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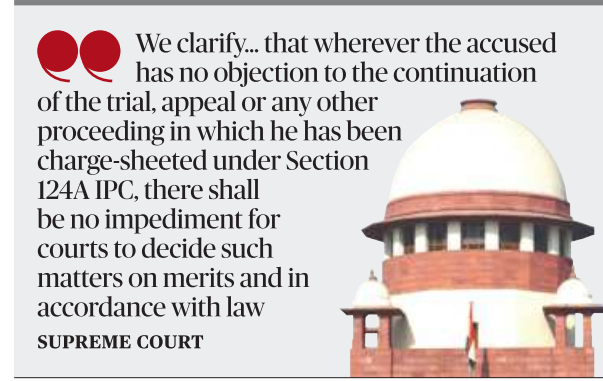
Sedition trials can go on if accused is willing, says SC

Aaratrika Bhaumik
NEW DELHI

Four years after putting on hold trials in sedition cases in courts across the country, the Supreme Court on Thursday said that they could proceed with trials and appeals involving the offence of sedition under Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) if the accused had no objection.

The clarification was issued by a Bench of Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justices Joydip Bagchi and Vipul M. Pancholi while hearing a plea by a petitioner who has been in jail for 17 years in a case involving sedition charges.

"The petitioner's grievance is that he has no objection if his criminal appeal is heard in its entirety, including with respect to the charge under Section 124A. That being so, we clarify... that wherever the accused has no objection to the continuation of the trial, appeal or any other



We clarify... that wherever the accused has no objection to the continuation of the trial, appeal or any other proceeding in which he has been charge-sheeted under Section 124A IPC, there shall be no impediment for courts to decide such matters on merits and in accordance with law SUPREME COURT

proceeding in which he has been charge-sheeted under Section 124A IPC, there shall be no impediment for courts to decide such matters on merits and in accordance with law," the Bench observed.

In an interim order on May 11, 2022, the top court had put on hold trials in sedition cases pending before courts until the government completed its promised exercise "to re-examine and re-consider" the colonial-era provision.

The court had also made it clear that it "hopes

and expects" the Centre and States to refrain from registering FIRs, continuing investigations, or taking coercive measures under Section 124A while the "reconsideration" of the provision was under way.

A Bench headed by then CJI N.V. Ramana had also observed that while it was "cognisant of security interests and integrity of the State on one hand," and the "civil liberties of citizens on the other", there was a requirement to "balance" both sets of considerations.

Ebola crisis: India-Africa Delhi summit postponed

Decision taken after consultations regarding the evolving health situation; new dates for summit will be finalised in due course, says MEA; the last such summit was held over a decade ago in 2015

Kallol Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

The Ebola public health emergency in Africa cast its shadow on India's diplomatic calendar on Thursday, with the Ministry of External Affairs and the African Union announcing the postponement of the India-Africa Forum Summit-IV that was scheduled to take place here from May 28 to 31.

In a joint statement, the MEA and the AU hinted at the Ebola crisis, saying that the decision was taken in view of the "evolving health situation in parts of Africa". The last such summit was held over a decade ago, and had also been postponed by a year due to an Ebola outbreak.

Consultations were held



Health concern: India has pledged to help governments of African nations to deal with the Ebola crisis. AP

between the Indian government and the Chairperson of the African Union and the African Union Commission regarding the "emerging public health situation on the continent", the MEA and the AU said in their statement. "Following these consulta-

tions, the two sides agreed that it would be advisable to convene the Fourth India-Africa Forum Summit at a later date," they added. It said that new dates would be finalised later.

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Big cat meet in Capital too put on hold

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

In the wake of concerns over the Ebola virus, India has postponed the International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) Summit that was scheduled in New Delhi on June 1.

The First IBCA Summit was scheduled in conjunction with the Fourth India-Africa Forum Summit as several African countries host big cats. "New dates for the Summit will be announced in due course following consultations," a statement noted.

IN BRIEF



Delhi govt. removes 7.71 lakh ineligible ration card holders

NEW DELHI
Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Thursday said the Delhi government has removed over 7.71 lakh ineligible ration card beneficiaries, paving the way for new eligible recipients for free foodgrains. » PAGE 2

87.85% turnout for repoll in Bengal's Falta Assembly seat

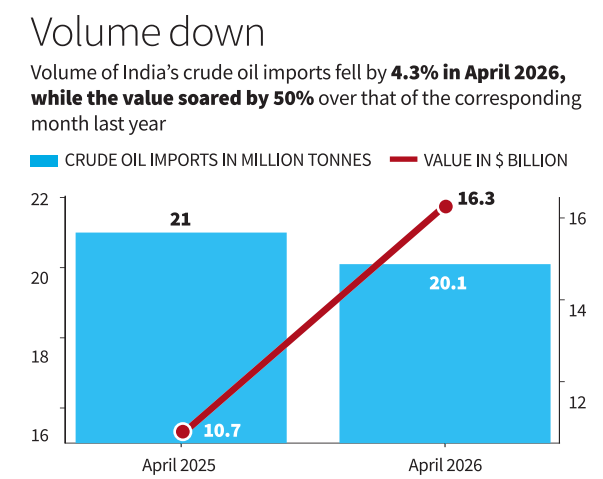
KOLKATA
The repolling in West Bengal's Falta Assembly constituency witnessed 87.85% voter turnout on Thursday. The day was largely peaceful after complaints of malpractices had surfaced on the original polling day on April 29. » PAGE 13

India's crude oil imports decline by 4.3% in April, but bill goes up by 50%

Saptaparno Ghosh
NEW DELHI

The volume of India's crude oil imports fell by 4.3% in April, the second month after the start of the West Asia conflict, while the value of imports soared by about 50% over the comparable period last year, government data showed. The figures are an indication of the price pressure on crude oil and natural gas due to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz.

Notably, as per the latest data from the Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell, the volume of imports of liquefied natural gas (LNG) declined by nearly 30% in



April, though domestic net production of natural gas fell by 4.2% during the month. This was, however, due to lower consumption.

Overall, the net import bill for oil and gas, which is inclusive of certain deductions from India's export of petroleum products, grew

Transporters announce hike in freight rates

MUMBAI
With diesel prices increasing and fuel shortage impacting free movement of trucks, transporters have decided to increase freight rates by 4% with effect from Wednesday, to pass on the extra burden to the customers. The move was announced by the All India Transporters Welfare Association. » PAGE 15

by about 23% to \$13.9 billion in April.

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UNLF-P cadre held, looted weapons seized in Manipur

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

A joint team of the Manipur Police, the Assam Rifles, and the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) has seized 67 weapons, including looted police weapons, and arrested four cadres of the United National Liberation Front-Pambei (UNLF-P), the oldest valley-based armed group of Manipur, from the Lamshang area in Imphal West for the alleged crime.

The Pambai faction of the UNLF signed a peace agreement with the Centre and the State government on November 29, 2023. According to the agreement, the cadres are mandated to stay within the designated camp, and surrender wea-



A special operation was launched based on information regarding the selling of looted arms in Lamshang. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

pons before the police. The cadres were in the process of selling the looted police weapons when they were apprehended by the police. The police posed as customers to bust the crime and made the recoveries after a brief exchange of fire.

Other than the weapons, they seized a high quality "drone jammer", recoveries by the police show. A police source said the "Made in Taiwan anti-drone jammer" may have been procured from Myanmar.

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Memorial to honour Indian troops opened in Seoul

Saurabh Trivedi
NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and the Republic of Korea's Minister of Patriots and Veterans Affairs Kwon Oh-eul jointly inaugurated the Indian War Memorial at Imjingak Park in Seoul on Wednesday, commemorating the 75th anniversary of the Korean War and honouring the contribution of Indian troops during the conflict.

Mr. Singh highlighted India's enduring contribution to peace and humanitarian assistance on the Korean Peninsula.

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RAS 2024 RESULTS
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Delhi govt. removes over 7.71 lakh ineligible ration card beneficiaries

Mulls raising annual family income limit for eligibility to ₹2.50 lakh per annum for fresh enrolments; Chief Minister says her govt. carried out a comprehensive audit of the PDS after assuming office and uncovered large-scale irregularities

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Thursday said the Delhi government has removed over 7.71 lakh ineligible ration card beneficiaries, paving the way for new eligible recipients for free foodgrains.

"This is not merely an administrative reform. It is our commitment to ensuring food security and a life of dignity for every needy family in Delhi," the Chief Minister said.

From May 15, the Department of Food Supplies and Consumer Affairs started accepting fresh applications for ration cards and addition of members to existing ones through the eDistrict portal, edistrict.delhigovt.nic.in.

Under the Public Distribution System (PDS), the government provides 35 kg foodgrain per month to Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) households and 5 kg foodgrain per month to Priority Household (PHH) beneficiaries free of cost under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMKAY).



From May 15, the Department of Food Supplies and Consumer Affairs has started accepting fresh applications for ration cards and addition of members to existing ones. FILE PHOTO

The Delhi government also provides 1 kg free sugar to all AAY cardholders.

Ms. Gupta said the government is also considering raising the annual family income limit for eligibility to ₹2.50 lakh per annum for fresh enrolments of PHH beneficiaries and a final decision is expected soon. The Chief Minister said the earlier eligibility limit for ration cards has already been increased from ₹1 lakh to ₹1.2 lakh under the Delhi Food Security Rules, 2026, with the objec-

ive of bringing more poor and middle-class families under the welfare net.

She said family income details were earlier accepted largely on the basis of self-declarations, allowing ineligible individuals to enter the system while genuine beneficiaries were often left out. "Under the new framework, applicants will have to submit Aadhaar cards, proof of residence, the latest income certificate and Aadhaar details of all family members. This will help ensure accurate verifi-

cation and prevent misuse of welfare benefits," the Chief Minister's Office said in a statement.

The National Food Security Act (NFSA) allows free foodgrain to 37.69% of the rural and 43.59% of the urban population of Delhi. This, according to the 2011 Census, adds up to 72.77 lakh individuals.

For several years, there have been lakhs of pending applications as Delhi had maxed out on the limit, and the cap of 72.77 lakh could be increased only after a

fresh Census, as per officials.

As the 2021 Census was delayed, the previous Aam Aadmi Party government had requested the Centre on multiple occasions to increase the limit so that new cards could be issued.

Comprehensive audit

The Chief Minister said the government carried out a comprehensive audit of the PDS after assuming office, which uncovered large-scale irregularities. "A total of 7,71,384 ineligible and bogus beneficiaries were identified. Of these, 6,46,123 were found to be above the prescribed income limit. Another 95,682 beneficiaries had not availed ration for more than a year. In 6,185 cases, the names of deceased persons continued to remain on ration records while 23,394 beneficiaries were found to be drawing benefits from multiple locations," the Chief Minister said.

Ms. Gupta said 3.72 lakh applications for new ration cards and 99,501 applications for inclusion of family members are currently pending.

2020 riots: Salim Malik gets bail; Umar Khalid moves HC

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Thursday granted bail to Salim Malik in the 'larger conspiracy' case linked to the 2020 riots, noting that his role was akin to that of other co-accused who have already got relief from the Supreme Court.

A Bench of Justices Prathiba M. Singh and Madhu Jain noted that Mr. Malik has been in custody for more than five years and 10 months, and the arguments on the charge were being heard. "Accordingly, the trial is going to take some time. Under these circumstances, bearing in mind the role of the appellant [Malik], this court is of the view that the appellant deserves to be released on bail," it ordered.

The court also pointed out that the role attributed to Mr. Malik is similar to the role ascribed to Mohd. Saleem Khan and Shadab Ahmad, who have been granted bail by the Supreme Court.

Mr. Malik was arrested in June 2020. According to the FIR, he had participated in various meetings where he was alleged to have conspired with other co-conspirators as to the manner in which the prot-



Police personnel take out a flag march in north-east Delhi in the aftermath of the riots. FILE PHOTO

est would be organised and the nature of action to be taken by the protesters.

He is also alleged to have been present at the protest site prior to February 24, 2020, along with the other co-accused and involved in spreading inflammatory messages and speeches. As per prosecution, Mr. Malik is also alleged to have participated in the riots by carrying bricks, rods, stones, etc. The prosecution stated that he incited clashes with the police by participating in a mob.

The prosecution has invoked the provisions of the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) in the case.

Advocate Jawahar Raja, representing Mr. Malik, argued that his case is fully covered by the decision of the Supreme Court in the Gulfisha Fatima case. On January 5, the Supreme

Court granted bail to five accused - Ms. Fatima, Meeran Haider, Shifa Ur Rehman, Mohd. Saleem Khan and Shadab Ahmad - in the 'larger conspiracy' case. The top court, however, denied the relief to activists Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam, saying all accused in the case do not stand on the same footing.

In the Gulfisha Fatima judgment passed on January 6, 2026, the Supreme Court had categorised one set of accused persons as the core ideological drivers of the conspiracy and the other as local-level facilitators and also field operators. "The prosecution narrative itself delineates Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam as occupying a position distinct from the remaining accused, both in terms of conceptual involvement and command over the alleged conspiracy," the Supreme Court had said.

Plea for interim bail

Meanwhile, Mr. Khalid moved the High Court on Thursday against a trial court order that dismissed his plea for interim bail to attend a 40-day post-death ritual of his uncle and take care of his mother, who has to undergo a surgery. The appeal is listed for hearing on Friday.

Will revive rainwater harvesting in 75 schools: CM

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Thursday said rainwater harvesting systems will be made functional in 75 CM SHRI schools before the onset of monsoon, with an estimated saving of 50 crore litres of water.

