



A.P. MINISTER NARA LOKESH
'Defeat of delimitation Bill is south India's loss'
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Nothing wrong in caste count: SC; rejects plea against move

Not within the court's domain to decide if it should necessarily be part of Census 2027, says CJI; until the 2011 Census, the exercise included the systematic enumeration of only the SCs and STs

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday said there was nothing wrong in the government of the day ascertaining caste as part of the ongoing nationwide Census exercise.

"Any government of the day must know how many people are backward and how many need welfare. This is a matter of policy," Chief Justice of India Surya Kant, heading a three-judge Bench, said.

The top court was responding to a plea filed by petitioner-in-person Sudhakar Gummula that caste enumeration should not be made part of Census 2027.

"There are endless possibilities of politicians and corporate entities misus-



Any government of the day must know how many people are backward and how many need welfare. This is a matter of policy.

SURYA KANT
Chief Justice of India



ing the caste data. There is no justification for gathering such a large tract of data on caste," Mr. Gummula submitted.

The Chief Justice said it was not within the top court's domain to decide whether a caste enumeration should necessarily be a part of Census 2027 or not.

"This issue exclusively comes within the policy domain," the CJI said before the court dismissed the petition.

The Cabinet Committee

on Political Affairs had decided to include caste enumeration in Census 2027 at a meeting held in April 2025.

Since then, caste enumeration has emerged as a major feature of the Census.

Until the 2011 Census, the exercise had included the systematic enumeration of only Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

The government had said on the floor of Parliament about the incorpora-

tion of the caste enumeration in the second phase of Census 2027.

Two phases

The first phase involved the collection of the House Listing Operation (HLO) information regarding housing conditions, assets, amenities and so on of each household.

The second phase, Population Enumeration, would involve the collection of demographic, socio-economic, cultural and other details.

Former Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar had said that "thoughtfully collected caste data would be an instrument of integration, like an MRI of the body".

The last comprehensive nationwide caste Census was conducted in colonial India in 1931.

India, Italy seal defence pact, boost ties to 'special strategic partnership'

Kallol Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

India and Italy have been in continuous contact over the conflicts in Ukraine and West Asia, said Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday, reiterating his call for "dialogue and diplomacy" to resolve the festering wars.

Delivering a press statement in Rome at the end of his multi-nation Europe trip, Mr. Modi described India-Italy relation as a "win-win partnership", and welcomed the upgrade of bilateral ties to the level of "Special Strategic Partnership".

"We have remained in continuous contact over Ukraine, West Asia, and other areas of hostilities. India has a clear position that all problems should be resolved through dialogue and diplomacy," Mr. Modi said in his press statement.

"I am happy that we are upgrading our ties to the level of Special Strategic

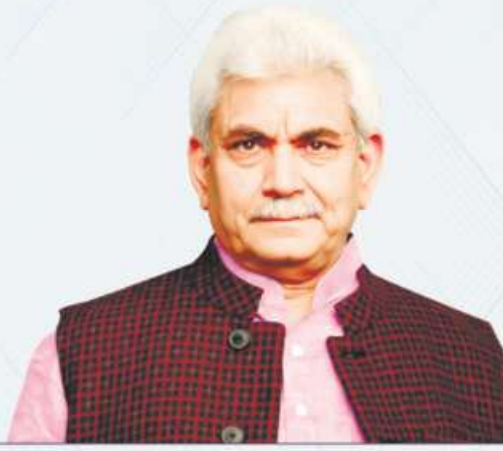


Prime Minister Narendra Modi gifts 'Melody' toffees to Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni in Rome on Wednesday. ANI


Partnership," Mr. Modi added.

The Ministry of External Affairs said that the Special Strategic Partnership would lead to strengthened cooperation in trade, technology, defence, clean energy and innovation and in the field of mobility of skilled and non-skilled workers through safe and secure channels.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 12







Shri Manoj Sinha
Hon'ble Lieutenant Governor, UT of J&K



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INBRIEF



CM Gupta launches ₹10-crore talent hunt scheme for youth

Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Wednesday launched the "Talent Hunt Scheme - Hauslon Ki Udaan 2026-27" to identify and nurture young talent in the city. The competition will feature seven major categories. Winners will receive cash prizes of ₹2.5 lakh for first place, ₹2 lakh for second, ₹1.5 lakh for third, and ₹1 lakh for fourth, with a total outlay of ₹10 crore for the scheme, according to the Chief Minister's Office. Participants can compete in classical and folk music, as well as classical, folk, and contemporary dance forms. Other categories include fine arts, sculpture, pottery, and theatre.

IIT hosts 120 govt. school girls under STEM mentorship plan

As many as 120 girls from schools across Delhi-NCR participated in IIT Delhi's STEM mentorship programme, aimed at encouraging them to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). The fifth edition of the programme, Manasvi, concluded recently, the institute stated in a release on Wednesday. All participants this year were students from government schools. Each day began with an informal session followed by academic or leadership sessions conducted by faculty members. Students built solar lamps and conducted molecular biology experiments, among other activities, the institute said.

Consider plea on *Dhurandhar* sequel baring intel, Centre told

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday asked the Centre and the censor board to consider a petition raising concerns that the film *Dhurandhar: The Revenge* reveals tactical and sensitive information about the country's intelligence and defence operations. The court said the concern raised by the petitioner was not without merit, adding that while movies are made for entertainment, their impact cannot be denied. The petitioner contended that the film violated the Official Secrets Act by disclosing details of tactical operations and sensitive locations and "directly compromised the safety of our undercover agents".

Police nab 89 in month-long crackdown on cybercrime

Raids, arrests conducted across States in April during investigations into digital arrests, investment frauds, fake dating apps and mule accounts involving ₹70 cr. of siphoned-off money: DCP (West)

Shrimansi Kaushik
NEW DELHI

Thirty-five individuals were arrested and 54 held under preventive custody in an inter-State month-long crackdown against cybercrime by the West district's Cyber Police unit, an officer said on Wednesday.

The crackdown was part of investigations into various cybercrimes, including digital arrests, investment frauds, fake dating memberships, and mule account operations, involving a total of ₹70 crore of siphoned-off money.

Hundreds of SIM and ATM cards were also recovered during raids and arrests conducted in April, said the police.

"Multiple dedicated teams worked day and night on technical surveillance, financial trail analysis, digital intelligence gathering and coordinated inter-State raids last month, leading to these arrests, which exposed highly organised cyber networks involved in routing and laundering cheated



Ashok Kumar, Suraj Kumar, Deepu Kumar and Vivek Kumar were arrested for the digital arrest of a senior citizen. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

money through mule accounts, cryptocurrency and layered transactions," said Deputy Commissioner of Police (West) Darade Sharad Bhaskar.

Dramatic escape bid

In one case, the police found a sophisticated mule account and OTP routing syndicate operating from Karampura. "On April 12, a team comprising Sub-Inspectors and head constables raided the premises from where the syndicate was being operated," stated a release from the DCP's Office.

As the team reached the spot, the accused tried to escape by jumping from the fourth floor of the multi-storey building. "However, all accused - Bittoo Chaudhary, Lavish Chugh, Rishi, Arun Singh, Ashish and Deepak Bhatt - were arrested. They were found to be in possession of ATM cards, SIM cards, banking documents and credentials of mule account holders," read the statement.

"Further investigation revealed that 35 NCRP (National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal) complaints amounting to a total of ₹40

crore were registered against them across Delhi, U.P. and M.P.," read the statement.

In another operation, the police busted a dating club membership fraud. "Fake dating club memberships have emerged as one of the most deceptive online frauds targeting emotionally vulnerable citizens," Mr. Bhaskar said.

The probe led the police to three persons, including Kartikey Choudhary, a Saharanpur-based journalist associated with a digital news outlet. He is accused of arranging and supplying 40 mule bank accounts to cyber fraud operators.

Another case was of the digital arrest of a senior citizen who was led to believe he was involved in a money-laundering case.

Officers followed the money trail and conducted raids in Ludhiana and Jamshedpur. The accused - Ashok Kumar, Suraj Kumar, Deepu Kumar and Vivek Kumar - were arrested for operating mule bank accounts and converting cheated money into cryptocurrency.

Govt. rolls out ₹473-cr. project to replace old street lights with LEDs

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Delhi government will replace nearly 96,000 street lights with energy-efficient LEDs at a cost of nearly ₹473.24 crore ahead of Deepavali, the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) said on Wednesday.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the Expenditure Finance Committee, chaired by CM Rekha Gupta earlier in the day.

The functioning of every street light will be monitored through a 'Smart Control Centre', read the CMO statement. It added that the government expects annual power savings of ₹25 crore. Public Works Department Minister Parvesh Sahib Singh and several senior officials also attended the meeting.

Ms. Gupta had proposed replacing conventional street lighting with energy-efficient smart LED systems in the 2026-27 budget in March.

The CM said the existing system has several shortcomings, adding that there is no real-time monitoring mechanism, due to which faulty street lights are identified only based on resi-



Nearly 96,000 street lights will be replaced before Deepavali, said the CMO. FILE PHOTO

idents' complaints.

"In many areas, dark spots have remained unattended for long, impacting visibility and safety. The current system also suffers from uneven lighting quality, high power consumption and light pollution due to the use of different types of fixtures," the statement quoted the CM as saying.

Ms. Gupta said the initiative will help improve women's safety, reduce accidents and provide the Capital with a modern, secure and energy-efficient lighting system.

Reiterating her commitment to complete the project before Deepavali, the CM said her government will ensure the entire city shines brightly during the festive season.

Husband, brother held for dowry death

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The police have arrested two persons, including the husband of a woman who died after a fall from a building in central Delhi's Inderpuri, on charges of dowry death, a senior officer said on Wednesday.

A PCR call was received on May 18 about a woman having fallen from a building at Holi Chowk in Das-

ghara village in Inderpuri.

A police team reached the spot and rushed her to a nearby hospital, where doctors declared her dead on arrival.

A case was registered under Section 80 (dowry death) and 3(5) (common intention) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita on Wednesday, following which the deceased's husband, Raju Singh, 27, who works as a helper in Karol Bagh, and

his younger brother Rajkumar, 22, were arrested.

Third suspect on the run Efforts are being made to trace Mr. Singh's second brother, who has also been named in the FIR, said the officer.

"The matter has been reported to the Sub-Divisional Magistrate of Karol Bagh. Further proceedings are under way," the officer added.

MCD to explore euthanasia policy for aggressive stray dogs following apex court ruling; key meeting likely today

Press Trust Of India
NEW DELHI

The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) is considering euthanasia of aggressive and demonstrably dangerous stray dogs, officials said on Wednesday, a day after the Supreme Court allowed legally permissible measures such as euthanasia in cases involving "rabid, incurably ill or demonstrably dangerous or aggressive dogs".

A meeting chaired by MCD Commissioner Sanjeev Khirwar is likely to be held on Thursday to determine the course of action and assess infrastructure for managing stray dog populations and shelters, a

The civic body plans to put in place a clear mechanism before taking any decision on euthanasia

senior official said.

On Tuesday, the apex court refused to modify its 2025 order directing all States and Union Territories to ensure removal of stray dogs from high-fall public institutions while clarifying that such dogs cannot be "re-released" even after vaccination and sterilisation.

The official said the civic body plans to put in place a step-wise mechanism before taking any decision on euthanasia. A monitoring

panel comprising representatives of the MCD and the Delhi government's Animal Husbandry Department is likely to be formed in line with the court's orders. "Just because someone claims that a dog has bitten them does not mean it will be euthanised immediately," the official said.

Dogs identified as aggressive or involved in repeated biting incidents will be taken to animal birth control centres. Sedatives may be administered for 10 to 14 days to assess behaviour. If the dog continues to show aggression despite treatment, euthanasia may be performed in the presence of two doctors, the official said.

BENGALURU SMART INFRASTRUCTURE LIMITED
Office of the Project Engineer-03, Bengaluru Smart Infrastructure Limited No.30/1, 3rd Floor, Thimmaiah Road, Miller Tank Bund Area, Vasanth Nagar, Bengaluru-560052
No: B-SMILE/PE-03/TEND/01/2026-27 Date: 20.05.2026

NOTICE INVITING TENDER(NIT)
(Through <http://kpp.karnataka.gov.in>) (Competitive Bidding under Two Cover System)

The Government of Karnataka has constituted "Bengaluru Smart Infrastructure Limited" (B-SMILE) for implementation of Specific Infrastructure works in the city of Bengaluru. On behalf of the Bengaluru Smart Infrastructure Limited (B-SMILE), The Project Engineer-03, Bengaluru Smart Infrastructure Limited (B-SMILE) invites tenders from eligible contractors registered with CPWD/KPWD / Railways / National Highway or any State Government Organizations for the development of work through Engineering Procurement & Construction (EPC) mode. The details of the work are as under.

Sl. No.	Name of the Work / Amount Put to tender/EMD/Construction Period
1	Construction of Elevated corridor from Sirsi Circle to Nayandahalli on Mysuru Road (Length 5.20 kms) in Bengaluru city under Engineering, Procurement & Construction (EPC) Mode on Lumpsum, Turkey with allowable Price Escalation using Ultra High-Performance Fiber Reinforced Concrete (UHPFRC)-based structures. Including maintenance for a period of ten years. Amount put to tender (Excluding GST) : Rs. 538.28 Crores, Earnest Money Deposit : Rs. 5.38 Crores (Rs. 1.00 Lakhs E-payment & Balance through Surety Bond/ E-BG). Construction Period : 18 Months.

Calendar of events: 1) Date and time for Availability of Tender documents in KPP Portal - 25.05.2026 at 17:30 Hours. 2) Last date for submission of pre bid queries - 04.06.2026 @ 10:00Hours. 3) Date and time of Pre-bid meeting : 05.06.2026 @ 15:00Hours. 4) Last Date and Time for receipt of tenders 24.06.2026 at 16:00 Hours. 5) Date & Time for Opening of Technical Bids : 25.06.2026 at 16:30 Hours. 6) Date & Time for Opening of Financial Bid - Will be Notified. 7) Validity of Bids : 180 days from Last Date for receipt of tenders.

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Notice Inviting Tender Dated : 20.05.2026

Raipur Development Authority (RDA) invites bids through the GeM portal from eligible bidders for the following work up to 10.06.2026 till 5:00 PM

Sr. No.	GeM Bid No.	Name of work/Description of work	Tender Amount	EMD Amount	Contract Period
1	GEM/2026/B/7561811	"Hiring of vehicles on monthly rental basis for official use in the office of Raipur Development Authority."	Rs. 93,84,000.00 (including GST)	Rs. 1.00 Lac	24 (Twenty Four) Months.

The bid documents can be viewed for <https://bidplus.gem.gov.in/all-bids> For any other information kindly visit <https://bidplus.gem.gov.in/all-bids> or bidder may contact Nodal Officer, RDA during office hours.

Nodal Officer

EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY
E-TENDER NOTICE

The Divisional Railway Manager (Engg)/ E.C. Railway/Samastipur for and on behalf of the President of India invites Open Tender from experienced and financially capable tenderers for the following works in e-Tendering mode of IREPS web portal of Indian Railways:-

- Tender Notice No. : TC-44-2026-SPJ. Name of work : Construction of Modular Training Center Building for DTSTC/SPJ (Phase-I). Tender value (In ₹) : ₹17233784.38, Earnest Money (In ₹) : ₹344700.00, Completion period of the work : 12 Months.
- Tender Notice No. : TC-45-2026-SPJ. Name of work : At Samastipur - Special repair to North side service building (Station building, Manoranjan Sansthan, C&W training school, Laundry, SSE/PWTD/SPJ etc). Tender value (In ₹) : ₹15020338.06, Earnest Money (In ₹) : ₹300400.00, Completion period of the work : 06 Months.
- Tender Notice No. : TC-46-2026-SPJ. Name of work : Balance work of special track maintenance work due to shortage of trackman in the jurisdiction of SSE/PWTD/SPJ. Tender value (In ₹) : ₹12866038.60, Earnest Money (In ₹) : ₹257300.00, Completion period of the work : 09 Months.
- Tender Notice No. : TC-47-2026-SPJ. Name of work : Balance work for side slope protection work for approaches of Major Bridges and between KM 3 to KM 5 in DBG bypass line. Tender value (In ₹) : ₹42686872.77, Earnest Money (In ₹) : ₹853700.00, Completion period of the work : 12 Months.

1. Last Date & time for receiving of Tender in E-Tender mode on IREPS web portal : 12.06.2026 upto 12.00 hours. 2. Opening Date & time for E-Tender : 12.06.2026 after 12.00 hours. 3. Website particulars where complete details of tender & tender document can be seen on website : www.ireps.gov.in. Amendments/modifications if any shall not be published in the newspapers but the same shall be uploaded in the website.

Sr. Divisional Engineer/Co-ord/ ECR/Samastipur
PR/0267/SPJ/Engg./T/26-27/64

TAMILNADU POWER GENERATION CORPORATION LIMITED
Notice Inviting Tenders (E-Tendering Process)

Specification No.	Tender Inviting Authority	Name of the Work
C-01	CE/USTPP	Construction of R S T U Types of Quarters for the Staff Officers of USTPP

For details of works/Procurement/Opening/Viewing and downloading of e-tenders, please visit websites, www.tnpgcl.org, www.tenders.tn.gov.in, www.tntenders.gov.in

DIPR/1932/TENDER/2026

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Subject:- Change of critical dates of bids/ Extension of Notice Inviting Tenders.

Ref:- (i) This office e-NIT No. EE/PMGSY/J/10of 2026-27 Dated :- 12.05.2026 issued vide endorsement No. EE/PMGSY/J/836-42 Dated :- 12.05.2026.

CORRIGENDUM- 01

S.No.	Particular	Original Date	Revised Date
1.	Closing date of downloading bidding Documents	19.05.2026	21.05.2026
2.	Dead line for submission of bids in electronic format on the website	19.05.2026	21.05.2026
3.	Time and date of opening of received bids on the website	20.05.2026	22.05.2026

Rest all the terms and conditions will remain same as already advertised.

Sd/-
No.-EE/PMGSY/J/1139-46 (Er.Bhopinder Kumar Banotra)
Dated:-12.05.2026 Executive Engineer
DIPJ-2364/26, May 20 2026 PMGSY Division Jammu

TAMIL NADU NATIONAL LAW UNIVERSITY
(A University established by Tamil Nadu Act No.9 of 2012)
Navalurkuttappattu, Tiruchirappalli - 620 027, Tamil Nadu, INDIA
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CALL FOR APPLICATIONS- PROJECT EYALVATHU KARAVEL

The last date for submission of applications pursuant to the advertisement dated 02nd April 2026, notified on the TNNLU website under Project Eyalvathu Karavel, is hereby extended. Tamil Nadu National Law University invites applications for the following :

Project Administrative Positions (Contractual positions from June 2026 to November 2028) and **Pro Bono Advocacy Fellowship Programme** (18 Months).

S.No.	Position	No. of Vacancies	Last date of receiving applications
1	Project Co-ordinator	1	11.59 PM, 07th June, 2026
2	Program Manager	1	
3	Documentation Officer	1	
4	Office Assistant	1	11.59 PM, 31st May, 2026
5	Accountant	1	
6	Fellows- Pro Bono Advocacy Fellowship Programme	10	

For detailed notification, eligibility criteria and application forms, visit: <https://www.tnlu.ac.in/Recruitment-Notification>

NOTE - Candidates who have already applied pursuant to the earlier website notification need not apply afresh.

REGISTRAR
DIPR/431/DISPLAY/2026

10 days later, still no clarity over Bengal Cabinet expansion

Of the 54 departments in the govt., CM Suwendu Adhikari holds 42; 12 depts. allocated to 5 Ministers; Budget Session begins on June 18

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

Almost ten days after the first Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government was sworn in in West Bengal, suspense continues over the allocation of portfolios of different departments.

Suwendu Adhikari was sworn in along with five Ministers on May 9 after the BJP won 207 seats in the 294-member Assembly, reducing the Trinamool Congress (TMC) to 80 seats.

There are 54 departments in the State government, and Mr. Adhikari currently holds charge of 42 of them, including Home, Finance, Industries, School, Higher Education and Health. At the first Cabinet meeting, 12 departments were allocated to the five Ministers who were sworn in alongside the Chief Minister.

Senior BJP leader Dilip Ghosh has been given charge of Panchayat and Rural Development, along with Animal Resources and Agriculture Marketing. Agnimitra Paul, the only woman face in the Cabinet, has been allocated Municipal Affairs and Women and Child Development. Ashok Kirtaniya, a prominent Matua face, has been given charge of the Food and Supplies Department. Ni-



If the Cabinet is not expanded by June 18, CM Suwendu Adhikari, who holds the Finance Department, will present the BJP government's first budget. FILE PHOTO

sith Pramanik, an MLA from North Bengal, has been allocated Sports and Youth Affairs, while Kshudiram Tuodu, a tribal face, has been appointed Minister of Tribal Affairs and Minority Department.

BJP govt.'s first budget
There is a lot of speculation within the BJP as to when the Council of Ministers will be expanded and who will be allocated key portfolios. The Budget Session of the Assembly will begin from June 18, and if the Cabinet is not expanded by then, Mr. Adhikari, who holds the Finance Department, will present the first budget of the BJP government.

There are also talks in the political circles that the BJP may rope in an economist and a member of the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council for the

post of the State's Finance Minister.

The State government is taking crucial policy decisions and implementing several promises made by the party during the election campaign.

The Cabinet expansion and allocation of different departments are going to be a challenge for the BJP leadership as it will have to balance the expectations of senior leaders who won the poll and also accommodate regional and caste aspirations. Senior BJP leaders like Swapan Dasgupta, Roopa Ganguly and Ritesh Tewari have made it to the Assembly and are key contenders for Ministerial berths.

Leaders like Sankar Ghosh and former Barrackpore MP Arjun Singh are among those who may be included in the Council of Ministers.

In 'Naxal-free' Bastar, Amit Shah lays out development blueprint for road ahead

NEWS ANALYSIS
Shubhomoy Sikdar
RAIPUR

Weeks after March 31, the Centre's deadline for eliminating Naxalism in the country, Union Home Minister Amit Shah visited Chhattisgarh's Bastar region over Monday and Tuesday to mark the symbolic conclusion of the "Naxal Mukta Bharat" mission.

In his public addresses during his two-day visit, Mr. Shah's tone was steeped in realism: the issue is not merely of internal security but of ideology as well. "I can proudly say that India has now become free from Naxalism," he said on May 18 during a meeting with the families of those felled, CAPF personnel and victims of Naxal violence in Jagdalpur, the administrative headquarters of the Bastar region that has seen a bloody battle between the Left-Wing Extremists and the state for decades.

The Home Minister described Naxalism as a "nightmare marked by bloodshed, underdevelopment", and one that only offered a bleak future for the youth in affected regions. He asserted that India under Prime Minister Narendra Modi had largely overcome the country's biggest security challenges that it faced in regions like Jammu and Kashmir and the Northeast besides Naxalism and underlined how the BJP-led Central and State governments had chalked out a strategy to



'I can proudly say that India has now become free from Naxalism,' Union Home Minister Amit Shah said in Bastar on May 18. FILE PHOTO

eradicate Maoism swiftly by the deadline.

Living with dignity
He also spoke of the road ahead, saying Bastar would welcome 3,000 surrendered Naxals with compassion and help them live with dignity.

"While Naxalism has ended, the responsibility of the government is to compensate for the losses of the last 50 years within the next five years and bring Bastar on a par with the rest of the country... The Ministry of Home Affairs will ensure all necessary infrastructure and services, including roads, rural development, banking, postal services, gas supply, clean water, electricity and food security," he said.

At a press conference the next day after the 26th meeting of the Central Zonal Council (CZC) that he chaired, Mr. Shah's appeal - that people must be

watchful of those inspired by Maoist ideology coming in disguise with guns to destroy - underlined that an ideological fight can carry on long after a security pushback.

The CZC comprises Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Madhya Pradesh besides Chhattisgarh. Holding a high-profile meeting attended by the Chief Ministers of four States in the Bastar region was unthinkable even three years ago.

In the context of Maoism in Bastar, the security successes have come in the wake of a long-drawn ideological war.

The region has seen various phases of the Maoist challenge. In the decades gone by, there have been major attacks like the Tadmetla ambush of 2010 in which 76 security personnel were killed or the Jheeram Valley violence of 2013 in which almost the entire State Congress leadership

lost their lives.

There have also been questions on the state's attempts to deal with the challenge - such as Salwa Judum, a vigilante movement started in 2005 and sponsored by the Chhattisgarh and Central governments, which was banned by the Supreme Court, or several encounters during the Raman Singh-led BJP government when human rights activists questioned the "encounter killings" by security forces.

Consistent stance

Even during his earlier visits to the region ahead of the March 31 deadline, Mr. Shah in his public addresses had squarely blamed the Maoist ideology for the lack of development.

This time, too, he claimed that intellectuals supporting it have argued that Naxalism arose because development failed to reach certain areas. He said this was not true, as there were many parts of the country that were even more backward than the Naxal-affected areas, but Naxalism did not spread there, and all those areas gradually moved towards development.

A significant announcement on this tour was the newly inaugurated Veer Shaheed Gundadhur Seva Dera, under which nearly one-third of around 200 existing police camps in Bastar will be converted into public service and livelihood centres.

"Citizens who had been deprived of development for 50 years will now receive 100% benefit from all schemes," Mr. Shah said.

Husband's mother, uncle held in G. Noida death case

Press Trust of India
NOIDA

The Gautam Buddha Nagar police on Wednesday arrested two more persons in connection with the alleged dowry death of a 24-year-old woman in Greater Noida, officials said. According to an official statement, Poonam (mother of the victim's husband) and Vinod (uncle of the husband) were arrested, while the husband, Hritik, and his father Manoj have already been arrested in the case.

7 named in FIR

A total of seven persons were named in the FIR, police said.

The case relates to the woman who died on Sunday night after allegedly falling from the terrace of her three-storey matrimonial home in Jalpura village of the Gautam Buddha Nagar district. While her in-laws claimed she died after falling from the building, her family has alleged that she was murdered over dowry demands.

The postmortem report found a brain bleed, rupture of internal organs and multiple contusions on the body of the deceased.

According to the complaint lodged by the woman's father, she had called him shortly before the incident and told him that she was being assaulted by her in-laws over dowry demands. The family alleged that the accused were demanding an SUV and an additional ₹45-50 lakh in cash.

Pleas in Calcutta HC seek exemption from animal slaughter Act for Id-ul-Azha

Press Trust of India
KOLKATA

Petitions were moved before the Calcutta High Court on Wednesday seeking an exemption under Section 12 of Animal Slaughter Control Act, 1950, for observation of Id-ul-Azha next week in view of certain restrictions imposed by the new Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government in West Bengal.

The petitions, which were moved before a Division Bench presided by Chief Justice Sujoy Paul, will be heard on Thursday, the court said after the newly appointed State la-

The petitions will be heard today, the court said after the new State lawyer sought time to study the pleas

wyer prayed for time to study the pleas.

One of the petitions filed by Trinamool Congress (TMC) MLA Akhramman sought an exemption of the Act under Section 12, vide which the State government can allow such exemption, party MP Mahua Moitra, who was present in court, said.

"We have filed a petition seeking exemption under Section 12 of Ani-

mal Slaughter Control Act, 1950, for which a notification has been given on May 13 and since the festival of Id-ul-Azha is to be held either on May 27 or 28," she said outside the court.

In a notification, the State government issued a set of guidelines barring animal slaughter without a "fit certificate" from authorities and warned of penal action if the directions were not followed.

The State also made it clear that animal slaughter in open public places would be "strictly prohibited".

The guidelines, the government said, were in

compliance with the Animal Slaughter Control Act of 1950 and issued in the light of a series of orders passed by the Calcutta HC in 2018 and 2022.

She said with ten days left for the festival and many poor families preparing for this the whole year, a very large part of the rural economy has been destabilised owing to the notification.

In another petition, lawyer Sudipto Dasgupta appeared before the court representing an association that said they are ready to accept the provisions of the 1950 Act, provided there is adequate infrastructure.

Timings
DELHI

THURSDAY, MAY. 21		
RISE	05:28	SET 19:08
RISE	09:49	SET 23:58
FRIDAY, MAY. 22		
RISE	05:27	SET 19:09
RISE	10:56	SET 00:00
SATURDAY, MAY. 23		
RISE	05:27	SET 19:10
RISE	12:00	SET 00:36

Delhi Weather	max	min
Delhi City	45	28
Safdarjang	45	28
Palam	45	29

Delhi Palam Today
46°C The weather will be dry. Day will be very hot with uneasy conditions. Heat wave to prevail. Nighr also will be uneasy.

Delhi Palam Tomorrow
47°C Heat wave to continue. Chances of Duststorm and thundershower with strong winds.

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THE HINDU
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Two Cong. leaders try to meet BSP chief, fuel 'alliance' buzz

Mayank Kumar
LUCKNOW

Two Congress leaders attempted to meet Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) president Mayawati on Tuesday evening in Lucknow, but were turned away by her security team. The pictures of the visit came out on Wednesday leading to speculation about an "alliance".

Congress leader Rajendra Pal Gautam and Barabanki Lok Sabha MP Tanuj Punia reached the BSP chief's house and sought a meeting with her.

However, they were unable to meet her as she "was unwilling to meet them".

The two leaders claimed it was a courtesy visit. In a statement issued later, the Congress said it is "the responsibility of all like-mind-



Rajendra Pal Gautam.
FILE PHOTO

ed people to oust the BJP government and protect the Constitution, and this is what the public desires".

"Mayawati is a prominent Dalit leader. Her activism has been somewhat diminished in recent days... The public wants the State to be free from the casteist, dictatorial Yogi Adityanath government. The government is committing atrocities against Dalits and women. The government is using bulldozers against Muslims and minorities," the statement read.

No politics in Garg's name, says Himanta

Press Trust of India
GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday said the Congress-led Opposition paid the price for "politicising" musician Zubeen Garg's death in the Assembly poll as they were rejected by the people.

He visited Garg's cremation ground 'Zubeen Khetra' in Sonapur on the outskirts of Guwahati to pay tributes to the musician who died in Singapore on September 19 last year.

Mr. Sarma said there should be no politics in the name of Garg.

He said politicising the unfortunate death of Garg backfired on the Congress-led Opposition during the Assembly election.



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IN BRIEF



NCP (SP) leader rules out merger with Sunetra-led NCP

Maharashtra NCP (SP) chief Shashikant Shinde on Wednesday said the issue of merger with the ruling NCP is over, ruling out any future discussion amid renewed speculation triggered by a meeting between party chief Sharad Pawar and NCP leader Sunil Tatkare. After attending a party meeting chaired by Mr. Pawar, the NCP (SP) State unit president said the focus is on strengthening the party organisation and intensifying public agitations under the banner of the Maha Vikas Aghadi. The meeting took place against the backdrop of reports of internal strife in the ruling NCP, led by Deputy CM Sunetra Pawar. PTI

Simultaneous polls: Gujarat govt. backs move before JPC

Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel on Wednesday met the Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) examining the proposal for simultaneous elections to the Lok Sabha and assemblies, with the State government backing the 'One Nation, One Election' idea. The Opposition Congress slammed the proposal, calling it a hidden agenda aimed at centralisation of power. Besides Mr. Patel, Deputy Chief Minister Harsh Sanghavi and senior officials also met the JPC panel at GIFT City near Gandhinagar and submitted the State's views before the committee chaired by P. P. Chaudhary. Mr. Sanghavi said the Gujarat government fully supports the proposed legislation as it is in the "national interest". PTI

Bengal govt. to 'detect, delete and deport' illegal infiltrators, says Suvendu

Those covered under CAA provisions to be exempted, says Chief Minister; land for construction of fencing along 27 km of Bangladesh border across five districts of State handed over to the BSF

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

Emphasising that his government will be tough on illegal infiltrators, West Bengal Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari on Wednesday said his government will follow a new policy of "detect, delete and deport" when it comes to them.

"Those not covered under CAA (Citizenship Amendment) Act, are completely illegal infiltrators. The State police will arrest them and hand them to BSF (Border Security Force). The BSF will hold talks with BDR (Border Guards Bangladesh) and try to deport them. This means a policy of detect, delete and deport," the Chief Minister said.

