live with cerebral palsy, epileptic disor-



Proportion of children with complex, chronic and debilitating conditions has grown exponentially over the decade. Their care requirements are not something families can handle on their own

P. G. HARIPRASAD
Doctor

ders or genetic conditions for years, while the families bearing that burden remain marginalised and invisible to the system, say medical experts.

“Over the years, we managed to bring down infant mortality drastically, but mortality has been replaced by morbidity. The proportion of children with complex, chronic and debilitating conditions has grown exponentially over the decade. Their care requirements are not something families can handle on their own,” observes P. G. Hariprasad, Professor of Paediatrics, SAT Hospital, who runs a specialty OP clinic on Thursdays along with Pallium India, an NGO, which offers palliative care to children with chronic disabilities.

Counselling is offered to parents on care issues and needy families are provided with consumables like diapers, air beds and wheelchairs.

Kerala lacks a comprehensive study on the prevalence of major neurodevelopmental disorders and chronic disabilities in children in the State.

However, CDC Kerala 16, a survey covering over one lakh children below six years in Thiruvananthapuram in 2014, had identified that 3.08% of the surveyed were positive for developmental issues and multiple disabilities.

A 2025 study in Puthupally, Kottayam, reported an overall prevalence of neurodevelopmental disorders of 1.38% among children under 12 years.

Neurodevelopmental disability

A prospective cohort study from a tertiary Kerala NICU in 2016 found a 6.2% incidence of major neurodevelopmental disability at one-year corrected age among preterm babies born at or before 33 weeks.

The rising proportion of preterm and low-birth-weight (< 2.5 kg) [LBW] births in Kerala compounds this picture. State Health department data for 2023-24 puts preterm births at 7.21% and LBW newborns at 14% of live births.

“Roughly, of the 994 babies that survive out of every 1,000 live births in the State annually, between 6-7% go on to develop minor and major disabilities. A significant number of children are being annually added to a cohort that needs continuous care and support,” notes a senior

Health official. In 2018, the National Health Mission Kerala launched Shalabham, a comprehensive newborn screening programme for early identification, referral and management of defects at birth, diseases, deficiencies, and developmental delays for all children up to 18 years.

In private sector

Though around 40 lakh children under two years of age were screened for birth defects, the data are fragmented because 78% of Kerala’s births take place in the private sector and only a tiny fraction of these children might later come into the public health system.

Kerala cannot build a digitised registry of birth defects unless the private sector is formally engaged, with data-sharing agreements, experts feel.

Having a child, whose chronic illness course is unpredictable, leaves serious physical, psychological and financial consequences on the family.

A child with a chronic neurologic or neuromuscular condition typically has multiple comorbidities – intellectual and speech disabilities. They may also face issues of epilepsy, swallowing difficulties, chronic pain, vision or hearing impairment and behavioural and mental health challenges. They require physiotherapy, occupational and speech therapies regularly. They are also highly susceptible to aspiration pneumonia and repeated urinary and gastrointestinal infections, necessitating frequent hospitalisations, say doctors.

Impact on family

“The demands of such debilitating illnesses on an ordinary family are overwhelming. Monthly spending on diapers alone can exceed ₹10,000.

A child saved in a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at 28 or 24 weeks may go on to live with cerebral palsy, epileptic disorders or genetic conditions for years, while families bearing that burden remain marginalised and invisible to the system



The State lacks a comprehensive study on prevalence of major neurodevelopmental disorders and chronic disabilities in children. FILE PHOTO

There are a large number of cases where the mothers are forced to shoulder the entire care burden with the father abandoning the family. Every hospital visit is a financial drain for them. The neglect and desolation that the ‘normal’ sibling faces is hard,” says Sangeeta Suresh, a palliative expert.

Physical burden

The physical burden intensifies as the child grows. “Once girls attain puberty, maintaining menstrual hygiene becomes a task. A mother told us during a counselling session that she has to wait until her elder child returns from school as she cannot single-handedly change the sanitary pads of her bedridden daughter,” Dr. Hariprasad recounts.