Ms. Gupta said the government will adopt the 'Ehsaas' model for rainwater harvesting in schools. According to a statement, the initiative will collect rainwater from rooftops, filter it, and channel it into storage units and borewells, aiding groundwater recharge and helping revive dry borewells.

RML reports first 2 heatstroke cases as Delhi bakes at 43.6°C

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital (RML) reported its first two heatstroke cases of the season, with two critically ill patients admitted on Thursday morning amid severe heatwave conditions in the national capital, officials said.

Both patients were brought to the hospital in an unconscious state with extremely high body temperatures and were immediately put on ventilator support and immersion cooling therapy, doctors said.

While a 21-year-old man from West Bengal was admitted around 1.45 a.m. after falling ill while travelling on a train, another man



Young boys walking along a dried bed of Sanjay Lake amid intense heat conditions in New Delhi on Thursday. PTI

in his 50s was brought in by the police around 10.45 a.m. in an unconscious state, said Dr. Ajay Chauhan, Director Professor of Medicine at the hospital.

Doctors initiated immersion cooling therapy and later shifted them. Their condition continues to be critical, doctors said.

Delhi recorded a maximum temperature of 43.6 degrees Celsius on Thursday, while the minimum settled at 31.9 degrees Celsius, which was 5.2 degrees Celsius above normal, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD).

(With inputs from PTI)

Day One of transport strike leaves commuters stranded

Shrimansi Kaushik Mahima Rao Shubhangi Kshitiza Saurav
NEW DELHI

A three-day strike called by transport and taxi unions disrupted daily life across Delhi-NCR on Thursday, leaving commuters stranded for long hours and affecting the supply of goods to markets.

Transport unions, led by the All India Motor Transport Congress under the banner of the Rashtriya Driver Sanhit Morcha, called the 'chakka jam' in protest against the rising fuel prices, an increase in environmental compensation cess, and restrictions on BS-IV vehicles.

Hundreds of truck, cab and autorickshaw drivers participated in the strike on its first day.

"The green tax was recently increased from ₹1,400 to ₹2,000 for smaller trucks and from ₹2,400 to ₹4,000 for bigger ones. Moreover, BS-IV vehicles will not be allowed to enter



Transport and taxi unions across Delhi-NCR have launched a three-day strike from May 21-23. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Delhi after October 31, 2026," said Ravi Rathor, vice-president of the Sarvodaya Drivers Welfare Association.

Warning against the shortage of fruits, vegetables and milk if the strike continues, he said over 1,500 trucks did not supply goods to the Azadpur mandi on Thursday.

Autorickshaw and taxi drivers demanded revision in fare amid the rising fuel costs and competition from app-based aggregators that had made operations in-

creasingly unviable.

The strike disrupted the morning commute across the city. At railway stations and bus stops, commuters reported confusion and delays. Harsh Gupta, 29, missed his train after struggling to book a cab. "I tried multiple apps but could not find a ride," he said.

Nandini Goel, 24, reached her workplace in Gurugram 45 minutes late after failing to find a ride through mobile applications and missing her usual shuttle service.

Janakpuri rape case: parents upset as court grants bail to teacher

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The parents of a three-year-old girl, who was allegedly raped inside a private school in Janakpuri last month, have expressed dissatisfaction with a Delhi court's order granting bail to the class teacher arrested as a co-accused in the case.

Additional Sessions Judge Rohit Gulia of Dwarka Courts on Wednesday granted bail to the teacher saying that her judicial custody was not required as she had joined the investigation and not interfered with it. In its order, the court said the victim had not named the teacher and that no pending investigation remained against her.

"Without going into the authenticity of the allegations made therein, it is stated that the victim had not disclosed the name of the teacher in her initial complaint. Moreover, the accused was arrested after 13 days of the incident," the order said. The teacher's counsel told the court that six other teachers were present on campus on the day of the incident, along with nannies looking after 34 students.

The parents, however, have alleged that the crime was committed by the caretaker in connivance with the teacher, who was "identified by the child in front of the police". They have also alleged that the accused tried to intimidate them via social media. The court has directed the investigating officer to counsel both the parties.

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// सर्व संबंधित को सूचना //

भारत सरकार, पर्यावरण, वन और जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय, नई दिल्ली को अधिसूचना दिनांक 14.09.2006 (यथा संशोधित) के तहत सर्व संबंधित को सूचित किया जाता है कि M/s Clean Coal Enterprises Private Limited, Village-Gatora, Tehsil-Masturi, District-Bilaspur (C.G.) expansion of Wet Type Coal Washery from 1.92 MTPA (2X-96MTPA) to 5.0 MTPA (2X2.5 MIPA) के पर्यावरणीय स्वीकृति हेतु लोक सुनवाई बाबत छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल में आवेदन किया गया है। उक्त प्रस्तावित परियोजना के संबंध में आपात / सुझाव / टीका-टिप्पणी इस सूचना के जारी होने के दिनांक से 30 दिवस के अंदर क्षेत्रीय अधिकारी, क्षेत्रीय कार्यालय, छ.ग. पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल, व्यापार विहार, पं. दीनदयाल उपाध्याय पार्क के पास, बिलासपुर (छ.ग.) के कार्यालय में लिखित रूप से कार्यालयीन समय में प्रस्तुत की जा सकती है। इस परियोजना के लिए लोक सुनवाई दिनांक 24/06/2026 को प्रातः 11:00 बजे स्वयं शासकीय पूर्व माध्यमिक शाला प्रांगण, ग्राम-करी, तहसील मस्तुरी, जिला बिलासपुर (छ.ग.) में नियत की गई है। सूचित हो कि लोक सुनवाई के दौरान भारत सरकार, पर्यावरण, वन और जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय, नई दिल्ली के ऑफिस मेमोरेंडम F No. 22-25/2000-IA, III दिनांक 14.09.2020 तथा कोरोना वायरस के नियंत्रण एवं रोकथाम हेतु शासन द्वारा जारी समस्त दिशा-निर्देशों का अंशरतः पालन किया जाना अनिवार्य होगा।

ई.आई.ए. अधिसूचना दिनांक 14.09.2006 (यथासंशोधित) के प्रावधानों के अनुसार ड्रफ्ट ई.आई.ए. रिपोर्ट, कार्यपालकवार की प्रति (हिन्दी व अंग्रेजी में) एवं इसकी सी.डी. (साइट कॉपी) जन सामान्य के अवलोकन / पठन हेतु कलेक्टर, कार्यालय कलेक्टर, जिला-बिलासपुर, मुख्य कार्यपालन अधिकारी, कार्यालय, जिला-बिलासपुर, जिला-बिलासपुर, अनुविभागीय अधिकारी (रा.), कार्यालय, अनुविभागीय अधिकारी (रा.) मस्तुरी, जिला-बिलासपुर, मुख्य महाप्रबंधक, कार्यालय मुख्य महाप्रबंधक, जिला व्यापार एवं उद्योग केंद्र, बिलासपुर, जिला बिलासपुर, उपसंचालक (खनि, प्रशा.) कार्यालय कलेक्टर (खनिज शाखा), जिला-बिलासपुर, मुख्य कार्यपालन अधिकारी, कार्यालय जनपद पंचायत, मस्तुरी, जिला-बिलासपुर, क्षेत्रीय अधिकारी, क्षेत्रीय कार्यालय, छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल, व्यापार विहार पं. दीनदयाल उपाध्याय पार्क के पास, बिलासपुर, सरांच / सचिव कार्यालय ग्राम पंचायत / ग्राम-नतीरा, करी, फरदा, खैरा, लिमारा, भेलाई, रलिया, रिक, देवरी, पंधी, किसान-परसदा, इटादीही, तहसील-मस्तुरी, जिला बिलासपुर (छ.ग.) डायरेक्टर, पर्यावरण, वन और जलवायु परिवर्तन, मंत्रालय, भारत सरकार, इंदिरा पर्यावरण भवन, वायु विंग, जोरबाग रोड, नई दिल्ली, क्षेत्रीय निदेशक, एकोकृत क्षेत्रीय कार्यालय, भारत सरकार, पर्यावरण, वन और जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय, अण्डय भवन, नॉर्थ ब्लॉक, सेक्टर-19, नवा रायपुर अटल नगर रायपुर एवं मुख्यालय, छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल, पर्यावास भवन, नॉर्थ ब्लॉक, सेक्टर-19, नवा रायपुर अटल नगर, जिला-रायपुर (छ.ग.) में रखी गई है।

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

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH ANNIVERSARIES

11th ANNIVERSARY

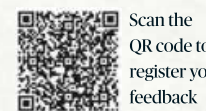


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BANARAS LOCOMOTIVE WORKS, VARANASI - 221004

Tender Notice No. PCE/BLW(ET)/Publish/2026-27/02-03 Date:19.05.2026 E-TENDER

Dy. Chief Engineer, Banaras Locomotive Works, Varanasi on behalf of the President of India invites "Open" Tender through E-Tendering from the contractors- S.N.: 1, Tender No.: BLW-WAT-ET-02-26-27, Name of Work: Zone works in East Township for one years i.e. 2026-27 under SSE/W/ET, Zone works in Central Township for one years i.e. 2026-27 under SSE/W/CT, Zone work in WT (North) for the year 2026-27 under SSE/W/WT/North in BLW Varanasi & Zone work in WT (South) for the year 2026-27 under SSE/W/WT/SOUTH in BLW Varanasi, Tender Cost (Rs.): 4,68,32,670.89, Earnest Money (Rs.): 9,36,700.00, Time of Completion: 12 Month, Closing Date of Tender: 10.06.2026 At 15:00 pm, Date of Opening of Tender: 10.06.2026 At 15:30 pm, S.N.: 2, Tender No.: BLW-WAT-ET-03-26-27, Name of Work: Zone works in ADM area for one years i.e. 2026-27 under SSE/W/ADM, Zone work in workshop under SSE/W/W during the year 2026-27 & Zonal works under SSE/BR (North and South) for one years i.e. 2026-27, Tender Cost (Rs.): 2,72,36,375.46, Earnest Money (Rs.): 5,44,700.00, Time of Completion: 12 Month, Closing Date of Tender: 10.06.2026 At 15:00 pm, Date of Opening of Tender: 10.06.2026 At 15:30 pm. Special Notice: To see the detailed terms & conditions of tender and for submission of tender, please visit website: <http://www.ireps.gov.in> PRO/BLW-C-4 Dy. Chief Engineer

SOUTH EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY

TENDER NOTICE FOR ENGINEERING WORKS

Sri. No. (1) E-Tender No. DRM-ENGG-BSP-T-63-26-27, Date : 18.05.2026

Work: Supply of welding portion and welding of rail joints by aluminio thermic SKV process (Single shot Crucible with Automatic Tapping Thimble technology) including supervision, tools and plant and consumables etc. under the jurisdiction of ADEN/Central/BSP of Bilaspur division.

Tender Value : ₹ 82,07,231.97/-
EMD : ₹ 1,64,200.00/- Completion Period : 12 Months.

Sri. No. (2) E-Tender No. DRM-ENGG-BSP-T-64-26-27, Date : 18.05.2026

Work: Supply of welding portion and welding of rail joints by aluminio thermic SKV/process (Single shot Crucible with Automatic Tapping Thimble technology) including supervision, tools and plant and consumables etc. under the jurisdiction of ADEN/Pendra of Bilaspur division.

Tender Value : ₹ 80,81,827.77/-
EMD : ₹ 1,61,600.00/- Completion Period : 12 Months.

Start date of Submission of Tender: From 11:00 hrs. on 02/06/2026. Last date of Submission of Tender: Upto 11:00 hrs. on 16/06/2026.

The complete information of above e-Tender Notices is available over websites <http://www.ireps.gov.in> Bids other than e-bids shall not be accepted against above Tenders.

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THE HINDU

India's National Newspaper

Row in Bengal over singing of National Song in madrasas

The Hindu Bureau
KOLKATA

A row has erupted over the singing of *Vande Mataram* in madrasas in West Bengal. The State government had recently mandated singing of the National Song in all educational institutions. Several Opposition parties criticised the move. Aam Janta Unnayan Party chief Humayun Kabir, who won from two seats in the Assembly election, said,

The Director of Madrasa Education had issued a letter directing singing of the song before classes commence

“The State government has no authority to dictate such matters in madrasas.”

However, the Trinamool Congress leadership largely remained silent on the issue and did not make any

statements. BJP State president Samik Bhattacharya said *Vande Mataram* and madrasas have no link. “This divisive politics partitioned the nation in 1947. The Congress has forever used the *Vande Mataram* slogan, then what is the problem now?” he said. A letter signed on May 19 by the Director of Madrasa Education stated that *Vande Mataram* has to be sung before classes commence.

Should NGO be allowed to serve midday meals during probe: HC

Amarnath Tewary
PATNA

The Patna High Court has flagged the May 7 Baluaha midday meal incident, in which over 150 students of a government school in Saharsa district fell sick and were hospitalised after allegedly spotting a dead snake in their meal, asking whether

the NGO that supplies meals to over 150 schools in the district should be allowed to continue to provide meals during the investigation.

Students at Baluaha Middle School of Mahishi block in Saharsa fell sick after eating midday meals supplied by NGO Bharat Ratna Bhim Rao Ambedkar Dalit Utthan

Avam Shiksha Samiti. While hearing a public interest litigation plea regarding the incident on May 19, a Division Bench of the Patna High Court expressed concern over delays in the inquiry and asked the PM Poshan Directorate to examine whether the NGO should be allowed to continue operations during the probe.