'Immediate action'

Mr. Adhikari said the State's Director General of Police and Home Secretary have been told to inform all police stations along the border of the State that this law comes into force with immediate effect in the in-



CM Suvendu Adhikari handing over 27 km of land for border fencing to BSF chief Praveen Kumar in Kolkata on Wednesday. ANI

terest of the country and West Bengal.

The Chief Minister made the remarks at an event at the State Secretariat where the West Bengal government handed over land to the BSF for construction of border fencing along 27 km of the India-Bangladesh border across five districts of the State.

BSF Director General Praveen Kumar was present along with officials of the West Bengal government.

A total of 31.9 acres of land was purchased by the State government from the farmers and handed over to the BSF. One of the key promises made by the Bharatiya Janata Party during its winning West Bengal Assembly poll campaign was that once it comes to power, it will hand over the land for border fencing to the BSF.

"In West Bengal, around 1,600 km of the total 2,200 km border with Bangladesh has already been

fenced, while nearly 600 km still remains unfenced. Wherever land is needed for fencing and border security, we will hand it over to the BSF," the Chief Minister said.

Coordination meetings

Mr. Adhikari claimed that for the last several years, coordination meetings between the BSF, State police and administration in border areas had not happened; the district-level coordination mechanism had now been revived. "The district coordination meetings have now started and these will happen regularly now," he said, claiming that the previous Trinamool Congress government was not serious as far as the issue of illegal infiltration was concerned.

"A letter was sent by the Centre to the State last year regarding the direct handover of infiltrators to the BSF, but the previous government failed to implement this important provision. We have now enforced it," he said.

EPS camp MLA denies T.N. Minister's claim on DMK-AIADMK pact

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Former Handlooms Minister and the AIADMK's legislator from Vedaranyam, O.S. Manian, who is with the camp led by party general secretary Edappadi K. Palaniswami, on Wednesday denied the claim of Minister for Public Works and Sports Development Aadhav Arjuna that the AIADMK and the DMK had tried to forge an alliance in the run-up to the formation of the government.

He told journalists in Chennai that the AIADMK general secretary had, both inside and outside the legislature in the last five years, "highlighted vigorously the lapses" of the previous DMK regime on issues such as law and order, drug menace, and safety of women. This was why the party and its allies had won in 53 Assembly constituencies, he added. "The main reason for the performance was Mr. Palaniswami's strident criticism of the DMK," Mr. Manian said.

As for Mr. Arjuna, the former Minister recalled that he had been a member of various parties. He had once approached Mr. Palaniswami with a request to be made the deputy general secretary in the AIADMK, but his request was reject-



AIADMK MLA O.S. Manian

ed, Mr. Manian claimed.

On the meeting convened by the general secretary on Tuesday with district secretaries and party headquarters' office-bearers, former Agriculture Minister 'Agri' S.S. Krishnamurthy, who is also with the Palaniswami camp, asserted that 75 out of 78 district secretaries took part. Likewise, out of 81 HQ office-bearers, 60 attended with 10 having sent letters, expressing their inability to be present.

Argument countered

Countering the argument of rebel leader C.Ve. Shanmugam on electoral setbacks the party had been suffering since the 2019 Lok Sabha election, Mr. Krishnamurthy said Mr. Palaniswami had, all along, given tickets to candidates in polls on the basis of the recommendations of district secretaries.

J&K school renamed after pony ride operator who died saving tourists during Pahalgam attack

Press Trust of India
ANANTNAG

The Jammu and Kashmir government on Wednesday renamed a high school here in the memory of pony ride operator Adil Hussain Shah who lost his life while protecting tourists during the Pahalgam terror attack last year.

Shah was a ponywallah who, along with 25 tourists, was killed in the attack by a group of terrorists in the Baisaran meadows in Pahalgam tourist resort in the south Kashmir district on April 22, 2025.

The renaming ceremony of the Government High School Hapatnar to Shaheed Adil Memorial High School Hapatnar was presided over by Education Minister Sakeena Itoo, along with Shah's family, who attended the occasion.

Ms. Itoo said the renaming of the educational insti-



CM Omar Abdullah with the father of Adil Hussain Shah, a pony ride operator who was killed in the terror attack in Pahalgam. FILE PHOTO

tute was a tribute to the bravery and sacrifice of Shah, who laid down his life while saving several tourists.

'Hospitable people'

"When Chief Minister Omar Abdullah visited the family to express condolences, he had announced that the high school would be named after Adil (Shah) as a tribute to his sacrifice," she told reporters. The Mi-

nister said Shah's sacrifice proved how hospitable the people of Kashmir are.

"The people of Jammu and Kashmir, especially the Kashmir Valley, are eyed with suspicion. However, his sacrifice proved how sensitive the people of Kashmir are about their hospitality. No one can forget his role in saving tourists, and this is a small attempt to keep his name alive," Ms. Itoo said.

Akhilesh releases 'audit report', alleges misappropriation of quotas by U.P. govt.

Mayank Kumar
LUCKNOW

Samajwadi Party (SP) president Akhilesh Yadav on Wednesday alleged that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government in Uttar Pradesh is weakening the reservation system, adding candidates from marginalised sections like Other Backward Classes (OBCs), Scheduled Castes (SCs) and minorities are not getting rightful share in recruitment exercises. Releasing a 'Samajwadi Audit Report' on "misappropriation" of reservation quotas, he alleged that scams and corruption have plagued recruitment processes in the State.

The 'audit report' details the alleged failure of reservation rules across 22 different recruitment drives, including the recruitment of 69,000 teachers, forest and wildlife guards, masters and headmasters for aided junior high schools, village



Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav addressing a press conference at the party office in Lucknow on Wednesday. ANI

panchayat officers, eye testing officers, Uttar Pradesh Subordinate Services Selection Commission stenographers, veterinary officers, revenue clerks, health and education officers, Ayurvedic medical officers and agricultural technical assistants, among others.

"The PDA is not getting its rights under the BJP rule," Mr. Yadav said, referring to the party's acronym for Pichhda (OBC), Dalit and Alpasankhyak (minorities).

"In the 69,000-teacher

recruitment process, students belonging to the Backward Classes were entitled to a constitutionally mandated reservation of 27%; however, they received only 3.86% — amounting to a misappropriation of 23.14% of their reserved quota. Similarly, while the reservation for Scheduled Castes stands at 21%, they received only 16.21%. Even the National Commission for Backward Classes has acknowledged a scam involving 20,000 seats within this teacher re-

ruitment process," the SP chief alleged. "In a particularly shameful act, the BJP government has left 1,133 posts reserved for Scheduled Tribes unfilled," he said, adding in total over 11,514 reserved category seats were not filled with candidates hailing from these reserved groups across 22 examinations.

'No redressal'

Mr. Yadav said candidates of the 69,000-teacher recruitment drive had knocked on every door in their quest for justice, yet they received no redress under the BJP government. "Similarly, during university recruitment processes, individuals belonging to reserved categories are excluded by being labelled "NFS" (Not Found Suitable). This government's days are now numbered. Upon forming the government in 2027, the Samajwadi Party will deliver justice to the candidates," he said.

Deregister AAP, ban Kejriwal plea dismissed by High Court

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday dismissed a petition seeking a direction to the Election Commission to deregister the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and disqualify its chief Arvind Kejriwal and other leaders from contesting elections for boycotting court proceedings in the excise policy case.

A Bench of Chief Justice D.K. Upadhyaya and Justice Tejas Karia said the petition by Satish Kumar Aggarwal was bereft of any merit and his contention was "too far fetched, highly misconceived and misplaced".

The court stated that the Election Commission does not have the power to deregister a political party, and contempt of court proceedings have already been initiated against the politicians for their conduct.

Maharashtra completes documentation of over 23,000 wetlands, paves way to bring them under legal protection

Snehal Mutha
MUMBAI

The National Centre for Sustainable Coastal Management (NCSCM) has completed the documentation and ground truthing of Maharashtra's 23,415 wetlands, paving the way to formally notify and bring the water bodies under legal protection under the Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules.

According to the Maharashtra wetlands dashboard maintained by the NCSCM, Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar and Nagpur divisions has the highest number of wetlands in the State, with 5,196 and 5,086 respectively.

District-wise, Ahmednagar has the highest number



Environmental groups say the move will prevent wetlands, which are not officially notified, from becoming dump yards. FILE PHOTO

of wetlands at 1,596, followed by Nashik with 1,236 and Chandrapur which has 1,231.

The wetlands documented also include 247 in Thane, 1,093 in Raigad, 37 in Mumbai city and 210 in Mumbai suburban districts.

The Maharashtra government tasked NCSCM, functioning under the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), to do satellite mapping, documentation and field verification of wetlands identified un-

der the National Wetlands Inventory and Assessment launched by the Centre nearly two decades ago.

Ground truthing

Ground truthing for 11 wetlands located in Pune among the 2,3415 is remaining. Ground truthing means the process of physical verification of wetlands on site to confirm their existence, boundaries, ecological condition and present land use against satellite imagery — a crucial step before wetlands can be officially notified under environmental protection laws.

The MoEFCC launched the decadal-change version of the National Wetland Atlas in 2020 to track changes in wetlands over time, but

Maharashtra's ground-truthing exercise continued to lag for years thereafter. The exercise gathered momentum following legal interventions by environmental NGO Vanashakti and subsequent Supreme Court directions asking States and Union Territories to complete wetland demarcation and verification in a time-bound manner.

According to the environmental groups, it is a critical step as this will prevent wetlands, which are not officially notified, from becoming a dumping yard. The unnotified wetlands are treated as reclamation and are vulnerable to debris dumping, encroachments and destruction in the name of infrastructure development.

Punjab temple defers 'untimely' Rath Yatra after Puri protest

Press Trust of India
PURI

The Ferozepur district administration in Punjab on Wednesday informed the Jagannath Temple in Odisha's Puri that they have ensured the postponement of the Rath Yatra planned for May 23 after the shrine's officials protested against holding the festival on random dates.

Letter to official

The authorities of the Puri Jagannath Temple had written to Ferozepur District Magistrate Deepshikha Sharma, requesting her to prevent the temple in her jurisdiction from holding the Rath Yatra on May

23. Responding to Shree Jagannath Temple Administration's (SJTA) chief administrator Arabinda Padhee's letter, Ms. Sharma said the Ferozepur Jagannath Temple administration, which was organising the Rath Yatra, was called on May 20 and "were informed about the appropriate timing of the festival."

"The temple administrators have provided their written consent to postpone the Rath Yatra," she said.

The Puri temple reacted to the proposed untimely Rath Yatra plan of the Ferozepur temple after it came across some publicity materials and social media posts in circulation.

The SJTA maintained that the May 23 date for Rath yatra was not in consonance with the prescribed religious calendar and the established scriptural traditions governing this sacred festival.

Established rituals

"As per the 'Tithi' and established rituals associated with Lord Shree Jagannath, Rath Yatra is to be celebrated on July 16 this year," Mr. Padhee had mentioned in the letter.

He said that any observance of this sacred festival on a date other than that prescribed by the scriptures is likely to hurt the religious sentiments of millions of devotees of Lord Jagannath.

Cong. set to join T.N.'s first coalition govt. today; likely to get 2 berths in Cabinet



Tamil Nadu Congress Legislature Party leader S. Rajesh Kumar (left) with Chief Minister C. Joseph Vijay and other party leaders. FILE PHOTO

The Hindu Bureau CHENNAI

After being out of power for 59 years in Tamil Nadu, the Congress is poised to join the Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK)-led government headed by Chief Minister C. Joseph Vijay on Thursday, ushering in a coalition era in the Dravidian State.

The party, which won five Assembly seats in the alliance led by the DMK, was the first to rush to Mr. Vijay's aid as he fell short of

the majority mark.

Mr. Vijay is set to expand his 10-member Cabinet. Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar will administer the oath of office and secrecy to more than 20 new Ministers at 10 a.m. at Lok Bhavan on Thursday.

Charge gives approval
Congress general secretary K.C. Venugopal on Wednesday said party president Mallikarjun Kharge had approved the induction of Congress Legisla-

ture Party leader S. Rajesh Kumar (Killiyoor) and P. Viswanathan (Melur) into the Council of Ministers.

While Mr. Kumar is likely to be allocated the Tourism portfolio, Mr. Viswanathan is expected to get Higher Education.

Congratulating both the Congress MLAs over phone, Mr. Vijay said the TVK and the Congress would sail together for the welfare of the people.

Earlier in the day, the TVK invited the VCK and the IUML to join the Cab-

inet. If the two parties agree to join the government, it would pave the way for a major political realignment in the State.

"We invite VCK leader Thol. Thirumavalavan to be part of the Council of Ministers. This is the wish of the Chief Minister as well. Similarly, the IUML should also join the Council of Ministers. We have conveyed our invitation to the IUML leaders," Minister for Public Works and Sports Development Adhava Arjuna told reporters.

He said the people of Tamil Nadu, particularly women and youngsters, voted for change after a gap of nearly 50 years. However, both the DMK and the AIADMK underestimated the TVK, he said.

Mr. Arjuna said after the results were declared, the AIADMK should have functioned as an Opposition party. The Minister accused AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K. Palaniswami of attempting to join hands with the DMK by going against the peo-

ple's mandate and trying to make a "backdoor entry" until the last minute.

To a question on whether the rebel AIADMK legislators would be part of Mr. Vijay's Cabinet, Mr. Arjuna said C.Ve. Shanmugam, who heads a faction of the AIADMK, had said their intention was not to secure ministerial berths.

Mr. Thirumavalavan said he would take a decision soon on joining Mr. Vijay's Cabinet after holding discussions with the party's high-level committee.

Anti-encroachment drive: 3 police personnel injured in stone pelting in Mumbai

Press Trust of India MUMBAI

Three police personnel were injured after angry residents of a slum in Mumbai's Bandra East area allegedly hurled stones at them as authorities razed an "illegal" mosque during an anti-encroachment drive on Wednesday, officials said. At least 10 people were detained in connection with the incident.

The police resorted to lathi charge to disperse the mob, an official said, adding that several persons, including women, sus-

tained injuries.

The Western Railway on Tuesday had launched a massive anti-encroachment drive in Gareeb Nagar slum, clearing several of the 500 illegal huts adjacent to the eastern side of the Bandra railway station following the Bombay High Court's directions.

The authorities plan to clear 5,200 square metres of encroached railway land over five days.

Vineet Abhishek, chief PRO of the Western Railway, said almost 60% of the illegal structures have been removed so far.

BHAKRA BEAS MANAGEMENT BOARD
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Sl. No.	Name of the Work / Amount Put to tender/EMD/Construction Period
1	Construction of Elevated Corridor (Flyover) at Konanakunte Cross on Kanakapura road in Bengaluru City (Length 1.50 kms) using Ultra High-Performance Fiber Reinforced Concrete (UHPRFC) under Engineering, Procurement & Construction (EPC) Mode on Lumpsum, Turkey with allowable Price Escalation based structures including Maintenance for a period of 10 years. Amount put to Tender (Excluding GST) : Rs. 7717.98 Lakhs , Earnest Money Deposit : Rs. 77.18 Crores (Rs. 1.00 Lakhs E-payment & Balance through Surety Bond/ E-BG) , Construction Period : 18 Months .
2	Construction of Elevated Corridor (Flyover) at Adyar Ananda Bhavan Raghuvanahalli cross, Kanakapura Road in Bengaluru City (Length 0.90 kms) using Ultra High-Performance Fiber Reinforced Concrete (UHPRFC) under Engineering, Procurement & Construction (EPC) Mode on Lumpsum, Turkey with allowable Price Escalation based structures including Maintenance for a period of 10 years. Amount put to Tender (Excluding GST) : Rs. 4210.53 Lakhs . Earnest Money Deposit : Rs. 42.11 Crores (Rs. 1.00 Lakhs E-payment & Balance through Surety Bond/ E-BG) . Construction Period : 18 Months .

Calendar of events: 1) Date and time for Availability of Tender documents in KPP Portal - **25.05.2026 at 17:30 Hours**. 2) Last date for submission of pre bid queries - **04.06.2026 @ 16:00Hours**. 3) Date and time of Pre-bid meeting : **05.06.2026 @ 14:30Hours**. 4) Last Date and Time for receipt of tenders **24.06.2026 at 16:00 Hours**. 5) Date & Time for Opening of Technical Bids : **25.06.2026 at 16:30 Hours**. 6) Date & Time for Opening of Financial Bid - **Will be Notified**. 7) Validity of Bids : **180 days from Last Date for receipt of tenders.**

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ENTERPRISE CONNECT

A Business Initiative

NBCC Signs MoU with State Bank of India for Comprehensive Corporate Salary Package



NBCC (India) Limited signed a Memorandum of Understanding with State Bank of India (SBI) on May 15, 2026, for extending a comprehensive Corporate Salary Package (CSP) to the employees of the company. The MoU was signed by Smt. Jyostna Rani Moharana, DGM (SBI) and Shri Sanjeev Kumar, CGM (HRM), NBCC in the presence of Shri Anjeev Kumar Jain, Director (Finance), Sh. Ashwin P. Kulkarni, DGM and senior officials from both organisations. The agreement further provides financial protection benefits including Personal & Accident Insurance, Permanent/Temporary Disability Group Term Life Insurance, Health insurance, Top-up facilities, Rebate in loan facility etc.

IMM Business School Successfully Concludes IMM Academic Excellence Conference



IMM Business School successfully organized the IMM Academic Excellence Conference 2026 on 15th and 16th May 2026, bringing together academicians, researchers, industry professionals, scholars, and students from across India for two days of academic discussions, research presentations, and collaborative learning. Centered around the theme "AI-Driven Digital Transformation and Sustainable Business Innovation in the Global Economy," the conference highlighted the growing role of Artificial Intelligence, digital technologies, and sustainability in shaping modern business practices and management education. The conference witnessed enthusiastic participation from academicians,

research scholars, corporate professionals, and students representing diverse institutions and disciplines. The conference was graced by Mr. Satish Kumar, I.E.S., Assistant Director, Government of India, Department of Food & Public Distribution, Ministry of Consumer Affairs, as Chief Guest. Ms. Sangeeta Sumbly, Vice President - Corporate Affairs & Placements, IIT Delhi, attended the conference as Guest of Honour and shared valuable insights on strengthening industry-academia collaboration in the era of digital transformation.

National Conference on Indian Knowledge Systems: Continuities, Ruptures & Synthesis organised at IP University



University School of Liberal Arts, Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University organised two-day National Conference on "Indian Knowledge Systems: Continuities, Ruptures & Synthesis". Prof. Queeny Pradhan, incharge of University School of Liberal Arts, highlighted that the conference aimed to bring together scholars, researchers, and students from diverse disciplinary backgrounds to engage in critical conversations around the evolving field of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS). The conference was a gathering of several distinguished scholars and eminent public intellectuals. The inaugural session featured distinguished public intellectual Dr. Sachchidanand Joshi, Member Secretary IGNCIA. In addition, the annual newsletter of the University School of Liberal Arts, 'Navkriti' was also released on the occasion.

HURL Barauni inaugurated Multiskilling Centre at Chakballi

Strengthening communities through healthcare and skill development, HURL Barauni inaugurated a newly established Multiskilling Centre at Chakballi and a state-



of-the-art Health ATM at UPHC Sokhara, Barauni on 16th May 2026 under its CSR initiatives. The programmes were inaugurated by Plant Head, Barauni in the presence of healthcare officials, local representatives, community members, and project stakeholders. The Multiskilling Centre has been established with the objective of empowering local youth through industry-relevant vocational training programmes, benefiting around 875 beneficiaries and enhancing their employability for a self-reliant future. Addressing the gatherings, Plant Head, Barauni emphasized the importance of skill development and accessible technology-driven healthcare in today's evolving landscape and reiterated HURL's commitment towards inclusive growth, community welfare, and nation-building.

Jaypee University of Information Technology (JUIT) Organizes Principals' Meet in Ambala

Jaypee University of Information Technology successfully organized a Principals' Meet at Ramada by Wyndham Ambala on 16th May 2026. The programme was conducted under the visionary leadership of Honorable CEO, JUIT, Shree Manu Bhaskar Gaur. The event was graced by the esteemed presence of Honorable Vice Chancellor of JUIT, Prof. Rajendra Kumar Sharma. The Principals' Meet was organized in association with the Ambala Progressive Sahodaya School Council and the Haryana Progressive Schools' Conference. Key dignitaries and collaborators included Dr. Vikas Kohli, Mr. Prashant Munjal, Mr. Saurabh Kapoor, and Shree Pawan Acharya. During the event, Prof. Rajendra Kumar Sharma shared his valuable experiences and insights on technical learning, innovation-driven education, and the evolving role of higher educational institutions in preparing students for future technological challenges.

KARNATAKA GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT
Multi Storied Building, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Veedhi, Bengaluru- 560001.

No. ED/SEGOV/2026 Date:19.05.2026

RECRUITMENT NOTIFICATION

The Karnataka State Higher Education Academy is an academy under the department of Higher Education, Government of Karnataka invites application from qualified and competent candidates for the position of the **Director, Karnataka State Higher Education Academy, Haliyal Road, Dharwad, Karnataka-580003**. Interested candidates may apply by sending detailed in the prescribed format to dsuniversities@gmail.com. The details are given below. The last date for receiving email application along with CV is **30.05.2026 (05.00 P.M.)**.

- Applicant must be a Professor in a Government Higher Education Institutions of the State/Public Universities (State & Central)/Institute of National Importance of Government of India.
- Ph.D. from a recognized University.
- Minimum 15 years of teaching/research experience in Higher Education and Minimum 5 years in a senior academic administrative position.
- Age must not exceed 60 years as on the closing date of application.
- Must not have any pending disciplinary or vigilance proceedings.
- Appointment for the period of 5 years or till age of 65 years whichever is earlier.
- The Director must draw the his/her own salary and grade during his tenure, addition to director allowance of Rs.10,000/-. If a retired person is appointed as Director, the emoluments shall be reduced by the amount of pension and allowances drawn by him and other emoluments.

For Application format, visit <https://hed.karnataka.gov.in>

Sd/- (V.T. Rajyashree)
Deputy Secretary to the Government (Universities),
Department of Higher Education)

भारत सरकार/Government of India
कर्म एवं रोजगार संजाल/Ministry of Labour & Employment
रोजगार महाविभाग/ Directorate General of Employment
अनुसूचित जाति/ अनुसूचित जनजाति हेतु मेगलन करियर सेंटर
NATIONAL CAREER SERVICE CENTRE FOR SC/STs
9-11, बीआरसी बिल्डिंग, विकास मार्ग, कर्कराडूमा, नई दिल्ली-110092
9-11, VRC Building, Vikas Marg, Karkardooma, New Delhi - 110092
फोन/Email: sreoncsc.del-dget@gov.in, टेली/Tel.011-20824142/22372705

No: NCSCD/SCS/2026-27/ Date: 20.05.2026

APPLICATION INVITED FROM REPUTED INSTITUTIONS FOR IMPARTING COACHING/ TRAINING TO SC/ST JOB SEEKERS DURING 2026-27

The office of Sub-Regional Employment Officer, National Career Service Centre for SC/STs, Delhi invites application from reputed institutions for imparting coaching/training to the SC/ST jobseekers in General English, General Awareness & Numerical Ability & Training in Shorthand & Typing on computer so as to equip them to compete in various examinations for vacancies of Group C and equivalent posts conduct by Staff Selection Commission for a period of 12 months. The coaching and training are to be held on six working days a week for three hours (per day) duration covering both the theoretical and practical aspects for 160 candidates during 2026-27.

The selected training institute will be paid @ Rs. 1200/- per candidate per month and is likely to commence w.e.f 01.07.2026. Desirous institutes are advised to submit their applications mentioning name, location, registration/accreditation number of institute, PAN, Carpet area, Class rooms with sitting capacity, No. of computers, details of faculty members along with their bio data, placement records of the last three years, experience in education, training and coaching of students of competitive examinations etc. Application proposals with all complete documents should reach this centre by registered post in a sealed cover latest by 10.06.2026. The undersigned reserves the right to change or alter any terms & conditions at any stage in case of dispute, decision of DGE, M/o Labour & Employment (Govt. of India) New Delhi would be binding on both the parties. For any further details please contact to this office through email: sreoncsc.del-dget@gov.in

Sd/-
(G.K. MUKHERJEE)
Assistant Director (Addl. Charge)

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
Ministry of Labour & Employment
Directorate General of Employment

NATIONAL CAREER SERVICE CENTRE FOR SC/STs
9-11,V.R.C Building,Vikas Marg, Karkardooma, New Delhi-110092
Email: sreoncsc.del-dget@gov.in, Tel.-011-20824142

FREE & STIPENDIARY COACHING /TRAINING FOR SC/ST STUDENTS
ADMISSION NOTIFICATION: 2026-27

Applications are invited from eligible SC/ST Jobseekers for admission in the following Courses:

Sr.	Name of the Course	Duration of the course	Age limit	Minimum qualification	family income	Books & Stationery	Likely to be commenced
1.	Special Coaching Scheme (Eng. Reasoning, Maths, G.K Computer, Stenography)	01 Year	18-27 Years (As on 01.07.2026)	10+2 Passed	Upto Rs. 3.00 Lakh per annum	FREE	01.07.2026
2.	'O'Level Computer Software training through NIELT	01 Year	18-30 Years (As on 01.07.2026)	10+2 Passed	Upto Rs. 3.00 Lakh per annum	FREE	01.07.2026
3.	Office Automation, Accounting and Publishing Assistant through NIELT	01 Year	18-30 Years (As on 01.07.2026)	10+2 Passed	Upto Rs. 3.00 Lakh per annum	FREE	01.07.2026
4.	Computer Application and Business Accounting Associate through NIELT	01 Year	18-30 Years (As on 01.07.2026)	10+2 Passed	Upto Rs. 3.00 Lakh per annum	FREE	01.07.2026
5.	Cyber Secured Web Development Associate through NIELT	01 Year	18-30 Years (As on 01.07.2026)	10+2 Passed	Upto Rs. 3.00 Lakh per annum	FREE	01.07.2026
Short Term Course							
6.	Course on Computer Concepts	2 months	18-30 Years (As on 01.07.2026)	10+2 Passed	Upto Rs. 3.00 Lakh per annum	FREE	01.07.2026

NOTE: For Courses from Sl. No. 1-5, the candidate is entitled for the stipend @ Rs.1000 per month, during the course period. There will be no stipend for the short-term courses. Desirous SC/ST candidate should collect and submit the Application Form with all the required self-attested documents to the following address: Monday to Friday (10.00 AM - 5.00 PM) Last Date for submission of Application is - **15.06.2026**

Room No.29, National Career Service Centre for SC/STs, 9-11,V.R.C Building, Bharatendu Harish Chandra Marg, Beside: Shanti Mukund Hospital, Opp Metro Pillar 117, Karkardooma, Delhi-110092.

Documents Required to be enclosed(Xerox Copies):

- 10th Marksheets
- 12th Marksheets
- Aadhar Card
- Caste Certificate
- Family Annual Income Certificate
- Employment Exchange Delhi Registration Copy(<https://onlineemploymentportal.delhi.gov.in>)
- NCS portal Registration(<https://www.ncs.gov.in>)
- Bank Passbook Copy
- Passportsizephotos-03nos.
- Copy of Aadhar mapped Seeding Status(<https://www.npci.org.in>)
- DBT Portal Student Log in New Registration(<https://dbsctsc.ncs.gov.in>)

Sd/-
(G.K. Mukherjee)
Assistant Director (Add. Charge)

ANDHRA PRADESH STATE CIVIL SUPPLIES CORPORATION LIMITED
Head Office:10-152/1, Ashok nagar, Bandar Road, Vijayawada-520007.

SHORT TENDER NOTICE
Dt: 20.05.2026.

LR.No.Mktg.M6/RG Dall/Tenders/July/2026 to September/2026

BIDS ARE INVITED FROM ELIGIBLE BIDDERS FOR SUPPLY OF 2,250,000 MTs (+ or -25%) OF R.G DALL IN 1 KG PACKET FORM WITH SECONDARY PACKING IN 50 KG NEW POLYPROPYLENE (PP) BAGS UNDER ICDS/THR SCHEMES FOR THE MONTHS OF JULY/2026 TO SEPTEMBER/2026 (Three Months) TO ALL THE MLS POINTS OF (28) DISTRICTS IN ANDHRA PRADESH STATE.

All the interested R.G Dall Manufacturers in All Over India may visit www.apscsl.in & www.neml.in to view and download tender documents at free of cost.

Interested bidders need to register in portal as vendor with NCDX e Markets Limited to participate in the tenders. Contact Tel: 9962059599 or 9032429420 or 9885549722 and Email: askus@neml.in.

Last date for registration and completion of formalities for the e-auction shall be up to 29.05.2026 at 5 p.m and the tentative date of online e-auction through NeML platform would be 01.06.2026 from 11.00 AM onwards.

Sd/- S. DILLI RAO, I.A.S
VC & Managing Director.

J&K Bank
Human Resources
Corporate Headquarters
M.A. Road, Srinagar
Phone No's-0194-2713121-24

Apply For - Contractual Positions (On Contract)

Applications are invited for the position of Zonal Security Officers and Financial Literacy (FL) Counsellors (On-Contract) at J&K Bank.

Name of Position	No. of Vacancy	Place of Posting
Zonal Security Officer	1	Zonal Office Kathua
Zonal Security Officer	1	Zonal Office Ladakh
Zonal Security Officer	1	Zonal Office Delhi
Zonal Security Officer	1	Zonal Office Mumbai
Zonal Security Officer	1	Zonal Office Bangalore
FL Counsellor	1	Lead District Office - Shopian
FL Counsellor	1	Lead District Office - Poonch

Interested candidates are requested to apply online from 21.05.2026 to 04.06.2026 through the link made available on Banks website (jkb.bank.in) under careers tab. The candidate shall have to pay the requisite fee of Rs. 500/- per application. The detailed notification is available on Bank's website.

No.:JKB/HR/Rec/2026-253 Sd/
Dated:-18.05.2026 General Manager-HR

Registered Office : Corporate Headquarters, M.A.Road, Srinagar 190001, Kashmir, India
CIN: L65100JK1938SC000048; T : +91 (0)194 2481 930-35; F : +91 (0)194 248 1928;
E : info@jkbmail.com; W : <http://jkb.bank.in>



Chief Minister V.D. Satheesan at a press conference in Thiruvananthapuram on Wednesday. NIRMAL HARINDRAN

Kerala Ministers' portfolios out after tussle; CM keeps 35

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

After internal wrangling and shuffling of departments between various Ministers, the newly elected United Democratic Front (UDF) government in Kerala notified the Cabinet portfolios on Wednesday evening.

Chief Minister V.D. Satheesan will be handling a total of 35 portfolios, including the key departments of Finance, Law, and Ports, signalling a possible concentration of powers.

The portfolio announcements came two days after the swearing-in ceremony of the new government, with delays being attributed to both intra-party as well as inter-party differences within the UDF.

One of the key issues which held up the official notification of the portfolios was with regard to the Fisheries portfolio, which will now be held by V.E. Abdul Gafoor of the Indian Union Muslim League

(IUML), a key ally.

The Latin Catholic Church was keen on the Congress keeping the Fisheries portfolio. The IUML was ready to part with the department only if the Congress spared the Higher Education Department.

Even as the negotiations were ongoing Mr. Satheesan had paid a visit to Thiruvananthapuram Archbishop Thomas J. Netto on Monday. The Chief Minister said that it was merely a courtesy call. In the end, Congress leader Roji M. John kept the Higher Education portfolio.

Senior Congress leader Ramesh Chennithala, who was reluctant to join the Cabinet after losing out in the three-way race to the Chief Minister post, will be holding Home, Vigilance, Fire and Rescue Services, Prisons and Coir.

Sunny Joseph will hold Electricity, Environment and Parliamentary Affairs.

K. Muraliedharan will be the Minister for Health as well as Devaswom.

Kerala govt. cancels K-Rail project launched by LDF

CM Satheesan says it posed an environmental disaster and was economically unviable; UDF govt. to return land acquired for the project to owners and withdraw cases filed against protesters

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Kerala Cabinet on Wednesday decided to scrap the K-Rail (SilverLine) semi-high-speed railway project from Thiruvananthapuram to Kasaragod.

The 530-km project had been launched by the previous Left Democratic Front (LDF) government led by Pinarayi Vijayan. The State had witnessed strong protests led by the Congress-led United Democratic Front against the project since 2022.