Globally, an estimated 6% of palliative care needs are in children. Yet, palliative care continues to be associated almost exclusively with end-of-life care for adults with terminal diseases. Even paediatricians are yet to fully recognise the palliative care needs of children with chronic conditions. The children could face daily physical issues like pain, breathlessness, spasticity, feeding difficulties, seizures and sleep disruption, which shall be managed alongside psycho-social concerns, Dr. Hariprasad points out.

The absence of any paediatric-specific community infrastructure for palliative care is a core systemic gap. Children are diagnosed, given a treatment plan and then largely left to families to manage at home, with no structured mechanism for ongoing symptom monitoring, pain assessment or psychological support between hospital admissions, he points out.

“Paediatric palliative care needs to be introduced right from the time of diagnosis to support families from the beginning. The community should step up and share its burden. Money cannot resolve all the problems. Sometimes, reassuring these families that they are not alone is what is needed,” suggests Dr. Sangeeta.

The State Palliative Care Policy assigns responsibility for palliative care to local self-government bodies, which are mandated to implement ward-level services through local medical officers and primary health-care teams. This has not been happening consistently.

Shalabham refers identified children to District Early Intervention Centres (DEIC), which have multidisciplinary teams to offer therapies and follow-up care. But the DEICs are overwhelmed with caseload.

‘Not easily accessible’

Located in major secondary care hospitals, these are not easily accessible to families with bedridden children.

“The children with developmental disabilities should be continuously monitored at specific intervals, given speech, physio, occupational therapies and readied for rehabilitation by the time they turn six years. Our aim should be to reduce the complexities of the disability so that they can be rehabilitated well,” a senior Health official says.

“It is not that the State did not try. At one point, we had the DEICs, then Regional Early Intervention Centres at medical colleges and two mobile intervention units in each district. But the patient load was too much to handle. We need to reinstate this three-tier structure and establish rehabilitation centres alongside the DEICs, to which children can be eased into after they turn six years of age,” he suggests.

(*Names have been changed to protect the privacy of individuals)

ANDHRA PRADESH



Trainer D. Venkata Sai with remand prisoners enrolled for the ‘Office Assistant’ rehabilitation initiative launched by the Visakhapatnam Central Jail authorities in collaboration with the SDI, at the Gnanasagar education block of Visakhapatnam Central Jail. K.R. DEEPAK

Learning skills for life away from crime

The first-of-its-kind digital programme in Andhra Pradesh jails is steering remand prisoners toward meaningful employment after serving prison time. Primarily targeting individuals booked under the NDPS Act, the initiative focuses on rehabilitation and future financial independence of the inmates, explores **Harish Gilai**

Young men in crisp blue uniforms file quietly into a book-lined classroom, each carrying a stack of textbooks. In a room adorned with motivational slogans about discipline, hard work, and success, they settle into neat rows, waiting for the day’s lesson to begin. Moments later, trainer D. Venkata Sai walks in with a book tucked under his arm. The class rises to greet him before settling in for a practical session on computer hardware and system troubleshooting. Questions come thick and fast, and the discussion soon expands to how artificial intelligence is reshaping the technological landscape.

At first glance, the scene appears to be that of a college or a skill development centre. But in reality, it is actually inside the Visakhapatnam Central Jail, and the students are not ordinary learners but remand prisoners, with the trainer being a convict prisoner.

As it turns out, the young remand prisoners are participating in an innovative rehabilitation initiative called the ‘Office Assistant’ programme, launched by the Visakhapatnam Central Jail authorities in collaboration with the Skill Development Institute (SDI). The programme is the brainchild of Central Jail Superintendent Mahesh Babu and Deputy Superintendent Ch. Surya Kumar, both of whom have professional backgrounds in Information Technology.

It aims to equip young remand prisoners in the age group of 18 to 35 with basic computer knowledge and office management skills, enabling them to improve their employment prospects after their release. It primarily targets inmates charged under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, who account for nearly 60 per cent of the prison’s inmate population.

To guide these underqualified youth, the prison authorities looked inward, finding an instructor with an exceptional academic background—D. Venkata Sai. A native of Anakapalli district, Venkata Sai is a convict serving a sentence for abetment in a suicide case. He graduated from the Indian Institute of Technology Madras and holds a Ph.D. in Chemical Engineering. Over the years, he has worked with prestigious organisations and now spends his time training young remand prisoners in digital and office skills inside the Visakhapatnam Central Jail.