Timings

DELHI

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
SUNDAY, MAY. 24		
RISE	05:27	SET 19:10
RISE	12:59	SET 01:09

Delhi Weather

	max	min
Delhi City	44	32
Safdarjang	44	32
Palam	44	31

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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11th International Convention In the Platinum Jubilee Year of the IIT System 25th May to 31st May 2026, IIT Kharagpur Dedicated to Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra in his birth Centenary Year

Panel Members: N. Rajam, Lalgudi GJR Krishnan, Seshampatti T. & Lalgudi Vijayalakshmi, Sivalingam

Evening Programs: Sujata Mohapatra, Ronu Majumdar, Tarun Bhattacharya, Parween Sultan, S. Sowmya, Margi Madhu, Ullhas Kashalkar, Shahid Parvez, Suresh Talwalkar, Sajjan Mishra, Ashwini Bhide Deshpande, Tejendra Narayan Majumdar, Wasifuddin Dagar

Afternoon Programs: Rajit Kapur, Mahmood Farooqui, Debashish Reang, Shashadhar Acharya, Tarapada Rajak, Achinta Kumar Behera, Prahlad Singh Tipaniya, Ghanakanta Bora, Kanaka Sudarshan, Parvathy Baul, Nise Meruno, Manpreet Singh, Warai Brothers

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For information contact: C.S. Kumar - 9434005819, Suman Dasgupta - 9899308953, Meena Sankar - 9078139255.
Online Live Broadcast: youtube.com/spicmacayofficial
SPIC MACAY, 41/42, Lucknow Road, Delhi - 110 054 www.spicmacay.org

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This information is also available on BCCL website www.bclweb.in

APPOINTMENT

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY CALICUT
NIT Campus P.O., Calicut, Kerala – 673601, India

NOTIFICATION FOR FACULTY RECRUITMENT

NIT Calicut invites applications for Faculty position at Pay Level 10 & 12 (7th CPC) in the Department of Education.
Phase-04 : Notification No.: NITC/P04/456/FR/EDN/2026
Dated:15/05/2026
For details, visit (www.nitc.ac.in).
Online application opens on 15 May 2026
Online application closes on 15 June 2026, 5 PM

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THE HINDU

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Panel Members



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Dean, Faculty of Engineering and Technology, SRM Institute of Science and Technology



Dr Jawaharlal M
Dean, SRM College of Agriculture Sciences, SRM Institute of Science and Technology



Dr Devinder Dhingra
Principal Scientist (Process Engineering) Indian Council of Agricultural Research, Division of Agricultural Engineering



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VICTORIS

IN BRIEF



U.P. Governor asks all varsities, colleges to enforce dress code

Uttar Pradesh Governor Anandiben Patel on Thursday directed all higher education institutions in the State to strictly implement a dress code for students to "strengthen quality, discipline, and social harmony" among students. "Following the Governor's directions, adherence to a dress code will be made mandatory across the State," said Higher Education Minister Yogendra Upadhyay. "The student community is essentially a homogeneous group. Differences in attire often reflect social and economic inequalities, which can create feelings of inferiority among some students," he said.

Latur man's death after attack by stray dogs triggers protest

A protest was held at the civic headquarters in Maharashtra's Latur city on Thursday after a man died following an attack by stray dogs, an official said. Vilas Gorve, 22, was mauled by stray dogs a few days ago at the local fish market and died during treatment at a hospital, the official added. His kin, as well as the area residents, brought his body to the Latur Municipal Corporation office and raised slogans against the administration, accusing it of not doing anything to control the rise in the number of stray dogs in most localities of the city. After the gates of the civic office were locked, protesters tried to break the locks with stones, a police official said.

Telangana police arrested Union Minister's son; he did not surrender, says Revanth

R. Ravikanth Reddy
HYDERABAD



Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy (centre) addressing a press conference in Hyderabad on Thursday. G. RAMAKRISHNA

Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy on Thursday clarified that the police had arrested Bandi Bageerath, son of Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Bandi Sanjay Kumar, and he did not surrender as is being claimed in a case filed under provisions of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.

"If Bandi Sanjay Kumar had voluntarily handed over his son to the police, authorities could have completed the process at his residence itself. Police arrested Mr. Bageerath while searching for him," the Chief Minister said.

Addressing a press conference at the State Secretariat in Hyderabad on Thursday, Mr. Reddy said notices were issued to rele-

vant persons and an inquiry was being conducted in the case involving Mr. Bageerath.

'Debased politics'

The Chief Minister accused Opposition parties, particularly the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS), of engaging in "debased politics" over sensitive issues, including the POCSO Act case and farmers' concerns while asserting that the police were strictly following legal procedures in all investigations. He alleged that

BRS leaders were behaving like "sadists" as though they had achieved something significant in the POCSO Act case.

"If they want to do politics, they should defeat us in elections, but they should not stoop to such levels," he said.

The Chief Minister said notices were served and probes conducted after drugs were allegedly found in a farmhouse linked to the brother-in-law of BRS working president K.T. Rama Rao.

Jammu families hit by demolitions to 'skip Id festivities, stay put'

Peerzada Ashiq
SRINAGAR/JAMMU

With regional leaders rushing to express solidarity, families affected by the recent demolition drive in Jammu said on Thursday that they will not celebrate the upcoming Id in "makeshift polythene shacks and on foam floorings".

Saima Jan (name changed), is among two dozen families affected by the drive on May 19 in Jammu's Raika Bandi area. "Around 5 a.m., bulldozers crushed our houses. Elders were offering prayers and younger ones were sleeping when the drive tore through the hutments. The first night we were forced to sleep with ants creeping in from all sides. The nearby panchayat ghar is full."

With Id being observed on May 27, the mother of

four said there will be no celebrations this year. "We are left without shelter. We lived here over four decades and will not leave the place. We lived outside forest fences. Voter cards, ration cards, electricity, and water supply are testimony to that. But now water and electricity are being cut off too," she said.

'Systematic targeting'

As many as 32 structures were demolished. Officials said it was against encroachments on forest land. However, Haji Mohd. Yousuf Majnu, president of the Gujjar Bakarwal Conference, termed it "systematic targeting of a particular community". "All demolition drives in Jammu are directed towards one community. We demand compensation and rehabilitation. The Centre and the



Household items strewn around during an anti-encroachment drive to clear "illegal" settlements on forest land, in Jammu on May 19. PTI

J&K administration should not forget the role of these communities in maintaining J&K's unity with India. Those who are behind the drive should be unmasked," he said.

Ruling National Conference (NC) MLA and Gujjar leader Mian Mehr Ali and Peoples Democratic Party leader Iltija Mufti visited the affected families in Sid-

Press Trust of India
LUDHIANA

Akal Takht Jathedar Giani Kuldeep Singh Gargaji and Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) president Harjinder Singh Dhami on Thursday met Punjab Governor Gulab Chand Kataria at a gurdwara here and raised the issue of the recently enacted anti-sacrilege law with him.

Mr. Gargaji and Mr. Dhami briefed the Governor in detail about the "objectionable" clauses in the law - Jaagat Jot Sri Guru Granth Sahib Satkar (Amendment) Act 2026.

'Talks with CM'

Speaking to mediapersons after the meeting, Mr. Kataria, who visited the gurdwara to pay obeisance, said several comments have emerged since the law was enacted. He added

that he plans to call the Chief Minister for talks on the issue to find a solution.

Mr. Gargaji also handed over to the Governor a letter along with the draft of objections officially sent by the Akal Takht Sahib to the Punjab government.

The Jaagat Jot Sri Guru Granth Sahib Satkar (Amendment) Bill, 2026 was unanimously passed by the State Assembly on April 13. Its provisions stipulate stricter punishment, including life imprisonment for any act of sacrilege against the Guru Granth Sahib.

On May 8, the Akal Takht Jathedar issued a 15-day ultimatum to the Aam Aadmi Party government to remove provisions from the anti-sacrilege Act that are "against the Guru Granth Sahib, the Khalsa Panth, and the sentiments of the 'Sangat (Sikh community)'".

West Bengal govt. issues order banning officials from speaking to media

Notification bans adverse criticism of any policy, decision of Central, State govts.; actions that can lead to strain in Centre-State ties also prohibited; TMC terms move 'strangulation of democracy'

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government in West Bengal has issued an order prohibiting government officials and police personnel from speaking to the media. The government notification, dated May 19, comes 10 days after the BJP government led by Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari was sworn in by Governor R.N. Ravi on May 9.

The circular titled, 'Dissemination of Information by any member of the All India Service, West Bengal Civil Service, West Bengal Police Service and other employees working under the Government of West Bengal' directs complete prohibition "without any government order on any direct or indirect communication of any document or information with the press by the members of the services".

It directs a ban on members of the services from indulging in any adverse



The notification, dated May 19, was issued 10 days after the BJP government led by CM Suwendu Adhikari was sworn in. FILE PHOTO

criticism of any policy or decision of the Centre or State government. It bans any publication, interaction, utterance, broadcast, or contribution in any media that can lead to straining of the relations of the State government with the Central government or any State governments.

Sharing the circular on social media, Trinamool Congress (TMC) general secretary Abhishek Banerjee said the phrase "complete prohibition" echoes through the circular like a warning "not to protect go-

vernance, but to enforce silence upon govt. employees across Bengal".

"No speaking to the press. No writing articles. No participating in media programs. No criticism of the Centre or State government. No expression that may strain relations with Delhi. Under @BJP4India's remote-controlled governance," he said.

Mr. Banerjee said "silence is now an administrative requirement" under BJP rule and when a government "cannot tolerate criticism, it starts crushing

dissent". "This shocking circular is not about discipline, it is about curtailing free expression and systematically choking fundamental rights to ensure absolute obedience to the masters sitting in Delhi," the TMC leader said.

He described the development as "strangulation of democracy".

Deployment extended Meanwhile, the Union Home Ministry has decided to continue deploying 500 companies of the Central Armed Police Forces in West Bengal till June 20 for post-election law and order management based on a request from the State government, an official said Thursday.

In an official communication, the Home Ministry said the State government had sought continuation of the deployment of Central forces till the end of October for post-election duties.

"The request of the government of West Bengal has been considered by the Ministry," it stated.

In a first, Ranjeet K. Dass gets 2nd term as Assam Speaker

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI



Ranjeet Kumar Dass was on Thursday elected Speaker of the Assam Assembly for a second term, a first in the State. The newly elected 126-member House also set a precedent on the inaugural day of its first session by allowing MLAs belonging to ethnic communities to take oath in their mother tongues. This followed a formal request from Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma to honour the State's diverse linguistic heritage.

The four-day session opened with Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya appointing the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) Chandra Mohan Patowary, the seniormost member of the House, as pro tem Speaker.

Mr. Patowary administered the oath to the CM and four Cabinet Ministers - Atul Bora of the Asom Gana Parishad, Rameswar Teli and Ajanta Neog of the BJP, and Charan Boro of the Bodoland People's Front. The other MLAs took oath in Assamese, Bengali, Bodo, English, Sanskrit, and several ethnic tongues, including Karbi, Rabha, and Rajbongshi.

"This was the first time

that newly elected MLAs took oath in languages of their choice, beyond the 22 languages listed in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution," the Chief Minister told the House.

Mr. Dass, MLA from the Bhowanipur-Sorbhog constituency, was unanimously elected as Speaker from June 2016 to January 2017. A former journalist and teacher, he served as an Indian Information Service officer before joining politics in 2005.

Uniform Civil Code

Mr. Acharya is scheduled to address the Assembly on Friday. Legislation related to the implementation of the Uniform Civil Code, approved by the Cabinet a week ago, is expected to be tabled on May 26, the final day of the session.

Akal Takht raises issue of anti-sacrilege law with Punjab Governor

Press Trust of India
LUDHIANA

Akal Takht Jathedar Giani Kuldeep Singh Gargaji and Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) president Harjinder Singh Dhami on Thursday met Punjab Governor Gulab Chand Kataria at a gurdwara here and raised the issue of the recently enacted anti-sacrilege law with him.

Mr. Gargaji and Mr. Dhami briefed the Governor in detail about the "objectionable" clauses in the law - Jaagat Jot Sri Guru Granth Sahib Satkar (Amendment) Act 2026.

'Talks with CM'

Speaking to mediapersons after the meeting, Mr. Kataria, who visited the gurdwara to pay obeisance, said several comments have emerged since the law was enacted. He added

that he plans to call the Chief Minister for talks on the issue to find a solution.

Mr. Gargaji also handed over to the Governor a letter along with the draft of objections officially sent by the Akal Takht Sahib to the Punjab government.

The Jaagat Jot Sri Guru Granth Sahib Satkar (Amendment) Bill, 2026 was unanimously passed by the State Assembly on April 13. Its provisions stipulate stricter punishment, including life imprisonment for any act of sacrilege against the Guru Granth Sahib.

On May 8, the Akal Takht Jathedar issued a 15-day ultimatum to the Aam Aadmi Party government to remove provisions from the anti-sacrilege Act that are "against the Guru Granth Sahib, the Khalsa Panth, and the sentiments of the 'Sangat (Sikh community)'".

Congress workers clash with police in Jaipur during stir against NEET-UG paper leak

Mohammed Iqbal
JAIPUR

Hundreds of Congress workers clashed with the police on Thursday when they were stopped from marching towards the BJP State headquarters during a protest against the NEET-UG exam paper leak.

Led by State Congress president Govind Singh Dotasra, the party workers demanded the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan and dissolution of the National Testing Agency.

Carrying posters, banners and placards, they raised slogans such as "NEET paper kahan milega? BJP ke baade mein. (Where will you find NEET paper? In the BJP's backyard)".

As the police personnel tried to stop the protesters at the Martyrs' Memorial



Congress workers led by State party chief Govind Singh Dotasra protesting in Jaipur on Thursday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

area near the Police Commissionerate, they climbed barricades. Shahpura MLA Manish Yadav was among those who were forcibly brought down by the police from the barricades.