Markers to go

Speaking to the press after the Cabinet meeting, Chief Minister V.D. Satheesan



Anti-SilverLine activists remove a concrete marker laid for the rail project, in Kottayam district on Wednesday. VISHNU PRATHAP

said all the land acquired for the project would be denotified and the concrete markers for rail line would be removed.

The Chief Minister, however, did not rule out the possibility of the UDF go-

vernment coming up with its own semi-high-speed rail project. "We are not against high-speed rail projects. We opposed K-Rail because it was an environmental disaster and not economically viable. The

LDF government had given up on the project and other projects were being discussed. Unfortunately, the land acquired for the project was not denotified, due to which people were suffering as they couldn't sell or pledge their property. All the cases connected with the agitation will be withdrawn," he said.

Ahead of the Assembly election, Mr. Satheesan had said the UDF would return the land acquired for SilverLine if voted to power. The BJP had also been against the project, saying the project lacked Central approval. The project was expected to reduce travel time between the two ends of the State to four hours.

(With PTI inputs)



Trinamool Congress MLAs protesting near Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's statue on the West Bengal Assembly premises in Kolkata on Wednesday. PTI

TMC MLAs stage stir on Assembly premises over hawkers' eviction

Shrabana Chatterjee
KOLKATA

Trinamool Congress (TMC) legislators staged a protest on the West Bengal Assembly premises on Wednesday over the eviction of hawkers in massive anti-encroachment drives in the State and alleged targeting of party workers in incidents of violence that erupted following the recent Assembly election.

Wearing copies of the Preamble to the Constitution around their necks, senior party leaders Firhad Hakim, Ritabrata Banerjee, and Nayana Bandyopadhyay raised slogans against the "oppression of people using bulldozers".

They staged the protest in front of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's statue under the leadership of Belehghata MLA Kunal Ghosh.

Sharing pictures of the protest on social media, Mr. Ghosh wrote, "Protest against hawkers evictions without rehabilitation. Immediate action demanded for the Trinamool workers

tortured in post-election terror. Protecting the right to religious practice for people of all religions. Protest against the price hike of petrol, gas, diesel."

Reacting to the protest, Minister Agnimitra Paul said before the BJP government starts its own work, it will take a long time for it to undo the wrongdoings of the previous TMC government and punish the wrongdoers. She added that "any illegal work cannot become legal under their government".

TMC leaders arrested

Earlier in the day, TMC leader Debraj Chakraborty's aide Amit Chakraborty was arrested for allegedly creating tensions during a BJP victory rally on May 4.

Mithu Sardar and Sabita Ray, two women leaders allegedly close to jailed TMC strongman Shahjahan Sheikh, were arrested from Sonarpur in South 24 Parganas district for allegedly inciting violence against officials of the Enforcement Directorate in 2024.

SC extends date for Bengaluru civic polls

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday said the Karnataka government seems to be deploying "delaying tactics" to postpone civic polls in Bengaluru, while extending its deadline by another two months to August 31.

Shifting the time limit for the election, the court said this would be the State government's "last

chance", and there would be no further extensions.

"The matter gives an unnecessary impression that this is all delaying tactics on the part of the State," Chief Justice of India Surya Kant, heading a three-judge Bench, remarked.

The State said it had made all arrangements for polls, including the budgetary allocations. However, there was a "manpower problem", requiring an "extension of 60 days".

Elderly woman dies of amoebic infection

The Hindu Bureau
KOCHI

A 73-year-old woman from Nellikuzhi in Kothamangalam in Ernakulam district of Kerala has died of primary amoebic meningoencephalitis (PAM).

The rare but lethal central nervous system infection is caused by *Naegleria fowleri*, a free-living amoeba found in freshwater, lakes, and rivers. It can also survive in poorly main-

tained swimming pools.

The woman had developed symptoms of the infection, including fever and headache, on May 6.

A worker under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, she is suspected to have washed her face using water collected from a canal. After her death, the panchayat health wing carried out superchlorination of water sources, including wells.

IN BRIEF



Karnataka to replace open safari jeeps with closed buses

The Karnataka government has banned open safari vehicles in tiger reserves and wildlife sanctuaries. Environment Minister Eshwar B. Khandre on Wednesday instructed the Chief Wildlife Warden to instead deploy buses equipped with iron meshes and shatterproof glasses. Ambulances should be stationed near safari centres and elephant camps, he said. The directions come in the wake of the death of a tourist at the Dubare Elephant Camp, after she got caught between two fighting elephants.

HC slams delay in probe in microfinance fraud case

The Kerala High Court has directed the probe team to conclude within a month the investigation in the microfinance fraud case registered against Vellappally Natesan, general secretary of the SNDP Yogam, and four others. The court was considering a plea by Mararikulam resident M.S. Anil seeking to speed up the probe in the case. The probe team had submitted before the court in September 2025 that the investigation in the case was in its final stage and could be completed within three months. The matter was posted for hearing on June 20.

Fireworks storage unit blast victims' kin to get ₹10 lakh aid

The Kerala government has sanctioned ₹10 lakh each as compensation from the Chief Minister's Distress Relief Fund (CMDRF) to the families of two persons who were killed in the explosion at a temporary firecracker storage unit at Choorakadu, Thripunithura, in Ernakulam in February 2024. The blast ripped through a stockpile of firecrackers "illegally stored" by the Vadakkumbaghom Karayogam for a fireworks display at the Puthiyakavu Bhagavathy temple on February 12, 2024. Besides claiming two lives, it caused varying degrees of damage to 312 houses.

Monsoon prelude



Waves crash against the barrier at the Fort Kochi beach in Kerala on Wednesday. The Southwest monsoon is likely to set in over Kerala on May 26, nearly a week ahead of its normal arrival date of June 1. THULASI KAKKAT

Number of bonded labourers rescued in Telangana rises to 529

Lavpreet Kaur
HYDERABAD

At least 226 minors, including nine infants, were among the 529 people rescued from bonded labour-like conditions, in large-scale raids at brick kilns in Telangana's Nizamabad district, records accessed by *The Hindu* show.

The raids, which began on Tuesday afternoon and continued late into the night, led to the rescue of 529 people belonging to 135 families from four brick kilns in Degaon village of Armoor mandal. The youngest infant listed in

the records was aged one month, while the oldest was eight months old. The minors comprised 118 girls and 108 boys.

More than 400 rescued labourers were shifted to Nellore district in Andhra Pradesh in buses while others remain in Nizamabad awaiting release certificates and rehabilitation-related formalities. "These certificates are important because they are linked to rehabilitation assistance and welfare support such as ration facilities, and monthly financial aid when they return to their villages," an official said.

A.P. and Telangana reel under intense heatwave; Piduguralla records 47.6°C

The Hindu Bureau
VIJAYAWADA/ HYDERABAD

Large swathes of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana continued to reel under heatwave conditions on Wednesday as temperatures went past 45°C in several districts, with the India Meteorological Department (IMD) warning the extreme weather is likely to persist till Sunday.

Piduguralla in Andhra Pradesh's Palnadu district recorded 47.6°C – the highest so far of the season.

On Wednesday, the IMD issued orange alerts for NTR, Guntur, SPSR Nellore, West Godavari, East Godavari, Dr. B.R. Ambed-



Recharge point: A vendor sells juice in Hyderabad. NAGARA GOPAL

kar Konaseema, Alluri Sitharama Raju and Kakinada districts. On Thursday, 74 mandals are likely to experience severe heatwaves. State Disaster Management Authority MD Prakhar Jain

Rijiju attempting to deny Muslims their rights, says Owaisi

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

The interpretation of Muslims as a minority community became a bone of contention with Hyderabad MP Asaduddin Owaisi accusing Union Minister for Minority Affairs Kiren Rijiju of attempting to deny Muslims their fundamental rights under Article 30 of the Constitution.

Mr. Owaisi took objection to the manner in which the Union Minister compared the population of Parsis and Muslims. While the former's numbers were the equivalent of a village, the latter's population was large enough to be the world's sixth-largest country, the Minister had said.

"Simple math question for @KirenRijiju what is bigger? 79.8% or 14%? If Hindus are the majority community, then every non-Hindu group is a minority community," Mr. Owaisi responded on X.

"If we accept the Minister Against Minorities' logic, then Hindi-speakers cannot be a minority in non-Hindi states because their population is more than the population of Canada and U.S.," the MP said.

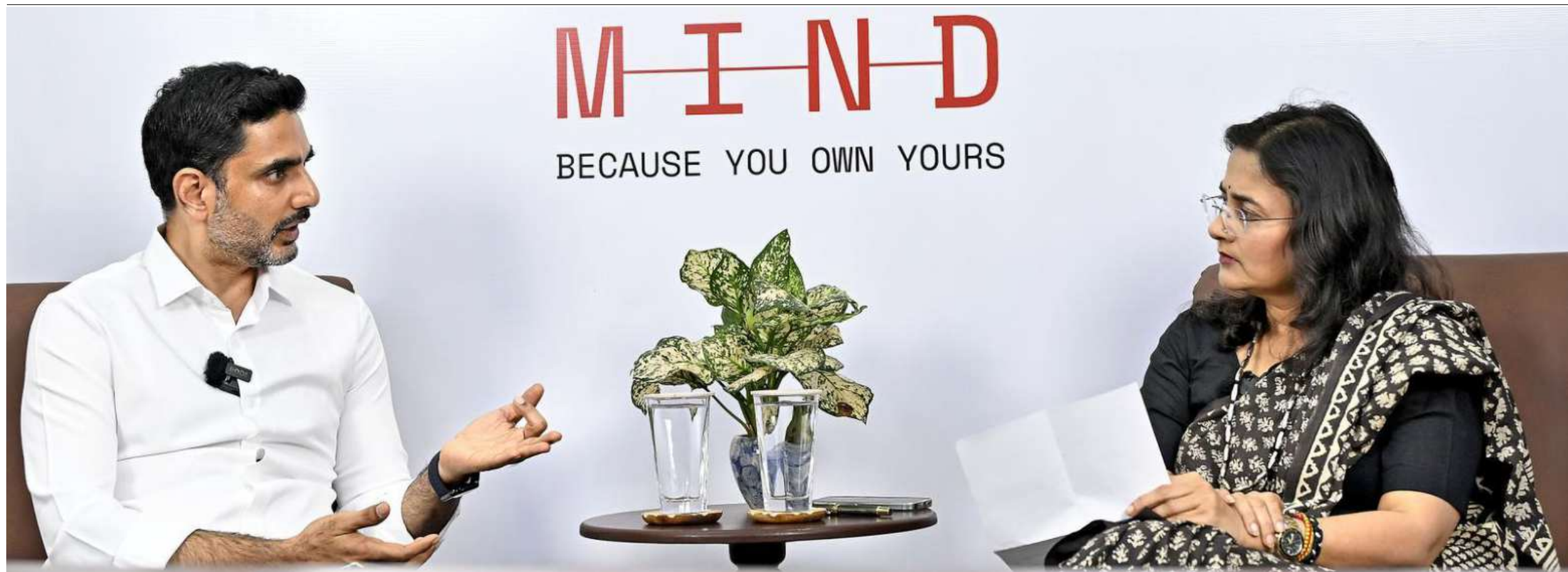
Mr. Rijiju retorted by pointing out that while Muslims may be notified as a minority in India, he should "not let them feel small because their numbers would be the 6th largest country, if they are counted as a nation".

pregnant women, senior citizens and children. All government health facilities have procured oral rehydration salts (ORS) in large quantities.

IMD warning

In Telangana, 12 districts recorded above 45°C temperatures on Tuesday, according to data from the Telangana Development Planning Society.

The IMD has issued a heatwave warning for 15 districts for Thursday. In addition, a thunderstorm forecast was issued for Vikarabad, Sangareddy, Mahabubnagar, Nagarkurnool, Wanaparthy, Narayanpet and Jogulaba Gadwal.



TDP national working president and Andhra Pradesh's Minister for IT Nara Lokesh in conversation with *The Hindu's* Political Affairs Editor Nistula Hebbar. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

'Defeat of delimitation Bill is south India's loss'

The vote against Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill has placed southern States at a disadvantage — Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh stand to lose representation after the next Census, Telugu Desam Party's newly appointed working president says, blaming politics, not policy for the Bill's failure; he addresses concerns over upcoming resource-intensive data centres and explains why his government is incentivising larger families

INTERVIEW

Nara Lokesh

Andhra Pradesh's 42-year-old Minister for IT, Human Resource Development and Real Time Governance, who is widely seen as the party's future face, says giving voice to the youth has become critical to politics. He shares his views on the special intensive revision, economy, and talks about the lessons he learnt from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), in a wide-ranging conversation at *The Hindu* MIND event, moderated by Nistula Hebbar.

In an interview with *The Hindu*, Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu had expressed apprehension over Andhra Pradesh's financial situation, which he said went beyond the special category status demand. Two years on, how do you view the situation?

We inherited a State with a lot of debt. The previous administration couldn't even pay salaries on time. The entire economic engine had stalled. We have been able to restart that and restore investor confidence. Nearly 25% of India's investments have come to our State. That's what is setting us apart, and that's how we have been able to record growth in our tax collection. But that's not enough. We are well on our way to executing all the projects we have signed.

We have covered some of your social media exchanges with Industry Ministers from other southern States over competition for investments. Do such things come in the way of a broader solidarity on issues such as delimitation?

Competition is good. I think States should compete; only then will India win. The speed of doing business is one of our poll promises, and we are delivering on it. That's why we received investments from Google, ArcelorMittal, and Royal Enfield, as well as for the AMCA

(advanced medium combat aircraft) programme. Every State gets investments as per its strategy, so I don't see any bitterness there. On the question of issue-based discussion, I think fundamentally it's very unfair to create this north-south divide. In our conversations in the NDA (National Democratic Alliance), we never had the sense that there would be injustice to the South. Based on our conversations, it was very clear that proportional representation would be maintained.

But it was not spelt out in the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026.

I agree. But the Home Minister [Amit Shah] made it very clear on the floor of the House that if required, an amendment could be brought in. But politics drove the whole debate. There's a larger issue at play.

What the other political parties have actually done is a grave injustice to the South, because if you look at Article 81 [which governs the composition and structure of the Lok Sabha], it clearly stipulates that the number of Lok Sabha seats of States will be proportional to their population. Due to the defeat of the Bill, which was based on the last [2011] Census, the States' representation in the Lower House will now be based on the



If you look at data, even in States where there are BJP governments, 10-12% of the votes have been cleaned up. And it has happened across the nation. Even in States where the Congress won, SIR did happen. It's wrong to read all sorts of things into it

next Census, which would place the South at a disadvantage. Tamil Nadu and Kerala will lose about seven seats, Andhra Pradesh will lose about three, and Telangana will lose one. So it is imperative that we actually get a delimitation Bill and amend that.

Your government has announced incentives and urged people to have more than three children. Empirically, such measures to boost population have not worked in other countries.

Andhra Pradesh today has a Total Fertility Rate (TFR) of 1.5, below the replacement rate of 2.1. We are not mandating that families should have more children, but pointing out that it's important to have this conversation. We feel it is the right approach to create a mechanism that supports families that choose to have more children. So as the Chief Minister has already announced, at birth, there's a direct benefit transfer (DBT) programme, and already in Andhra Pradesh, from Classes 1 to 12, for the number of children that you have, there's already a functional DBT scheme. That was our marquee promise before the 2024 election. We believe the TFR will continue to decline before it gets any better. Therefore, I think it's important to have this debate. As far as delimitation is concerned, we are very clear that whatever the South's current proportion is, it will be maintained.

Have there been conversations between the TDP and its allies after the special session of Parliament?

Absolutely. Before, during, and after the session. When the Bill was introduced, as I said, I did share my fair share of note-taking and shared my opinions as a member of the NDA, where we debate and discuss within the four walls of the alliance.

You, a millennial, have now formally stepped into the role as the TDP's working president at a time when India has probably seen its first Gen Z poll in Tamil Nadu. Do you agree with the characterisation, and what changes do you foresee in India's politics when it comes to the youth?

Fundamentally, political parties have to transform themselves. While our ideology remains the same, in terms of representation and giving voice, incorporating the youth of the State will be critical to the political system.

If you look at what Mr. Naidu has done in his fourth term, 50% of our legislature comprises first-timers from across the social spectrum, from anganwadi workers to journalists.

Almost 17 out of 25 Ministers are first-timers. We are the youngest parliamentary party. So we have very young representation and it's a continuous process. In terms of messaging, we need to listen. During my *padayatra* [foot march] in the run-up to the 2024 poll, a common thread emerged: employment. Firing up the economic engines was the mandate the people of Andhra Pradesh gave me; this was followed by a desire to be part of the political process. If you look at our party's structure and committees, you will see a lot of fresh faces.

Sobhana K. Nair: Andhra Pradesh has reported an increase in school pass percentage from 81% in 2025 to 85% this year. What did you change during this time?

My approach has always been that the government has a very important role to play in school education. The One Class, One Teacher policy

has been the biggest push that I've made in this direction. When we came into power, only 3% of the government schools had one teacher for each class. We brought in a structural reform where we took that number up to 33%. We recruited 16,000 teachers in 150 days with zero controversy. Additionally, we've introduced critical thinking over rote learning in schools. We also revamped the curriculum. I believe we just need to give children a way to harness their energy, to get to 100%. You will be seeing more changes in the government education system, and for sure, we'll give the private sector a run for its money.

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan: While the pass percentage is going up, expenditure on education as a percentage of your total budget has been falling, from about 15% in 2019-20 to a little less than 11%. How are you managing with less funds?

Yes, capital expenditure is important, but so are our teachers and the need to motivate them. Rolling out basic structural reforms is what has enabled us. For example, we are one of the very few States to have a Teacher Transfer Act. Teachers no longer have to go to politicians to be transferred. There are points based on their seniority and there's an online system through which they can apply and get transferred. Promotions are now streamlined and seniority has been fixed. So I have removed the administrative burden on teachers, Mandal Education Officers, and District Education Officers, allowing them to focus more on learning outcomes.

Also, doing bridge courses from, say, fifth to sixth grade, and from ninth to 10th grade, these sorts of micro-interventions have really paid off for us.

A.M. Jigeesh: We have seen protests across the world, particularly in developing countries, against data centres over the intensive use of water and power. In A.P., there are plans for big data centres. How will you address these issues?

What the West doesn't have, and we do, is One Nation, One Grid. Moreover, the West has not spent sufficiently on the upkeep of its energy infrastructure while India continues to spend on it.

As far as Andhra Pradesh is concerned, along with data centres, we're also thinking about the AI engine that would power them and how to build the entire ecosystem. Our State today is energy surplus in terms of renewables.

We have a 160-gigawatt renewable energy commitment. What does that mean? Solar, wind, and pumped storage projects, which are hydro batteries that we're going to use. So we can offer renewable energy, which other States cannot. We started the Polavaram project [an under-construction multipurpose irrigation project] so that water can be delivered to Visakhapatnam. If you look at the amount of Godavari river water that goes to the ocean, a drop of it is all we need to harness and meet the energy requirements of the data centres.

A.M. Jigeesh: The removal of import duties on cotton has led to distress among farmers. How are you addressing this issue?

Our conversation with the Union government has been that we need to have a chart where we understand where the exact issue lies with regard to prices and whether to allow imports or not. In Andhra Pradesh, farm income has gone up, different commodities have done well, but there has always been a cycle, of course. Last year we had challenges with the chilli crop, but this year it has done exceptionally well. Similarly, turmeric has done exceptionally well. But for paddy, we want to pivot out of it because the per capita paddy consumption is coming down in the South.

We are also looking at newer commodities where greater value can be added, with farmers getting the lion's share of that added value. Tariffs have been a challenge as well, but we managed to get all stakeholders together, identified how much of a hit farmers, feed suppliers, and exporters, etc., can take and offered support accordingly. So the impact has been softened even as we managed to open new markets such as Australia.

Varghese K. George: When did you decide to become a politician?

It was in 2004, six months after Mr. Naidu lost the

Assembly election. We had gone to a wedding, where close to 5,000 people were present. The moment he entered the venue, they all stood up in respect. I said to myself that no other profession can really give you that kind of recognition if you want to do good and leave a legacy. I was 21 then, and it never occurred to me, even while studying at Stanford University later on, to do anything but public service.

Varghese K. George: What is it about politics that you don't like?

My concern is that the quality of discourse and exchange is coming down. It was a welcome change to see a sitting Chief Minister calling on his predecessor recently, so that knowledge transfer happens, but Andhra Pradesh politics has become a lot more bitter and very personal, which I don't stand for.

Today, it's just sad that the Opposition doesn't even come to the Assembly. So there's no real discussion or discourse happening. When Mr. Naidu was in the Opposition between 2019 and 2024, up until the time my mother was insulted on the floor of the House, which is when he vowed not to return till he became the CM, he used to attend regularly and raise people's issues.

Varghese K. George: In the last few years, allies of the BJP, the JD(U) being the latest example, have seen their power shrink. Has the thought that the BJP might want to be a force in Andhra Pradesh at your expense crossed your mind?

Every political party is entitled to their growth, aspirations, and ambitions. Why should we hold it against a political party? If I am inefficient, if I am unable to capture the imagination of the youth, then I am at fault. And honestly, I have learnt a lot from the BJP.

Could you share instances?

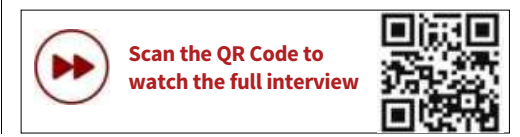
I've learnt the power of electioneering. I've learnt the approach that they take with regard to their booth management. I created an app called 'My TDP', which you could consider the BJP's app on steroids. In it, we have news, of course, but we also identify performers from the field and create a mechanism to incentivise them in a very transparent process. So I am tracking nearly 1,10,000 party members.

Sreeparna Chakrabarty: As a regional party, do you have any concerns with the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls?

The Election Commission sought opinions from all political parties on the issue, and we've shared ours with them. If you look at data, even in States where there are BJP governments, nearly 10-12% of the votes have been cleaned up. And it's happened across the nation. Even in States where the Congress won, SIR did happen. So it's wrong to read all sorts of things into it. Electoral rolls need revision, and the TDP, as a political party, has understood the role of electoral rolls from day one. That is why there is a system called 'Cluster Unit Booth' within the TDP. Once the voter list gets published, we have a mechanism to digitise it, send it to our booth agents, who review it and share their views. I've been tracking voter lists since 2004. All the digital voter lists are there, so we know how demography is changing, where it is that votes are getting deleted, and if a voter's name is deleted, we go to their house and ensure they are being enrolled.



The quality of discourse and exchange is coming down. It was a welcome change to see a sitting Chief Minister calling on his predecessor recently, but Andhra Pradesh politics has become a lot more bitter, which I don't stand for





The bail rule

The Andrabi ruling reaffirms liberty over the stringent UAPA bar

The idea of justice should never allow for the indefinite imprisonment of someone without trial. However, The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), does so, through its stringent Section 43-D(5), which makes bail near impossible once a court is satisfied, on the prosecution's material, that a prima facie case exists against the accused. But on May 18, in *Syed Ifthikhar Andrabi vs National Investigation Agency, Jammu*, the top court delivered a welcome restatement of the principle that bail should be the rule even in cases related to the UAPA. The Bench granted bail to Andrabi, who had spent over five years and nine months in pre-trial custody. The Bench also clarified the legal position where an undertrial has spent years in custody without any realistic prospect of the trial concluding. By reiterating that the right to personal liberty and a speedy trial cannot be subservient to the provision in Section 43-D(5), the judgment disapproved the reasoning in two two-judge Bench rulings, *Gurwinder Singh (2024)* and *Gulfisha Fatima*, decided earlier this year. Both had sought to dilute the principle laid down by a three-judge Bench in *K.A. Najeeb (2021)*, which held that the "rigours" of Section 43-D(5) would "melt down" where there was no likelihood of the trial concluding within a reasonable time and the incarceration already undergone was substantial. The Bench also held that the two-judge Benches could not have departed from a binding three-judge ruling in the first place.

In *Gulfisha Fatima*, the Delhi Riots "larger conspiracy" bail decision, the Court denied bail to Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam and even foreclosed their right to renew the plea for a full year, despite both having spent over five years in prison. Now in *Andrabi*, the Court has disapproved the *Gulfisha Fatima* Bench's reading that *Najeeb* was confined to its own facts and was not a constitutional limitation on Section 43-D(5). Consequently, Khalid and Imam should have been granted bail on the basis of the *Najeeb* ruling, and not denied it on a narrower reading of it. This is a welcome intervention, provided it is binding in all such cases, even if it is only about the favourable consideration of bail pleas where the accused have been in custody for long periods without trial, and not about a right to bail under the UAPA. Tellingly, a day after *Andrabi*, Additional Solicitor General S.V. Raju told another Bench that under the UAPA's statutory bail bar, "the presumption of innocence takes a backseat" which is precisely the position *Andrabi* has now set itself against, in line with constitutional principles.

Measure for measure

Courts should not react defensively to every line of criticism

While it is the courts' prerogative to punish contempt, how well they have separated contemptuous attacks from constitutionally protected criticism, especially by journalists, lawyers, activists, and scholars, has varied widely. This is because the judiciary has not been able to draw consistent lines between fair and exaggerated criticism, politically motivated and defamatory comments, and speech that obstructs justice. The judiciary faces misinformation, political pressure, abusive on-line discourse, and declining public trust, and the ways in which judges can respond to these attacks are limited. Rhetorical excess in oral observations must also not be confused with legal doctrine. However, recent comments by the Bench have created the appearance of a judiciary increasingly intolerant of external scrutiny. Last week, when hearing a lawyer's petition over not having been elevated to a senior rank, CJI Surya Kant described certain actors in the legal ecosystem as "parasites" and certain young lawyers engaging in RTI-based activism as "cockroaches". While he later said the remarks were directed at persons entering professions with bogus degrees, rather than critics of the judiciary, such language is unbecoming of the CJI. The tenor follows the NCERT textbook controversy, with the Supreme Court focusing its manifest ire on three academics involved in drafting the chapter, effectively excluding them from work on public school curricula without prior hearing. The action evoked concerns about the Court being aggrieved party and arbiter. In the Ali Khan Mahmudabad matter, the Court granted him relief from coercive action but also imposed a gag order. Then, in a display of willingness to discipline the norms of public conduct rather than determine legality, it urged the state to decline to prosecute him as a concession.

When a CJI's comments of this nature appear outside formal contempt proceedings, they render a chilling effect as they amount to institutional condemnation without the safeguards of due process. The comments on using the RTI Act as a basis for activism have a similar effect, beyond the Act being a legitimate instrument. Recently, when a journalist (with a law degree) sought data on complaints against specific judges, the Supreme Court Registry declined the existence of such information. When the journalist produced a Law Ministry disclosure to the contrary, the Registry's legal representative dubbed the inquiry "fishing and roving" – a moving goalpost that was, again, under-concerned with legality while raising questions of the Court arguing its own case. Former CJI D.Y. Chandrachud said that judges are public actors exercising state power and courts should not react defensively to every line of criticism. That attitude improved how the bar, the press, and the academy experienced courts. The recent comments have set the clock back.

The house listing phase of the 2027 Census is now progressing in some States and the work in other States will be taken up soon. The questionnaire for this phase was pre-tested last year. It was reported that the inclusion of questions on caste has delayed the pre-testing of the questionnaire for the population enumeration phase of the Census. Field testing of the schedules is essential to ensure that the concepts and definitions are easily understood by the enumerators and respondents.

The question on caste is being included in the Census for the first time since Independence. The only recent experiences on the issues relating to enumeration of caste are from the surveys in Bihar and Karnataka. I am sure that the Census organisation would have conducted extensive research on the issues and possible solutions, and the pre-testing would help streamline the questions and instructions. The experience of Karnataka and Bihar suggests that, whatever the results, there will be communities that are not ready to accept their numbers.

The population figures from the 2027 Census will be used for the next delimitation of Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assembly constituencies. Neither the Constitution nor any other law talks about whether the Census has to count people on *de jure* or *de facto* basis. Census on *de jure* basis would mean that people have to be counted at the place where they reside. On the other hand, a *de facto* census would count people at the place where they are present during the Census.

The method used

The Indian Census has been following an extended *de facto* method. People found at their usual/normal place of residence when the enumerator visits the household, as well as members who are absent at that time but have stayed there for at least one night during the Census enumeration period, which normally lasts 20 days, are also enumerated. Also included are visitors who stayed with the household throughout the entire period of Census enumeration period. A household is defined to include all members, even if unrelated, who partake food from a common kitchen. Thus, household help living with household and paying guests should be enumerated there, if they have food from the same kitchen.

This enumeration process implies that the number of voters in an area may not correspond to the population enumerated there. A six-month residence is required for registration as a voter. Further, the voters' list would include those living abroad (non-resident Indians, or NRIs) who chose to register as a voter, whereas they are not part of the census at all. According to the website of the Ministry of External Affairs, there are about 1.58



K. Narayanan Unni

Retired officer from the Indian Statistical Service

crore NRIs living abroad. This is more than 1% of the population of the country. If they were all counted in the Census in one State, it would get at least five Lok Sabha seats in the next delimitation.

While the NRIs may be from across the country, some States have proportionately more NRIs than others. Kerala, Gujarat, Punjab, Telangana and Tamil Nadu are known to have a significant number of people living abroad. The Kerala Migration Survey 2023 has estimated that about 22 lakh people from the State are living/working abroad. Not including them in the population of the State would result in the loss of one Lok Sabha seat. Some other States may also be similarly affected.

Some countries collect data on non-residents in the census by enumerating family members, if any, living abroad. This process cannot collect information on those households that have migrated abroad with all their members. Still, it would be a useful starting point and would provide better data for delimitation purposes. Therefore, I suggest pre-testing an appropriately worded question on NRIs.

The problem areas

The next Census is unique because the entire data collection process is planned to be carried out using mobile electronic devices, mostly smartphones. This can save time for the computerisation of data. Consistency checks on responses during data collection can result in improved quality of data and faster processing.

However, one has to allow for a significantly large portion of enumerators who are not savvy with smartphones, and tablets. During the recent Socio Economic and Caste Survey in Karnataka, there were reports of enumerators finding it difficult to handle the equipment for the survey. During the planning for the 2021 Census, it was indicated that enumerators would have the option to collect data using printed paper schedules, which could later be transferred to the electronic database from home. It is highly probable that a family member or a student of the teacher appointed as the enumerator may assist with this work. This could lead to accountability issues and may also compromise the confidentiality of the data. Therefore, a mechanism to detect and control data-entry errors is essential. There will also be an option for respondents to self-enumerate using a computer or smartphone as provided in the house listing phase.

The questions in the population enumeration stage are more complex when compared to those in the house-listing phase. Many of the questions require a thorough understanding of the instructions that even many enumerators find difficult. For example, the explanation of disability in the 2011 Census ran to about six printed pages. Even the seemingly simple

question, "Have you worked at any time during the last year?" was accompanied by more than two pages explaining what constitutes 'work'. The follow-up questions on industry, occupation, and related matters are also not easy for most people to understand.

It is too naive to expect that the respondents would read all the instructions before clicking on an item in the drop down menu. The three million plus enumerators may not equally understand the concepts, definitions and the need to ask the questions in an appropriate manner. The self enumeration facility can become worse unless the questions are well worded and explanations are given within the question. It is difficult to achieve this without significant simplification of the concepts and definitions.

Guard against respondent fatigue

Including too many questions in the online schedule in an attempt to obtain better responses can also lead to respondent fatigue, as the form has to be completed for every individual in a household. The possibility of respondents deliberately providing incorrect answers to certain questions in order to avoid follow-up questions cannot be ruled out.

Post-enumeration surveys from past censuses have indicated that distant relatives of the head of the household and unrelated persons, such as domestic helpers living with the household, have higher rates of omission. In a self-enumeration system, the chances of missing such persons are even greater. There is also the possibility of including children who are living in hostels and are therefore not eligible to be enumerated as part of the household. Better structuring of the questions may help ensure more accurate enumeration of such persons. For example, questions such as, "Is the person currently present in the house and, if not, was he or she present at any time after February 9 or likely to return before February 28?" (assuming that the census enumeration takes place during that period as in the past censuses), could be asked for every individual. Similarly, questions such as "Is there any other relative of the head of the household, or any unrelated person such as a servant, helper, or nurse, who shares meals from the same kitchen and lives with the household?" may also be included. While such measures may not ensure completely error-free enumeration, they could help reduce omissions and improve accuracy.