Looking ahead, Venkata Sai explains that the programme has been designed to begin with the fundamentals before gradually introducing advanced concepts. “We started with the basics, including the different components of a computer, storage devices, connected devices, printers, scanners, photocopiers and their purposes. Once the inmates became familiar with the hardware, we moved on to practical applications such as Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, cloud storage, data backup, routine office procedures and the maintenance of office equipment.”

Hoping of helping them rebuild their lives, he says, “Besides technical skills, I am also training them in basic English communication, behavioural skills, and body language so that they become more confident while attending interviews and



When this course was introduced, I saw it as an opportunity and decided that instead of spending my time doing nothing, I wanted to learn something useful. I am putting in my best effort because once I am released, I want to secure a respectable job and begin a new life

K. SAI KALYAN
Remand prisoner

working in professional environments.”

The programme is open to remand prisoners who have completed Class X, a qualification possessed by most of them. The first batch has already completed nearly a month of training and has another month remaining before the course concludes. According to Venkata Sai, the response has been overwhelming. “The students are extremely sincere. They attend every class with enthusiasm, ask questions, and are eager to learn. Many of them had never operated a computer before, but today they are comfortably using office applications and understanding concepts that are relevant in modern workplaces,” he says.

Hopes and dreams

Such positive outcomes align perfectly with the broader objectives of the jail authorities. Recognising that many of these inmates are at a critical stage in their lives, the jail administration believes that skill development can play a significant role in preventing them from returning to crime. By providing structured training in computer operations, office applications, and digital literacy, the authorities hope to prepare them for meaningful employment and successful reintegration into society.

Driven by this vision, the jail authorities had established ‘Gnanasagar’ block, a dedicated education wing with the objective of transforming lives through learning. The block houses a well-equipped computer laboratory, a spacious classroom, and a large library stocked with books spanning various subjects, genres, and perspectives. It also serves as a learning centre for inmates preparing for open school examinations, Intermediate, and degree courses. Behind this academic block lies a peaceful garden where inmates spend time reading, reflecting, and preparing for examinations in a calm environment.

For some, the change has been welcome. Among them is K. Sai Kalyan, 28, a remand prisoner booked under the NDPS Act, who recalls that a series of unfortunate decisions brought him here. “I never imagined my life would take such a drastic turn. I made mistakes without understanding the consequences. When this course was introduced, I saw it as an opportunity and decided that instead of spending my time doing nothing, I wanted to learn something useful. We are learning different computer applications and office software. I am putting in my best



effort because once I am released, I want to secure a respectable job and begin a new life,” he says. Another 26-year-old remand prisoner, booked under the NDPS Act, who dropped out after Intermediate, expresses deep regret over the activities that landed him in prison. “I understand the pain my family is going through because of my mistakes. Every day here reminds me of how one wrong decision changed the entire course of my life. This programme has given me hope that I can rebuild my life. I want to complete this course, find a decent job after my release, and support my parents and family. I don’t want them to suffer because of my actions,” he shares on an emotional note.

Challenges

Such remand prisoners’ background reflects a broader regional challenge that prison authorities are trying to tackle at its roots. Until a few years ago, parts of the Alluri Sitharama Raju (ASR) district and the Andhra-Odisha Border (AOB) region were known for illegal ganja cultivation. Although stringent enforcement measures and the formation of the Elite Anti-Narcotics Group for Law Enforcement (Eagle) have drastically reduced cultivation in Andhra Pradesh, the crop continues to be grown in certain parts of neighboring Odisha.

The contraband is often transported through transit routes passing across ASR, Anakapalli, and Visakhapatnam districts. In the process, several unemployed youngsters from Anakapalli, ASR, Vizianagaram and nearby regions are lured into the illegal trade with promises of quick money, expensive mobile phones, and easy earnings. Many are recruited merely as pilots or escorts for smuggling vehicles without fully understanding the legal consequences. By the time they realise the seriousness of the offences, they often find themselves facing cases under the NDPS Act. Prison officials believe initiatives such as the ‘Office Assistant’ programme can help prevent such youngsters from returning to crime.