Minor injuries

Former Minister Pratap Singh Khachariyawas sat on the road while former MLA Ved Prakash Solanki was pushed back by police

personnel. The Congress workers carried Mr. Dotasra on their shoulders when the police used water cannons to disperse them. Some protesters suffered minor injuries.

Leader of the Opposition Tika Ram Jolly said while the paper leak was first exposed in Rajasthan, the State government "deliberately delayed" registering even a single FIR.

Murder convict who jumped parole, worked in Bollywood arrested

The Hindu Bureau
AHMEDABAD

A murder convict, who jumped parole in 2014 and allegedly built a parallel life as an actor in Bollywood and Gujarati cinema after changing his identity, was arrested by the Ahmedabad Crime Branch, police said on Thursday.

The accused, Hemant Modi, 53, was apprehended on Wednesday near a metro station. According to police, Modi was serving a life sentence in Mehsana District Jail in connection with a 2005 murder and rioting case registered in Ahmedabad. He was granted 30-day parole by the Gujarat High Court in 2014

but failed to return to custody upon its completion. The High Court then declared him a parole absconder in July that year, stated a release from the City Crime Branch.

"During his decade-long absconding period, Modi maintained a highly active and visible career in the entertainment industry, appearing in major Bollywood productions such as *Thugs of Hindostan* alongside Amitabh Bachchan and Aamir Khan, and *Jayeshbhai Jordaar* starring Ranveer Singh," the Crime Branch said.

Modi will now be handed over to Mehsana District Jail staff to serve the remainder of his life term.

Coalition era begins as two Congress MLAs join 33-member Cabinet in T.N.

N. Sai Charan
CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu got its first coalition government on Thursday with the induction of two Congress nominees in Chief Minister C. Joseph Vijay's Cabinet, along with 21 Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) MLAs, taking the strength of the Council of Ministers to 33.

Meanwhile, the Indian Union Muslim League (IUM) nominated A.M. Shahjahan (Papanasam) and the Viduthala Chiruthaigal Katchi (VCK) named Vanni Arasu (Tindivanam) to join the Cabinet on Friday. With the Cabinet's strength capped at 35, this effectively shuts the doors on the 25 AIADMK rebel legislators, who voted in favour of the TVK government during the recent trust vote.



T.N. Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar felicitating Minister P. Viswanathan, in the presence of Chief Minister C. Joseph Vijay and Chief Secretary M. Sai Kumar, on Thursday. B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

Mr. Vijay also effected a minor reshuffle of portfolios, handing over the Revenue and Disaster Management portfolio to K.A. Sengottaiyan and the Finance portfolio to N. Marie Wilson (Dr. Radhakrishnan Nagar), who was newly inducted into the Ministry.

For the first time, the Tamil Nadu Cabinet will comprise seven Ministers

belonging to the Scheduled Caste – eight once Mr. Vanni Arasu is inducted – and two from the Brahmin community (since 1952). They include P. Venkataraman (Mylapore) and S. Ramesh (Srirangam). The number of women Ministers has gone up to four.

Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar administered the oath of office

and secrecy to the Ministers at Lok Bhavan in Chennai on Thursday.

The Congress, ousted from power in 1967, has joined the government after 59 years. All coalition partners had contested the Assembly election in the DMK-led front, but the Congress snapped ties with the Dravidian party after the poll and hopped on to the TVK bandwagon.

Additional portfolios

Mr. Vijay will additionally handle the Special Initiatives, Poverty Alleviation and Rural Indebtedness Departments, previously vested with N. Anand, the Rural Development and Water Resources Minister.

Energy Resources and Law Minister R. Nirmalkumar's Legislative Assembly portfolio has been given to Mr. Sengottaiyan.

Karnataka govt. calls key meet, mulling legal action over SIR

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Karnataka government is mulling legal action over the special intensive revision (SIR) being conducted by the Election Commission in the State from June 20, even as the Congress is likely to hold a brainstorming session involving its leaders on May 24. Following this, the government is expected to spell out its specific plans.

Sources said the Congress had called all its legislators, former legislators, defeated candidates, lead-

The Law Minister told presspersons that the government would spell out its plan in four or five days

ers and heads of frontal organisations for a meeting at a resort near Bengaluru where the SIR would be discussed in detail. Among those participating in the sessions include Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, Deputy CM D.K. Shivakumar and Congress general secretary in charge of Karnataka Randeep Singh Surje-

wala, a source said. Meanwhile, Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister H.K. Patil told presspersons in his post-Cabinet briefing that the government would spell out its plan in four or five days.

"We discussed whether we can take the case to the Supreme Court and request the court to get the final voters' list," he said.

According to sources, the Congress is worried about voter deletions in districts such as Kodagu, Raichur, Yadgir, Chikkamagaluru, and Davangere, where migration is high.

16 arrested for pelting stones at police in Bandra East

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

Sixteen people were arrested for allegedly pelting stones at police personnel stationed at the site of a five-day anti-encroachment drive in Bandra East that started on May 19, an officer said on Thursday.

"First Information Report has been registered under the sections related to rioting, assaulting government employees, damaging public property, and others," he added.

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WHEN CONFLICTS BRING UNCERTAINTY

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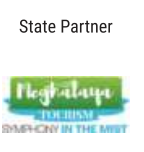


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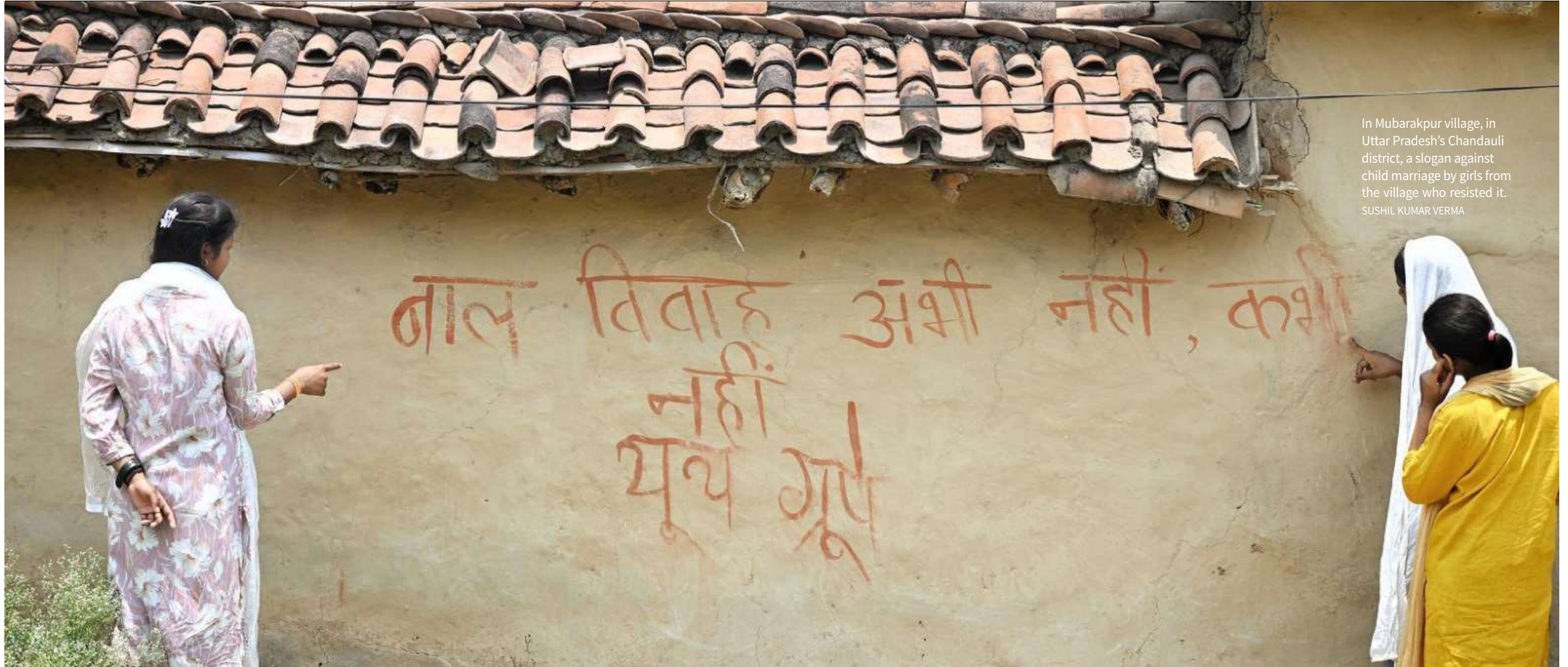
Presents



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SPOTLIGHT



In Mubarakpur village, in Uttar Pradesh's Chandauli district, a slogan against child marriage by girls from the village who resisted it.
SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Lakshmi may have ended up a child bride

Teenage girls across villages in Uttar Pradesh's Chandauli district are resisting child marriage with the assistance of anganwadi workers who were once child brides themselves and are determined not to let another generation be forced into the same cycle. **Ashna Butani** meets the girls and women pushing for change in a State with one of the highest number of child brides

Sixteen-year-old Lakshmi's voice travels through the streets of Mubarakpur. She sings in the Hindi-Bhojpuri strain of Chandauli, a district in Uttar Pradesh bordering Bihar. "Apne bojh bhale papa, lihab utaare, hamra ke deb papa, jite di ki maari. Kam hi umar mein papa, kar na biyah ho, (Papa, even if you get me married thinking I am your burden, you would have killed me while I am still alive. Papa, please don't marry me off so young)."

Lakshmi wrote the song for her father when she was in Class 5, six years ago. At the time, her marriage had been fixed, and she had wanted to study further. When Lakshmi first sang the song, he was not convinced by its message. Eventually, with intervention from anganwadi workers and the village pradhan, her father, then a daily wager, agreed to pause her marriage. Today, the streets are lined with mud houses that feature painted messages on them, announcing the need for change.

Seated on a mat below a tree, in Mubarakpur village, with her friends from neighbourhood villages, Lakshmi holds forth. The group has gathered for a programme to fight child marriage. "I want to become a social worker and stop other child marriages in the village," she says. Lakshmi and her friends, all girls, are finding ways to resist and educate those around them that it is a violation of the law.

As per a 2023 UNICEF report, India accounts for 34% of child brides across the world, meaning that one in three child brides across the world are in India. The report points out that Uttar Pradesh is home to the highest absolute number of child brides, even as States such as Bihar and West Bengal have a higher prevalence. Together, these three States, along with Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, make up half the number of child brides in the country.

In Mubarakpur, where the primary occupation is farming, on a hot afternoon, when nobody is on the streets, the brown of the mud houses is contrasted by messages on the walls. Written in blue paint by the girls is a Hindi slogan on one of the houses, stating, 'Every house will light a lamp, and every child will go to school,' and on the wall of another house in red, 'Child marriage: not now, not ever.'

Chanchal, 17, smiles as Lakshmi sings her song. Her friend's resounding voice pushes her to open up about her own story. "I had fallen sick when I was in Class 8. I could not go out for some time, and I could hear my family planning my marriage, referring to me as a *bojh* (burden)." She is one of seven sisters.

In Chandauli district, which is near Varanasi, the percentage of women between 20 and 24 years who were married before age 18 stands at 17.2, as per the National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-5, recorded in 2019-2021. This was still an improvement from the NFHS-4 survey in 2015-2016, when it stood at 33.7%.

Rooted in taboos and expectations

Sunita Devi, an anganwadi worker who herself got married before she turned 18, has been working proactively to stop child marriage in the village. With *sindoor* (vermillion) on her forehead and carrying a register in her bag always, Sunita says it wasn't easy to get started. "Initially, everyone in the village would say that I am working on it because I have daughters and I want to stop them from getting married early," she says.

But over the past few years, six to seven child marriages have effectively been stopped in the



One of my friends' marriages got fixed. Will you help me too?

LAKSHMI Representative, Child Welfare and Protection Committee

village. She says, "We explain to the parents that the girl is still not mature, and if she has a child at such a young age, it can adversely impact her health as well as that of her child. Some agree, others get upset with us."

The girls say they have to ask their parents for an "extension" every few years. They also tell people around them that those found involved can be arrested under the provisions of the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006.

Ruksana Begum, the pradhan, who is seated with Sunita, helps her keep track of children who are at risk of child marriage. They maintain the list in the register. Ruksana says, "When we explain the dangers to parents, they say that they do not have enough money to take care of the girl. They are also scared that their daughter will meet someone outside their *biraadri* (community), so they want to marry them young, before that can happen." Despite the intervention, the girls say that nobody marries of their "own choice" or outside their own caste and religion. When anyone mentions the words "love marriage", it is often in hushed tones.

The need for support

Lakshmi points out that it helps that the anganwadi workers and their village pradhan are women, who can understand what they are going through. While the Ministry of Women and Child Development (WCD) provides a framework to combat challenges such as child marriage and child labour, among other issues, implementation is being driven by anganwadi and ASHA workers, and village pradhans, who receive training from grassroots-level organisations.

The Ministry mandates the formation of a Child Welfare and Protection Committee (CW&PC) at the village level, accompanied by similar committees at the district and State levels. However, a committee member says that the panels were inactive before they were provided with additional support and training.

One such programme that is bridging this gap is KAWACH, run by the British Asian Trust, a non-profit that focuses on social development in South Asia. Projects are in partnership with grassroots organisations, aiming to ensure that

frontline workers are supported, trained, and backed by the structures they are a part of.

Dr. Neelima Pandey, who heads the programme, says, "Frontline workers are often the first to know. They are also trusted by the community. With the backing of key stakeholders and the right tools and empowerment, they can become a powerful force for child protection at the community level."