The possibility of fraudulent enumerations in some areas or by some groups using the self enumeration facility cannot be ruled out. The memory of cancelling the Census in some areas in 2001 is still fresh. The organisation needs to be vigilant and steps to prevent such incidents need to be field tested.

Drone mania, separating hype from battlefield reality

Operation Sindoor started with a bang at 1.02 a.m. on May 7, 2025 and the surprise ceasefire at 3.30 p.m. on May 10, 2025, was akin to an "out-of-syllabus" event. On the first anniversary, discussion of the four-day engagement between India and Pakistan has been dominated by events concerning India's long-range strikes on Pakistani terrorist and air force infrastructure; what has been missed out, however, has been the use by both sides of small unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), including loitering kamikaze munitions, colloquially referred to as drones.

Drones have acquired an outsized image for three reasons. First, there is their aura of being relatively "unstoppable" because their small size makes detection difficult. Second, their relatively low cost *vis-à-vis* a manned aircraft makes them very appealing to number-crunchers. Lastly, the fact that they do not place a combatant in harm's way is an argument that undercuts most of their limitations. In the recent past, the advent of fibre-optic-guided first-person-view drones used by Hezbollah against Israel has further added to the hype.

So, the question whether drones have revolutionised warfare needs a professional analysis *vis-à-vis* the basic tenets of warfare through a prism of doctrine and strategy.

Doctrinal issues

The first question is whether the arrival of drones represents a revolutionary change in warfare or merely an evolution enabled by new technology. Evolutionary developments merely enhance existing capabilities, whereas revolutionary technologies fundamentally reshape warfare by opening up new domains. The advent of the air domain was transformational because it revolutionised warfare. UAVs, however, are merely another weapon system – albeit one with unique advantages – that has evolved within the



Manmohan Bahadur

Retired Air Vice Marshal and a former Additional Director General of the Centre for Air Power Studies

air domain. Second, since drones fly at low altitudes, some strategists have coined the term "air littoral", suggesting the creation of another domain of warfare unique to drone operations. This is misleading because drones operate within a restricted airspace layer – from the ground up to the coordinating altitude, a pre-designated level that separates fast-moving conventional airpower from slower-moving assets such as helicopters and UAVs. This has forced surface forces to devise methods to protect themselves. In effect, as an essay in the *Air & Space Forces Magazine* argues, drones are not reshaping air warfare but are actually reshaping ground combat. The importance of attainment and maintenance of air superiority through manned systems, therefore, remains undiminished.

Strategic considerations

First, the innovative strike by Ukraine, deep in the interior of Russia through drones inserted in specially constructed containers as part of its Operation Spider's Web, points to a new strategic requirement of possessing good counterintelligence to thwart such long-term strategies in the adversary's planning stage itself. In the event, the strategic air fleet of Russia had lost many costly assets.

Second, such innovative use has shifted the boundaries of kinetic warfare hundreds of kilometres inland. This is akin to a cyberattack that can be launched by anyone, from anywhere in the world, against any target globally. Consequently, a new requirement has emerged to protect assets located deep within a nation's interior on a 24x7 basis. Incidentally, the United States has introduced new laws restricting the purchase of land by foreign entities near military bases and critical infrastructure.

Third, the field of unmanned flight is, in many ways, still developing. The integration of artificial intelligence will bring about an exponential

increase in capabilities, leading to fully autonomous operations. Allowing a machine to make life-and-death decisions comes with enormous consequences, and a United Nations committee is currently examining the ethical and moral issues involved.

Counter UAS strategy

In warfare, a new weapon brings in counter-measures and counter counter-measures. As more counter unmanned aerial systems (CUAS) are fielded, the drone threat would be addressable to a great extent.

In Operation Sindoor, waves of individual drones that had been sent into India by Pakistan were neutralised by an integrated CUAS network. On the other hand, drone swarms that are being developed would be an integration of multiple drones to overwhelm air defence systems by sheer numbers. This is the next challenge, and counter-measures under development would basically be directed energy weapons such as the Israeli Iron Beam laser system which ensures rapid engagement at just \$2-\$3.50 per laser shot instead of the \$40,000 to \$50,000 per missile of its Iron Dome system.

The Europeans are launching a drone-wall initiative which will use a layered mesh of detection and interception capabilities of drones of European Union member states. The U.S. is planning its Golden Dome system with space based and hypersonic interceptors to address incoming projectiles.

It is good that India too is envisaging a nationwide terrestrial and space-based 'Sudarshan Chakra' to be in place by 2035 for addressing multifarious air defence threats. That is still at least a decade away and, therefore, such a system would require phase-wise operationalisation along with enormous and committed funding. It is imperative that New Delhi finds the monies to support it.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Bail ruling

The Supreme Court of India's reflection on its earlier bail ruling is a welcome reminder that justice must not be delayed into denial. When trials stretch endlessly, liberty becomes collateral damage. Bail is not mercy but a constitutional right tied to freedom and fairness. The Court's acknowledgment

that prolonged incarceration violates the spirit of justice should guide all future decisions under stringent laws. Upholding personal liberty while ensuring accountability is the true test of judicial balance. India's great democracy depends on courts that correct themselves and reaffirm that the rule of law protects citizens, not just

prosecutes them. **K. Chidanand Kumar**, Bengaluru

Rationality in politics

The recent and stunning electoral success of the fledgling Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) party in Tamil Nadu has paved the way for several youngsters to become Members of the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly.

This will naturally encourage more young people to view politics as a career option, which is healthy for a democracy. However, what message does a TVK MLA send to youngsters when she claims to hold an "honorary doctorate in astrology" and conducts meetings with Corporation officials, who reportedly "voluntarily" met her at her "astrology

consultancy office" (Tamil Nadu page, "TVK MLA criticised for meeting officials in 'astrology office'", May 20)? Will not youngsters influenced by her political success begin to think that a degree in astrology is a desirable qualification for securing an MLA ticket from the TVK, and start pursuing such qualifications? As a political party seeking

to govern Tamil Nadu, the TVK cannot shy away from its responsibility to curb pseudoscientific practices, which have the potential to erode rational thinking, in the public sphere.

A. Venkatasubramanian, Tiruchi, Tamil Nadu

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

Analysing India's budgets for justice

The lack of any targeted funding to improve justice outcomes in the Union Budget 2026-27 shows that India continues to overlook the importance of rule of law to economic growth. To understand government priorities within competing constraints of financial resources, one just has to follow the money.



Valay Singh
Lead and Co-founder,
India Justice Report

A recent study of the budgets for the justice system, which includes the police, prisons, judiciary and legal aid departments, has found that across 11 high-GDP States in India such as Gujarat, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh, there has been a cumulative spend of ₹2 lakh crore towards justice in 2024-25. On average, this accounted for 4.6% of State budgets. In comparison, the Council of Europe's European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice study, which excluded police services, and was based on information from 2022, shows that Europe only spends about 0.31% of its GDP on justice. Nationally, India spends about ₹450 per capita on the judiciary, ₹9 on free legal aid, ₹150 on prisons and about ₹1,500 on the police.

The India Justice Report noted that across India's 11 wealthiest and most populous States, policing accounted for over 80% of all justice-related allocations with a spend of ₹1,616 per capita. Such a distribution raises questions about the state's priorities in delivering justice.

An overview of the system
That the lion's share of justice expenditure goes to policing is explainable. Policing is an undeniable core function of any State; however the disaggregation of that spending reveals a particular orientation. Most of the funds go towards salaries, and administrative firefighting. Funds for infrastructure, particularly vehicles, computers and other equipment, come next, leaving quite little for areas that affect the

quality of policing. For instance, less than 1.5% of the police budget is allocated to training, and roughly only 1% to forensics. Judiciary budgets accounted for less than 1% of the total State budgets, despite unprecedented caseloads. Across the 11 States, there are 3,500 district courts, which handle seven times the cases of the High Courts and receive only three times the budget. Budgetary allocations are directed towards infrastructure, the salaries of judges and support staff, and training. However, training accounts for just about 1% of judiciary budgets. Based on the population projections of March 2025, the actual strength of the Bench stands at 15 judges per 10 lakh population, which is well below the 1987 Law Commission recommendation of 50 judges per 10 lakh population. Analysis shows that for every judge position in the district judiciary, at least 5-9 other positions are needed for secretarial and clerical functions. While the financial cost of adding judges is not insignificant, India's economic growth should not be stalled because of severely inadequate judge strength. Prisons in these 11 States hold 60% of India's prisoners. The occupancy in these States, which stood at 137% in 2023, was higher than the national average (131%). Prisons accounted for only 0.14% of State budgets. On average, of every ₹100 spent on prisons, only ₹0.23 was spent on training. The Justice Report also noted that prisons across India functioned with at least 30% vacancies. Legal aid received the least amount of funds. Given that legal aid is the primary mechanism through which low-income and marginalised individuals access the justice system, this underinvestment has consequences: limited reach, inadequate representation, and delays in securing legal assistance for those who need it the most.

Systemic priorities
When policing takes the majority

of funding for justice systems, it brings to light an architecture which is structured primarily around enforcement and surveillance, not access, adjudication, or rehabilitation. The priority appears to be maintaining law-and-order capacity rather than promoting fairness, and strengthening the broader ecosystem of justice delivery. A justice system is only as strong as its weakest component. The current distribution of funds suggests that those components most essential for protection and equal access – legal aid, judicial and prison staff training, and independent oversight bodies – are the least supported. An overemphasis on just one component comes at a cost; a crisis in the system which needs to be managed by the other pillars.

The National Crime Record Bureau's Crime in India 2024 report shows us that 26 lakh people were arrested, a majority of whom belonged to communities which were socially and economically marginalised. This is indicative of a system that is highly efficient at generating cases, arrests, and detentions, but inefficient at supplying remedies. Another clear example is the treatment given to State Human Rights Commissions (SHRC). Despite their clear statutory mandate to investigate rights violations, review safeguards and provide independent oversight, SHRCs in the highest-GDP States receive a mere 80 paise per capita. Several operate with over 40% vacancies, and many struggle to perform even basic functions.

This does not imply that policing should be deprioritised, but it does paint a clear picture of an imbalance. A recalibration of justice budget priorities, one that is firmly grounded in evidence and aligned with what the Constitution mandates would move India closer to a system that is accessible, and people-centred; capable of meeting the needs of all.

Boosting climate action in Tamil Nadu

The new government should prioritise and accelerate climate action in the State

STATE OF PLAY

Arivudai Nambi Appadurai



A new political mandate in Tamil Nadu arrives at a time when climate risks are no longer distant projections but lived realities. From rising heat to coastal vulnerability, the urgency to embed climate action into governance has never been clearer. This political transition offers an opportunity to accelerate the State's climate action response.

Tamil Nadu is among the most climate vulnerable States of India. Increasing sea-levels, frequent cyclones, heatwaves, water stress and rapid urbanisation exacerbate existing vulnerabilities, making the transition of climate action into policy and implementation an absolute necessity.

In the past, Tamil Nadu has actioned several policies to manage climate risks. The government has introduced various programmes such as the Climate Change mission, Coastal Restoration Mission and the Green Tamil Nadu mission, in addition to the creation of institutions such as the Tamil Nadu Green Climate Company (TNGCC) and the Tamil Nadu Green Energy Corporation. Further, the Governing Council on Climate Change, a high-level body with experts headed by the CM, is a first-of-its-kind State-level body designed to provide strategic policy direction, and accelerate climate adaptation and mitigation efforts.

Some of the key initiatives under the Climate Change Mission have been the establishment of climate resilient villages as a pilot in 11 districts; district-level decarbonisation plans; carbon-neutral hubs; bio-fencing; climate-resilient

green temples; green schools; and the Green Fellows programme. The role of the State Planning Commission cannot be ignored here for it was instrumental in conceiving many targeted studies across a spectrum of priority areas, which fed into both policy and implementation processes. On the financial side, Tamil Nadu pioneered the launch of the first State-owned Green Climate Fund with a corpus of ₹1,000 crore to support clean energy transition, mobility and water security. Besides this, the State has been successful in acquiring significant funding from the World Bank and other multilateral agencies to execute the TN-Shore Mission focused on building coastal resilience.

The next step

All these measures have placed Tamil Nadu as a forerunner in climate action. Furthermore, institutions such as the TNGCC can be leveraged to attract private capital to achieve climate action goals. It could translate ambition into opportunity at scale and create the next generation of industrial winners.

The new regime should not only look to sustain current initiatives to shape better outcomes but also be innovative in putting together forward-looking policies. It must also ensure inclusive decision making in order to create an enabling environment.

As Tamil Nadu is one of the most industrialised States, the scope for emission mitigation programmes is wide and pertinent. The new government's environment mandate has an organic link with the past government's climate actions and ambitions. It aspires to come out with a dedicated climate budget plan to the tune of ₹3,000 crore, achieve 100% renewable energy through the Vetri Solar Mission, install 20,000 EV fast charging stations by 2031, and electrify 5,000 State-owned buses.

And while mitigation-related priorities are important, the new government should not lose sight of adaptation actions, which include measures to safeguard the lives and livelihoods of the poor and the vulnerable. A separate framework and plan of action for adaptation strategies would not only help the State's climate-resilient policies but also strengthen its contributions to the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), National Adaptation Plan (NAP) and other existing international mechanisms.

Further, investments in research, training, and capacity-building would enhance the value of climate action. The new government should strive to mobilise funds, both domestically and internationally.

Tamil Nadu enters its next phase of governance at a time when the climate action platform is well-positioned for accelerated implementation. The new government guided by its grand social agenda must ensure that every rupee spent on development is also an investment towards a cleaner and resilient future.

Arivudai Nambi Appadurai is Director of the Climate Resilience Practice at the World Resources Institute India. Views expressed are personal.

Patterns from Gujarat's 2026 local body elections

Of the 9,986 seats in the State's local body polls, 732 were won by the BJP without a single opposing candidate

DATA POINT

Pradeep Kumar Dontha
Vignesh Karthik K.R.

In April 2026, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) swept Gujarat's local body elections across 9,986 seats spanning four administrative tiers: Municipal Corporations (MCs), Nagarpalikas (NPs), District Panchayats (DPs), and Taluka Panchayats (TPs), winning 75.03% of all seats. The BJP's seat share falls in a near-perfect gradient from 89.75% in MCs to 70.29% in DPs (Table 1), indicating that while its dominance is real, the terrain becomes more contested as governance gets closer to the village level.

This urban-rural gradient holds across both seat shares and vote shares (Chart 1). In 2015, the Congress led the BJP in both DPs and TPs. Rural Gujarat has since been systematically realigned, but the realignment is incomplete. The residual resistance at the Taluka tier is Congress's most viable terrain for recovery.

The three-cycle trend is useful evidence of structural, not cyclical, consolidation (Chart 2). The BJP improved its overall vote share across all administrative tiers by 7.6 percentage points, from 46.69% in 2015 to 54.28% in 2026.

The Congress, meanwhile, shed 14 percentage points in its overall vote share, from 44.77% in 2015 to 30.76% in 2026. Importantly, it secured fewer absolute votes in 2026 (1.8 crore) than in 2015 (2.3 crore) despite a substantially larger electorate, a clear sign of the party losing ground. The vote share of the Others category, including independents and minor parties, has more than halved from 8.55% to 3.98%, as the political space has consolidated into a three-party frame after the entry of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP).

The AAP secured a 6.21% vote share in its first local body elections in Gujarat in 2021 and in-

creased it to 10.98% in 2026, adding 29 lakh votes over that period. The correlation data is unambiguous: the AAP's vote share correlates at +0.98 with the BJP's growth and at -0.96 with the Congress's decline across tiers, showing that it is cannibalising the Opposition and not eroding the BJP's voter base.

The BJP won 94.87% of Scheduled Caste (SC) (General) seats at the DP tier and performed consistently above 79% in SC categories across all tiers. The historic KHAM (Kshatriya, Harijan, Adivasi, Muslim) coalition's SC pillar, built by former Congress Chief Minister Madhav Singh Solanki in the 1980s, is structurally absent from these results. The Congress's most durable electoral asset has effectively dissolved at the grassroots. Its SC pillar has migrated to the BJP, and its Scheduled Tribes (ST) pillar is now split three ways.

In TPs, the BJP won 65.59% of ST (General) and 61.72% of ST (Women) seats – its weakest numbers at any tier-and-category combination. In the north Gujarat tribal corridor, the BJP's ST (General) win share dropped to 52.1% and ST (Women) to 55.3%. The Kutch showed a similar dip, with the ST (General) win share at 57.1%. The tribal belt, where the BJP, the Congress, and the AAP are in a triangular contest, remains the only competitive terrain in Gujarat's local body elections.

The most alarming finding in the 2026 data is the disappearance of contest itself. Of the 9,986 seats, 732 (7.3%) were won without a single opposing candidate. The BJP claimed 717 of these (Table 2), of which 435 were in women-reserved categories. The historical escalation is stark: 37 uncontested seats in 2015, 237 in 2021, and 732 in 2026. Whether this reflects the Opposition's inability to recruit women candidates, or a judgment that reserved seats are unwinnable, the consequence is the same: in over 700 pockets, the democratic contest has effectively ceased.

Collapsing contests

The data were sourced from Gujarat State Election Commission. Pradeep Kumar Dontha is a political consultant. Vignesh Karthik K.R. is a postdoctoral research affiliate of Indian politics at KITLV-Leiden



CHART 1: The seat shares and vote shares of the major parties across administrative tiers

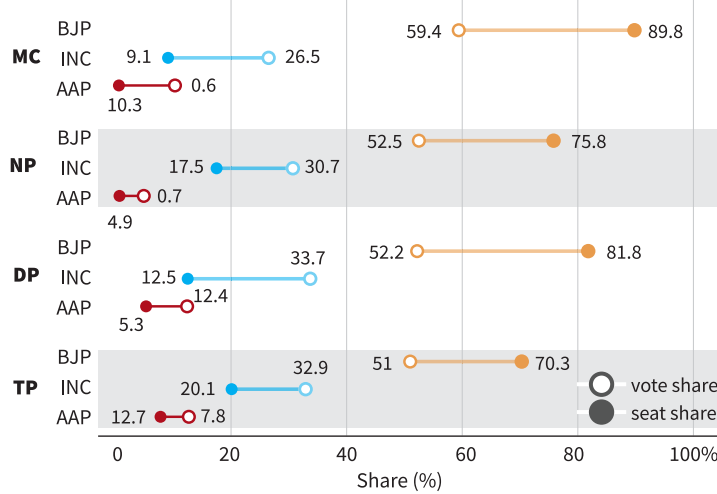


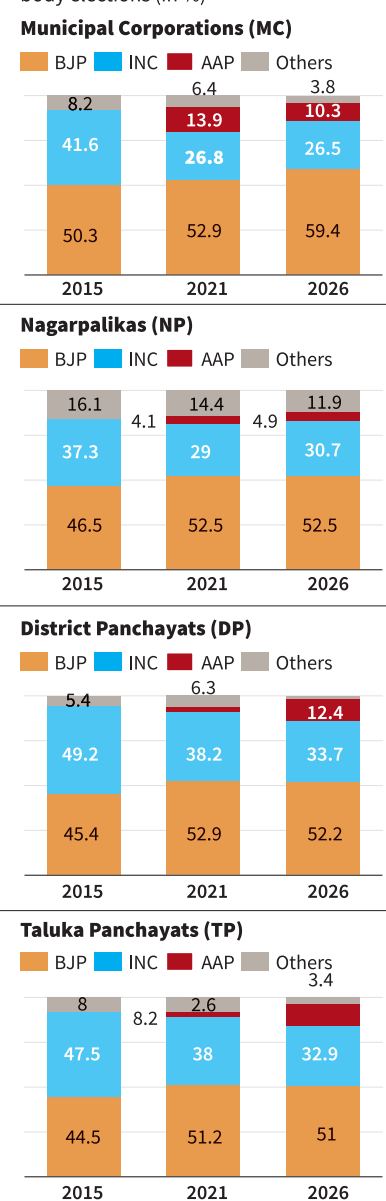
TABLE 1: The seat share of the BJP across different reservation categories and administrative tiers

Category	MC	NP	DP	TP
UR (G)	89.6	73.9	82.5	70.4
UR (W)	91.4	76.6	86.3	73.5
BC (G)	90.8	74.6	78.4	72.7
BC (W)	87.8	75.4	87.4	73.3
SC (G)	79.1	82.7	94.9	76.4
SC (W)	87.9	82.3	94.3	74.1
ST (G)	89.5	74.2	73.9	65.6
ST (W)	100.0	80.0	70.5	61.7

TABLE 2: Seats won without any contest (unopposed) in the local body elections

Tier	(Col A) Seats won unopposed	(Col B) Seats won by BJP among Col A	(Col C) Seats reserved for women over Col B
MCs	43	43	33
NPs	385	370	232
DPs	52	52	27
TPs	252	252	143
Total	732	717	435

CHART 2: The party-wise change in vote shares over the past three local body elections (in %)



FROM THE ARCHIVES

The Hindu

FIFTY YEARS AGO MAY 21, 1976

Neyveli success in transplanting trees

When the mining operations in Neyveli were extended in 1968, the Neyveli Lignite Corporation authorities had to shift and re-lay an orchard with 924 plants like grafted mango, lemon, acid lime, jack, coconut, arecanut and grape most of them procured from the Government Model Orchard-cum-Nursery at Timmapuram in Salem district. At the time of shifting most of the trees had established themselves well with a trunk base ranging from 9 inches to one foot and were just then in yield.

Test excavations around the trees up to their branch spread revealed they had put forth network of roots up to 3 and 4 feet from the base. For transport and transplantations of trees on a large scale cranes and tractor trailers were used. No watering was done around the trees to be lifted to their new location to keep the soil harder and drier for better shape. The roots of the trees under normal conditions were found to travel underground to the extent of the branches over the ground. It was noticed during the transplantation operations that if the trunk of a tree was 12" in diameter, the ball of earth would be between 4 and 5 feet diameter. In all the cases trenches were cut around the trees beyond the diametrical length the trenches being sufficiently broad for tying and lifting plants operations inside the pits. The ball of earth was sectioned off in such a way as to taper down underground where root fibers were thinner. Wherever the soil was found sandy and likely to crumble, the ball of earth was wrapped with sack or tarpaulin bits and then securely tied. Special slings were used around the ball of earth before lifting plants with cranes.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MAY 21, 1926

Reform of Afghan coinage

Simla, May 20: Recently the whole of the Afghan coinage and system of weights and measures have undergone a change. The Metric system has been adopted. The present rupee is called the *Afghani*, as opposed to the old *Kabuli*, and is declared to be of slightly higher value. 10 *Afghanis* being equal to 11 *Kabulis*. The *Afghani* is divided into 100 *Pals*. Only 2, 5, and 10 *Pal* coins are issued. 20 *Afghanis* go to make one *Amani*, which is the standard gold coin. The coins are well minted.

Text & Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Heroin seized near the Jammu border in a drone drop

3 In kilograms. Police in Jammu recovered around 3 kg of heroin suspected to have been dropped by a drone near the International Border in the Bishnah sector. Officials said the consignment, estimated to be worth over ₹15 crore in the international market, was intercepted during an operation targeting narco-smuggling networks. PTI

Tamil Nadu healthcare surveillance vehicles flagged off

40 Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C. Joseph Vijay flagged off 40 new vehicles worth ₹2.9 crore for the Directorate of Medical and Rural Health Services. The vehicles will be used to monitor hospitals, inspect scan centres, investigate quackery cases and support emergency medical relief operations across the State. PTI

Ships allowed through the Strait of Hormuz by Iran

26 Iran's Revolutionary Guards said 26 vessels, including oil tankers and container ships, were allowed to transit the Strait of Hormuz over the past 24 hours. Iran has largely blocked shipping through the strait, a vital global energy conduit, since the outbreak of war with the United States and Israel on February 28. AFP

Temperature recorded in Rajasthan's hottest city

46.5 In degrees Celsius. Sriganganagar recorded a maximum temperature of 46.5° Celsius, making it the hottest place in Rajasthan. Most parts of the State are likely to continue experiencing heatwave conditions with temperatures ranging between 42 and 46 degrees Celsius over the next week. PTI

Matches scheduled in BCCI domestic season 2026-27

1,788 The BCCI announced that the 2026-27 domestic season will feature 1,788 matches across men's and women's tournaments in multiple age groups and formats. The season will begin with the Duleep Trophy on August 23. ANI
COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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Oral remarks and institutional limits

Chief Justice's 'cockroaches' remark from the bench, and the clarification that followed, have revived a question the Supreme Court has tried to settle twice; the standard the court has set out asks the public to read bench remarks as distinct from the formal opinion, and asks judges to keep that distinction from collapsing

LETTER & SPIRIT

V. Venkatesan

Chief Justice Surya Kant's remarks from the bench on May 15 and the clarification that followed the next day have revived a question Indian law has tried to settle twice. When a judge speaks from the bench and the speech wounds, what standard governs? Hearing applications relating to the designation of senior advocates, the Chief Justice remarked that "there are youngsters like cockroaches" and that some advocates were "parasites of society." The clarification confined the criticism to fake-degree-holding designees. The clarification has not closed the controversy.

The court has named the convention twice. The first was the Restatement of Values of Judicial Life, adopted by the Full Court on May 7, 1997. The second was *Chief Election Commissioner vs M.R. Vijayabhaskar*, decided by Justice D.Y. Chandrachud and Justice M.R. Shah on May 6, 2021. A century before either, Benjamin Cardozo, in his Storrs Lectures at Yale in 1921, named the standard that constrains all judicial utterance. The judge, Cardozo wrote, "is to draw his inspiration from consecrated principles. He is not to yield to spasmodic sentiment, to vague and unregulated benevolence. He is to exercise a discretion informed by tradition, methodized by analogy, disciplined by system, and subordinated to the primordial necessity of order in the social life."

The Vijayabhaskar standard

The trigger for *Vijayabhaskar* lay in the Madras High Court. In April 2021, during the second wave of COVID-19, the Madras High Court was hearing a petition on COVID protocols at a Karur polling booth, with Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee presiding. The Bench, exasperated at the Election Commission for permitting large political rallies during the Assembly elections then under way, remarked that the Commission was "singularly responsible" for the situation and that Commission officers "should be put up for murder charges probably." The remarks were not in the formal order but were widely reported. The Election Commission moved the Supreme Court for a direction restraining the media from reporting oral observations of judges.

Justice Chandrachud refused that restraint. The judgment did three things. It defended bench questioning as a form that provides "clarity to the judges" and lets lawyers develop arguments "with a sense of creativity founded on a spontaneity of thought." It cautioned against scathing language directed at persons or institutions, calling the Madras High Court's metaphor "inappropriate" and the remarks "harsh." And it held, as the doctrinal centrepiece, that "the formal opinion of a judicial institution is reflected through its judgments and orders, not its oral observations during the hearing." Two faces of the bench remark were thus named by the court itself: the question that tests and the language that wounds. The same standard, drawn from Cardozo and codified in Item 8 of the 1997 Restatement, applies to both.

The bench question that tests

The first face is the bench question that tests an argument. The judge states a position she may not hold, to see how the lawyer defends against it. The form is



GETTY IMAGES

unscripted; the function is rigorous. The judgment is the considered position; the bench question is the testing that precedes it. Three instances show the form at work. During the second round of hearings in *Brown vs Board of Education* before the United States Supreme Court, Justice Felix Frankfurter asked Thurgood Marshall what he meant by saying the Constitution required "equal" treatment in schools. Marshall answered: "Equal means getting the same thing, at the same time, and in the same place." The bench question forced the petitioner to define his term in a phrase that would travel. The answer entered the American civil rights doctrine.

On September 12, 2023, the Israeli Supreme Court sat as a 15-justice panel to hear petitions against an amendment that stripped the courts of their power to review government decisions for reasonableness. President Esther Hayut told government counsel from the bench: "We are not concerned with our prestige but with the vital interests of the public." She pressed the government on whether reasonableness could survive as a legal obligation if no judge could enforce it. The questioning was widely read as foreshadowing the 8:7 majority that struck down the law in January 2024.

In April 2023, hearing the marriage equality petitions in *Supriyo vs Union of India*, Chief Justice Chandrachud told Solicitor General Tushar Mehta that "there is no absolute concept of a man or an absolute concept of a woman at all... the very notion of a man and a woman is not an absolute based on genitals." The exchange was widely read as signalling that the bench would read same-sex unions into the Special Marriage Act, 1954. The judgment delivered six months later went the other way. Chief Justice Chandrachud himself was in the minority. The bench question had done its work of testing. The considered position lay elsewhere.

The intemperate remark

The second face is the intemperate remark. The standard against "scathing language" is most strained when the language reaches for the dehumanising.

In December 2015, hearing *Fisher vs University of Texas* at Austin on race in university admissions, Justice Antonin Scalia observed from the bench that there were those who contended that African-American students did better at "a slower-track school" than at competitive universities. The remark went to the empirical question of whether affirmative action helped its intended beneficiaries. The language he used to put the question carried its own weight. The remark was widely condemned as racist. Justice Scalia did not retreat. He died two months later, leaving the remark on the record.

On March 1, 2021, hearing the bail plea of a government employee accused of raping a school student in Maharashtra, Chief Justice S.A. Bobde asked his counsel: "Will you marry her?" The accused's lawyer informed the court that his client was already married. The Chief Justice withdrew the suggestion. A week later, he said the remark had been "completely misrepresented": he had asked whether the accused was going to marry, not directed him to do so.

Hearing a PIL on urban housing for the poor in February 2025, Justice B.R. Gavai, who would assume office as Chief Justice three months later, wondered aloud whether freebies were producing "a class of parasites." That he was urging the homeless to be drawn into the mainstream did not redeem the epithet. Justice Surya Kant's remarks of May 15 belong to the same category and have followed the same arc: utterance, criticism, clarification confining the scope of what was said.

The same standard applies off the bench. In July 2016, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg of the United States Supreme

Court called Donald Trump, then the presumptive Republican presidential nominee, "a faker" in media interviews, and said she did not want to think about his winning the White House. After Mr. Trump called for her resignation, she issued a statement: "On reflection, my recent remarks in response to press inquiries were ill-advised and I regret making them. Judges should avoid commenting on a candidate for public office. In the future I will be more circumspect." Item 8 of the 1997 Restatement, which directs an Indian judge not to "enter into a public debate or express his views in public on political matters or on matters that are pending or are likely to arise for judicial determination," would have reached the same conclusion in fewer words.

A pattern runs through the intemperate remarks. Each was followed, where it was followed at all, by a retreat that did not match what had been said. Scalia did not retreat. Justice Bobde said the remark had been misreported. Chief Justice Surya Kant said the criticism had been narrower than reported. Only Ginsburg, in withdrawing, acknowledged the standard she had crossed. The retreat that names the rule is the rarer kind. The retreat that denies the speech is the more common one.

The standard *Vijayabhaskar* identified has not changed. What has changed is the audience. Bench remarks now travel from the courtroom to the news cycle in real time, before the formal opinion of the court is written. The discipline Cardozo named, and Item 8 codified, now operates in public. The clarification that denies the speech leaves the wound on the record and the standard unanswered. A clarification that named the rule is what *Vijayabhaskar* asks of the bench. The first occasion to apply it has come and gone. A second is now in play.

(V. Venkatesan is a journalist and legal researcher.)

THE GIST

▼ Bench questions are meant to test arguments and aid judicial reasoning, but "intemperate remarks" and "scathing language" that wound individuals or institutions cross a recognised judicial standard.

▼ Drawing on Cardozo, the 1997 Restatement of Values of Judicial Life, and *Vijayabhaskar*, the article distinguishes between the "bench question that tests" and the "language that wounds."

▼ As oral observations now travel instantly into the public sphere, clarifications that narrow or deny controversial remarks leave "the wound on the record and the standard unanswered."

CACHE

How States are managing the surging summer power demand

India's electricity demand has surged sharply, with peak demand touching an all-time high of 256.1 GW in April, making it harder for States to manage supply during high-demand hours and exposing them to costly short-term market purchases and stressed distribution networks

Rishu Garg

India's electricity demand has surged earlier than expected this year, with peak demand touching an all-time high of 256.1 gigawatts (GW) on April 25. (The country followed up with higher records on May 19 and May 20). Nearly one-third of this peak demand was met through renewable energy (RE) sources. While the national grid held up without any shortage during solar hours, the non-solar hours saw a deficit of 2% (4,243 megawatts) on the same day.