Visakhapatnam Central Jail has always encouraged inmates to learn skills. This time, we wanted to introduce a programme that matches today’s employment landscape and supports the government’s vision of creating a technology-driven workforce.

CH. SURYA KUMAR
Central Jail Deputy Superintendent

returning to crime.

For over a decade, the Visakhapatnam Central Jail has focused on skill development and rehabilitation by equipping inmates with vocational training aimed at improving their employability and helping them reintegrate into society after their release. In association with the Skill Development Institute (SDI), the prison has conducted a range of training programmes in trades such as plumbing, welding, carpentry, tailoring and jute bag manufacturing. Building on this legacy, the prison has now introduced the ‘Office Assistant’ training programme, a first-of-its-kind initiative in the Andhra Pradesh prison system.

For K. Gowri Naidu from Vizianagaram, who has been in judicial remand for the past three months in connection with a family dispute case, the programme has opened up new possibilities. “I have been attending these classes for the past month and have learned many useful skills. This is a wonderful opportunity for people like us. If everything goes well after my release, I want to start an internet centre and earn my livelihood honestly,” he says.

To deliver on this promise, the programme follows a rigorous daily routine. Every day, Venkata Sai conducts one-and-a-half hours of classroom teaching, followed by another one-and-a-half

hours of practical training in the computer laboratory. During the practical sessions, inmates receive hands-on experience in operating computers, preparing documents, creating presentations, and handling office software under the trainer’s close supervision.

This programme is inspired by the State government’s emphasis on digital transformation and the rapid expansion of the IT sector across North Andhra, particularly in Visakhapatnam. Conceptualised by Central Jail Superintendent Mahesh Babu and Deputy Superintendent Ch. Surya Kumar, the initiative seeks to prepare inmates for employment opportunities in the modern digital economy.

Tech-driven future

Outlining the initiative’s goals, Deputy Superintendent Ch. Surya Kumar says, “Visakhapatnam Central Jail has always encouraged inmates to learn skills. This time, we wanted to introduce a programme that matches today’s employment landscape and supports the government’s vision of creating a technology-driven workforce. If these youngsters acquire digital skills and secure jobs after their release, it will transform their lives and significantly reduce the chances of them returning to crime.”

He says currently the jail houses around 1,600 inmates, including nearly 350 convicted prisoners, while the remaining are remand prisoners. According to him, nearly 60 per cent of the inmates have been booked under the NDPS Act. A majority of them belong to the age group 18 to 35, with many hailing from tribal communities, the Andhra-Odisha Border (AOB) region and neighbouring districts. Several of these youngsters become involved in drug-related offences without fully understanding the long-term consequences of their actions, he adds.

The ‘Office Assistant’ programme is being implemented in collaboration with the Skill Development Institute, which has provided study materials, books and training content. Upon successful completion of the programme, participants will receive certificates issued by the SDI. Importantly, the certificates will not indicate that the course was completed inside a prison, thereby ensuring that the beneficiaries are not subjected to stigma while seeking employment.

Mr. Surya Kumar says the prison administration is also working closely with the SDI to facilitate employment opportunities for trained inmates after their release. Since the SDI regularly organises job melas across different locations, the jail authorities are exploring ways to ensure that eligible candidates are given an opportunity to participate in these recruitment drives. “We are coordinating with the Skill Development Institute so that these youngsters can attend job melas after completing the course. Our hope is that they secure meaningful employment and begin a new chapter in their lives with dignity and self-reliance,” he says.

This digital training builds upon a long-standing culture of rehabilitation within the facility. Over the years, the jail authorities have partnered with various organisations to help inmates learn diverse skills, such as manufacturing furniture, blankets, garments, and jute products.

Even during the COVID-19 pandemic, the prison earned widespread appreciation for manufacturing face masks. Today, in addition to these vocational activities, inmates operate a popular bakery and cultivate vegetables using organic farming methods. All of these inmate-made products—including the bakery items, fresh vegetables, and homemade food—are sold through a dedicated store outside the prison premises, which has become popular among residents of the surrounding areas.

By bridging the gap between historical rehabilitation and the modern digital economy, the Visakhapatnam Central Jail is providing these young remand prisoners with a new start toward a crime-free future.