She adds that providing such support to frontline workers like anganwadi workers has led to a significant uptick in the identification and prevention of child marriage cases in the areas KAWACH operates in, which include U.P., Bihar, and West Bengal.

In Rampur village, this coordination has been instrumental in curbing child marriage, points out Paras Nath Singh, the village head. Inside the gram panchayat office, a list of 11 members along with their phone numbers has been stuck on an orange-painted wall. The list includes an anganwadi worker, an ASHA worker, and child members who are tasked with informing the committee when any other child they know is about to get married.

Since the committee has become active, Singh too, has found ways of determining the prevalence of child marriage. He says, "Many parents come to us to change a girl's age in her Aadhaar card from 15 or 16 to 18. This makes it obvious that they are planning a marriage."

The committee advises parents and tells them that they will be ineligible for many government programmes if they marry their daughter young, including the Mukhyamantri Samuhik Vivah Yojana, which provides cash incentives to brides after they turn 18.

Financial pressures

In Ghatmapur village in the same district, Roshni (name changed to protect identity), steps out of her one-room house into the newly established grocery shop in front of their home, in a black salwar suit. She has not only escaped child marriage, but also child labour.

Extreme poverty pushed the family to agree to take up farm labour in Thane, Maharashtra. Even Roshni, 16, and her younger brother went with their parents to work at a radish farm. Roshni's mother says, "We did not have any other option because we have many children, and less money. But we went there and regretted it."

The family includes the couple and six children, of whom three are daughters. The youngest child, a toddler, is asleep in bed as Roshni keeps shooing away the mosquitoes.

After returning to their village, they planned to get Roshni married. Fidgeting with her black dupatta, Roshni says, "One day, I was coming back from school and I saw a man sitting in the house. I had a suspicion that he had come for me. I went inside and started crying."

With the committee telling the family about the impacts of child marriage, as well as legal repercussions, and facilitating Roshni's re-enrolment in school, her parents have put the idea on hold for now. Now in Class 11, Roshni says she

likes studying biology and wants to become a doctor.

In the Chandauli district headquarters, inside an office, Prabhat Kumar, who is the Child Marriage Prohibition Nodal officer, says that the issue is often monetary and that families tell officers that they will "break" due to the financial burden. He says that awareness of the law is still limited, and they are starting initiatives such as declaring a village "child-marriage-free" to inspire others to do the same.

Personal and professional battles

At a monthly remuneration of about ₹8,000, which is lower than Uttar Pradesh's current minimum wage, anganwadi workers have numerous duties, including pre-school education, keeping track of children's and mothers' health, and conducting house visits.

Despite no additional monetary benefits from the government for the extra tasks they are assigned, these women have resolved to proactively fight child marriage.

A recently retired anganwadi worker, Lalmani, tears up when she describes how she is left without any incentives, pension or benefits, since anganwadi workers are recognised as volunteers and not government employees. "Even after retirement, my family members say that it is in my nature to work towards social change," she adds.

In Naugarh, a block in Chandauli, which is surrounded by verdant forests, a group of anganwadi workers gathers after their work for the day. When asked how many of them were married before the age of 18, almost all of them raise their hands and start sharing their stories. "I got married at 11 because of money issues," says one of them.

Having spent years in the field, they observe changes, such as the fact that younger generations are open to inter-caste and inter-religious marriages, which is pushing parents to tighten their grip over children.

Despite this, Renu Jaiswal says emphatically, "Maa hamesha maan jaati hai (The mother always agrees)." She adds, "Because she has been through it herself, and does not want her daughter to go through the same. Explaining to fathers is the hardest." Now 50, she recalls her marriage at 15, which was arranged by her family. This was before the 2006 Act. "I really wanted to study and become something, but I was married in Class 10 and couldn't continue. Many times, over the years, I wanted financial independence, because I had to depend on my husband even for ₹10." Eventually, she became an anganwadi worker in 2004. And now, she does not want anyone to go through the same experience.

The workers point out that they are often threatened by families for getting "too involved in family affairs". But this is where support from the block and district officials helps. When someone does not agree and plans to go ahead with the marriage, the workers alert the local police stations. However, this is a last resort, as the aim is not to shame families, but to make them understand the cons of child marriage, they say.

Hopeful futures

As the child representative of the CW&PC, Lakshmi says she is halfway to her dream of becoming a social worker and helping those around her. "One of my friends' marriages got fixed. She said to me, 'You help everybody. Will you help me too?'" Lakshmi informed the committee who counselled her friend's family until they agreed not to go ahead with the marriage.

Now, both Lakshmi and Chanchal are studying in Class 12 and are known as champions in their schools for fighting child marriage. Chanchal, who wants to become a District Magistrate to "find solutions" to her district's problems, was even given the opportunity to serve as Chairperson of the U.P. State Commissioner for Protection of Child Rights, as part of an annual tradition, in 2024.

Her eyes light up when she recalls the day, the first time she travelled to Lucknow. She even issued an order on a child rights issue after receiving a complaint. With hope in her voice, she says, "Since that day, the path to becoming a DM, and addressing issues such as child marriage, has become even clearer to me."



Mubarakpur village pradhan Ruksana Begum (left) and anganwadi worker Sunita Devi track child marriages in their area. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

ashna.butani@thehindu.co.in

Theatre's enduring spark

Swaroop Sampat returns to the stage alongside Anupam Kher in the play *Jaane Pehchaane Anjane*



In the limelight
Swaroop Sampat and Anupam Kher in *Jaane Pehchaane Anjane*; (inset) Swaroop Sampat. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Deepali Dhingra

As a girl, Swaroop Sampat's greatest joy was to sit backstage and watch the heroine of the play apply her make-up to transform into the role she was playing. "My father was the chief producer of the Indian National Theatre and I would accompany him to various rehearsals," recalls the 67 year old. One of her fondest memories is that of watching the Gujarati theatre doyenne Sarita Joshi getting ready for her role in the iconic *Santu Rangili*, a social drama that ran for nine years. "You wouldn't know how incredible that feels unless you have experienced it. I was hardly 10 years old and to me theatre felt fantastic," says the former Miss India, who became a household name with the television serial *Yeh Jo Hai Zindagi* in 1984.

The magic of theatre continued to hold sway over Swaroop, who started acting on stage in college. Later, as a professional, she often shared the stage with her husband and actor Paresh Rawal. After more than two decades she made her comeback with the play *Jaane Pehchaane Anjane*, which premiered in Mumbai on April 12, and will have its premiere in Delhi on May 22. The play, which sees her perform opposite Anupam Kher, is a light-hearted take on loneliness and companionship. It revolves around different characters – a widow, widower, a young paying guest, and a woman navigating mid-life separation. "The length of my role might be lesser than that of

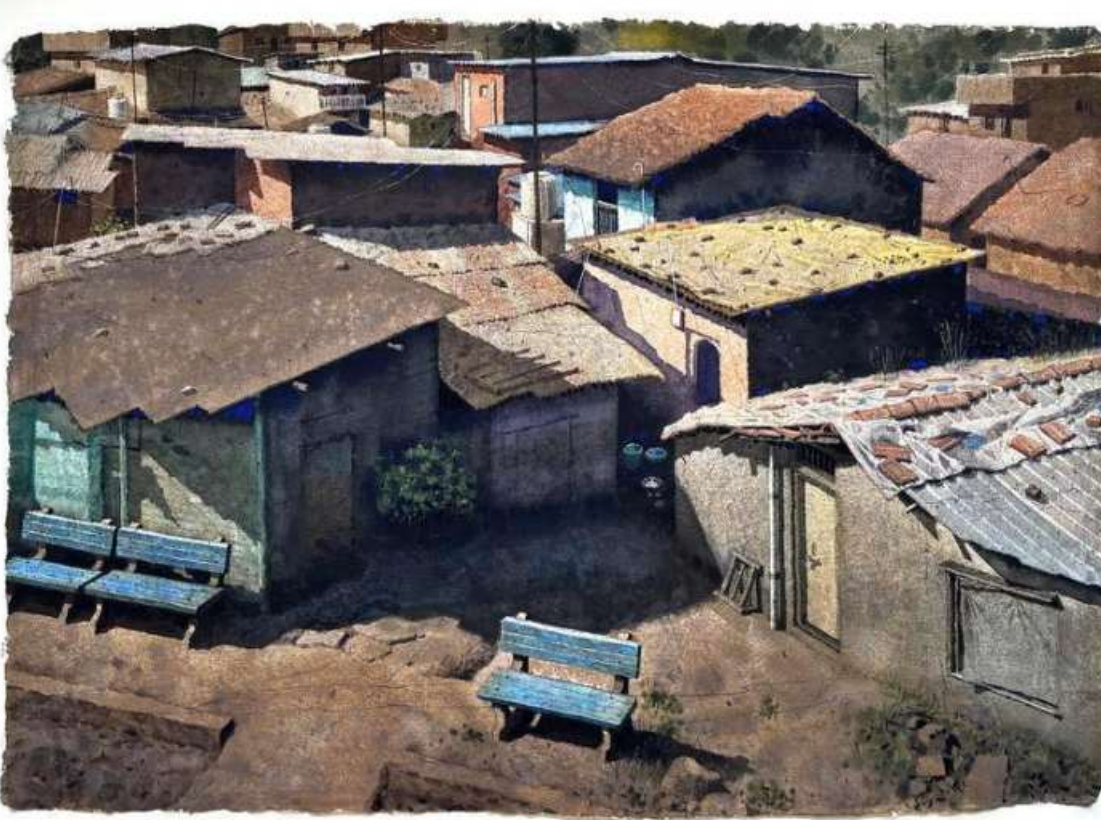
Anupam's but it has great scenes. Also, I didn't want to do something which was too hectic. This was a good fit," she says, describing her co-actor as "a fantastic person". Later this year, the play is also travelling to the US and Canada. Swaroop's bond with the stage never truly faded. Theatre is woven into the very fabric of her life – with her husband and sons, Aniruddh and Aditya Rawal, being active practitioners too – but her own connection is academic as much as it is personal. Her doctoral thesis at the University of Worcester focussed on the powerful role of drama in developing life skills for children with learning disabilities.

It was a nudge from Anupam that brought her back to theatre. "Anupam pushed me to take this leap, and I'm glad I did," she says. Sampat has made notable appearances in films such as *Uri: The Surgical Strike* (2019), and *The White Tiger* (2021). While her commitment to education remains her focus, she is keen on returning to the screen and stage for the right projects.

Jaane Pehchaane Anjane will be staged at Kamani Auditorium, Copernicus Marg, on May 22, 23 and 24 at 2pm and 7pm. Tickets are available on Bookmyshow.com and priced ₹2,299 onwards



Scan this QR code to read Anupam Kher's interview on the play.



Democratisation of art (Clockwise from left) Harshwardhan Devtale's *Illuminated Silence*; Charudatt Pandey's *Silent Witness*; artist Asit Patnaik; and Shaji Appukkuttan's *A river has run its course*. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



transcends from literal to metaphorical as the men become dream catchers looking at the bird as a harbinger of good news," says Kiran, explaining how every work speaks its own language.

A painter of dualities, Asit Patnaik's *The World Within* has a large, tanned male head as the cradle for a female figure sitting huddled within herself. There is a meditative quality in the 'gender fluid' painting. Oil and acrylic images of multi-tiered abandoned rural houses in Charudatt's *The Silent Witness* speak of collapse through disuse and neglect, but the painting makes them eternal in the cultural memory of people.

Harshwardhan Devtale's aerial view of village and urban architectural spaces in water colours refines the visual art language, and veteran printmaker Jai Krishna Agarwal's gleece print titled *Remnants of the Empire*, is an allegorical response to the socio-political changes in the world. There is a rhythm and harmony in the exhibition.

Art historian Johny ML says in his critical introduction, "the exhibition is an assortment of styles rooted in established approaches to art. The artists in this show clearly inhabit different worlds. In their styles, they are modernists. In their concerns, they are post-modernists. And in their lore, they are very much of the contemporary moment."

As the modern to contemporary Indian artscape metamorphoses, galleries like Shailaja's are rethinking the way art is presented and understood.

At Shailja Art Gallery, Suncity Business Tower (5th Floor), Golf Course Road, Sector 54, Gurugram; On until June 13; 11am to 6.30pm.

Generations in dialogue

The Contemporary Lore highlights a conversation around ageism in the art world and how art galleries are addressing it

Soma Basu

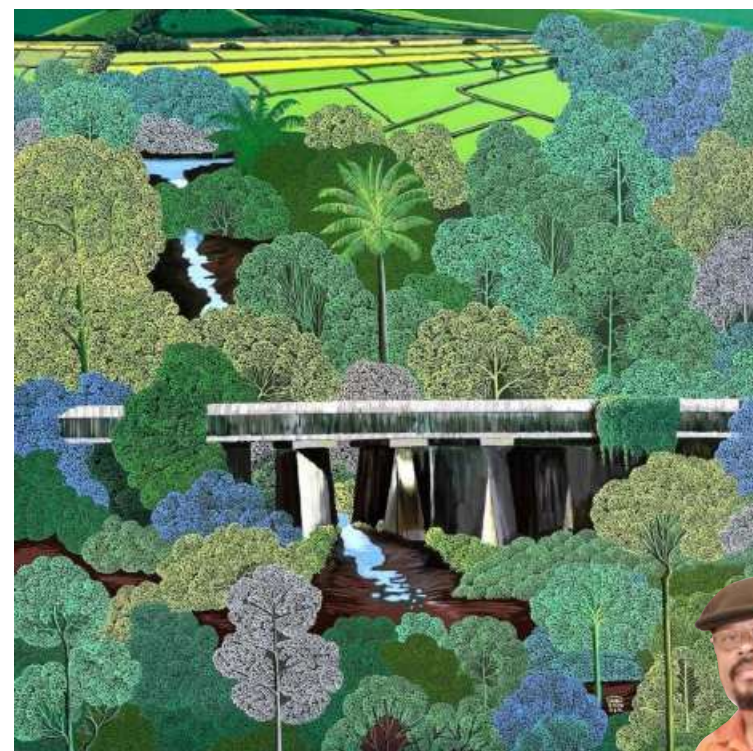
The Contemporary Lore: Sojourn of Styles and Generations Unfurled, an exhibition of artists across generations and diverse styles and techniques, is compelling not only for the kind of art on display but also for the thought behind the show.