What is peak demand?

Peak demand refers to the highest point of electrical power consumed on a grid over a specific period, typically a 15-minute interval. While peak demand is a single instant, it occurs during 2 to 4 hours of higher-than-average demand or 'peak demand period'. Summer months may cause longer peaks from late afternoon to evening hours and then during the night due to cooling loads (from air conditioners and coolers). Similarly, winter peaks can last longer in the morning (between 6 a.m. and 10 a.m.) and evening (between 6 p.m. and 9 p.m.) due to increased heating and lighting loads during these hours, particularly in the northern States.

Paying heed to the duration of these peaks is important because even though they occur only for a short period, the grid needs to meet the peak load instantly. In fact, the entire power sector infrastructure (generation, transmission, and distribution capacity) needs to be planned to deal with this peak. But this is easier said than done. Building a system to serve the periods of highest load that last only for a few hours is neither resource-efficient nor economical. If enough capacity is built to meet the peak demand, it will remain underutilised during off-peak hours. On the other hand, if enough capacity is not available to meet the peak demand, then the system will face issues like load shedding and grid instability.

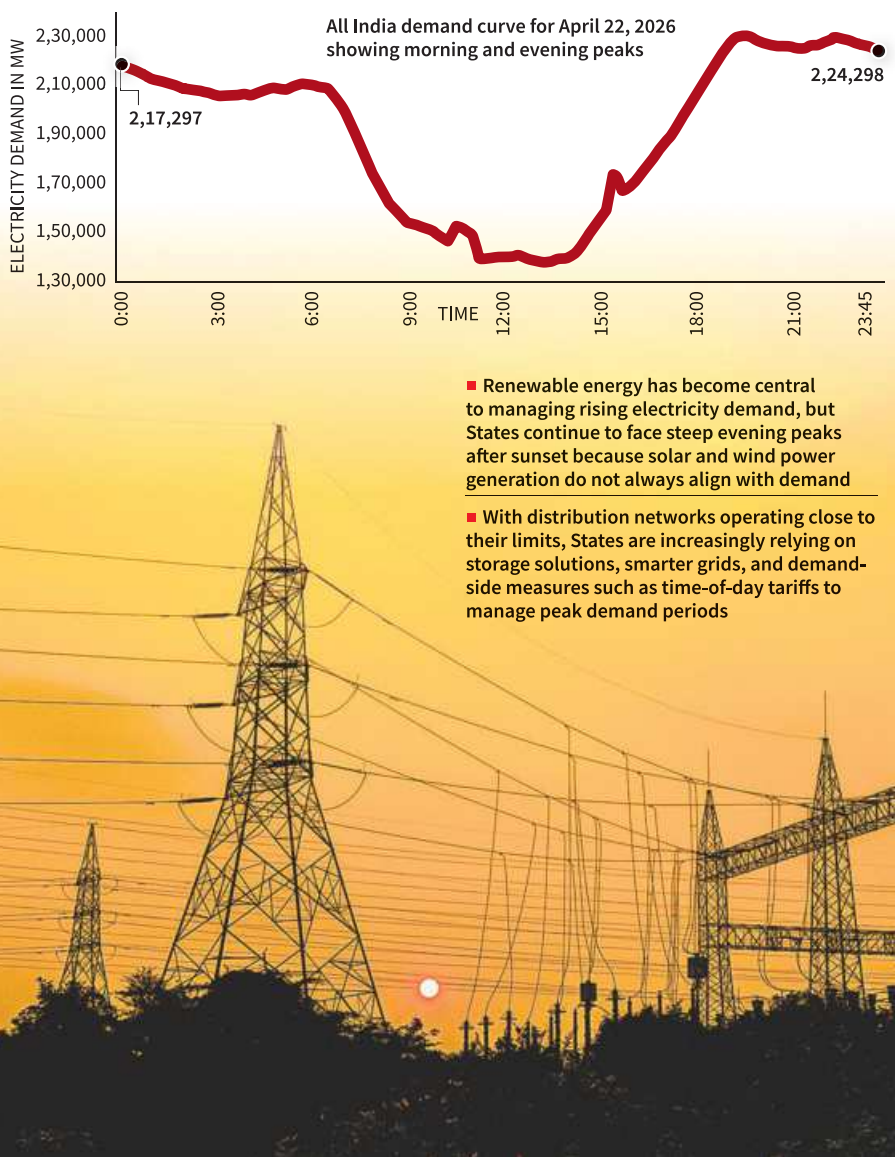
How do States manage demand?

States meet demand through two mechanisms: contractual supply and power exchange purchases. Contractual supply comprises the long-term power purchase agreements (PPAs) that State distribution companies (DISCOMs) sign with power generators to ensure power supply over several years. This helps the DISCOMs in meeting the average demand for their consumers. Almost 85%-90% of the demand in India is being met through contractual supply or bilateral contracts between the DISCOMs and generators. In the event of real-time mismatches or when the contractual supply falls short due to sudden spikes in demand or power plant or transmission failures, DISCOMs turn to the second mechanism – buying power from power exchanges. At present, around 10%-15% of the electricity is traded on the power exchanges.

For managing peaks, States often undertake demand-side measures. Most States have relied on advisories urging consumers to reduce usage during peak hours, typically between 6 p.m. and 11 p.m. Delhi has increasingly utilised measures such as time-of-day tariffs

Stress on the grid

While renewable energy helps States meet daytime demand, steep evening peaks during non-solar hours continue to strain grids and increase dependence on short-term market purchases



(electricity charges that vary based on the time of day) and smart metering to flatten evening peaks that are driven by cooling demand.

What are some challenges faced by States due to rising demand?

A steady growth in household electrification, use of air conditioners, electric vehicle penetration, and agricultural power consumption has been driving the increase in India's electricity demand. In the last 5 years, the country's peak demand has risen by 37% – from 183 GW in December 2020 to over 250 GW in April 2026. This surge has made it tougher for States to fulfil the electricity requirements.

With DISCOMs committed to long-term agreements that are signed at a fixed capacity and price, any shortfall has to be met through power exchanges, which are short-term markets. This exposes the States to price volatility because prices in these markets increase during peak periods. Indian Energy Exchange data shows that electricity prices in the day-ahead market have seen sharp spikes during peak periods, with rates touching the regulatory ceiling of ₹ 10 per kilowatt-hour on several occasions during April and May this year.

Another challenge relates to the inadequacy of the distribution network. Infrastructure expansion and upgrades in

India's power distribution segment often lag demand growth, leading to issues with last-mile delivery of power to the end-consumer. Over the last decade, India's generation capacity has increased by 76% (from 303 GW to 532 GW), its transmission lines have expanded by 47% (from 3,41,551 circuit kilometres [ckm] to 5,01,766 ckm), and the transformation capacity has increased by 115% (from 6,58,949 megavolt-amperes [MVA] to 1,41,63,76 MVA). However, a corresponding expansion in the distribution infrastructure has not happened, and distribution networks continue to face major stress. Recent assessments by the Central Electricity Authority indicate that nearly 13 lakh distribution transformers (DTs) fail annually in India. Some States have low DT failure rates of less than 2%, such as Kerala, while some (particularly the northern States) experience DT failure rates as high as 20%. Further, overloading of transformers and feeders, ageing equipment, and inadequate maintenance continue to compromise last-mile power delivery. Many States experience local outages, especially during peak demand periods, highlighting that their distribution networks are operating close to their limits and need upgradation.

The challenge posed by demand surges becomes acute for financially stressed States because they are neither able to

procure costly short-term power nor invest in distribution network upgrades. States like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar continue to grapple with high losses, ageing distribution infrastructure, and overloaded transformers.

How does RE help?

RE has become central to the management of rising electricity demand, particularly during summer peak periods. Since solar and wind power plants have low operating costs, higher RE penetration can also reduce overall power purchase costs for DISCOMs.

States with high RE capacity, such as Gujarat and Karnataka, are able to meet daytime peak comfortably as the solar power generation aligns reasonably well with daytime commercial and agricultural demand. But these States face steep evening peaks after sunset, for which they need to increasingly depend on energy storage technologies such as pumped hydro storage (PHS) and battery energy storage systems (BESS). Similarly, Tamil Nadu, with a high wind capacity, benefits significantly from wind generation during the monsoon months, reducing dependence on thermal power. But the State has to resort to market purchases during periods of low wind output to meet the high evening urban demand.

However, Punjab, which has a meagre RE capacity and a dominant agricultural load during the paddy-sowing season that coincides with the summer peak, has to rely heavily on hydro imports and short-term market purchases.

What needs to be done?

Despite its growing contribution, RE cannot help in ensuring a reliable round-the-clock power supply because of its variable nature. Also, electricity demand and RE power generation do not always align. Solar power generation falls sharply after sunset, though electricity demand often remains high during evening hours. Similarly, wind generation is seasonal and highly dependent on monsoon conditions. Because of this, States now face the challenge of managing variability and steep evening demand.

This is where energy storage technologies like BESS and PHS that enhance flexibility become critical for India's power system, as they help to balance the grid when the output (power) generated by RE changes suddenly. PHS is already emerging as a key solution in States like Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka. At the same time, the grid itself needs to become smarter and more flexible through stronger transmission networks, upgraded distribution systems, and energy efficiency initiatives.

With Indian States witnessing more peak demand periods, the challenge is shifting from simply generating more electricity to building a system capable of managing power efficiently across regions and time periods. This calls for substantial investments in storage solutions, along with adopting more demand-side measures like ToD tariffs and agricultural load scheduling.

(Rishu Garg is a senior policy specialist in the Energy Policy and Regulations group at the Center for Study of Science, Technology and Policy (CSTEP), a research-based think tank)



FROM THE ARCHIVES

Know your English

S. Upendran

What is the meaning and origin of the idiom "to bring home the bacon"?

(S. Madhusudan, Tiruchy) (T.N.) Bacon and eggs is a popular American breakfast. When someone "brings home the bacon", he or she is providing food for the family. What do you need in order to buy food? Money, of course! When you say that someone "brings home the bacon", it means that he or she has a job and is earning a salary. He or she is the breadwinner.

"Bhaskar is married, but it's his wife who brings home the bacon."

In the old days, weekly and monthly fairs were very common in villages. On these occasions, farmers used to bring vegetables, meat, cattle, sheep, etc. and sell them at the market place. As a form of entertainment, a well-greased pig was let loose in the market. Any man or woman catching the pig could claim it as his/her prize. Since the animal had grease all over it, it was very slippery and hence very difficult to catch. But the person catching it could take it home. The man or woman catching the pig was literally bringing home the bacon! Nowadays, of course, you don't bring pigs home, instead you provide food for the family by bringing home a salary. But things haven't changed all that much. These days in order to "bring home the bacon", you often have to grease someone's palm!

Why do we call the spare tire that we carry in our car a "stepney"?

(N. Chandramouli, Hosur, Karnataka) Although this word is quite common in India, hardly anyone uses it in Britain. The Americans, of course, have never used it. The word is not included in most dictionaries! What we call a "stepney", native speakers of English refer to as a "spare". In America, the spare wheel is much smaller than the normal wheel.

Where did the word "stepney" come from? Well, actually, the word 'stepney' is the name of a street in Wales. A mechanic in the street of Stepney in the town of Llanely, was the first to provide the ready to use spare wheels. And the product, namely the spare wheels, began to be referred to by the name of the street where they were produced.

What is the difference between "in the end" and "at the end"?

(T. Sandhya, Hyderabad) "In the end" means "finally". It is normally used when you want to give the impression that a conclusion was arrived at after a lot of confusion or uncertainty. For example:

"In the end, the hero runs away with all the money."

"At the end", on the other hand, means at the point when something stops. Here we are thinking of a single event, and not a series of events. Take for example, the following sentence. "At the end of the song, the hero jumps into the river." The single event that we are thinking of here is the end of the song. When we say, "in the end", what we have in mind is a sequence of events, not just one event. You cannot say "In the end of the song." Here are a few more examples.

"At the end of the third day, the little boy ran away."

"In the end, the little boy runs away."

It is wrong to say "in the end of." It always has to be "at the end of".
Published in *The Hindu* on September 19, 2000

THE DAILY QUIZ

Here is a quiz on how Ebola infects, spreads, and survives

Vasudevan Mukunth

QUESTION 1

Filoviruses come in five (known) genera. The two most famous are Ebola and _____. Their natural reservoir is almost certainly fruit bats of the Pteropodidae family of fruit bats, which are able to carry the virus without getting sick. Fill in the blank.

QUESTION 2

The Ebola virus does not directly destroy tissue. Instead, it infects macrophages and dendritic cells early. This prompts the immune system to release a deluge of proteins called _____, which encourage inflammation and damage the vascular endothelium. Fill in the blank.

QUESTION 3

The Ebola virus has a protein called VP35 that mimics X, which is a kind of RNA that the immune system's sensors

have learnt to recognise as a sign of infection. However, VP35 binds to them in such a way that they're occupied but not activated, and they can't 'trigger' the immune system's defence. What is X?

QUESTION 4

The Ebola virus can persist in immune-privileged sites in the body long after it has been cleared from the blood. These include the eyes' _____ and the central nervous system. Fill in the blanks.

QUESTION 5

The Ebola virus first latches onto proteins on the cell surface. Then the cell swallows it whole, enclosing it in a bubble called a Y. Inside the Y, the cell's digestive enzymes accidentally help the virus by trimming part of its outer coat, revealing a hook that grabs on to a protein called NPCL. Then the virus fuses with the Y wall and gets into the cell proper. Name Y.



Visual Question:

Name this country. The disease is called Ebola virus disease, the virus is called Ebola virus, and the species label is "Q ebolavirus", where Q is the former name of this country.

Questions and Answers of the previous day's daily quiz:

1. On this day in 1873, which clothing company's founders were granted a patent for trousers reinforced with rivets? **Ans: Levi Strauss**
2. Which American actor born on this day is known for his roles in films 'You Can't Take It With You', 'The Philadelphia Story', among others? **Ans: James Stewart**
3. This Asian country became independent on this day in 2002. On May 20, 2002, this became the first new sovereign state of the 21st century. **Ans: Timor-Leste**

4. This English philosopher and political economist conceived of liberty as justifying the freedom of the individual in opposition to unlimited state and social control. Who was he? **Ans: John Stuart Mill**
5. This French novelist and playwright was born on this day in 1799. Who was he? **Ans: Honoré de Balzac**

Visual: Identify this singer. **Ans: Cher**
Early Birds: Soumendhra Banerjee | Alok Kumar Giri | Sayandeep Das | Abhay Krishan | Yashica

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

Word of the day

Boffo: resoundingly successful and popular

Synonyms: outstanding, triumphant, phenomenal

Usage: The singer made a boffo comeback this year.

Pronunciation: newsth.live/boffo

International Phonetic Alphabet: /bɒfəʊ/

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

From Page One

India, Italy seal defence agreement, elevate ties

The two sides also sealed a "Defence Industrial Road Map", a Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation in critical minerals, and another agreement for cooperation between the Italian Corps of the Guardia di Finanza and the Directorate of Enforcement.

A joint statement announced that the two sides had signed an agreement on agriculture and agricultural research that would connect Ministries and institutions of India and Italy. The two sides also expressed commitment "to a free, open, peaceful and prosperous Indo-Pacific, in line with international law, including United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea".

On the Gulf situation, the Joint Statement called for "freedom of navigation and the resumption of global flows through Strait of Hormuz". In a significant push, ahead of the India-Africa Forum Summit-4, the two sides said they have agreed work on selected projects bilaterally in partners in Africa. In this regard, the Joint Statement said, "Recognising the strategic priority both countries attach to Africa, the two Prime Ministers agreed to work together in trilateral initiatives with African partners in areas such as Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI), agriculture, education, healthcare, artificial intelligence, connectivity and infrastructure and renewable energy in line with India's development partnership in Africa and Italy's Mattei Plan."

Mr. Modi pointed out that more than 800 Italian companies are operating in India and are contributing to the economic growth story of India. He acknowledged the support that India has received from Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni for the conclusion of the India-European Union Free Trade Agreement.

Mr. Modi was conferred the Agricola Medal for 2026 by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations, at the FAO headquarters in Rome.

Steel, cement help quicken April core sector growth to 1.7%

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

Growth in activity in the eight core sectors of the economy quickened marginally to 1.7% this April, up from 1.2% in March, official data released on Wednesday showed.

Data on the Index of Eight Core Industries released by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry saw a significant revision of the growth rate for March – now coming in at 1.2% compared with the preliminary contraction of 0.4% that had originally been reported for the month.

In a signal that construction activity might again be picking up, the steel and cement sectors saw relatively robust growth in April. The steel sector saw growth come in at 6.2% in April, compared with a

newly revised growth of 7.7% in March. The preliminary March growth figure for the sector was 2.2%.

Similarly, the cement sector saw growth quicken to a three-month high of 9.4% in April.

Here, too, the growth rate for March was revised upwards to 4.7% from the original 4%.

The domestic crude oil sector contracted 3.9% in April, marking the eighth consecutive month of contraction.

The natural gas sector, too, again slumped into a contraction of 4.3% in April after having briefly come back into positive territory in March due to the energy crisis brought on by the war in West Asia.

Prior to March, the natural gas sector had contracted for 20 consecutive months.

No new hydel projects can come up in upper Ganga, govt. tells SC

Three Union Ministries submit common affidavit in top court saying the government is not in favour of permitting any new projects in the Alaknanda and Bhagirathi river basins in Uttarakhand, apart from the seven already commissioned

Jacob Koshy
NEW DELHI

In a significant submission to the Supreme Court, the Union government has said that no new hydroelectric projects should be permitted in the upper reaches of the Ganga in Uttarakhand, with the Ministries of Environment, Jal Shakti and Power presenting a single, restrictive position to the court.

In a common affidavit filed on May 19, the three Ministries stated that apart from seven hydroelectric projects already commissioned or substantially built, the government was "not in favour of permitting any other new hydroelectric project in the Alaknanda and Bhagirathi river basins in the upper reaches of the River Ganga in the State of Uttarakhand". The hardened stand is notable for the Power Ministry's concurrence; as recently as November 2024, it had argued for as many as eight projects.

The seven projects cleared will have a total capacity of just over 2,150



The Tapovan hydel power project was damaged during the 2021 Rishiganga flood in Chamoli district of Uttarakhand. PTI

MW and include some of the State's largest projects. They are the 1,000 MW Tehri pumped-storage project on the Bhagirathi; the 520 MW Tapovan Vishnugad on the Dhauliganga, damaged by the February 2021 Rishiganga flood; the 444 MW Vishnugad Pipalkoti on the Alaknanda; the 99 MW Singoli Bhatwari and 76 MW Phata Byung on the Mandakini; and two small projects, the Madmaheshwar and Kailganga-II. Four have already been

commissioned while the remaining three are 74% to 80% complete.

The government's rationale for letting these continue is that they have absorbed substantial public and private investment, none falls within the Bhagirathi Eco-Sensitive Zone, and none was flagged by expert bodies. Halting them now would strand sunk costs without commensurate environmental gain, it said.

In August 2024, the Su-

preme Court constituted the committee chaired by Cabinet Secretary T.V. Somanathan, with the three Secretaries (Environment, Jal Shakti and Power Ministries) and Uttarakhand's Chief Secretary as members, directing it to give due consideration to Expert Body-II's findings and place the Centre's reasoning on record. The committee – whose recommendations have only become public with the affidavit – narrowed 21 projects under consideration to five: Bowala Nandprayag, Devsari, Bhyundar Ganga, Jhalakoti and Urgan-II.

Seismic fragility

The Centre has now declined to accept even those five, citing the cumulative impact of "bumper-to-bumper" dams, seismic fragility, and a string of disasters, including the 2013 cloudburst and the Dharali flash flood of August 2025.

"This is a wise and welcome step from the government that came out after more than a decade of wait," Mallika Bhanot, an environmental activist and

part of the Bhagirathi Eco-sensitive Zone monitoring committee, told *The Hindu*.

The case originates in the Kedarnath floods of June 2013, which killed at least 5,000 people. Halting hydel development in the State, the court directed the Environment Ministry to examine the role such projects played in amplifying the disaster. A 17-member committee led by environmentalist Ravi Chopra – Expert Body-I – concluded in 2014 that 23 of 24 projects examined would have severe impact on the ecology of the Alaknanda and Bhagirathi basins. A second panel under Vinod Tare of IIT-Kanpur, examining six developers' projects, too found they "may not be taken up" in their present form.

The Environment Ministry then set up Expert Body-II under B.P. Das, which in March 2020 took a markedly more permissive view, recommending 26 for implementation with design modifications to others. The Centre, however, only ever accepted seven.

Cong. slams Centre over economic distress

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Wednesday led a sharp attack on the Narendra Modi government over inflation, unemployment and weakening economic indicators, accusing it of pursuing publicity while the economy faced mounting distress.

"Modi ji wants the public to enjoy the 'melody' of speeches while surviving the 'misery' of his government's loot," he said, using a poster carrying the slogan, "Looting is MELODY for BJP, but MISERY for citizens!"

The Congress attack came during Mr. Modi's foreign visit, after Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni shared a post of him gifting her 'Melody' toffees. The criticism was amplified at a press conference by Congress media and publicity department chairman Pawan Khera, who rejected the government's contention that global geopolitical tensions were primarily responsible for economic pressures.

Presenting figures on fuel inflation, Mr. Khera said petrol prices had risen by 38% and diesel by 62% over the past 12 years.

Naga body in Manipur petitions PM, seeking release of six Naga captives

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

An apex body of Naga women in Manipur petitioned Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday, seeking the Centre's intervention for the release of six Naga men allegedly held hostage by Kuki groups. They also demanded the abrogation of agreements signed with several Kuki extremist groups.

The appeal of the Naga Women's Union (NWU) followed a memorandum from the Kuki-Zo Council, an apex body of Kuki-Zo communities in the State, to the Prime Minister on May 18. The Kuki body had sought the safe release of 14 Kuki men, including three minor students, allegedly held hostage by Naga groups.

The latest hostage crisis



Women protest demanding the release of six missing Naga civilians, at Kanglatongbi village, in Imphal West district of Manipur. PTI

hit Manipur after unidentified gunmen ambushed and killed three Thadou church leaders on May 13. A section of Thadous claims it is a tribe independent of the Kuki tag.

Six hostages remain

On Wednesday, hundreds of NWU members staged protests in the Naga-majority hill districts – Chandel,

Kamjong, Noney, Senapati, Tamenglong, and Ukhrul – to demand the release of the six Naga captives and the abrogation of the Suspension of Operations (SoO) agreements.

In the memorandum to the Prime Minister, the NWU said Kuki extremists had abducted 20 Naga civilians, 14 of whom were released in exchange for an

equal number of Kuki hostages on May 15. The union identified the remaining abductees as church leaders.

The NWU also demanded that the Centre arrest and prosecute all those involved in the abductions, deliver justice to Wilson Thanga, a Naga villager killed in Noney district on May 13, and ensure the welfare, rehabilitation, and protection of the women who had been released.

Officials said the security forces were continuing their search-and-rescue operations.

A Tangkhul Naga delegation from Ukhrul met CM Yumnam Khemchand Singh, highlighting that repeated attacks on the vulnerable village of Sina-keithi have created fear, insecurity, and distress among residents.

SC 'inclined' to grant bail to accused in 2020 Delhi riots case

Aaratrika Bhaumik
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday indicated that it was *prima facie* inclined to grant bail to 2020 Delhi riots accused Tasleem Ahmed and Abdul Khalid Saifi, while adjourning the hearing at the request of the Delhi Police.

Additional Solicitor-General S.V. Raju, appearing for the Delhi Police, sought a short adjournment before a Bench of Justices Aravind Kumar and P.B. Varale.

"*Prima facie*, we are with you for the time being, subject to what he [Mr. Raju] says," the Bench orally remarked while hearing the bail pleas filed by the two accused challenging the September 2, 2025 or-

der of the Delhi High Court, refusing them bail in the larger conspiracy case linked to the riots.

Senior advocate Rebecca John, appearing for Mr. Saifi, submitted that her client's case was squarely covered by the Bench's January 5, 2026 ruling. It had then denied bail to Jawaharlal Nehru University scholars Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam while granting relief to five other co-accused by distinguishing their alleged roles.

Earlier, Mr. Raju had argued that "conflicting" views expressed by different Supreme Court Benches on the grant of bail under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 (UAPA), warranted consideration by a larger Bench.

Rajnath holds wide-ranging defence talks in South Korea, pushes strategic cooperation

Saurabh Trivedi
NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh held comprehensive bilateral discussions with South Korea Minister of National Defence Ahn Gyu-back in Seoul on Wednesday, with both sides agreeing to expand defence cooperation across industry, maritime security, emerging technologies, logistics, and military exchanges.

According to the Defence Ministry, the two Ministers reviewed the entire spectrum of bilateral defence ties and reaffirmed their commitment to a free, open, inclusive and rules-based Indo-Pacific, highlighting the growing convergence between India's Act East Policy and South Korea's regional stra-



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and South Korean Minister of National Defence Ahn Gyu-back exchange agreements on promoting defence cyber cooperation, in Seoul on Wednesday. ANI

tegic vision. During the discussions, several memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) were signed to deepen cooperation in defence, cybersecurity, and training exchanges between India's National Defence College and the Korea National Defence University, and United Nations peacekeeping opera-

tions, further broadening the scope of the India-South Korea strategic partnership.

Two significant MoUs have been signed on future-oriented projects on self-propelled air defence systems, directed energy weapon systems. Both projects have a strong 'Make in India' focus.

The Hindu Maharashtra Infrastructure Conclave to be held in Mumbai tomorrow

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

As Maharashtra enters a defining phase of redevelopment and infrastructure transformation, discussions around urban expansion, regional connectivity, maritime growth, and investment-led development have become important.

Against this backdrop, The Hindu Group is organising the Maharashtra Infrastructure Conclave, 2026, a high-impact platform bringing together policymakers, industry leaders, urban planners, infrastructure experts, investors, and developers to discuss the opportunities and challenges shaping Maharashtra's next growth story.

The event will be held from 10 a.m. on May 22 at Taj President, Mumbai. Presented by the Adani Group, the conclave aims



to foster dialogue on how infrastructure can support sustainable growth, improve urban living, and position Maharashtra as a global investment destination.

Key dignitaries include Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, Shrikant Shinde, MP, Cabinet Minister Girish Mahajan, Cabinet Minister Ashish Shelar, Minister Nitesh Rane, and BMC Municipal Commissioner Ashwini Bhide. Mr. Eknath Shinde will deliver a special address on the "Mumbai to Surajgaad" vision.

In a session on navigating the financial capital, Ms. Bhide will be in conver-

sation with Vinaya Deshpande, Chief of Bureau, Maharashtra, *The Hindu*. A panel discussion titled "Mumbai and beyond" will see deliberations on the plans for an expanding metropolis. It will bring together IAS officers Sanjay Mukherjee and Mahendra Kalyankar, Mr. Shrikant Shinde, and Mr. Ashish Shelar in conversation with Pankaj Joshi, Principal Director, Urban Centre, Mumbai.

Another discussion on "Kumbh: The Spiritual Boost for a Regional Economy" will feature Mr. Mahajan, Manisha Khatri (Municipal Commissioner, Nashik Municipal Corporation), Shekhar Singh (Commissioner, Nashik Kumbh Mela), and Lubaina Rangwala (Program Head, Urban Development, WRI India), and will be moderated by Lalatendu Mishra, Senior Deputy Editor, *The Hindu*. Mr. Rane

will speak with Ms. Deshpande on opportunities in the maritime sector. The Australian Consul-General, Paul Murphy, and Finland's Consul-General, Erik Hallstrom, will join her for a discussion on global perspectives on Mumbai.

The conclave will feature four special addresses. Kaustubh Dhavse, Chief Adviser to the Chief Minister, will speak on Maharashtra's investment outlook. Captain Jagmohan (retd), CMD of Mazgaon Dock, will address industry expectations for maritime development, and M. Jamshed, Distinguished Fellow at CRF, will speak on the last decade of growth in the rail, road, and shipping sectors.

Associate sponsors of the event are World Trade Center, Mumbai, Bank of Maharashtra, NBCC, and Bank of India, with Times Now the telecast partner.

Pradhan takes up safeguards for NEET(UG) re-test in June

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Wednesday held review meetings with Central security and intelligence agencies to address vulnerabilities ahead of the NEET (UG) 2026 re-test, cancelled earlier this month over a paper leak.

He also met Meta, Google, and Telegram representatives, raising serious concerns over spread of misinformation related to competitive exams that include fake paper leak claims and unverified information that triggers panic among students and parents. He said that "safeguarding students from misleading narratives and maintaining public confidence in the examination process remains the government's a top priority."

Marco Rubio to begin India visit on May 23; discuss trade, energy

Meeting comes amid U.S.-Iran war that has hurt India's energy security; trade and defence cooperation also on the agenda of his first India trip

Kallol Bhattacharjee
Shiv Sahay Singh
NEW DELHI/KOLKATA

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio will pay his first visit to India between May 23 and 26, the U.S. State Department said on Friday.

The visit will be closely watched as it comes against the backdrop of the U.S.'s continued engagement in hostilities in the Persian Gulf region, which have had consequences for India's energy security.

Mr. Rubio's visit is part of a tightly packed Indian diplomatic calendar for this summer and monsoon season, with New Delhi expected to host meetings of BRICS, the Quad, the India-Africa Forum Summit, and other platforms.

"As America gets ready to celebrate our 250th birthday, we look forward to doing it with our partners in India. India is the



U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio, right, with External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar in Washington. FILE PHOTO

world's largest democracy and we are the world's oldest. So, we look forward to celebrating it together," Mr. Rubio said, in a video message that was shared on X by the U.S. Embassy in India. He will visit Kolkata, Agra, Jaipur, and New Delhi.

"The Secretary will discuss energy security, trade, and defense cooperation during meetings with senior Indian officials,"

U.S. State Department spokesperson Thomas Pigott said.

The visit is connected to unfolding regional and global diplomatic dialogues, coming days after India hosted the BRICS Foreign Ministers meeting.

The State Department's announcement did not mention the Quad Foreign Ministers meeting that is also expected to be held in the near future.

'No double standard, we condemn all nations that violate international law'

Norway has been clear that the U.S.-Israel invasion in Iran is not in line with law, says Norwegian Foreign Minister; he says that his country will prefer that India reduces its intake of Russian oil, but understands its concerns on energy security

INTERVIEW

Espen Barth Eide

Suhasini Haidar
OSLO

India and Norway must engage more to ensure they aren't "overdependent" on any one global power, says Norwegian Foreign Minister Espen Barth Eide, pitching for more trade, technology, and cooperation on renewable energy. Edited excerpts:

Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke of a golden era for ties, but Norway-India bilateral trade in goods and services is still just about \$2 billion. Did your discussions focus on how to take this forward?

India is becoming really a centre of many technolo-

gies and many industries and important for us. I would also say India should be aware of the difference between interdependence, which is good, and overdependence, which is not so good. We cannot be dependent on a single source of resource or technology, and other countries then need to strengthen their bonds, and this is what we are doing together.

The Green Strategic Partnership, announced between India and Norway, spoke about carbon credits, about renewable transitions, but we are also seeing a focus on fossil fuel transfers, LNG, and crude oil from Norway to India. Is this also driven by an idea of trying to wean India off Russian oil?

Of course, we would be happy if India was less dependent on Russian oil, be-



cause that would be good for the situation in Ukraine. But I think, the main point here is that we want to be partners in the energy transition, which doesn't [happen quickly]. We know that India is severely affected by the closure of the Hormuz Strait, because much of its cooking gas has been imported from Qatar and other countries on the inside of the Strait, so we take that very seriously.

The U.S. has overnight renewed for a third month its general open licence for sanctions waivers on Russian oil. How do you react to

that development?

We [U.S. and Europe] imposed these sanctions together. We thought it was important to demonstrate to Russia that we cannot condone, we cannot tolerate this grave violation of international law, because what Russia has done in Ukraine is to violate rule number one, basically, which is that they shall not intervene and occupy other countries. So that needs to have some kind of consequences, and we would prefer that the sanctions were still in place. I understand that India has a different relationship with Russia. What I would like to see is that India uses its good relations to send a message that the rule of law is good for all of us.

Given the U.S. has broken international law repeatedly over the last year, whether it is in Venezuela, in its claims over Greenland, Iceland, or the

U.S.-Israel strikes on Iran that set off the war that we are all suffering the effects of. Do you think Europe has a double standard?

Well, speaking for Norway, we have been crystal clear that the [U.S.-Israel] invasion in Iran was not in line with international law, neither was the [U.S.] operation in Venezuela. We were also very clear in the case of Greenland that there is no way that a country can just say I claim the territory of another state. I am one of the first to say that we must not have double standards. I would agree that some European countries had double standards, particularly when it came to the reaction to the massive Israeli campaign, killing tens of thousands of Palestinians in Gaza, but Norway has always been very consistent. We have to speak up because international law should apply to all people, all places, all the time.

Rahul's remarks against PM reflect his 'anarchic mindset', says BJP chief

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Bharatiya Janata Party president Nitin Nabin on Wednesday said that Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's "traitor" remark on Prime Minister Narendra Modi reflected his "anarchic mindset".

"You have insulted not merely Narendra Modiji, but the 140 crore citizens of this country. It seems you have not learnt any lessons from the past, as every time you have insulted Narendra Modiji, people have responded by adorning him with the garland of victory. You will definitely have to pay a heavy price for such an unfortunate remark," Mr. Nabin said in a video message.

Mr. Nabin's response came after Mr. Gandhi, at an event in his Rae Bareilly Lok Sabha constituency in Uttar Pradesh on Wednesday, called Mr. Modi and Union Home Minister



Nitin Nabin

Amit Shah "traitors", accusing them of attacking the Constitution.

Stating that such a comment served only to vitiate the country's political atmosphere, the BJP chief said: "His [Mr. Gandhi's] continuous electoral defeats and the resulting frustration are now becoming evident in his temperament and conduct, and that desperation and despondency are reflected in his statements."

Modi, Shah are traitors who are attacking Constitution, says Rahul at Rae Bareilly meet

Mayank Kumar
LUCKNOW

Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday hit out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), describing them as "traitors". Mr. Gandhi alleged that they were attacking the Constitution, snatching reservation of the marginalised sections and working to support some industrialists.

"I will never apologise and I will say it again: Narendra Modi-Amit Shah are traitors because they have attacked the Constitution. Listen carefully... I am not afraid of RSS people," Mr. Gandhi said at the Bahujan Swabhiman Sammelan in Rae Bareilly.

Mr. Gandhi reiterated that a massive economic crisis was around the corner. "The times



Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi and Uttar Pradesh Congress chief Ajay Rai at a meeting in Rae Bareilly on Wednesday. PTI

ahead are going to be very difficult. Inflation will be at a level the country has never seen before. Prices of everything will rise, farmers will be distressed because there will be a shortage of fertilizers. Oil and gas supplies will be disrupted. But this economic storm will not affect Adani-Ambani and Narendra Modi, because they will remain sitting in their palaces. If anyone will be hit by

this economic storm, it will be the common people of the country," he said.

He also hit out at the Prime Minister over a visit to Italy. "Modi gave a speech in India and said the global situation is vulnerable. He then flew to Italy in his expensive plane, carrying a Melody candy in his pocket for Meloni [Italian Prime Minister]," said the Congress leader.

Left only alternative to BJP's politics; CPI will highlight livelihood crisis, says Raja

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Left is the only ideological alternative to the aggressive right-wing politics of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Communist Party of India (CPI) general secretary D. Raja told *The Hindu*.

Against the backdrop of electoral setbacks in Kerala and the party's failure to revive in West Bengal, the CPI has planned a nationwide political campaign from August 6 to 15, culminating in a public meeting in Delhi in September.

The CPI was working to strengthen its rank and file ahead of the next round of general election so that it was not forced to negotiate from a position of weakness, Mr. Raja said.

Since 2014, Mr. Raja said, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)-supported BJP government



D. Raja

at the Centre had been pushing for a unidimensional India, ignoring the country's diversity.

'Needs to reconnect'
"The Left may have lost electoral battles and its presence in Parliament and Assemblies may have shrunk, but ideologically the Left is the only powerful alternative to BJP's right-wing politics," he said.
This was why the BJP continued to target the

Left, Mr. Raja added, pointing to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's remarks after the recent election results on May 4, when Mr. Modi referred to Left leaders as "urban Naxals".

Mr. Raja said the Left needed to "reconnect, revive and re-emerge" as a force to lead struggles linked to everyday issues.

"From August 5 to 16, we will hold *padyatras* across the country to highlight the livelihood crisis. This campaign will conclude with a rally in Delhi on September 28," the CPI leader said.

"The Congress, as the largest party in the INDIA [Indian National Developmental, Inclusive Alliance] bloc, should be more accommodative. It should undertake serious introspection and a self-critical review of its policies in relation to its allies," Mr. Raja said.

No military component in Nicobar project: Congress

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Accusing the Narendra Modi government of trying to label those opposed to the proposed transshipment hub on Great Nicobar island as being "soft on China", the Congress on Wednesday said the project was a commercial venture with no military component.

Congress general secretary in-charge of communications Jairam Ramesh alleged that the government had launched a "propaganda campaign" through its "ecosystem" to portray critics of the Great Nicobar Island Development Project as sympathetic to China, even

as he accused the Centre of pursuing what he termed a policy of "Continuing, Calibrated Capitulation to China".

In a post on social media platform X, Mr. Ramesh described the charge against opponents of the project as "the height of hypocrisy".

Arguing that India must continue to address the economic and strategic challenge posed by China on multiple fronts, Mr. Ramesh maintained that the Great Nicobar Island Development Project was "overwhelmingly a commercial enterprise" and that the proposed transshipment port "has no component of military infrastructure".

राष्ट्रीय सिद्धा संस्थान / NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF SIDDDHA
आयुष मंत्रालय / Ministry of Ayush
भारत सरकार / Government of India
ताम्रम संतोडियम / Tambaram Sanatorium चैन्नई / Chennai - 600 047.
फोन / Tele : 044-22411611 ईमेल / Email: director.nis-tn@gov.in
वेब / Website: https://nischennai.org

मिस्सिल संख्या / F.No.NIS/1-30/Recruitment-Regular/2025 तारीख / Date : 20.05.2026

EMPLOYMENT NOTIFICATION NO: 03/2026

Applications in the prescribed format are invited for filling up the following posts in the National Institute of Siddha, on Direct Recruitment basis / on Deputation basis (including short term contract):

GROUP 'A' POSTS:			
1) Professor:			
S. No.	Name of the Department	No. of Post	Mode of Recruitment
1.	Maruthuvam	01	Direct Recruitment
2.	Sattam Saarntha Maruthuvamum Nanju Maruthuvamum	01	Direct Recruitment
3.	Gunapadam	01	Deputation including short term contract

a. Scale of Pay: Pay Matrix: Level 13 + NPA [Pre-revised Scale of Pay : PB - IV (Rs.37400-67000) with GPs.8700/- + NPA admissible as per the Central Govt. Rules].

2) Associate Professor:			
S. No.	Name of the Department	No. of Post	Mode of Recruitment
1.	Gunapadam	01	Direct Recruitment
2.	Varmam, Puramaruthuvam and Sirappumaruthuvam	01	Deputation including short term contract

a. Scale of Pay: Pay Matrix: Level 12 + NPA [Pre-revised Scale of Pay : PB - III (Rs.15600-39100) with GPs.7600/- + NPA]

3) Joint Director(Admin)			
S. No.	Name of the Post	No. of Post	Mode of Recruitment
1.	Joint Director(Admin)	01	Deputation including short term contract

a. Scale of Pay: Pay Matrix: Level 12 [Pre-revised Scale of Pay : PB - III (Rs.15600-39100) with GPs.7600/-]

4) Assistant Professor: (Anatomy)			
S. No.	Name of the Department	No. of Post	Mode of Recruitment
1.	Anatomy	01	Direct Recruitment

a. Scale of Pay: Pay Matrix: Level 11 + NPA [Pre-revised Scale of Pay : PB - III (Rs.15600-39100) with GPs.6600/- + NPA] Note: NPA is applicable only for the candidates qualified in B.S.M.S. /MD (Siddha)/ MBBS]

5) Assistant Professor:			
S. No.	Name of the Department	No. of Post	Mode of Recruitment
1.	Maruthuvam	01	Direct Recruitment
2.	Varmam, Puramaruthuvam and Sirappumaruthuvam	01	Direct Recruitment

a. Scale of Pay: Pay Matrix: Level 10 + NPA [Pre-revised Scale of Pay : PB - III (Rs.15600-39100) with GPs.5400/- + NPA]

6) Dy. Medical Superintendent / Medical Officer			
S. No.	Name of the Post	No. of Post	Mode of Recruitment
1.	Dy. Medical Superintendent / Medical Officer	01	Direct Recruitment

a. Scale of Pay: Pay Matrix: Level 10 + NPA [Pre-revised Scale of Pay : PB - III (Rs.15600-39100) with GPs.5400 + NPA]

7) Lower Division Clerk			
S. No.	Name of the Post	No. of Post	Mode of Recruitment
1.	Lower Division Clerk	01	Direct Recruitment

a. Scale of Pay: Pay Matrix: Level 2 [Pre-revised Scale of Pay : PB - I (Rs.5200-20200) with GPs.1900]

The cost of application is Rs.750/- for posts from S.No.1-6 and Rs. 500/- for S.No.7. Application form can be downloaded from the Institute website: <https://nischennai.org>. The application form should be neatly typed / Handwritten in single side in A4 size paper providing all the details. The filled up application along with application fee for Rs.750/- (S.No.1-6) and Rs.500/- (S.No.7) by way of a DD drawn in favour of "Director, National Institute of Siddha" payable at Chennai together with self attested photocopies of certificates / testimonials should be sent to "The Director, National Institute of Siddha, Tambaram Sanatorium, Chennai-600 047" within 45 days from the date of notification in the Employment News.

Other details regarding educational qualification, experience, age, general conditions, etc., are available in the Institute website: <https://nischennai.org>.

DIRECTOR

IN BRIEF



13-nation military exercise commences in Meghalaya

A 13-nation military exercise began at the Umroi Military Station in Meghalaya on Wednesday. Apart from host India, soldiers from “12 friendly nations” are participating in the PRAGATI 2026. They are Bhutan, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, Seychelles, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam. The exercise seeks to provide a common platform for participating armies to engage in professional exchange and build closer military-to-military ties, the Defence Ministry said.

Private firm conducts firing trials of indigenous rockets

The Pune-based private sector defence manufacturer Nibe Ltd. has successfully conducted firing trials of its indigenous Suryastra rockets with strike ranges of 150 km and 300 km at the Integrated Test Range on May 18 and 19. The trials mark the first time an Indian private defence company has demonstrated indigenous long-range rocket systems of such capability, representing a significant milestone in India's defence preparedness.

NIA arrests Kolkata man for passing information to Pak.

Devesh K. Pandey
NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has arrested a Kolkata resident allegedly involved in passing confidential security-related information to Pakistani intelligence officers (PIOs), said the agency on Wednesday.

The accused has been identified as Zafar Riaz alias Rizvi, against whom a Look Out Circular had earlier been issued and proceedings were initiated to declare him a proclaimed offender. He was married to a Pakistani national, with their children also being Pakistani citizens, as alleged. “Convicted earlier in an espionage case under the IPC (Indian Penal Code) and the Official Secrets Act, Zafar had been travelling frequently between India and Pakistan since 2005,” the NIA said.

In a case registered by the NIA's Delhi unit in December 2025, the agency found that he was allegedly contacted and cultivated by PIOs to carry out espionage activities in India.

He had earlier been convicted in an espionage case under the IPC, Official Secrets Act

“To facilitate other espionage and terror operations, the accused had provided one-time passwords (OTPs) of Indian telecom mobile numbers to a PIO to help him activate WhatsApp accounts. The alleged PIO had used these accounts to secretly communicate with one Moti Ram Jat, also an accused in the instant case. Jat was also engaged in conveying secret security-related information to the PIO,” said the agency, adding that further investigations were under way.

In May 2025, the NIA arrested the then Central Reserve Police Force Assistant Sub Inspector Moti Ram Jat, who was dismissed from service. He had allegedly been passing on information to PIOs since 2023.

SC flags lack of uniform excise laws across States

Lack of a clear definition for liquor ‘bottle’ has led to ‘very deceptive’ packaging of cheap alcohol, with liquor passed off as ‘juice’, says court; some excise laws include sacks and wrappers as ‘bottle’

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday sought a response from the Centre and States on a plea that excise laws differ widely from State to State, even on the point of clearly identifying what a liquor “bottle” really looks like.

Chief Justice of India Surya Kant agreed that the lack of a clear, uniform and harmonious definition of the term “bottle” in excise laws across the country has led to a “very deceptive packaging” of cheap alcohol, which is even labelled as “fruit juice”. The duplicitous marketing of liquor has led to a dramatic increase in the public consumption.

“There is ‘green apple’ vodka... This is very deceptive,” Chief Justice Kant said. The court issued notice to the Centre and all the States.

These packages pose various risks, including consumption by juveniles, drinking in a moving vehicle, health risks, increased ease of smuggling, ease of public consumption and environmental risks. Moreover, these [cartons] have attractive packaging with vivid colours, but do not have prominent health warnings

PETITION IN SUPREME COURT



It is alarming that liquor is sold in cartons, clearly intended to mislead consumers, advocate Vipin Nair, representing petitioner-NGO, Community Against Drunken Driving, submitted.

The use of fruit names alongside colour photographs of apples and mangoes on the packaging further reinforces this deception, he added.

The petition said the government had an obligation to protect public

health against the deliberate marketing strategy used by the liquor lobby to pass off alcoholic beverages as fruit juices in order to evade scrutiny by the authorities and target underage consumers.

He said the vague and varied definitions given to “bottle” in State excise laws also aid in deception through inconspicuous packaging of liquor in portable bottles, plastic sachets, and cartons.

“In some State laws, a

bottle includes even a sack or a wrapper. The court has to direct the government to bring in some sort of standardisation,” Mr. Nair submitted.

The petition said discretion conferred by the State excise laws to allow varied packaging of liquor was only intended for the sole purpose of raking in revenue, even at the cost of public and environmental health.

“These packages pose various risks, including consumption by juveniles, drinking in a moving vehicle, health risks, increased ease of smuggling, ease of public consumption and environmental risks. Moreover, these [cartons] have attractive packaging with vivid colours, but do not have prominent health warnings like in the case of cigarettes, which would dissuade people from drunken driving and responsible drinking,” the petition said.

Will seek CBI probe into Twisha Sharma death, says Madhya Pradesh CM

Press Trust of India
BHOPAL

The Madhya Pradesh government will seek a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) probe into the death of Noida woman Twisha Sharma, who died after being allegedly harassed for dowry in Bhopal last week, Chief Minister Mohan Yadav assured her family members on Wednesday.

The family members met Mr. Yadav and sought a fair probe. Twisha, 33, was found hanging at her marital home in Bhopal's Katara Hills area on May 12.

During the day, a court rejected a plea filed by Twisha's parents for a second autopsy.

Mr. Yadav said he would write to the CBI, urging it to take up the probe, the statement added.



Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav meeting the family members of the late Twisha Sharma in Bhopal on Wednesday. ANI

NCW seeks report within seven days

NEW DELHI

The National Commission for Women (NCW) on Wednesday sought a detailed action-taken report from the Madhya Pradesh government within seven days on the death of Twisha Sharma. It also sought a fair, time-bound probe.

dowry death and harassment. A court has rejected the anticipatory bail plea of Mr. Samarth, while his mother had earlier secured

SRMIST, The Hindu to organise webinar on careers in agritech

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

SRM Institute of Science and Technology (SRMIST) and *The Hindu* will jointly organise a webinar on ‘Agri Tech Revolution: Engineering the Future Farming’, highlighting how rapid technological advancements are reshaping the agriculture sector and creating innovative solutions for modern farming challenges. This is a part of the ‘Future Career Conversations’ series.

Boosting productivity
With agriculture increasingly adopting smart technologies, the discussion will explore the growing role of engineering in improving productivity, sustainability, and efficiency in farming practices.

The key areas of focus will be the role of AI, the Internet of Things and drones in agriculture, climate change and sustainable farming solutions, agri startups and entrepreneurship, government policies and incentives, and emerg-

Rules for new rural employment scheme to be issued soon

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Rules governing the new rural employment guarantee scheme, the Viksit Bharat - Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin), which is scheduled to come into force from July 1, will be released by the government in the next few days, officials of the Union Ministry of Rural Development informed a Parliamentary Standing Committee on Wednesday.

The committee, headed by Congress leader Saptagiri Ulaka, met on Wednesday to review the preparatory work for the scheme's implementation.

The Centre has to address several issues, including the formulation of a system for normative allocation of funds among the States. Section 4(5) of the legislation says: “The Central government shall determine the State-wise normative allocation for each financial year, based on objective parameters as may be prescribed by the Central government.”

Centre informs parliamentary panel that 25 States have allocated funds for the programme

The provision is aimed at ensuring a more equitable distribution of resources.

The Ministry informed the panel that 25 States have already allocated funds for the programme, and administrative and policy steps are being put in place. All major States have made the required budgetary provisions for implementation from July 1, sources said.

Beneficiaries will be issued new smart job cards, replacing those issued under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005. The new cards will include a face-recognition feature to improve transparency and accountability, sources said. Existing job cards will remain valid until the new Gramin Rozgar Guarantee Cards are issued.

CBI registers case against retired Navy Captain

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Central Bureau of Investigation has registered a case against a retired Navy Captain for possessing assets disproportionate to his known sources of income.

The case alleges that retired Captain Raminder Singh Wadhwa acquired movable and immovable assets in his own name and in the name of his family members.

According to the agency, the alleged disproportionate assets are worth over ₹3 crore.

The accused was commissioned as a Sub-Lieutenant in the Navy on July 1, 1989. He was promoted to the rank of Commander on December 16, 2006, and later to Captain (equivalent to Colonel in the Army) on August 6, 2016. He retired from service on May 31, 2024.

He had served at the National Security Council Secretariat and the Directorate of Naval Design (Submarine Design Group).



ing career opportunities in agri-engineering.

The panel will feature Leenus Jesu Martin M., Dean, Faculty of Engineering and Technology, SRMIST; Jawaharlal M., Dean, SRM College of Agricultural Sciences; Devinder Dhingra, Principal Scientist (Process Engineering), Indian Council for Agricultural Research, Division of Agricultural Engineering; and Poorna Pushkala, CEO, Samunnati Foundation.

The session will be moderated by A.M. Jigeesh, Senior Deputy Editor, *The Hindu*.

The webinar will be held at 11.30 a.m. on May 23. Those interested may register at newsth.live/THSRMEE



THE CROSSWORD+ 14799 (set by Gussalufz)

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

SCAN TO PLAY

ACROSS

- European in hurry, cycling for show (5)
- Supported revolutionary Polish pacifist, right? (5,4)
- West Indian player's style: play flamboyantly well, chasing century (7)
- Chest scratched on both sides? Characteristic of fretfulness (7)
- Man, perhaps I'm boring, overly fussy (6)
- Stick slice of orange in bread — pastry! (8)
- Gluttons slurp revoltingly, guzzling gallons (4)
- Worried if flu U-turn is something not likely to yield (10)
- With constraints dropped, Agent-1 lessened courteous behaviour (10)
- Till supply ends / first of February (4)
- Unethical lab won; safeguards partially retracted? Swell! (8)
- Popcorn ABC? (6)
- Firm absurdly leaden, time to intervene (2,5)
- Exciting undergarment and new shirt, after six (7)
- Deodorise extravagantly around centre of navel, conceding, "I used too much" (9)
- Dogfighter? (5)

DOWN

- Release snake under bulk of relative (7)
- Continuing with unfinished holy dip? No, god no! (7,2)
- Withdraw and go authentic, says Rev. Spooner (6)
- Excessively large organ (4)
- A tense detective from the south: "Lock this tyrant!" (10)
- Flower's top decomposed one day after coming up (8)
- Very complete bar, special spirit (5)
- It's about parts of kidneys, about part of eye (7)
- Being not OK with news — sullen, distressed (10)
- Female hit lovers with torches (9)
- Stripped and dressed bird, including part of skeleton (8)
- Bad cops with backing? Nothing touches, say! (7)
- Brute force unleashed by Mrs., often randomly (7)
- Tree regularly seen by a tomb, maybe (6)
- Love left to wither, that's nothing new (5)
- A film that's intense (4)

SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

Solution to previous puzzle

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

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

FAITH

Sacred kshetra Thiruthangal

Thiruthangal near Srivilliputtur is a divyadesam. The main deity in Thiruthangal is Nindra Narayana Perumal, said Thenthirupperai Parthasarathy in a discourse. He is in a standing posture, and so is the Goddess Sengamala Nachiar. In the main shrine of Nindra Narayana Perumal, four of His Devis are with Him - Sri Devi, Bhu Devi, Neela Devi and Jambavati. Sri Devi is known here as Anna Nayaki, Bhu Devi as Amrita Nayaki and Neela Devi as Ananta Nayaki. There once arose a quarrel among the friends of Lord's Consorts. Each had the idea that her friend was superior to the other Devis. Sri Devi did penance here and was declared superior to the rest of His Consorts. The Tamil word for Sri is Thiru. Since Sri Devi stayed in this place, it came to be called Thiruthangal.

The story of Jambavati's marriage to Krishna is interesting. Krishna's friend Shatrjit had a gem called Shyamantika, which Krishna liked very much. One day, Shatrjit's brother went hunting and was killed by a lion. He was wearing the gem at that time. Shatrjit went in search of him and found that he had been killed. The gem was missing. Everyone felt that since Krishna had admired it, He must have taken it. To clear His name, Krishna went looking for the gem. The gem was with Jambavan's child. Jambavan had killed the lion, and taken the gem for his child to play with. When Krishna tried to take the gem from the child, Jambavan fought with Him. When Jambavan realised that Krishna was another avatara of the Lord, he apologised and gave his daughter Jambavati in marriage to Krishna. Krishna's grandson Aniruddha married Usha, daughter of Banasura in this kshetra.

INBRIEF



NCDEX set to unveil weather derivatives contract

The National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange (NCDEX) on Wednesday said it will launch RAINMUMBAI, the country's first exchange-traded weather derivatives contract, on May 29, offering businesses and farmers a regulated tool to hedge against monsoon variability. The contract, which has received approval from the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), was developed with the Indian Institute of Technology Bombay (IIT Bombay), using rainfall data from the India Meteorological Department (IMD). The instrument will be used to hedge losses from unpredictable weather and monsoon variability. IMD surface rainfall and automatic weather stations (AWS) observations at Santacruz and Colaba will be the source of rainfall data. The derivative will trade between 10:00 a.m. and 11:30 p.m.

Rupee slips 16 paise to settle at 96.86 against U.S. dollar

The rupee depreciated 16 paise to close at a fresh lifetime low of 96.86 against the U.S. dollar on Wednesday as elevated global crude prices amid the West Asia crisis stoked inflation worries. At the interbank forex market, the rupee opened at 96.89 against the U.S. dollar, then lost further ground to touch a record low of 96.95. It went up to the day's high of 96.65 before settling at a fresh all-time low of 96.86 against the greenback, registering a fall of 16 paise over its previous close. In the previous session, the rupee tumbled 50 paise to settle at 96.70. "Indian rupee hit fresh lows on a strong dollar and a surge in U.S. treasury yields. U.S. 30-year treasury yields rose to a two-decade high, while the 10-year yields rose to a 16-month high. "This led to inflation worries and sell-off in global markets," said Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst, Commodities Research at Mirae Asset Sharekhan. PTI

Australian LNG supplies to India will surge, says Green

Shipments could reach via the Indian Ocean route that is free of choke points, says Australian High Commissioner; lithium, copper may follow

Appaji Reddem
VIJAYAWADA

Amid the global energy shortage triggered by the West Asia crisis and tensions around the Strait of Hormuz, enhanced LNG supplies from Australia could become a viable alternative to bridge India's energy demand-supply gap, Australian High Commissioner to India Philip Green has said.

In an exclusive interaction with *The Hindu* in Vijayawada, Mr. Green said Australia's proximity to India's east coast and a crisis-free maritime route made Australian LNG well-suited to support eastern India's growing energy needs and green steel production.

At present, most LNG used for industrial and domestic needs in India comes from West Asian countries through ports on India's west coast.

"I can see a future where Australia increases LNG supplies to India," Mr. Green said, noting that Australia's major gas fields are located across the Indian Ocean from India's southern State, Andhra Pradesh. While LNG cargoes from Australia to India had already begun, supplies could become "much more substantial" in the future, particularly for eastern India.



Philip Green

He added that maritime routes between Australia and India remain free and supply chains intact.

Australia's metallurgical coal exports for Indian steel-making and imports of processed petroleum products from India are continuing and uninterrupted.

Mr. Green said that Australia currently exports LNG mainly to East Asian markets such as Japan, Korea and Singapore. The Indian Ocean route offers India a supply chain free from strategic choke points, he said.

ECTA-led surge

Trade between India and Australia is growing strongly and is expected to expand further, according to Mr. Green.

Indian exports to Australia have grown by 200% in the last five years, compared with 40% growth in exports to the rest of the world. "India is profiting

five times more in trade with Australia than with the rest of the world," Mr. Green said. Since the implementation of the Australia-India Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA), Indian textile exports to Australia have risen 25%, agricultural exports 50%, and car exports 85%.

Australia is also aiming to play a major role in supplying critical minerals such as lithium and copper for the clean energy sector. The country produces nearly half of the world's lithium and already exports considerable quantities of copper to India.

Mr. Green said India's growing electric vehicle (EV) and battery industries will require much larger lithium supplies, making Australia a natural partner.

Australia is working with Indian government agencies and companies to build a direct lithium supply chain, including investments and offtake agreements in Australian lithium mines. He added that India must remain proactive in securing Australian lithium amid rising global competition from Europe, North America and East Asia.

"Indian consumers need to be active and hungry in a competitive global market looking to source more Australian lithium," he said.

Bharat Petroleum increases Russian share in crude oil purchases to 41%

Saptaparno Ghosh
NEW DELHI

The share of Russian crude oil in Bharat Petroleum's overall basket has increased to about 40-41% from about 31% during the quarter-ended March 2026, its Director for Finance Vetsa Ramakrishna Gupta told investors in an analyst call on Wednesday.

Mr. Gupta attributed the increased quantum of Russian crude to its wider availability in the spot market as well.

"Percentage of Russian [crude] cargo has definitely gone up. It was 31% in the fourth quarter (of FY 2025-26), but in the current period most of the supply on a spot basis, Russian crude is more available, therefore, offtake is higher at about 40-41%," Mr. Gupta told investors.

According to the senior executive, Russian crude constituted about 25% of the overall basket in the third quarter of the previous financial year.

Responding to a query about the impact of U.S. sanctions, Mr. Gupta explained that, rather than Russian crude being sanctioned, certain entities were sanctioned. He maintained that BPCL made its purchases only from non-sanctioned entities.

"During the waiver you could buy Russian crude from any party, and with the lapse of waiver you can only buy from non-sanctioned entities," he stated.



The refiner has secured crude oil supply until July this year, said Mr. Gupta.

"Whatever Russian crude we buy is always from non-sanctioned entities, be it the cargo vessel, port or supplies - those should be non-sanctioned entities."

Overall, the official said that it has secured crude oil supply until July this year.

"We have diversified to eight new grades of crude [oil] during the year, covering four geographical regions," he stated. "I would also like to assure that crude supplies have been secured till July 2026."

Elaborating on the diversification, Mr. Gupta told analysts that Bharat Petroleum tested varied grades of crude in the previous financial year, including those from North America and Middle East spot cargoes.

To a query about landing costs considering the elevated freight and insurance costs, Mr. Gupta said they were indicatively higher by about \$12 for every barrel, although he added that they were dynamic and prone to change.

Investors mistake Parle Industries for toffee maker; shares up 5%

Ashokamithran T.
MUMBAI

In an interesting turn of events, a penny stock, Parle Industries Ltd., hit the upper price band of 5%, closing at ₹5 a share, after Indian investors mistook it for FMCG company Parle Products Pvt. Ltd., that makes 'Melody' toffees.

The investors were reacting to a video shared by Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, in which Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi is seen gifting her the toffee, suggesting that the brand name was a portmanteau of the two leaders' names.

Parle Products Pvt. Ltd., an unlisted company, is known for household snacks Parle-G, Monaco, Krack Jack, and Kismi.

Following the events, Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal posted on his X page that India's toffee exports had more than doubled since 2013-14 to ₹132 crore in 2025-26.

However, toffee, caramel and similar sweets as a category constituted just 0.0034% of the total exports of ₹39.03 lakh crore in 2025-26, according to Commerce Ministry data. India is a small player in confectionery exports.

The episode assumes significance in the context of awareness levels among retail investors. In a study, the Securities and Exchange Board of India said most investors depend on social media influencers to make decisions.

Where Maharashtra's Next Growth Story Takes Shape

Today, the state is entering a new era of redevelopment and infrastructure transformation. From new growth corridors and maritime ambitions to the rise of the extended MMR, the future of Maharashtra is being redesigned in real time.

Friday, May 22, 2026 | 10:00 am Onwards
President, Mumbai - IHCL Selections, Mumbai

Key Dignitaries



Eknath Shinde
Deputy Chief Minister, Maharashtra



Dr Shrikant Shinde
Member of Parliament



Girish Mahajan
Cabinet Minister for Water Resources (Vidarbha, Tapi & Konkan), Kumbh Mela, & Disaster Management



Nitesh Rane
Minister for Fisheries & Ports Development



Ashish Shelar
Guardian Minister, Mumbai (Suburbs)



Ashwini Bhide, IAS
Municipal Commissioner, Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC)



Presents



Maharashtra Infrastructure Conclave

Featured Sessions

Mumbai to Surjagad: Expressway to Prosperity
Address by **Eknath Shinde**, Deputy Chief Minister, Maharashtra

Navigating The Financial Capital
Ashwini Bhide, BMC Commissioner in conversation with **Vinaya Vilas Deshpande**, Chief of Bureau, The Hindu

Mumbai and Beyond: The Plan for an Expanding Metropolis
Dr Shrikant Shinde, Member of Parliament
Ashish Shelar, Guardian Minister, Mumbai (Suburbs)
Dr Sanjay Mukherjee, IAS, Metropolitan Commissioner, Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA)
Dr Mahendra Kalyankar, IAS, Chief Executive Officer, DRP/SRA
Moderated by **Pankaj Joshi**, Principal Director of Urban Centre, Mumbai

Kumbh: The Spiritual Boost for a Regional Economy
Girish Mahajan, Cabinet Minister for Kumbh Mela
Manisha Khatri, Municipal Commissioner, Nashik Municipal Corporation
Shekhar Singh, Commissioner, Nashik Kumbh Mela
Lubaina Rangwala, Program Head, Urban Development, WRI India
Moderated by **Lalatendu Mishra**, Senior Deputy Editor, The Hindu

To know more, Visit: newsth.live/THINFC2026PA

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MIAMI

U.S. charges Raul Castro with murder over 1996 shutdown



Federal prosecutors on Wednesday charged former Cuban President Raul Castro, now 94, over the 1996 shutdown of two exile-operated civilian planes, accusing him of murder and aircraft destruction. The Trump administration called the indictment "long-overdue justice for the four Americans killed". AP

GENEVA

Board of Peace will ask UNSC to press Hamas militants to disarm



The Board of Peace, the body overseeing the U.S.-brokered ceasefire in Gaza, will ask the United Nations Security Council to press the Hamas militant group to disarm, according to a report on Tuesday. Last week, the head of the Board of Peace acknowledged that the deadlock over disarming Hamas had paralysed progress. AP

YANGON

Myanmar military claims capture of southern town on Thai border



Myanmar's military claimed on Wednesday to have recaptured a town on the Thai border, expanding the frontier trade crossings it claims to control in the grinding civil war. The capture would of the southern Myanmar border town of Mawtaung represent another boost for the military, adding to a string of recent victories. AP

MANILA

Philippine court says it won't stop ICC arrest of drug war enforcer



The Philippine Supreme Court on Wednesday refused to block the arrest of Senator Ronald "Bato" Dela Rosa, wanted by the ICC over the deadly drug war, denying his request for interim relief in a 9-5-1 vote. The ICC last week unsealed an arrest warrant against Dela Rosa, accused of crimes against humanity. AP

Putin, Xi hail 'resilient' relations in talks days after Trump's China visit

Beijing and Moscow have 'continuously deepened our political mutual trust and strategic coordination' with a resilience that remains unyielding, says Chinese President; the leaders have signed a slew of agreements on trade, media and energy

Agence France-Presse
BEIJING

President Xi Jinping hailed China and Russia's "unyielding" ties in talks with Vladimir Putin on Wednesday, as the pair met to underscore their alliance days after Donald Trump's own visit to Beijing.