By bringing together 30 paintings, sculptures and mixed media by 23 artists from across India, the exhibition unfolds a living dialogue between emerging, mid-career and established artists.

"The idea is not to look at the career trajectories of the creators or place their works in a hierarchy, but to allow their varied mediums, practices, and perspectives merge like lore," says curator Kiran Mohan. "We want to have an artscape where veterans and emerging artists are showcased as equal partners, and not as part of art history in progression," says Shailaja Jain, the gallery founder.

The Indian art scene, points out Kiran, has long been dominated by the same set of masters. "When art became saleable, galleries sold the works of masters to make money. Somewhere along the way, several other contemporary artists did not get their due," she explains.

So, at The Contemporary Lore, the memories, observations, vocabularies, and emotions of artists from different decades intersect and connect through ideas, the materials used, and their shared concerns of the times we live in, and the things around us. In this confluence of artistic voices, Jai Krishna Agarwal and Prem Singh, Charudatt Pande and Nilisha Phad, along with Ashok Bhowmick, Asit Patnaik, Bipin



Kumar, Shaji Apukuttan, and several others create an impactful exploration of genres, styles, colour palettes, figures and forms. Ashok Bhowmick's *Fowlers*, a work about bird catchers, has

three men in stark profile looking at their prey as a bird is perched on the shoulder of the first man. "But the work



Creatures of the night (Clockwise from left) At a bat walk in Delhi; Fulvous fruit bat; Blyth's horseshoe bat. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



Bats in my backyard

A new fold-out publication, *Bats of Delhi NCR*, seeks to help people better understand these flying mammals

Preeti Zachariah
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At researcher Rohit Chakravarty finds the mouse-tailed bats, a group of small insectivorous bats, often found thronging the monuments of Delhi, particularly cool. "What I love about them is their long, whip-like tails, which they use to feel what is behind them," he says, pointing out that the secluded, undisturbed environment, often found within monuments, mimics a cave, their typical habitat. "This may explain why Delhi has some

of the largest urban insectivorous bat colonies in the country." Bats are so often overlooked, believes Nikhil John, lead naturalist and assistant manager, Nature Connect at WWF-India. "They fly over our heads all the time, but we have very limited information about them," he says.

A new fold-out publication, *Bats of Delhi NCR*, is attempting to change that. Nikhil hopes that the guide, brought out by WWF-India in partnership with the Nature Conservation Foundation (NCF), the Centre for Wildlife Studies (CWS), and Bat Conservation International, will help people

better understand them. "Delhi's historical monuments, gardens and biodiversity parks are home to 15 species of bats," states the publication, which was released in Delhi on International Bat Appreciation Day, April 17.

Not only does the publication feature illustrations of bat anatomy, explain their ecological roles, and bust many prevailing myths about them, but it also highlights the morphology, habitats, diets, and characteristics of most of Delhi's bat species.

"From the tiny pipistrelles that sleep inside crevices in our homes to the mighty flying foxes of

Janpath, this guide is an attempt to make Delhiites care about their city's hidden nocturnal wonders," says Nikhil. Bats, with over 1,400 species worldwide, are capable of sustained flight, thanks to their elongated forelimbs, a wing-like membrane called a patagium that helps them climb, and the ability to navigate using echolocation. They are crucial to the functioning of a healthy ecosystem, not just because of their role in seed dispersal and pollination, but also because they contribute substantially to pest management. "Bats influence the surrounding ecosystems, and we have evidence to show that it's not a great idea to remove these bats

from monuments," says Rohit, principal scientist and faculty, Centre for Wildlife Studies (CWS), Bengaluru. But bats, like other nocturnal animals are thought to bring bad luck.

He believes that a publication like this will not only educate people about bats but also help them realise that they are harmless. What has not helped the reputation of bats are that they can serve as reservoirs for viruses that cause diseases like COVID and Nipah. However, he feels that these stories need to be addressed with some nuance and context. "We have shared space with these animals for centuries and we need to respect the distance we have traditionally maintained from them."



STEP OUT



Painted horizons

A new solo exhibition by Ashish Kushwaha brings together landscapes shaped by memory and travel. Working across watercolour on paper and acrylic on canvas, Kushwaha paints expansive skies, mountains, and forests, often hinting at the fragile relationship between people and Nature. The works draw from his upbringing in Chhattisgarh as well as travels through the Himalayan regions. *Where the Sky Remembers* is on view until May 29, between 11am and 7pm, at Palette Art Gallery, Golf Links.



Faith and form

This exhibition looks at devotional art traditions and brings together Tanjore paintings, Mysore reverse glass works, pichwais, oleographs, ritual objects, and sculptures. It traces how sacred imagery and artistic practices travelled between regions through trade, pilgrimage, and patronage. *Dakshin | Dilli - A Sacred Dialogue* runs until May 30, between 11am and 8pm, at Arzaani, Bikaner House.



Caste away

People must have the option to state they are casteless in the Census

The Supreme Court was not wrong to dismiss a petition that sought to stall the caste census, which is part of the ongoing Census 2027. The Chief Justice of India remarked, in support of the caste count, that “any government of the day must know how many people are backward and how many need welfare”. In April 2025, the Narendra Modi government had made a turnaround to announce caste enumeration alongside the fresh census, the first such exercise since 1931. Mr. Modi had earlier derided the idea as a sign of “urban Naxal” thinking, and the RSS had warned that such surveys were attempts to fracture Hindu society. The Congress, too, had made a dramatic turnaround in its historical position to demand a caste census. Early governments of independent India decided not to enumerate caste with the census. The dominant thinking then was that counting caste communities would only reinforce the institution of caste that the state wanted to dismantle. On the one hand, state policies sought to create a casteless society, while on the other, they also accounted for caste identities for positive discrimination in legislative representation and employment. This dual approach to caste that was baked into the nation’s founding principles has created a paradox that continues to this day. The clamour for a caste census is the latest manifestation of it.

The Census itself has been long overdue. The decennial population survey was originally due in 2021 but was delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic and logistical hurdles. The caste enumeration will take place in the second phase and will involve asking every individual their caste, rather than merely recording whether they belong to a Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe, as in previous Censuses. The delay in the Census has a bearing on planning of all sorts. In India, a considerable portion of state policy is directly or indirectly linked to the caste profile of the target group. The one attempt at a post-Independence national caste count came in 2011. The open-ended caste identification process of the Socio-Economic and Caste Census produced over 46 lakh distinct caste names and 8 crore data errors, rendering the dataset unusable. Most of its findings remain unpublished. The Modi government is still grappling with the challenge of finding the appropriate methodology for an accurate enumeration of caste communities. A caste census detracts from the effort to eradicate caste as it ossifies identities, but is helpful if viewed alongside other socioeconomic indices to better target welfare measures and ensure representation. The annihilation of caste must remain a goal, and people must be allowed to classify themselves as casteless if they so wish.

Bat for the better

Courts must treat tax exemptions to the BCCI as a form of state grant

The RTI Act was originally designed to scrutinise the state, a limit that the BCCI has repeatedly tested thanks to its outsized power. The BCCI is a private body that operates commercially and lacks direct public financing. RTI disclosures could expose competitive information and compromise the flexibility required to govern a sport, especially since the BCCI already has anti-corruption measures and comes under judicial review if required. If the BCCI is brought under the Act’s remit, there is also a risk of political forces abusing transparency requirements to exert greater influence on cricket administration. Even so, the Central Information Commission’s (CIC) recent decision to exclude the BCCI from the RTI Act is unlikely to go uncontested because the body has also monopolised a national sport. The BCCI benefits from national symbolism, police deployment at matches, concessional land allotments, and State hospitality; uses public stadium infrastructure; enjoys the regulatory privileges accruing to its monopoly status; and negotiates with foreign boards in ways that sometimes overlap with diplomacy. These liberties have thus sustained civil society concerns about being unable to scrutinise its conflicts of interest and governance arrangements.

Under Section 2(h) of the RTI Act, the BCCI is not a constitutional or statutory body and was not created by government notification, leaving the matter to turn on whether it can be said to be under state control or financing. Following disputes in 2005 and 2013, the Supreme Court repeatedly said in 2015-16, when the BCCI was adopting the Lodha committee recommendations, that it performs public duties. The Law Commission furthered this position in 2018 because, it added, the BCCI also serves as a National Sports Federation without the Sports Ministry recognising it as one and received tax exemptions worth ₹2,100 crore in 1997-2007 alone, a figure the Commission interpreted as foregone state revenue. Subsequently, former Information Commissioner Sridhar Acharyulu ruled the BCCI to be a public authority under Section 2(h). The Madras High Court stayed the order, and the CIC has now reversed the ruling. The CIC has admitted that the BCCI exerts a significant influence on public life while insisting that its decision is based on Section 2(h) alone. There is a contradiction between writ jurisdiction applying to the BCCI – as the Court affirmed in 2015 – even as the body is private enough to conceal its internal records. At this time, Section 2(h) should be amended to include any body discharging public duties, especially with monopoly power, perhaps by creating a category that simultaneously protects the BCCI’s commercial interests. Courts must also treat tax exemptions as a form of state grant.

Ladakh seeks belonging through representation

It is both sad and ironic that the Union Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India argues that Ladakh needs more districts rather than a legislature or stronger constitutional safeguards under the Sixth Schedule. It contends that Ladakh’s sparse population, strategic sensitivity and financial dependence on the Centre make a legislature unnecessary, and instead offers administrative decentralisation through additional districts as a practical alternative.

This argument is fundamentally flawed and reflects an impoverished understanding of democracy. Not long ago, the British Empire claimed that Indians lacked the maturity and institutional capacity for self-rule – that Indians were too poor, illiterate and divided to govern themselves. It was against such paternalism that Sri Aurobindo championed the idea of Purna Swaraj, or absolute self-governance, as a matter of dignity and national selfhood. History proved the British wrong.

Yet, close to 80 years after Independence, the argument that Ladakh should be content with districts instead of a legislature echoes the same colonial logic in the language of nationalism. Must Ladakhis still prove they are sufficiently populous, profitable and capable enough to deserve political representation? Does being geographically vast, sparsely populated and strategically sensitive disqualify a region from having a legislature?

The recent announcement of five additional districts in Ladakh – Nubra, Changthang, Sham, Zaskar and Drass – has been celebrated as a major governance reform. Certainly, administrative accessibility matters in a region spread across nearly 59,000 square kilometres of high-altitude terrain. Villages separated by mountain passes and harsh winters do require local administrative presence.

But handing out districts is not democracy. Districts cannot legislate on land protection, demographic safeguards, ecological preservation, employment priorities, cultural autonomy, renewable energy negotiations, education policy or the long-term developmental vision of the region. Districts are instruments of administration. Legislatures are instruments of representation. A district magistrate implements policy. A legislature shapes the future of a people. A district reports upward to the bureaucracy. A legislature answers downward to citizens. No amount of administrative decentralisation and convenience can substitute for political agency.

Expendable electoral promises

The most troubling aspect of the present discourse is that the Government of India itself repeatedly promised constitutional safeguards to Ladakh. After the abrogation of Article 370 and the creation of the Union Territory in 2019,



Gitanjali J. Angmo

Founder of the Himalayan Institute of Alternatives, Ladakh, and an education reformer and public intellectual working to reimagine education, democracy, ecology and Himalayan futures through grassroots leadership and innovation

Ladakh’s democratic aspirations cannot be reduced to the administrative convenience of districts

assurances regarding Sixth Schedule protections were publicly articulated by leaders of the Bharatiya Janata Party and reflected in their election manifestoes for the MP and Hill Council elections in 2019 and 2020, respectively.

Yet, once the elections were over, and the party won based on these very manifestos, it went back on its commitments, raising ethical questions: Can promises made to frontier populations become expendable after elections?

The case of the northeast

What of the objections themselves? Take the first one – that Ladakh is too strategic a border to be trusted with self-government. Arunachal Pradesh shares one of India’s most sensitive borders with China. It is geographically vast, sparsely populated, strategically critical and financially dependent on the Centre. Yet, when it was granted full statehood in 1987, its strategic location was not viewed as a security risk, but as a strategic necessity. India understood that border populations cannot be held merely through bureaucratic administration or military presence. The people who feel politically enfranchised and constitutionally respected defend a nation more fiercely than people who merely live inside its lines. If strategic sensitivity was an argument for empowerment in one Himalayan frontier, by what logic does it become an argument against it in another?

The same applies to much of the Northeast. When Nagaland was granted statehood in 1963, its population was barely around 3.5 lakh. Mizoram became a State in 1987 with a population of roughly five lakh. Sikkim entered the Indian Union as a state in 1975 with a population of barely two lakh. Arunachal Pradesh itself had roughly six lakh people at the time of statehood. None of these States was financially self-sufficient. Many remain substantially dependent on central transfers even today. India did not tell them that they were too small, or too poor, or too remote for a legislature. It understood that you do not integrate a frontier through subsidy and garrison alone. You integrate it through belonging.