The two countries' ties have deepened since Moscow's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, as Russia has become increasingly dependent on China.

Mr. Putin was received by Mr. Xi outside Beijing's opulent Great Hall of the People in much the same fashion as Mr. Trump last week, complete with



Xi Jinping with Vladimir Putin during a welcoming ceremony at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, on Wednesday. REUTERS

chanting children and military fanfare.

But the language was much warmer, with Mr. Xi telling the Russian leader Beijing and Moscow have "continuously deepened

our political mutual trust and strategic coordination with a resilience that remains unyielding", according to Chinese state media.

Opening talks, both were quick to laud their

countries' special ties as they extended their treaty of "friendly cooperation".

Mr. Putin, quoting a Chinese phrase, told Mr. Xi: "A day apart feels like three autumns," adding that relations had reached an "unprecedentedly high level" despite "unfavourable external factors".

In an apparent swipe at the U.S., Mr. Xi warned of "unilateral and hegemonic countercurrents running rampant" in the world.

In contrast to Mr. Trump's visit last week, which yielded little in the way of immediate concrete announcements, Mr. Putin and Mr. Xi signed a slew of agreements on Wednesday on trade, media and energy.

The two leaders will have tea later, at which "the most important issues" such as Ukraine, Iran and relations with the U.S. will be discussed, Kremlin foreign policy aide Yuri Ushakov said.

"Russia and China are actively cooperating in the energy sector... We are ready to continue reliably supplying all these types of fuel to the rapidly growing Chinese market," Mr. Putin said on Wednesday.

Mr. Xi told Mr. Putin on Wednesday that "a comprehensive ceasefire (in Iran) is of utmost urgency, resuming hostilities is even more inadvisable and maintaining negotiations is particularly important".

War would spread beyond West Asia, say Iran Guards

Agence France-Presse
TEHRAN

Iran warned on Wednesday that the West Asia war would spread far beyond the region if the United States and Israel resumed their attacks, after U.S. President Donald Trump threatened to strike again unless a deal is reached.

A ceasefire on April 8 brought a halt to the conflict, which has roiled the global economy, but with Washington and Tehran seemingly reluctant to resume the fighting a war of words has taken its place.

U.S. President Donald Trump has repeatedly threatened Tehran with renewed military action, while Iranian officials have



A Basij force member demonstrates how to handle an assault rifle during a weapons training class in Tehran on Tuesday. AP

hit back with their own warnings of devastating action.

On Tuesday, U.S. Vice-President J.D. Vance told presspersons that "a lot of good progress is being made" and "we're just going to keep working at it", even as he told Iran the

U.S. military was "locked and loaded".

Iran's Revolutionary Guards issued their own threat on Wednesday, saying, "if the aggression against Iran is repeated, the promised regional war will this time spread far beyond the region".

Taiwan Travelogue wins International Booker Prize 2026

Radhika Santhanam

Taiwanese author Yang Shuang-zi and translator Lin King won the International Booker Prize on Tuesday for *Taiwan Travelogue*, a historical romance set in Japan-occupied Taiwan in the 1930s.

It is the first novel written in Mandarin Chinese to win the prestigious prize for fiction translated into English. This is also the second year in a row that the independent press, And Other Stories, has taken home the prize, following *Heart Lamp* last year.

The prize was announced by Natasha Brown, chair of the 2026 judges, at a ceremony at London's Tate Modern on Tuesday. The judging panel said, "*Taiwan Travelogue* pulls off an incredible double feat: it succeeds as both a romance and an incisive postcolonial novel. As judges, we've enjoyed rich discussions about the



Yang Shuang-zi, right, with Lin King in London. AFP

many layers of this book. It's a captivating, slyly sophisticated novel."

Published in its original language in 2020, *Taiwan Travelogue* is the first of Ms. Yang's books to be translated into English. Ms. Yang has said she "wanted to untangle the complex circumstances" of Taiwan's time as a Japanese colony.

Ms. Yang and Ms. Lin will split the £50,000 prize, which recognises the best fiction translated into English, equally between them. (With AP inputs)

Israel's Ben Gvir sparks row over video of bound activists

Agence France-Presse
ASHDOD

Israel's far-right National Security Minister posted a video on Wednesday showing detained activists from a Gaza-bound flotilla kneeling with their hands tied and foreheads on the ground, sparking condemnation and calls for their swift deportation.

The video, shared on X by Minister Itamar Ben Gvir, was published after Israeli forces intercepted the flotilla's vessels at sea and began detaining hundreds of foreign activists at the southern port of Ashdod.

The video drew swift condemnation from Italy, while Mr. Ben Gvir himself was criticised by Israel's own Foreign Minister and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Captioned "Welcome to Israel", the footage shows dozens of activists on the deck of a military boat kneeling with their hands tied and foreheads on the



Itamar Ben Gvir

ground with the Israeli national anthem playing in the background.

The footage also shows Mr. Ben Gvir heckling and waving an Israeli flag amongst the detained activists.

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni slammed as "unacceptable" Israel's treatment of the activists and called for the immediate release of any detained Italian citizens and demanded an apology from Israel.

"It is intolerable that these protesters, among whom there are many Italian citizens, are subjected to this treatment, which

violates human dignity," Ms. Meloni said in a statement.

Mr. Ben Gvir also drew the ire of Prime Minister Netanyahu, who said the Minister's dealing with the activists was "not in line with Israel's values and norms".

"I have instructed the relevant authorities to deport the provocateurs (activists) as soon as possible," Mr. Netanyahu said.

Foreign Minister Gideon Saar also criticised Mr. Ben Gvir on X, saying he had "knowingly caused harm to our State in this disgraceful display - and not for the first time".

However, Mr. Ben Gvir hit back at Mr. Saar.

"I am proud to be the Minister in charge of the organisations that operated today against those supporters of terror," Mr. Ben Gvir said in Parliament. "Yes, there will be all sorts of pictures that Gideon Saar does not like, but I think they are a great source of pride."

'Ebola risk high at regional and national levels, low worldwide'

Agence France-Presse
GENEVA

The World Health Organization on Wednesday said the risk of the Democratic Republic of Congo's deadly Ebola outbreak was currently high at the national and regional levels but low worldwide.

WHO experts said that while investigations into its origins were ongoing, given the scale of the situa-

tion in the eastern DRC, the outbreak probably began a couple of months ago.

But the UN health agency's emergency committee said it did not currently meet the pandemic emergency threshold.

"WHO assesses the risk of the epidemic as high at the national and regional levels, and low at the global level," said the organisation's chief Tedros Adha-

nom Ghebreyesus.

So far, 51 cases have been confirmed in the DRC, in the eastern provinces of Ituri and North Kivu, "although we know the scale of the epidemic in DRC is much larger", he told a press conference at the WHO's headquarters in Geneva.

"Beyond the confirmed cases, there are almost 600 suspected cases and 139 suspected deaths."

Rajasthan Olive Cultivation Limited
State Institute of Agriculture Management Campus, Durgapura, Jaipur-302018

शुद्धि - फ़

राजस्थान ऑलिव कल्चिवेशन लिमिटेड, जयपुर के ई-निविदा संख्या 284-288 दिनांक 30/04/2026 में शुद्धि-फ़ 457-461 दिनांक 18.05.2026 जारी किया गया है। उक्त शुद्धि-फ़ का का संपूर्ण विवरण की <https://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in>, <https://sppp.rajasthan.gov.in> पर देखा जा सकता है।
(Tender ID 2026_ROCL 555347 UBN No. OCL26275LR00004)
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INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDY IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
(An Autonomous Institute under Department of Science and Technology, Govt. of India)
Paschim Boragaon, Garchuk, Guwahati- 781035

Advt. No. 592 Date: 21/05/2026

RECRUITMENT NOTICE

Applications are invited for the position of Post-Doctoral Fellow (PDF) under Physical Sciences and Life Sciences Divisions, IASST.

For advertisement, application submission and other details, please visit the Institute's website: <https://iasst.gov.in/>

Registrar, IASST

कोल इंडिया लिमिटेड
(एक महारत्न कंपनी)

"All the tenders issued by CIL and its Subsidiaries for procurement of Goods, Works and Services are available on website of Coal India Ltd www.coalindia.in / respective Subsidiary Company, CIL e-procurement portal <https://coalindiaticenders.nic.in> and Central Procurement Portal <https://eprocure.gov.in> In addition, procurement is also done through GeM portal <https://gem.gov.in/>."

INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDY IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
(An Autonomous Institute under Department of Science and Technology, Govt. of India)
Paschim Boragaon, Garchuk, Guwahati- 781035

Advt. No. 591 Date: 21/05/2026

IASST, Guwahati invites applications for admission under institutional JRF programme for the year 2026-27. Application should be submitted online at <https://iasst.gov.in> within 15 days of publication of this advertisement.

Please refer to the detailed advertisement published in the web site <https://iasst.gov.in>.

Registrar, IASST

UTKAL UNIVERSITY
VANI VIHAR, BHUBANESWAR-751004, ODISHA
E-mail: registrar@utkaluniversity.ac.in

Advertisement for Recruitment of Faculty Positions

No.: Estt./I/1041(Vol-IV)/5816/2026 Date: 19.05.2026

Established in 1943, Utkal University occupies a foundational place in the higher education landscape of Odisha, emerging from an early generation of public universities that helped shape the intellectual architecture of modern India. Headquartered at its Vani Vihar campus in Bhubaneswar—spread across a sprawling ecosystem of 460 acres enriched by nature's bounty and complemented by the Utkal University Rural Campus at Chandikhole, spread over 66 acres, the University anchors an extensive academic network of nearly 430 affiliated colleges across the state. Embedded within the dynamic intellectual geography of South Asia, it aspires to evolve as a global destination for higher learning. Offering 47 academic programmes across diverse disciplines—including the Social Sciences, Natural Sciences, Pharmaceutical Sciences, and Management—and extending from undergraduate to doctoral levels, the University reflects a wide spectrum of academic engagement. Rooted in a distinguished legacy yet responsive to a transforming knowledge order, it advances cutting-edge curricula, fosters innovation and incubation, and promotes transdisciplinary engagements within contemporary knowledge ecologies. Through its commitment to research excellence and evolving pedagogic practices, it sustains a dynamic interface between heritage, convention, and futurity.

Utkal University invites online applications from eligible Indian citizens and also Overseas Citizens of India (OCIs) for appointment to the posts of Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, and Professor against sanctioned positions across various Post-Graduate Departments, in accordance with Letter No. 5322/HE dated 31.01.2026 issued by the Department of Higher Education, Government of Odisha.

Disciplines / Departments:
Analytical & Applied Economics; Anthropology; Ancient Indian History, Culture & Archaeology (AIHCA); Biotechnology; Botany; Business Administration; Chemistry; Centre for Distance and Online Education (CDOE); Commerce; Computer Science; English; Geography; Geology; History; Library & Information Science; Law; Personnel Management & Industrial Relations (PM&IR); Mathematics; Odia; Philosophy; Physics; Psychology; Political Science; Public Administration; Sanskrit; Sociology; Statistics; Zoology.

Vacancy positions for different posts:

Assistant Professor	Associate Professor	Professor	Total
51	51	39	141

Eligibility & Qualifications:
Minimum qualifications, eligibility criteria, and service conditions shall be governed by the UGC Regulations/Notifications, 2018/ Government of Odisha guidelines as amended from time to time.

Application Process:
The application process shall be conducted entirely in online mode through the HIMS portal: <https://hims.odisha.gov.in/home>

Detailed advertisement, including department-wise vacancies and reservation positions, will be available on the University website: www.utkaluniversity.ac.in from 18.05.2026 onwards.

Important Dates:

- Opening of Online Application: 19.05.2026
- Closing of Online Application: 20.05.2026
- Last Date for Receipt of Hard Copy (Registered/Speed Post): 29.06.2026

In addition, a hard copy of the downloaded application form along with all relevant documents must be sent to the Registrar, Utkal University, Vani Vihar, Bhubaneswar-751004, Khordha, Odisha within the stipulated timeline.

General Instructions:
Applicants are advised to carefully review all eligibility conditions, qualifications, and procedural requirements before submission.
The University reserves the right to modify, amend, or cancel this advertisement, either in part or in full, without assigning any reason thereof.

Sd/- Registrar

DIFFERENT TAKE

'Opposition bowlers have to do badly for a team to score 300'



VIJAY SONEJI

It's not so easy to score 300. The entire batting unit has to fire. And as a bowling unit, it's very difficult to bowl that badly. I'm not trying to say anything wrong, but the bowlers have to bowl really badly for any team to score 300. It can happen in the future. But for now, the game has that balance — GT opener Sai Sudharsan.

RAY OF HOPE

Kartik looks like a real player for the future, reckons Hussey



VIJAY SONEJI

I'm excited about what we've seen. Urvil Patel has shown he's got amazing power and talent. Ayush Mhatre showed us a glimpse of what he could do before building on it. Kartik Sharma started slowly and learned good lessons. He looks like a real player for the future — Batting coach Michael Hussey on young CSK willow-wielders.

ONE OF A KIND

What Sooryavanshi did against LSG was commendable: Parag



R.V. MOORTHY

Rajasthan Royals captain Riyan Parag rated Vaibhav Sooryavanshi's 93 against Lucknow Super Giants "his best knock" yet. "A lot of senior batters, even me if I am in that situation, would try to fight our way and not go with a calm mindset. But what Sooryavanshi did was commendable," said Parag after the win over LSG.

TIMELY BOOST

Royal Challengers opener Salt to return to India later this week



FILE PHOTO: K. MURALI KUMAR

Royal Challengers Bengaluru opener Phil Salt is set to return to India later this week, as per ESPNcricinfo. The Englishman was sidelined during IPL 2026 for a month due to a finger injury, which was sustained during the loss to Delhi Capitals in Bengaluru. RCB next plays Sunrisers Hyderabad in Hyderabad on Friday.

Bowlers rise to the occasion as KKR lives to fight another day

Led by the crafty Narine, the hosts have the MI batters in a spin; Pandey and Powell shine with the bat for Rahane's men

IPL-19

Y.B. Sarangi
KOLKATA

Kolkata Knight Riders' commendable bowling effort followed by Manish Pandey and Rovman Powell's useful knocks helped the three-time champion post a four-wicket win over Mumbai Indians in an IPL 2026 match at the Eden Gardens on Wednesday. The victory helped KKR stay alive in the race for a playoff berth.

After Ajinkya Rahane chose to field, Cameron Green, Saurabh Dubey, and Kartik Tyagi took two wickets each while Sunil Narine stemmed the run flow as KKR's disciplined bowling restricted MI to 147 for eight. The home team achieved the target with seven balls to spare.

KKR bowlers delivered their best PowerPlay (46 for four) of the season. Green struck twice in his first over, removing Ryan Rickelton to a fine Pandey catch and having Naman Dhir caught behind. Left-arm seamer Saurabh then dismissed Rohit Sharma and Suryakumar Yadav in consecutive overs. Rohit's mistimed shot was spectacularly caught by Green after a 33-yard run from mid-on while Suryakumar dragged one onto his stumps.

Following an hour-long rain interruption, KKR spinners took control. The crafty Narine dished out his variety, while Varun Chakaravathy, nursing a foot injury, bowled tidily.



Purple strikes gold: Narine kept the MI batters guessing with his clever variations and picked up the key wicket of Hardik while Pandey held his nerve in a tricky chase. K.R. DEEPAK

Tilak Varma survived on 12 when Varun dropped a return catch. The left-hander fell soon after, pulling Tyagi to backward square-leg.

Narine bowled Hardik Pandya before Corbin Bosch's unbeaten 32 in the death overs lent respectability to MI's total.

In reply, KKR lost Finn Allen in the first over before Rahane and Pandey added 38 runs. But, Bosch

executed his plans well to account for Rahane and Green in successive overs.

Batting for the first time in the season in his fifth outing, Pandey (45), applied himself on a tricky surface and batted sensibly.

The 36-year-old collected boundaries through straight hits and square-cuts, and forged a vital 64-run stand with Powell, who picked his areas to

play the big hits.

The fall of Pandey and Powell in successive overs put KKR in a spot of bother before Rinku Singh hung on to ensure the host's victory past midnight.

Next assignment

MI: May 24 vs. RR
Mumbai, 3.30 p.m.
KKR: May 24 vs. DC
Kolkata, 7.30 p.m.

SCOREBOARD

MUMBAI INDIANS
Ryan Rickelton c Manish b Green 6 (7b, 1x4), Rohit Sharma c Green b Saurabh 15 (13b, 2x6), Naman Dhir c Raghuvanshi b Green 0 (2b), Suryakumar Yadav b Saurabh 15 (6b, 2x4, 1x6), Tilak Varma c Anukul b Tyagi 20 (32b, 1x6), Hardik Pandya b Narine 26 (27b, 2x4, 1x6), Will Jacks run out 14 (7b, 1x4, 1x6), Corbin Bosch (not out) 32 (18b, 3x4, 2x6), Deepak Chahar c Anukul b Tyagi 10 (7b, 2x4); Extras (b-4, lb-2, w-3): 9; Total (for eight wkts. in 20 overs): 147.

FALL OF WICKETS
1-17 (Rickelton, 2.3 overs), 2-17 (Naman, 2.6), 3-23 (Rohit, 3.5), 4-41 (Suryakumar, 5.3), 5-84 (Tilak, 13.4), 6-95 (Hardik, 15.2), 7-105 (Jacks, 16.4), 8-147 (Deepak, 19.6).

KNIGHT RIDERS BOWLING
Anukul 1-0-6-0, Saurabh 4-0-34-2, Green 3-0-23-2, Tyagi 4-0-37-2, Narine 4-0-13-1, Varun 4-0-28-0.

KOLKATA KNIGHT RIDERS
Ajinkya Rahane c Rickelton b Bosch 21 (17b, 4x4), Finn Allen (Impact Player for Varun) b Chahar 8 (5b, 2x4), Manish Pandey b Bumrah 45 (33b, 6x4), Cameron Green c Ghazanfar b Bosch 4 (8b), Rovman Powell c Bosch b Ghazanfar 40 (30b, 4x4, 2x6), Rinku Singh (not out) 9 (5b, 2x4), Tejasvi Dahiya (Concussion Substitute for Angkrish Raghuvanshi) c Rickelton b Bosch 11 (12b, 2x4), Anukul Roy (not out) 4 (4b); Extras (lb-1, nb-1, w-4): 6; Total (for six wkts. in 18.5 overs): 148.

FALL OF WICKETS
1-10 (Allen, 0.6), 2-48 (Rahane, 5.4), 3-54 (Green, 7.1), 4-118 (Pandey, 14.6), 5-124 (Powell, 15.2), 6-140 (Tejasvi, 17.5).

MUMBAI INDIANS BOWLING
Chahar 3-0-23-1, Bumrah 4-0-26-1, Bosch 3-0-30-3, Ghazanfar (Impact Player for Rohit) 4-0-25-1, Hardik 2-0-13-0, Raghu 2-0-23-0, Jacks 0.5-0-7-0.
Toss: Knight Riders.
Player-of-the-Match: Pandey. KKR won by four wickets with seven balls to spare.

GT faces CSK, hopes to boost top-two chances

Sankar Narayanan E.H.
AHMEDABAD

Gujarat Titans' fabulous five-match winning run may have come to an end with its 29-run loss against Kolkata Knight Riders. But Shubman Gill & Co. can take heart from the fact that they are playing their final IPL 2026 league fixture — after having already qualified for the playoffs — against Chennai Super Kings, the very same team they dismantled to kick off the hot streak.

The landscape has shifted considerably since GT and CSK last met in Chennai on April 26, when both teams had six points after seven games each.

While GT (13 games, 16 points) has given itself a genuine chance of making the cut for Qualifier 1, the five-time champion's hit-and-miss campaign (13 matches, 12 points) has resulted in it needing an NRR-boosting victory and many other results going its way to sneak into the knockouts.

Bowling firepower

Armed with a lethal pace battery and a three-game winning streak at the Narendra Modi Stadium, Titans will hold the edge over Super Kings when they meet here on Thursday.

No other team's fast



Battle within a battle: Noor and Rashid will look to outdo each other in the clash between the Afghan spinners. VIJAY SONEJI

Today's match

GUJARAT TITANS vs. **KOLKATA KNIGHT RIDERS**
Ahmedabad, 7.30 p.m.
HEAD-TO-HEAD
Played: 9
GT 5 | CSK 4
PREVIOUS MEETING
GT won by eight wickets, 2026
LIVE ON STAR SPORTS 1 & JIHOOTSTAR

due credit for their bullish run.

CSK batting coach Michael Hussey is aware of the challenge and wants his pacers to trust their individuality.

"There's no point in trying to bowl like Kagiso Rabada, Mohammed Siraj or Jason Holder. They might be different type of bowlers. The most important thing is to bowl to your strengths. The pitch here has provided good pace and bounce, and GT has played it well. Our bowlers, too, will enjoy bowling here. However, it's important that we don't try to be like them," Hussey said on Wednesday.

The ball is in the players' court now.

Dhoni has a sore thumb, he is not with the team: Hussey

Sankar Narayanan E.H.
AHMEDABAD

Chennai Super Kings isn't laying down arms yet.

Batting coach Michael Hussey's reply when asked to give an update on M.S. Dhoni's participation in the game and beyond indicated as much.

"I can confirm Dhoni is not here with the team, but if we do happen to qualify, he'll definitely join back up with the squad. He's got a bit of a sore thumb. He's recovering nicely, but he won't be ready for this match.

"If we manage to get through to the playoffs, hopefully he'll be alright," Hussey said on Wednesday, the eve of CSK's do-or-die IPL 2026 fixture against Gujarat Titans at the Narendra Modi Stadium.

Hussey admitted that the team was frustrated after losing to Sunrisers Hyderabad.

"It was disappointing, especially in front of our home fans. Obviously, it's made it difficult for us to get through to the knockouts. Everyone will take lessons from it, but we've got to move on quickly. We were a bit flat in the dressing room. The coach (Stephen Fleming) spoke to us



Dhoni. FILE PHOTO: R. RAGU

about having one more game and one more chance. It's all about hav-

ing the right attitude moving forward."

GT opener Sai Sudharsan said his team's top priority was to seal a win, adding that it will worry about the margin of victory and its Qualifier 1 chances later.

"We are not in a position to think about winning by a very big margin. It's about doing the right things consistently."

When asked to reflect on the win against CSK in the last meeting and the recent loss to Kolkata Knight Riders, Sai Sudharsan said: "I'm not looking at the previous games. We are not bringing in that residue or past into this match. We are trying to be as fresh as possible."

Sooryavanshi is just getting started, there's more to come

P.K. Ajith Kumar
JAIPUR

One of the enduring images for those who watched Sachin Tendulkar bat in Australia in 1991-92 could well be the expression on the big-moustached face of Merv Hughes. The big fast bowler had been straight-driven gloriously for a boundary by the curly-haired, baby-faced teenager at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

Hughes was surprised. Or shocked, rather. Maybe bewildered, even.

More than three decades later, the world's most fearsome bowlers are sporting similar looks. They are being tormented by another baby-faced teenager. Mitchell Starc, Jasprit Bumrah, Pat Cummins, Josh Hazlewood, Lungi Ngidi: he spares none.



Sooryavanshi... never a dull moment when he bats. R.V. MOORTHY

This one's hair is not curly. And he bats left-handed. And he prefers to deal in sixes mostly.

His journey has only begun, but make no mistake, Vaibhav Sooryavanshi is blessed with genius. The latest proof came on Tues-

day at the Sawai Mansingh Stadium here.

T20 cricket may not usually produce long-time memories, but some of the shots Sooryavanshi played — over extra-cover against the two quick Yadavs, Mayank and Prince, and the ramp off the latter — will be remembered.

A six over the wicket-keeper's head isn't cricket's prettiest of shots, but when he played that, with such timing, such inventiveness, you didn't mind. You admired.

Sooryavanshi's 38-ball 93 came in a must-win match for Rajasthan Royals against Lucknow Super Giants. He had begun sedately — 11 off 12 balls.

He played second fiddle to stand-in captain Yashasvi Jaiswal initially. Then, he exploded. The Yadavs and other bowlers soon began to resemble Hughes.

LSG coach Langer in awe of Sooryavanshi

P.K. Ajith Kumar
JAIPUR

Justin Langer has been around the 22 yards for a while. Three decades and a half, in fact.

He has played with and against and watched some of the greatest batters of our time. He is still awed by Vaibhav Sooryavanshi's batting. The former Australian opener, who played 105 Tests, feels the teenager has lit up world cricket.

"I have seen some amazing players in 35 years of cricket," the Lucknow Super Giants coach said shortly after Sooryavanshi played a match-winning innings for Rajasthan Royals at the Sawai Mansingh Stadium on Tuesday night.

"To see a young man bat like that, not just tonight but throughout the series, is breathtaking."

Langer is impressed by the way he treats formula-

ble bowlers like Mitchell Starc and Anrich Nortje.

"As an ex-batter, knowing how hard batting is, I think, 'what is going on here?'" he said.

"The bowlers are thinking, 'what on earth is going on here?' It is incredible actually to be able to play that way, there is high risk to it, and now he has the Orange Cap. He is doing it in every form of the game and scoring a lot of runs. Ultimately that is what the game is about."

He said the scary thing was how Sooryavanshi would play going forward. "The best way to learn how to make runs is to make runs, not by hitting some big sixes," Langer said.

"The scary thing going forward, if you go by the expressions on the faces of Starc, Nortje and every bowler now, is what about when he learns how to bat?"

Arsenal – how the title was won

Pickpockets, set-pieces and keeping the faith – inside the Gunners' journey to the pinnacle of English football

PREMIER LEAGUE

Associated Press
LONDON

Manchester City's 1-1 draw at Bournemouth on Tuesday assured Arsenal a first Premier League title since Arsene Wenger's "Invincibles" in 2004.

But the road to success was anything but smooth.

Back in 2021, Arsenal's hierarchy had a big decision to make. It was August 28, and the team had just lost 5-0 at Man City to slump to the bottom of the Premier League standings with a third straight loss to open the season – something that hadn't happened since 1954.

Mesut Ozil, who had just left Arsenal after being frozen out by Arteta, sarcastically posted "Trust the process" on social media, in a cutting reference to the methods of his former coach.

The board, headed by American owner Stan Kroenke, stuck with Arteta, though.

In the early years of his tenure, Arteta placed his trust in younger players to revive Arsenal's fortunes.

Bukayo Saka and Emile Smith Rowe were among the academy players promoted to the first team. An

The Magnificent Men

The numbers behind Gunners' title march:

1 Arteta is the first manager to clinch the Premier League (PL) title with a club he had represented as a player

2 At 44y and 54d, Arteta is the second youngest manager to go the distance in the PL after Mourinho (42y 94d and 43y 93d), who did it twice with Chelsea

4 Arsenal has four PL trophies in its kitty, the first three coming under Wenger

16 At 16y and 144d (on the final day of the season), Downman will become the youngest medal winner in the league's history

6 Arteta has led the Gunners to a top-division crown in his sixth full season in charge

8 Arsenal has now won the league in eight different decades

14 The 2025-26 PL victory was the London club's 14th top-flight title



19 Clean sheets Arsenal has kept so far this PL season, the best in the competition

18-year-old Gabriel Martinelli arrived from Brazil in 2019.

Another 18-year-old, William Saliba, joined the same year from France and was initially loaned out. Over the next couple of years, players under the age of 23 – such as Ben White and Martin Odegaard – were signed.

Final step

Arteta honed these youngsters into top-class Premier League players but it was clear that to make the final step, the club needed to buy slightly older, elite-le-

vel players like Declan Rice, Viktor Gyokeres and Eberechi Eze.

They didn't come cheap.

Finishing as runner-up in the Premier League for the past three years saw Arsenal's players and Arteta derided as "nearly men," even chokers.

But Arteta kept believing in his squad – and kept coming up with unorthodox, ridicule-inviting methods to inspire his players.

A professional pickpocket was reportedly hired for a preseason dinner and

took items from players, highlighting the need for them to be alert at all times.

Arteta brought a lightbulb into the locker room ahead of one game, linking that to his demand for the team to shine and light up Emirates Stadium. Just a few weeks ago, TikTok videos featuring fan chants were played on big screens during practice sessions.

For a couple of seasons, Arteta's Arsenal has been the emblem of a more back-to-basics approach in English football – set-pieces, long throw-ins and long

balls from the back.

It's a world Arsenal has mastered, with Gabriel Magalhaes a menace at corners, Rice key with his pinpoint throws and dead-ball deliveries, and Gyokeres a more robust, hold-up striker.

Rice and goalkeeper David Raya have stood out for Arsenal this season, putting them among the favorites for English soccer's Player of the Year award.

Rice's leadership, energy in midfield and set-piece delivery has made him an integral member of the team.

Raya has helped Arsenal keep 19 clean sheets, earning him the Golden Glove award for the third straight year.

City's stumble

City had to win to take the title fight to the final day, but the Cherries extended their unbeaten streak to 17 league games, a run which has secured European football for the first time in the club's history.

Elsewhere Tottenham was left sweating over its survival in the top division after losing to a struggling Chelsea 2-1.

The results: Bournemouth 1 (Kroupi 39) drew with Manchester City 1 (Haaland 90+5); Chelsea 2 (Fernandez 18, Santos 67) bt Tottenham 1 (Richarlison 74).

Punjab faces MCFC as title up for grabs

Vivek Krishnan
NEW DELHI

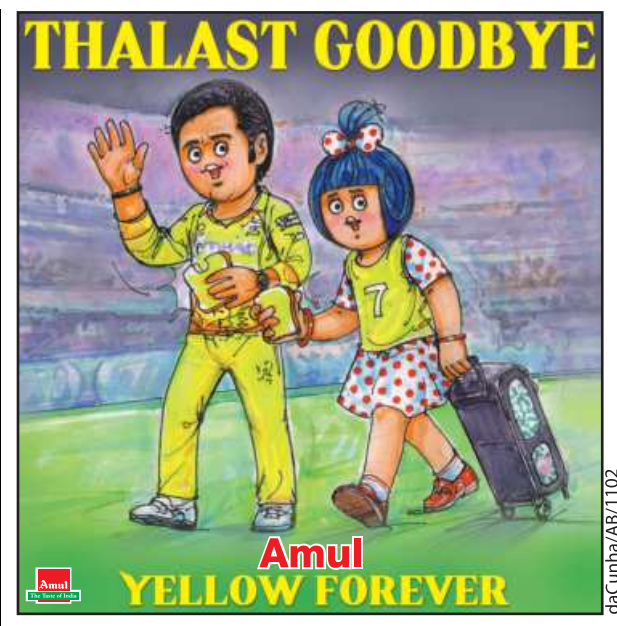
A drama-ridden final day of the 2025-26 Indian Super League season is on the cards on Thursday as four games kick off simultaneously to settle a title race that has gone down to the wire.

Just two points separating the top-six teams makes for a thrilling conclusion to a competition that was gasping for survival in the latter stages of last year.

The fact that only Bengaluru FC, which is third, has completed its matches among top-six sides means that five other teams are still in contention for the trophy.

Punjab FC has moved up gradually in the table, and finds itself at fourth spot with 22 points from 12 matches. Mumbai City FC, Punjab's opponent on Thursday, is fifth with the same number of points.

For one of these outfits to hoist the trophy, it will have to do its bit by prevailing at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium here and hope that results elsewhere fall into place. East Bengal FC, on top with 23 from 12, takes on Inter Kashi FC while second-placed Mohun Bagan Super Giant, behind its Kolkata rival only an inferior goal difference, faces Sporting Club Delhi.



SNAPSHOTS

Contrasting wins for Malvika, Ashmita

Kuala Lumpur: Malvika Bansod, Ashmita Chaliha and Devika Sihag won on an otherwise disappointing day for India at the Malaysia Masters Super 500 here, advancing to the second round in women's singles.

The results (first round):

Women: Malvika Bansod bt Yvonne Li 21-17, 16-21, 21-9; Ashmita Chaliha bt Thalita Ramadhani Wiryawan 21-16, 21-13; Devika Sihag bt Park Ga Eun 19-21, 21-18, 21-19; Line Christophersen Kjaersfeldt bt Anmol Kharb 13-21, 21-16, 21-19.

Doubles: Rin Iwanaga & Kie Nakanishi bt Rutaparna & Swetaparna Panda 21-7, 21-6.

Men: Moh. Zaki Ubaidillah bt Lakshya Sen 21-17, 21-11; Kodai Naruoka bt H.S. Prannoy 21-17, 20-22, 24-22; Alex Lanier bt Kiran George 21-15, 6-1 ret.; Wang

Po-Wei bt Tharun Mannepalli 17-21, 21-14, 21-8.

Mixed doubles: Bobby Setiabudi & Melati Daeva Oktavianti bt Ashith Surya & Amrutha Pramuthesh 21-13, 21-18.

Padma Shri for hockey coach Baldev

Baldev Singh, who turned the quaint town of Shahabad Markanda into a conveyor belt for elite hockey talent, will be conferred the country's prestigious civilian honour – Padma Shri – by President Droupadi Murmu on May 25, officials said on Wednesday.

Baldev used his experience in mentoring over 80 international players and eight Indian captains in the sport.

INBRIEF



Tajjul claims six, Bangladesh clinches Test series

Spinner Tajjul Islam took six for 120 to lead Bangladesh to a 78-run win over Pakistan in the second Test and clinch a 2-0 series win at Sylhet on Wednesday. It was Bangladesh's first Test series win at home against Pakistan and a second successive sweep after a 2-0 triumph on Pakistan soil in 2024.

The scores: Bangladesh 278 & 390 bt Pakistan 232 & 358 in 97.2 overs (Mohammad Rizwan 94, Tajjul Islam 6/120); **PoM:** Litton Das; **Pos:** Mushfiqur Rahim.

Dhairya shocks Chun in Asian junior squash

India's Dhairya Gogia on Wednesday shocked Hong Kong's 5/8 seed Tse Ka Chun 12-10, 10-12, 11-7, 11-7 in the first round of the boys' U-13 section at the 33rd Asian junior squash championships in Panzhihua, China, on Wednesday.

The results (1st round): U-13: Boys: Amarya Bajaj bt Chau Hyo Chon (Mac) 11-1, 11-1, 11-5; Abhyuday Arora bt Danuja Jayasinghe (SL) 11-5, 11-4, 11-1; Dhairya Gogia bt Tse Ka Chun (HK) 12-10, 10-12, 11-7, 11-7. **Girls:** Riyaa Dalal bt Dheeraya Mithali Silva (SL) 11-0, 11-6, 11-7; Alia Kankaria bt Eun Choi 11-4, 11-6, 11-5.

Veteran midfielder Khaka in Switzerland World Cup squad

Veteran midfielder Granit Khaka will take part in his seventh successive major international tournament after he was named in Switzerland's football World Cup squad on Wednesday. Switzerland reached the last-16 stage in the last three World Cups and the quarterfinals of the last two European Championships.

The squad: Goalkeepers: Gregor Kobel, Marvin Keller, Yvon Mvog; **Defenders:** Ricardo Rodriguez, Silvan Widmer, Manuel Akanji, Miro Muheim, Nico Elvedi, Aurele Amenda, Luca Jaquez, Eray Comert; **Midfielders:** Johan Manzambi, Granit Khaka, Remo Freuler, Denis Zakaria, Ardon Jashari, Michel Aebischer, Djibril Sow, Christian Fassnacht, Fabian Rieder; **Forwards:** Noah Okafor, Dan Ndoye, Zeki Amdouni, Brel Embolo, Ruben Vargas, Cedric Itten.

LIVE TELECAST

ISL: Sony Sports Ten 2 & FanCode, 5 & 7.30 p.m.
IPL: Sony Sports Ten 5 & LIV, 6.30 p.m.
IPL: Star Sports 1 & JioHotstar, 7.30 p.m.

From reluctant bowler to a rising all-rounder: Madhav Tiwari steps up at Delhi Capitals

IPL-19

Vivek Krishnan
NEW DELHI

Moments after Delhi Capitals suffered a harrowing loss to Kolkata Knight Riders at home on May 8, skipper Axar Patel, resigned to his team not making the playoffs of IPL 2026, said the remaining three league games would be used to give opportunities to newer players. One of the beneficiaries of Axar's view has been all-rounder Madhav Tiwari.

The 22-year-old from Madhya Pradesh – his family hails from Rewa dis-



Sparkling: Madhav, right, has repaid skipper Axar's faith in giving newer players a chance. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

trict but he was born and brought up in Indore – has grabbed his opportunity in DC's previous two matches. The seamer picked up two wickets apiece against

both Punjab Kings and Rajasthan Royals, and he also provided a glimpse of his ability with the willow during an unbeaten 14-ball 18 to seal a successful chase at

the expense of Shreyas Iyer's men.

Curiously, Madhav, whose IPL debut came against Mumbai Indians last year, is yet to feature for his State team at the senior level.

He attracted the attention of Capitals when he turned out for Bhopal Leopards in the maiden Madhya Pradesh T20 League in 2024.

"What was spoken about Madhav when we picked him was that he was somebody who liked the pressure. He can bat, hit a long ball, and also bowl through all three phases," DC head coach Hemang Badani told the media.

Madhav owes his cricketing skills to former India batter Amay Khurasiya, having trained at the 54-year-old's academy in Indore since the age of 12. As Khurasiya recounts, Madhav, whose father has a transport and logistics business, was a reluctant bowler to begin with.

"Those kids who bat well generally don't like bowling. He was one of those kids who loved batting," Khurasiya told *The Hindu*. "He never enjoyed bowling, but he somehow took my advice. I have been particular about everyone developing both the fundamental skills in the game."



Sasikumar held off Yamanaka's challenge. K. MURALI KUMAR

Sasikumar the lone Indian in last eight

Ashwin Achal
BENGALURU

Mukund Sasikumar emerged as the lone Indian to progress into the quarterfinals of the S.M. Krishna Memorial Open here on Wednesday. Sasikumar took out Japanese qualifier Taiyo Yamanaka 6-4, 7-6(1) in the round-of-16.

The experienced Sasikumar scored a decisive break in the 10th game to wrap up the opening set. In the second set, the 29-year-old Indian reserved his best for the tie-break.

Sasikumar, alongside Adil Kalyanpur, also reached the doubles quarterfinal with a 6-3, 7-5 victory over Dominik Palan (Czech Republic) and Digvijaypratap Singh.

Teenage wild card Krish Tyagi, who reached the semifinal of the Karnataka Open ATP Challenger here last week, went down to third seed Hamish Stewart 4-6, 6-4, 6-3.

Manish Sureshkumar, who stunned top seed and Karnataka Open champion Keegan Smith in the first round, lost to former World No. 40 Ilya Ivashka 1-6, 1-6.

The results (round-of-16): Mukund Sasikumar bt Taiyo Yamanaka (Jpn) 6-4, 7-6(1); Alastair Gray (GBR) bt Dominik Palan (Cze) 6-3, 7-6(2); Ilya Ivashka bt Manish Sureshkumar 6-1, 6-1; Hamish Stewart (GBR) bt Krish Tyagi 4-6, 6-4, 6-3. Alex Hernandez (Mex) bt Naoya Honda (Jpn) 5-7, 7-5, 6-4; Mitsuki Wei Kang Leong (Mas) bt Yusuke Takahashi (Jpn) 6-3, 6-2. Ognjen Milic (Srb) bt Sidharth Rawat 6-3, 6-1; Petr Bar Birukov bt Leo Vithoontien (Jpn) 7-6(4), 6-4.

ROUND-UP

Yajas, Dhruv score unbeaten centuries

Yajas Sharma and Dhruv Singh stepped up with unbeaten centuries to help Bal Bhavan Cricket Academy beat Pioneer Cricket Club by seven wickets and enter the final of the 41st all-India Laxman Dass Chhabra memorial cricket tournament at St. Stephen's ground on Wednesday.

The scores: Pioneer 333/9 in 40 overs (Mayank 65, Jasmeet Nain 34, Samant Jakhar 75 n.o., Suryakant Chauhan 3/46) lost to Bal Bhavan 336/3 in 25.4 overs (Yajas Sharma 176 n.o., Dhruv Singh 105 n.o.).

All-round show by Parth

Parth Kumar Bali (81 n.o. and two for 28) shone as Young Friends defeated Bright CC by six wickets in the 51st all-India Tyagmurthi Goswami Ganesh Dutt memorial cricket tournament at S.G.T.B. Khalsa College ground on Wednesday. **The scores:** Bright 240 in 39.1 overs (Vansh Mehra 100, Rushal 74) lost to Young Friends 241/4 in 26 overs (Anish Gautam 40, Jatin Kadyan 64, Parth Kumar Bali 81 n.o.).

Domestic season to open with Duleep on Aug. 23; Ranji Trophy from Oct. 11

CRICKET

Amol Karhadkar
MUMBAI

The Ranji Trophy champions of the previous two editions – Jammu & Kashmir and Vidarbha – have been clubbed together along with Madhya Pradesh in the same group as the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) announced the detailed calendar for the forthcoming domestic season.

While defending champion Jammu & Kashmir will be hoping to defend its crown by finishing in top two in Group A, Karnataka is one of the three southern teams to be placed in Group B along with familiar foe Saurashtra.

Tamil Nadu, after a mediocre campaign last season, will have to upstage domestic giant Mumbai along with consistent sides like Uttarakhand, Haryana and Railways in a bid to make it to the knockouts from Group D.

The seven-month-long

season will begin with the BCCI's Centre of Excellence in Bengaluru hosting the Duleep Trophy from August 23 and finish with the Women's Inter-Zonal Multi-Day tournament on March 28 next year.

The BCCI has altered the Under-23 (A) limited-overs tournament from 50-overs-a-side to a T20 tournament.

The tournament, scheduled to begin on December 1, will thus offer an additional opportunity for the IPL franchisees' talent scouts to witness promising domestic cricketers ahead of the auction.

The groups: Ranji Trophy: Elite: Group A: Jammu & Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh, Vidarbha, Baroda, Uttar Pradesh, Pondicherry, Goa, Bihar. **Group B:** Karnataka, Andhra, Saurashtra, Chhattisgarh, Hyderabad, Tripura, Punjab, Assam. **Group C:** Bengal, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Services, Gujarat, Kerala, Delhi, Odisha. **Group D:** Uttarakhand, Mumbai, Haryana, Railways, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Himachal Pradesh, Chandigarh. **Plate:** Nagaland, Manipur,

Meghalaya, Sikkim, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh.

Vijay Hazare Trophy: Elite: Group A: Vidarbha, Madhya Pradesh, Baroda, Railways, Tamil Nadu, Uttarakhand, Andhra, Bihar.

Group B: Saurashtra, Mumbai, Haryana, Jharkhand, Gujarat, Jammu & Kashmir, Hyderabad, Services.

Group C: Punjab, Delhi, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Goa, Rajasthan, Chandigarh.

Group D: Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Kerala, Bengal, Tripura, Odisha, Assam, Pondicherry.

Plate: Sikkim, Manipur, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram.

Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy: Elite: Group A: Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Baroda, Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Chandigarh, Karnataka, Mizoram.

Group B: Haryana, Punjab, Delhi, Jammu & Kashmir, Railways, Tamil Nadu, Saurashtra, Bihar. **Group C:** Andhra, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Pondicherry, Kerala, Assam, Tripura, Himachal Pradesh.

Group D: Hyderabad, Mumbai, Goa, Gujarat, Vidarbha, Odisha, Uttarakhand, Chhattisgarh.

Plate: Services, Sikkim, Nagaland, Manipur, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh. **Major men's tournaments for**

2026-27 – Duleep Trophy:

August 23 to September 10 (Bengaluru, CoE); **Irani Cup:** October 1 to 5 (Jammu or Srinagar); **Ranji Trophy: League stage leg 1:** October 11 to November 5; **Leg 2:** January 17 to February 4, 2027; **Knockouts:** February 9 to March 3, 2027;

Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy: League stage: November 14 to 26 (Mumbai, Visakhapatnam, Kolkata, Mohali, Dimapur); November 30 to December 6 (Nagpur); **Vijay Hazare Trophy: League Stage:** December 14 to 29 (Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Ranchi, Rajkot, Indore); **Knockouts:** January 2 to 8, 2027 (Visakhapatnam).

Major women's tournaments – Senior Women's T20 Trophy: League stage: October 26 to November 6 (Lucknow, Pune, Delhi, Mohali, Dimapur); **Knockouts:** November 14 to 20 (Ahmedabad); **Senior Women's Inter-Zonal T20 Trophy:** November 24 to December 4 (Guwahati); **Senior Women's One-Day Trophy: League stage:** December 19 to 31 (Cuttack, Jaipur, Baroda, Raipur, Kolkata); **Knockouts:** January 4 to 10, 2027 (Chennai); **Senior Women's Inter-Zonal One-Day Trophy:** February 17 to 27, 2027 (Chennai); **Senior Women's Inter-Zonal Multi-Day Trophy:** March 13 to 28, 2027 (Dehradun).

Senior Women's T20 Trophy: League stage: October 26 to November 6 (Lucknow, Pune, Delhi, Mohali, Dimapur); **Knockouts:** November 14 to 20 (Ahmedabad); **Senior Women's Inter-Zonal T20 Trophy:** November 24 to December 4 (Guwahati); **Senior Women's One-Day Trophy: League stage:** December 19 to 31 (Cuttack, Jaipur, Baroda, Raipur, Kolkata); **Knockouts:** January 4 to 10, 2027 (Chennai); **Senior Women's Inter-Zonal One-Day Trophy:** February 17 to 27, 2027 (Chennai); **Senior Women's Inter-Zonal Multi-Day Trophy:** March 13 to 28, 2027 (Dehradun).

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At peace with pressure: Understanding Jyothi Surekha

With compound archery heading to the Olympics, India's most decorated archer is learning to carry the weight of certainty



K.V.S. GIRI

Anirudh Velamuri
VIJAYAWADA

Jyothi Surekha Vennam has collected more than 90 medals across the Asian Games, Asian and World Championships, World Cups, and beyond, but numbers alone fail to capture what she has become. In Indian sport, she exists in a rare category of athlete: the kind who is expected to win before the first arrow is even drawn. A sure shot, as they call it. A burden disguised as praise.

With compound archery preparing for its Olympic debut at the 2028 Los Angeles Games, that certainty is set to be amplified into something brighter, heavier, harder to ignore. It is in this gathering light that *The Hindu* travelled to Vijayawada - crossing a river (Krishna) she once mastered as a five-year-old (which rocketed her into the Limca Book of Records) - to meet one of the country's most formidable athletes.

Her world does not announce itself. It hides in plain sight. A gated community. A door no different from the others. A home that could belong to anyone - until it does not. Inside, silence gives way to shimmer. Medals catch the light like fragments of a long, relentless conversation with time.

What was once a bedroom has surrendered itself to memory, becoming a walk-in archive of effort and repetition, of early mornings, missed shots, and moments of precision. Even now, it overflows - trophies resting where there is no space left for them. It is here that the 29-year-old sat down, surrounded by the evidence of everything she had done, to speak not just of winning, but of carrying what winning leaves behind and what lies ahead.

Thrown into the deep end

Long before the plethora of medals, before the expectation that she would never return home "empty-handed," before compound archery finally found its place at the Olympics, Surekha was an eight-year-old crying because she did not want to take up archery after getting used to the routine of swimming.

Sports ran in the family. Her grandfather was a physical education teacher who trained athletes for kabaddi. Her father, Vennam Surendran Kumar, played the sport himself at the college level before moving on to a career in veterinary science. Surendran and his wife, Sri Durga, made every major decision regarding their daughter's involvement in sports.

"My parents chose archery mostly because it's an individual game and involves more concentration and focus," Surekha explained. The idea to pick the compound vertical was to allow her the space to also balance her academics.

It was not love at first sight for Surekha with archery. The affection arrived gradually. When she struck six gold medals at her first nationals, at the U-13 level in 2008, the sport latched on to her,

permanently now. Unsurprisingly, the narration of one of the most consequential moments of her life comes with restraint: "I was like... okay, I am happy with it."

International archery wasn't as instantly rewarding. Silvers and bronzes kept getting collected, but golds were elusive at first. "It took me 12 World Cups to win a medal, and there were situations where people were coming into the team for the first time and they won one. I often asked myself, 'Why am I not able to win a medal in the World Cup?' I was really upset about it for a long time."

Earning her flowers

That drought would end in 2018.

"That year was really great because in all four stages of the World Cup, we won bronze in the mixed team event, and I also got to win two silvers in the women's team category as well."

Each year of the nearly two decades she has spent in archery has seen a generous sprinkling of medals across tiers of competition. But a few moments stand out. The 2023 Archery World Cup is one of them, where she shot 713 out of a possible 720 in the first stage in Antalya to match the erstwhile world record.

"Funnily, in training, I felt I was missing something. I was not confident at all. But I knew that it takes just one shot or a single feeling to bring you back. During the qualification, someone shot 360 while I had shot 353, which wasn't too bad. In the second half, I shot a full 360. It's something I haven't even done in practice. That was the first and last time I managed that (laughs)."

Her first individual medal was another memorable milestone, coming at the 2019 World Championships. Her first individual World Cup medal came in Paris in 2022. The Jyothi Surekha formula for success and crawling out of a rut is as simple and no-nonsense as she herself is. Three hours of practice in the morning, three hours in the second half, plus one hour of physical activity accompanying either session. Journaling and visualisation sessions also figure without a break in her timetable. "I just visualise that I am there in an arena, shooting my best. I focus on

the process, how I want to execute a shot and make sure I visualise doing it at the same place repeatedly so it doesn't seem new to me when I get there." And when things work, the 'celebration' is just as simple. "Most of the time, when I win, I call my parents. We talk about ice cream. No particular flavour, just any ice cream."

Many of the medals adorning the walls of Surekha's house were victories without an audience. So when she became one of the youngest recipients of the prestigious Arjuna Award in 2017, it was vindication for her, yes, but more for her parents.

"My parents always wanted me to earn the Arjuna Award. When it did come, my father kept reminding me that this should now spur me on to be more responsible and keep giving my best."

It did. She went from strength to strength. Among her achievements was a sensational triple gold at the Hangzhou Asian Games in 2023, where she scooped up top honours in the women's individual, mixed team and women's team events, becoming the first Indian to win multiple gold medals in archery at a single Asian Games.

Perhaps, the relentlessness of the drive her parents prioritised to keep achieving tinges her father's voice when he expresses regret that she is yet to make the recipient list of the Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna honour, the country's highest sporting award.

What could tip the scales? An Olympic medal, maybe?

Surekha's career coincides fortunately with the induction of her category in the roster for the Los Angeles Games in 2028. When the announcement came through, she was in Florida with the Indian team.

"It was the first day of the World Cup. After our session was completed, we had our lunch and were waiting for our bus when suddenly, World Archery people came around capturing reactions to the news. Every compound archer was really happy. I immediately called my parents."

She, however, was quick to put that joy into perspective. One that came from finding satisfaction in a discipline that has long survived outside the halo of the revered quadrennial extravaganza. "Olympics is just the name of the event.

It's the same archers who are competing at the World Championships, World Cups and more. In India, nothing else matters besides the Olympics. But it's not true. There are many tournaments just as big."

Otherwise happy to make do with a few words in her responses, Surekha's thoughts reflect immense clarity.

"That perspective needs to change. Because maybe if it does, maybe if the Olympics are not given that much priority, the athletes who are competing there can perform even more freely without any pressure and give their best performance and win more medals for our country."

Still, the importance of the platform and its positives, particularly for compound archery, is not lost on her. "If you look at history, when anyone wins a medal in the Olympics, that sport as a whole grows. For example, look at badminton, javelin throw and wrestling. There is so much hype that comes around for the person winning a medal and the sport they play. The interest automatically grows because of the publicity and that takes the sport to the next level."

Perhaps that is what makes Surekha such a compelling athlete to listen to right now. At a time when Indian sport increasingly celebrates noise, branding, and spectacle, she represents something quieter and far more enduring.

Discipline without drama. Ambition without arrogance. Confidence without demonstration. None of this happens in isolation. Surekha knows what it means to endure uncertainty. She knows what it means to chase excellence in a sport that does not always receive attention. She knows the emotional cost of expectation, the loneliness of underperformance, and the patience required to keep showing up. But through all of it, the thing she values most is remarkably human: the assurance that somebody will still be there when the competition ends.

"You have to believe in yourself, and you have to have a good support system, be it mentally or financially, to come into sports. If one has a strong familial support system, they're happy when you're successful. But, more importantly, they'll be fine if you aren't too."

Surekha has made the squad for the 2026 Asian Games in Japan. The drill remains the same. What will change are the eyeballs and the strengthening of the "she will bring home something" belief. "I have been listening to people saying that we know that you will not come empty-handed. I am fortunate that people think that way, that they trust, no matter what, that I'll bring back something."

By the time LA 2028 arrives, the spotlight around Surekha will only grow brighter. She will probably walk into that Olympic arena the same way she has walked into every other tournament in her life: without allowing the enormity of the moment to swallow her. Because long before the Olympics entered her category, Surekha had already mastered something far more difficult: separating who she is from what she wins.

THE GIST

▼ Surekha has won more than 90 medals across the Asian Games, World Championships, Asian Championships, and World Cups, quickly becoming one of the most consistent names globally in compound archery

▼ It took her 12 World Cups before she won a medal internationally, a period of frustration she credits to the success that followed thereafter

▼ Surekha's standout moment came at Antalya 2023, where she shot 713/720 to match the world record — a score she says she has never replicated even in practice

▼ Triple gold at the 2023 Hangzhou Asian Games made her the first Indian to win multiple archery golds at a single Asian Games



Sperm whale 'clicks' have complex patterns similar to human speech

Researchers have revealed that sperm whales, which communicate using clicking sounds, also vary the sounds in ways that resemble how humans use vowels; these vocalisations show clear parallels with human phonology – the system of rules that organises sound patterns in human language

Anirban Mukhopadhyay
NEW DELHI

Sperm whales communicate using short sequences of clicks known as codas, which they exchange while coordinating within their groups. Scientists have long classified these sequences using the number of clicks and the timing between them.

A study published on April 15 in *Proceedings of the Royal Society B* has however reported that there is more to it than meets the ears: the codas also vary in their acoustic structure in ways that resemble patterns found in human speech.

"Before this work, sperm whale vocalisations were often treated as a kind of Morse code – simply patterns defined mainly by timing," Gasper Beguš, associate professor of linguistics at University of California, Berkeley, and senior author of the study, said. "What we are showing here is that there is another layer of structure within the clicks themselves."

A learnt structure

Until now, classification relied on two measurable features: the number of clicks in a sequence and the spacing between them, known as inter-click intervals. These patterns produce distinct coda types. For example, a 1+1+3 coda consists of two clicks separated by pauses, followed by three clicks in rapid succession, while a 5R coda contains five evenly spaced clicks. Because different whale groups use different sets of these patterns, the system is unlikely to be entirely inborn. Instead, scientists think at least part of it is learnt within groups.

When the researchers broke each click down into its frequency components, they found that the sounds fall into two distinct categories: some have a single dominant frequency peak, while others have two. In human linguistics, such peaks are known as formants – the resonant frequencies that allow us to distinguish an "ah" sound from an "ee." Consequently, the authors label these whale categories "a" and "i." These two types are clearly distinct, and the same pattern of clicks – for example, a 1+1+3 coda – can be produced using either the "a" click or "i" click.

Calling it a "fascinating finding," Mason Youngblood, a behavioural scientist at Stony Brook University, said the study shows that sperm whale communication "varies not just in timing but also in tonal quality," in ways similar to human vowels, suggesting the "signals may be able to convey more information than previously thought."

Two layers, then three

The two click types are not used in the same way across all codas. In some, such as the 1+1+3 pattern, both appear in roughly equal numbers. In others, one dominates, and in a few it is almost absent.

If click type were simply a side effect of sound production, this variation would be random. Instead, the patterns are consistent, suggesting that sperm whales control not just when they click, but also what kind of click they produce – treating timing and type as two separate features of their signals.



A sperm whale and her calf off the coast of Mauritius. Sperm whales communicate using short sequences of clicks known as codas. GABRIEL BARATHIEU (CC BY-SA)

The researchers also identified several additional layers of variation in how codas are produced.

Codas in the two click types differ in length. Even when the pattern of spacing between clicks is the same, "a" codas are typically longer than "i" codas. In addition, the "i" category splits into two groups – some codas are short, while others are long – whereas the "a" category does not. This is similar to how the length of a sound can matter in human speech, where longer and shorter vowels can serve different functions.

They also found consistent differences between individual sperm whales. Even within the same coda pattern and click type, some whales produce longer sequences than others.

For example, the length of an "a" coda can differ by about 170 milliseconds between individuals. Despite this, "a" codas are still longer than "i" codas across all sperm whales, showing that while whales may sound different from one



There are clear similarities, but also important differences... The fundamentally rhythmic nature of sperm whale codas, for example, sets them apart from human speech

MASON YOUNGBLOOD
Behavioural scientist,
Stony Brook University

another, they follow the same underlying patterns.

Finally, they found that one coda can influence the next. Most codas consist of a single click type, but in a few cases, the first click is different from the rest – for example, a coda made up of "i"-type clicks may begin with a single "a"-type click. These mismatches occur most often when whales switch from one type of coda to another.

This suggests that the first click of a coda is affected by the coda that came before it, showing that codas are not

produced in isolation – the previous one can shape how the next begins.

What it means, what we don't know

The results show that sperm whale vocalisations show clear parallels with human phonology – the system of rules that organises sound patterns in human language through combinations of discrete sound categories, timing, and position. Prof. Beguš, provides a hypothesis of convergent evolution playing out over grand timescales to explain the observations. "Humans and whales diverged tens of millions of years ago, but both evolved complex vocal systems that show striking structural parallels."

Dr. Youngblood added that the rich social and cultural lives of sperm whales relies heavily on communication within their family and clan groups. He believes this might support such a complexity in whale phonology. At the same time, he cautioned that one must not be quick to call it a language just yet. "There are clear similarities, but also important differences," Dr. Youngblood said. "The fundamentally rhythmic nature of sperm whale codas, for example, sets them apart from human speech."

What these patterns mean remains unknown. The study does not identify what information codas convey or whether different patterns correspond to specific contexts. What it does show is that sperm whale communication is built from multiple features that can vary independently and in relation to one another – a level of organisation that is uncommon in animal communication systems. "Determining whether these patterns map onto specific meanings will require much more work," said Dr. Youngblood. "I know these are the goals of Project CETI, and I'm really looking forward to seeing what comes next."

(Anirban Mukhopadhyay is a geneticist by training and science communicator from New Delhi.

anirban.genetics@south.du.ac.in)



The study also found consistent differences between individual sperm whales. Even within the same coda pattern and click type, some whales produce longer sequences than others. GETTY IMAGES



A nearly hollow piece of trinitite backlit to reveal how light flows through it. WEIRDMEISTER (CC BY-SA)

New crystal found in the detritus of the first-ever nuclear blast

Vasudevan Mukunth

On July 16, 1945, the U.S.'s "Trinity" nuclear test in New Mexico changed history. The explosion released energy equivalent to 21,000 tons of TNT, vaporised a steel tower, and melted the surrounding desert sand into a glassy green crust called trinitite. Decades later, this mineral still holds secrets.

In a new study published in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, scientists from the University of Firenze, Slovak Academy of Sciences, Carnegie Mellon University, and Princeton University have said they have found a rare, cage-like crystal – called a clathrate – in the trinitite.

The researchers, led by Luca Bindi and Paul Steinhardt, were motivated by the discovery in 2021 of a quasicrystal in red trinitite – a specific variety of the glass tinted by copper from the test tower's wiring. Quasicrystals have ordered but non-repeating atomic patterns that scientists once thought to be impossible in nature. Because both the quasicrystal and the newly discovered clathrate were found in similar copper-rich droplets, the team wanted to know if these two rare forms of matter could be related. In other words, they wanted to check if the extreme conditions in the nuclear blast could have been a natural laboratory that created materials impossible to synthesise using conventional laboratory methods.

To find the new crystal, the team examined a sample of red trinitite collected shortly after the 1945 test. They used high-resolution nano-CT scans to peer inside the glass, where they identified small droplets of metal.

They identified one promising candidate, a grain just 10µm across. Then they determined the arrangement of its atoms and its chemical makeup using advanced instruments. The team also used supercomputer simulations to test its stability and its potential relationship to other rare materials. This is how the team discovered a previously unknown calcium-copper-silicon crystal. They said it is a type-I clathrate, which is characterised by a framework of silicon atoms forming small cages that trap other elements inside.

This is the first time a clathrate has been identified among the solid-state products of a nuclear explosion. According to the study paper, the newfound crystal is metastable: meaning it could only form under the extreme, fast-changing temperatures and pressures of the Trinity test – conditions reaching over 1,500 °C and pressures up to 8 gigapascals – and then frozen into place by cooling rapidly.

The researchers also checked whether the Trinity quasicrystal could have been derived from the clathrate structure. Their computer models showed that while a clathrate framework would indeed be stable with a small amount of copper, it would fall apart when the copper content reached the high levels found in the Trinity quasicrystal. In other words, the two materials formed in the same event but belong to separate structural families. Per the study, extreme environments can shape matter in ways that challenge scientists' understanding of chemistry and could pave the way for creating new synthetic materials that mimic these high-energy conditions.

The researchers wrote in the paper that their work, by ruling out a connection between clathrates and quasicrystals, also deepens the mystery of where and how complex, non-repeating can structures form in nature.

THE SCIENCE QUIZ

Conditions and diseases with animals names

Vasudevan Mukunth

QUESTION 1

_____ is the name of the condition that results when parasitic worms block the lymphatic system, causing fluid to accumulate in the limbs over years. The affected leg or arm can swell to enormous proportions while the skin can become quite thick and rough. Fill in the blank.

QUESTION 2

Medieval physicians who saw patients with the raw, ulcerated facial skin caused by X thought the wounds looked as though a wolf had been gnawing at the face. This condition attacks the body's own tissues and in some forms also produces a rash across the nose and cheeks. What is X?

QUESTION 3

In certain bone diseases, including Paget's disease, the bones of the face and skull

gradually become thicker and expand outward. The brow becomes heavy, the cheekbones more prominent, and the jaw becomes enlarged. What is this effect – like a coarsened mask physicians once thought bore an unsettling resemblance to a lion's face – called?

QUESTION 4

A stubborn variant of alopecia areata is a condition called Y – an autoimmune condition that causes patchy hair loss. But instead of appearing in random patches, the resulting baldness manifests in a continuous band around the back and sides of the scalp, following a serpentine path. Name the condition.

QUESTION 5

In people with a connective tissue disorder called Marfan syndrome, the fingers and toes tend to be unusually long, slender, and flexible. When the individual splays their fingers or toes, they look remarkably like spider legs. What is this condition called?



Answers to May 7 quiz:

- Measure of the number of atoms bonded to an atom – **Ans: Ligancy**
- Force resulting from surface atoms lacking 'lacking' material on one side – **Ans: Surface tension**
- High value of this attribute leads to Gibbs-Thomson effect – **Ans: Vapour pressure**
- Collective oscillations of electrons in a metal – **Ans: Plasmons**
- Formation on surface that allows a material's surface to melt first – **Ans: Liquid film**

Visual: **Pearlescence**

First contact:

K.N. Viswanathan | Tamal Biswas | Prem Nath Tiwari | Anmol Agrawal | Prem Raj P.

Visual: Name this condition, which gets its name from a common aquatic animal. The condition also played an important part in the Sherlock Holmes story *The Adventure of the Blanched Soldier*. CREDIT: GZZZ (CC BY-SA)

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