Which brings us to the fiscal objection – the weakest of the three. Ladakh, we are told, cannot generate enough revenue to sustain itself. But since when has fiscal solvency become the price of admission to Indian democracy? India’s federal structure is built on redistribution; the Finance Commission exists precisely because some States earn more than others and the Union shares it out. Even large States depend heavily on central devolution.

Uttar Pradesh, the most populous State, draws enormous sums from the Centre through tax devolution, central schemes and grants-in-aid. Bihar, Assam and several Northeastern States also rely heavily on central transfers (between 70%

and 90% of their expenditure) to bridge developmental gaps.

In many of these States, mountainous terrain, sparse populations and strategic constraints limit conventional revenue generation. Yet, no one would argue that Uttar Pradesh should surrender its legislature because it depends on central funds. The suggestion would be absurd. Democracy in India has never been a reward for profitability – and if it were, much of the country would fail the test.

Ladakh needs its own voice

And Ladakhis are worth hearing – especially when the same establishment that calls Ladakh economically negligible is planning some of India’s largest energy infrastructure projects on its land. The renewable energy project in the Pang region of Changthang is expected to generate nearly 13 gigawatts of power, spread across acres of high-altitude pastureland. With investments of around ₹50,000 crore and a potential of ₹7,000 crore of annual income, this is hardly the arithmetic of an insignificant region. It is the arithmetic of a region that is central to India’s energy future.

Ladakhis are increasingly watching decisions being made on solar parks, transmission corridors, mining, tourism expansion and land use. The real question, then, is who negotiates the terms of this transformation. Who decides land rights, grazing rights for Changpa herders, ecological limits, local jobs, royalties and inter-generational sustainability? A district officer cannot answer these questions. Nor was he ever meant to. That is the role of a legislature – made up of representatives accountable to the people whose lives are being shaped by these decisions.

This is what the argument ultimately comes down to. India’s greatness was never administrative tidiness, but the constitutional imagination to hold staggering difference within one Union without flattening it. That same imagination produced the Sixth Schedule, recognising that fragile and distinct frontier regions need protections the plains do not. Uniformity is not equity. And Ladakh is not asking to belong to India less; it is asking to belong more fully – not as a territory administered from afar, but as a people shaping their own future. That distinction matters.

Sri Aurobindo wrote that freedom is the necessary atmosphere for a nation’s soul to grow. India’s spirit has often been strongest at its edges – in places that chose Bharat and defended it through hardship and sacrifice without asking what it cost. The strength of a republic is not measured by how tightly it controls its frontiers, but by how deeply even its farthest regions feel they belong. The voice rising from Ladakh today is not a demand for privilege, but a quiet appeal to be trusted with its own future.

Regulation, not bans, can protect online gamers

The Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Act, 2025, was passed with the objective to “protect individuals, especially youth and vulnerable populations, from the adverse social, economic, psychological and privacy-related impacts” of online games involving money. As growing evidence of their impact emerges, it is becoming increasingly clear that the Act is proving counterproductive. Early studies suggest that the use of offshore online betting and gambling platforms has risen since the ban. Following the implementation of the PROG Act in October 2025, users quickly shifted from regulated domestic websites to illegal offshore platforms.

Rise in offshore platform use

An even more worrying consequence is that these platforms not only circumvent domestic laws but may also become channels for money laundering and terror financing. Several reports and surveys conducted after the ban suggest that offshore platform usage has risen sharply. A study by CUTS International found a significant increase in offshore participation after the implementation of the PROG Act – from 68.3% to 82% in Delhi NCR, 67.8% to 83% in Tamil Nadu, and 66.7% to 91.7% in Maharashtra.

In Tamil Nadu, 67.8% of users reported using offshore platforms before the ban, often alongside domestic real-money gaming platforms. After the ban, this rose to 83%, involving the use of offshore platforms, marking an increase of 15.2 percentage points. This increase reflects a net behavioural shift of 15.2% toward offshore platforms, driven by a larger number of respondents starting offshore use after implementation of the PROG Act than those discontinuing it.

This is not a new phenomenon. Across industries, paternalistic bans rarely change consumer behaviour; they merely push users toward underground and more volatile channels.



Karti P. Chidambaram

Member of Parliament, Congress party, (Sivaganga), Tamil Nadu

The implementation of the Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Act, 2025, is proving counterproductive

Products which are not physical in nature face an even deeper challenge, as users can quickly shift through VPNs and private links, making effective regulation and consumer protection far more difficult.

A case for strong regulation

In the recently concluded Budget parliamentary session, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology reported to the Lok Sabha that the Centre had blocked 8,376 URLs to combat the financial irregularities and cybercrime havoc being caused by illegal offshore betting networks. Despite this, media reports continue to allude to suicides linked to illegal online betting traps even after the ban. It is therefore crucial to recognise the scale of the problem and reconsider whether strong regulation may be more effective than an outright ban.

Illegal operators use technologically advanced evasion tactics, including virtual private networks (VPN), proxy servers and encrypted platforms such as WhatsApp and Telegram, to ensure seamless access and transactions. By the time authorities block one domain, users are often shifted to mirror sites with little disruption. The widespread use of VPNs also masks user locations, weakening geographic restrictions.

When users shift to offshore platforms, domestic authorities face significant limitations in ensuring consumer protection and grievance redress. The easy accessibility of offshore online gambling platforms to Indian users is therefore a serious public concern.

A recent inter-State online gambling and fraud racket that came to light in my constituency in Tamil Nadu – Sivaganga – in February this year involved a fraudulent “Old Coin Purchase Task” promoted on Telegram, in which the accused lured victims into investing money in fake old-coin bidding schemes by promising high returns. They also procured “mule accounts” by

persuading villagers in Sivaganga, Paramakudi and Kalayarkovil to open bank accounts in exchange for small payments, which were then used to divert the proceeds of the crime.

Examples from overseas

Looking at other jurisdictions offers useful perspectives on responding to the rise of offshore platforms. The United Arab Emirates, despite its long-standing prohibition, moved in 2023 to establish a tightly controlled federal licensing framework with strict compliance requirements, deposit limits and harm-prevention safeguards, partly to address the risks posed by unregulated offshore activity. Sri Lanka is now moving in a similar direction, with a centralised Gambling Regulatory Authority expected to become operational by June 2026 to consolidate oversight and bring offshore online activity within a clear domestic framework.

The emerging lesson is that the real policy choice is rarely between permitting and banning. It is between creating a regulated domestic framework with accountability and consumer safeguards, or allowing the space to be dominated by offshore operators beyond domestic oversight. Addressing this menace requires sustained coordination between the Centre and State governments. As the evidence suggests, a blanket ban is unlikely to work in the long run. Instead, policymakers should reconsider and test a regulated framework within a controlled environment.

This would enable policymakers to better understand and address the challenges posed by offshore operators, while also generating tax revenue from a regulated ecosystem. These revenues could then be reinvested in strengthening offshore monitoring and enforcement mechanisms, as well as funding player-awareness campaigns – an approach adopted successfully in several western countries.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Court on caste count

The Supreme Court of India has said that “any government needs to know how many people are backward and need welfare”. But the Court assumes, like most people, that caste indicates the living standards of its people. It is a fact that every caste, from the supposedly ‘highest’ to the

supposedly ‘lowest’, has the very wealthy to the very poor. The caste census will only help the politicians at election time, not help the government find who needs economical assistance. The Court seems to be cleverly, but unwisely, backing the government’s caste census, saying that the government needs to know who is rich and who is poor (Front

page, “SC says nothing wrong in caste count, rejects plea against move”, May 21). The government should devise a scheme by which it finds people living below the poverty line, irrespective of caste, religion, region and language. And help them. **Manuel Aaron,** Chennai

‘Melody’ moment

The gesture of Prime Minister Narendra Modi gifting a packet of ‘Melody’ chocolates to Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni seems to have gone contagiously viral on social media and grabbed much attention. It was fortuitous that the names blended so well. While a packet of

eye-catching and mouth-watering ‘Melody’ may have made the Italian leader happy, it is hard to quantify how much it has contributed to strengthening, as against ‘sweetening’, relations between the two countries. Leaders too are human like the rest of us and they are quite within their rights to give a personal touch to

their diplomatic encounters if they choose to (Front page, May 21). However, it becomes farcical when it is done to make reels for the consumption of supporters. **G. David Milton,** Maruthancode, Tamil Nadu

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

Should the NEET-UG be decentralised?



Dr. G.R. Ravindranath
Founder and General Secretary, Doctors' Association for Social Equality.

PARLEY

The cancellation and retest of the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET-UG), 2026 has exposed deep cracks in India's examination system. Allegations of paper leaks, corruption and repeated lapses by the National Testing Agency (NTA) has pushed lakhs of aspirants into uncertainty, stress and emotional exhaustion. This has led to many asking whether such a high-stakes, single day, single shift, national exam for admission to all medical courses in India should be decentralised. Dr. G.R. Ravindranath and Balaji Sampath discuss the question in a conversation moderated by **Bindu Shajan Perappadan**. Edited excerpts:



Balaji Sampath
Founder, AhaGuru

Since its inception in 2013, the NEET has been marred by controversies. What was envisioned as a transparent and uniform entrance exam has instead become synonymous with administrative lapses. Is the answer then to decentralise the exam?

G.R. Ravindranath: NEET has reduced the burden of multiple medical entrance exams and lowered students' financial, mental and physical stress. Unlike Plus Two cut-off admissions, NEET offers multiple attempts, giving students another chance to improve. However, rural, poor and government school students remain disadvantaged due to unequal access to coaching and resources. Measures such as special reservations, fee support scholarships, additional marks, and free coaching classes for government school students can ensure equitable opportunities. Tamil Nadu's 7.5% reservation for government school students can serve as a model for nationwide reforms to make NEET fairer and more inclusive. States should be allowed to conduct their own entrance exams and admit students in order to ensure that students from vulnerable socio-economic sections are not put at a disadvantage.

Balaji Sampath: Single window exams such as NEET have only increased the pressure on students because it affords them only a single chance – one time a year to get into various medical courses across India.

Moreover, NEET is both an entrance and eligibility test. Entrance for government seats and eligibility for management seats in private medical colleges. When the Supreme Court made NEET compulsory, the private college lobby pushed for keeping the qualifying marks really low (at 50th percentile which is around 120 to 140 marks out of 720). So a student who scores 130, qualifies NEET and is eligible to buy a management seat. However, poor and middle



Students' organisations stage a protest against the NTA following the cancellation of the NEET-UG, in New Delhi on May 14. SHIV KUMAR PUSHKAPAKAR

class students who score 400 are unable to pay and get these management seats. Given that there are only 1.37 lakhs seats and 22 lakhs students writing NEET, the cut-off should be kept much higher. This will ensure that rich students who score 130-350 do not pay and steal the seats of those who get much higher scores.

Why is the NEET exam marred by repeated allegations about paper leaks?

BS: To understand the vulnerability of the exam, we have to understand the scale that the paper targets. This pen-and-paper exam has 22 lakh students who compete for less than two lakh seats across all medical courses. The problem originates here and gets accentuated by dropper students who have money power; they are people who are ready to pay ₹30 lakh to get a guess paper. One has to understand that this corruption is driven by money power and desperation. In its current form, NEET has become an intensely high-stakes exam. Over half the candidates are repeaters, some attempting it for years, deepening desperation and fuelling paper leaks and corruption. Limiting attempts, while offering extra chances and reservations for disadvantaged students, could reduce pressure and improve fairness. A two-stage examination system, as recommended by the K. Radhakrishnan Committee – set up by the Central government after allegations of corruption in the NEET 2024 paper – could reduce incentives for cheating by filtering candidates through a preliminary qualifier before a more tightly monitored final exam.

GRR: The lack of effective regulation over private medical colleges and the fees of deemed medical universities has significantly deepened inequities in admissions. Under the National Medical Commission Act, fee regulation applies only to 50% of seats, while private colleges are



The pressure surrounding medical education is shaped by strong socio-economic and cultural factors, making NEET a far more high-stakes examination

DR. G.R. RAVINDRANATH

free to fix exorbitant fees for the remaining seats, making medical education inaccessible to many deserving students. Although anti-capitation laws exist, enforcement remains weak and requires urgent strengthening. The mop-up counselling and stray counselling conducted by private colleges and deemed universities pave the way for malpractice and eliminates merit based admissions. State government-controlled and Union government-controlled seats should be filled by the respective government authorities. Private institutions should not be allowed to admit students directly.

Also, medical admissions cannot be compared with engineering admissions, where vacancies remain high due to unemployment and declining demand. The pressure surrounding medical education is shaped by strong socio-economic and cultural factors, making NEET a far more high-stakes exam.

States should be granted greater autonomy in admissions through amendments to the National Medical Commission Act. States willing to opt out of NEET should be allowed to adopt systems based on Plus Two marks, State-level entrance tests, or a combination of both. Further reforms are necessary to reduce excessive competition. These include limiting the number of NEET attempts, introducing age limits, and fixing minimum eligibility marks at 60% in science subjects in Class 12th examinations for open quota and OBC students, and 50% for SC/ST students applying for NEET.

At the same time, NEET should continue for all-India quota seats, AIIMS, JIPMER, deemed universities, and management quota seats of private medical colleges. For these seats, admissions cannot be made on the basis of Plus Two marks or any State government exam because, for these seats, students from all over the country, as well as NRIs, overseas citizens of India and foreign nationals can also apply.

After the 2024 NEET paper leak controversy, the K. Radhakrishnan Committee identified major security lapses, including poor CCTV monitoring and excessive reliance on contractual staff within the NTA. Why has the government not fully implemented the Committee's recommendations?

BS: The NTA did not implement most of the important recommendations of the Radhakrishnan committee. The Committee's recommendations can be categorised into three types: improving NTA's capacity, strengthening security measures such as CCTV surveillance and safer paper transport, and most importantly, reducing the high-stakes nature of NEET itself. The third category is particularly important, but nothing was done about it. The most important recommendation was to conduct NEET in two stages. The first stage, the prelims, can select five lakh students out of the 22 lakhs and these five lakh students can then write the main NEET exam which will be used for medical college admission. This will dramatically reduce paper leaks. The second major recommendation was to limit the number of repeaters who in their desperation are often ready to pay large amounts for leaked papers. To ensure equity, two more attempts can be allowed for SC/ST and BPL (Below Poverty Line) students. The NTA did not implement any of these recommendations.

GRR: Among the several suggestions of the Committee, one of the most important was a computer based test which was never implemented. Also, that coaching centres across India should be registered, regulated and that fees should be fixed. Our association opposed demands to abolish NEET entirely, arguing that doing so would revive multiple entrance exams.

With lakhs of students now forced to retake NEET, many families have been pushed into severe emotional and financial distress. Both of you have been directly in touch with the aggrieved side, how do they view these repeated large-scale disruptions?

GRR: Although the authorities have now announced a NEET re-examination on June 21, the initial cancellation created enormous uncertainty and emotional distress among students.

It has created widespread anger, disappointment and a growing loss of confidence in the impartiality and credibility of national competitive examinations, leaving students feeling uncertain about their future. The Union government and the NTA should take the responsibility for the question paper leakage. In future such things should not recur.



To listen to the full interview
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NOTEBOOK

On measuring freedom of the press in India

International rankings are neither absolute nor worthless. They can be useful for gauging patterns but are unreliable as precise judgements

Varghese K. George

A patient complaining of pain can be asked to quantify it on a scale of 10 – a practice common in the West but still rare in India. There are experts who “aim to deeply investigate happiness measurement through biomedical signals, using psychophysiological methods to objectify the happiness experience.” Objective, universal facts are supposed to be the basis of management and governance.

The Norwegian journalist who wanted to ask Prime Minister Narendra Modi a question prefaced it by saying that her country had the freest press in the world, citing the World Press Freedom Index prepared annually by Reporters Without Borders. Press freedom, and even democracy, can apparently be ranked. India is ranked 157 in the World Press Freedom Index. Ukraine is at 55, Qatar at 75, Burkina Faso at 110, Oman at 127, Kuwait at 136 – countries some of which do not even hold a pro forma election rank higher on press freedom than India, according to this report.

Norway is number one. But what the ranking does not take into account is the unfiltered racism of an apparently free press – such as a Norwegian mainstream newspaper that portrayed Mr. Modi as a snake charmer, an age-old trope to depict India. The rankers have themselves clarified that the quality of journalism is not a criterion. The racism of the freest press does not affect its standing.

Mr. Modi has not addressed a press conference as Prime Minister. After a joint appearance with U.S. President Donald J. Trump, he took a couple of questions in February 2025. Mr. Trump, for his part, routinely seeks out confrontational interviews to make his point, while simultaneously seeking to delegitimise the media. Press conferences and probing interviews have become rare across India's leadership. No leader wants to take questions – whether in the legislature or the media. Political communication has become a one-way street in which the principal actor broadcasts without the inconvenience of

being contested – that applies as much to several Opposition leaders as well.

The contestations within the media space are often a reflection of society, and state control of the media is an extension of the control the state seeks to enforce across other domains of people's lives – movement, thinking, learning, and the mingling of populations. In Norway, the media, the society and the state share broadly the same consensus. Of its 55 lakh people, 95 per cent speak Norwegian and 60 per cent are affiliated to the Church of Norway. A largely homogenous country where the media does not require to contest the state is not comparable to a large, diverse country riven by conflicting viewpoints about everything, and where the state is simultaneously trying to control the thinking of its people. Political contestation in such a society produces a multitude of media narratives – and a multitude of pressures.

That said, those who seek to dismiss Western standards as irrelevant are curiously selective in their approach. They would dismiss the Press Freedom Index but in the same breath celebrate some random ranking on Ease of Doing Business, or a foreign country's national honour conferred on their leader. The convenience of the dismissal gives it away. Rankings exist. They are often methodologically dubious, frequently corrupted by subjective factors and sometimes by outright prejudice. No global ranking is required to establish that the Indian media is under severe stress – from market forces and from state measures alike. Equally, no amount of fine print can sustain the argument that Kuwait belongs far above India on any honest measure of press freedom. The index's own methodology undermines its own conclusions at the extremes.

The better argument is not that rankings are worthless but that they are blunt instruments – useful for identifying broad patterns, unreliable as precise judgements.

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PICTURE OF THE WEEK

Keeping one's head above water



A quick dip: As temperature in the city soars, Royal Bengal Tiger 'Jay' takes a dip inside a water pond in the Tiger exhibit of the Veermata Jijabai Bhosale Botanical Garden and Zoo in Mumbai on May 21. The prolonged heatwave conditions across the country, particularly in Maharashtra, has led to multiple cases of heatstroke. EMMANUAL YOGINI

FROM THE ARCHIVES

The ~~100~~ Hindu.

FIFTY YEARS AGO MAY 22, 1976

Hindi as Supreme Court language under study

New Delhi, May 21: The Minister of State for Home Affairs, Mr. Om Mehta informed the Rajya Sabha to-day that the Parliamentary Committee was considering among other things, the question of introduction of Hindi in the Supreme Court.

He was intervening in the discussion on a non-official Bill, seeking to amend Article 348 of the Constitution, to provide for the use of Hindi along with English in the Supreme Court

and High Courts for delivering judgments.

The Bill was withdrawn by its sponsor, Mr. O. P. Tyagi (JS) following the Minister's reply. The Minister listed the progress that Hindi had made as official language. He said three lakh Government employees had been trained in Hindi. Of them, about 17,000 were typists and 4,000 stenographers.

He made it clear that there was no question of Hindi being imposed on anybody. Efforts were being made to ensure the development of regional languages along with Hindi.

Members supported in principle a non-official Bill seeking to amend Article 348 of the Constitution to provide for the use of Hindi along with English in the Supreme Court and High Courts for delivering judgments.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO MAY 22, 1926

Origin of all disease

A new and revolutionary theory of bacillar disease was just put forward before the French Academy of Science in a paper by Professor Tissot. Indeed it is rather a theory of organic life itself, animal and vegetable, too difficult and complex to transmit in a brief telegram, but which is summed up in the expression: “Everything that lives is simply an organised mould” – that is to say, a mould as we meet it in uncovered decaying organic matter, the cryptogamic material which, according to Professor Tissot, is the very basis of life.

Text & Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Peak electricity demand in Delhi on Thursday

8231 in MW. Delhi sizzled on Thursday, pushing peak power demand to this summer's highest of 8231 MW, discom officials said. According to Delhi's State Load Dispatch Centre, the demand crossed the 8,000 mark for the first time this year on Wednesday. Delhi's peak power demand in 2026 was higher than the corresponding days of 2025. PTI

Decrease in the net migration to the U.K. in 2025

1,71,000 In 2025, the net migration to the U.K. fell to 1,71,000, nearly half of the previous year's figure of 3,31,000, according to official data. The decline was mainly driven by fewer non-EU work-related arrivals following tighter visa rules. The figures come amid concern over undocumented migration. AFP

Missing persons traced between May 7 and 21 by the Gujarat police

701 Gujarat police have traced 701 missing persons between May 7 and May 21 under 'Operation Milap' and reunited them with their families, Deputy Chief Minister Harsh Sanghavi said on Thursday. The special drive has been launched under Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel's leadership, with all necessary resources made available to the police. PTI

COVID-19 cases recorded in Singapore from May 10 to 16

12,700 Singapore recorded around 12,700 new COVID-19 cases between May 10 and 16, a rise of nearly 59 per cent from the previous week, according to official data. Daily hospitalisations also increased, though no deaths were reported. Authorities said the NB.1.8.1 variant is driving infections. PTI

Health ministry flags substandard drug samples in April audit

169 Central and State drug testing laboratories identified 169 drug samples as "not of standard quality" in April, including 42 flagged by Central laboratories, the Union Health Ministry said. Authorities said action is being taken regularly to remove substandard and fake medicines from the market. PTI

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Should the rupee be left to depreciate?

Following days of sustained losses, the rupee has closed at nearly ₹97 to the dollar; while some advocate letting it find its own level, there is a risk in allowing depreciation to continue unchecked, especially as rising import costs of essential goods could fuel inflation

EXPLAINER

Rahul Menon

Continuous days of sustained losses has seen the rupee close at almost ₹97 to the dollar, with no indication that the slide has been arrested. Rising oil prices and the threat of external inflation will put further pressure on the rupee in the days to come. This has prompted calls for intervention to prevent further falls.

Some writers, like Harvard professor Gita Gopinath, have resisted calls for intervention by the RBI, advocating for letting the rupee find its own level. A weaker rupee would automatically curtail imports and boost exports. Intervention would only obstruct the free flow of market forces.

While intervention does have its challenges, there is danger in letting the process of depreciation continue unabated, especially when much of it is being driven by speculative finance. With foreign interest rates bound to rise, capital will flow out faster, leading to stronger negative pressures on the rupee. In such a scenario, it might take inordinately long for the rupee to 'find its level', and the inflationary dangers of a weak rupee will exert even more stresses on a populace already exposed to hardship as a result of worldwide spikes in energy prices.

Can intervention deepen volatility? A current account deficit implies more imports than exports, and hence a greater need for foreign currency. If this is adequately met by foreign capital inflow to purchase assets like stocks, the rupee's value relative to the dollar will not change.

If the economy experiences a deficit without sufficient inflow of foreign capital, it faces a problem, with demand for foreign exchange exceeding available supply. Mainstream models dictate that in such a situation, the rupee must depreciate. The weaker rupee makes



GETTY IMAGES

exports more affordable and imports more expensive, leading to an automatic adjustment of the current account deficit relative to the available inflow of foreign capital.

In such a scenario, intervening to artificially prop up the value of the rupee only delays the inevitable. It inhibits adjustment by ensuring import demand does not fall, because the rupee has not depreciated enough to naturally shut off higher import demand, the cause of the widening deficit in the first place.

What is the difference between a weak rupee and a falling rupee?

Arguments for non-intervention, however, conflate a falling rupee with a weak rupee. A fall in the rupee value would not automatically increase export demand if the market expects a further fall. Exports might be higher when the rupee is weak, but may not rise when the rupee is falling if foreign buyers expect the price to fall even further and for goods to become cheaper at a later date.

At the same time, if the economy imports essential goods like oil, demand may not automatically reduce sufficiently

as the rupee falls. If people expect the rupee to fall further, and for the prices to rise even more tomorrow, they may front-load purchases today and increase import demand in the short run. This can be seen in the rush to buy petrol when prices were raised, as consumers expected further increases in the future.

A falling rupee would see higher import values, but no necessary increase in exports, ensuring that the deficit is not curtailed. The very problem that required a depreciation might just perpetuate itself. One might argue that exports would pick up and imports reduce when the process eventually works itself out. But the adjustment process is rarely painless. Rising import values of essential goods will lead to rising inflation in the domestic economy that has already experienced reverse migration and real wage squeezes.

What is the role of capital flows?

For the sake of argument, one can posit an equilibrium value of the rupee driven by fundamental values, such as export and import demands that exhibits uniform and predictable behaviour as the rupee changes value. The process may be

long, but the economy might eventually settle at this value, driven by fundamental changes in the current account. However, this assumption neglects the role of speculative foreign capital.

Much of the fall in the rupee has been driven by speculative outflows of foreign institutional investment that, for whatever reason, does not see Indian assets as being sufficiently remunerative. Perhaps investors think returns on Indian stocks will not be high in the future, that growth is not sustainable, or that interest rates will rise in developed country markets. Whatever the reason, these speculative expectations of foreign investors can lead to capital outflow and depreciation, necessitating current account adjustments based on the sentiments of foreign investors.

In such a situation, the 'actual' value of the rupee is determined not by consumption demand but by speculation. There are no fundamentals or technical values underpinning the pure speculation of financial markets. With indications that foreign Central Banks may soon raise interest rates, the rupee could come under further pressure.

Intervention is one amongst many policies that must be considered, and one that even developed economies have resorted to. As the yen slid against the dollar in April this year, Japanese Finance Minister Satsuki Katayama signalled that the government would take 'decisive action' in financial markets to maintain the yen.

Intervention to stem speculative capital flows is extremely hard to manage, and can lead to negative outcomes if the force of speculation is too great, or if governments do not - or cannot - show enough commitment in markets.

However, we must not assume that the rupee can find an equilibrium value soon, for its fall is being driven by speculation rather than any fundamental economic behaviour. It is time to have a serious conversation regarding the role and place of foreign capital in India's growth story. (Rahul Menon is associate professor at O.P. Jindal Global University.)

THE GIST

▼ If the economy experiences a current account deficit without sufficient inflow of foreign capital, it faces a problem, with demand for foreign exchange exceeding available supply.

▼ Much of the rupee's decline has been driven by speculative outflows of foreign institutional investment. These speculative expectations can lead to capital outflow and depreciation, necessitating current account adjustments driven by market sentiment.

How does the Gaganyaan's life-support system operate?

What are the systems designed to support astronauts aboard the spacecraft while in orbit?

Unnikrishnan Nair S.

The Environmental Control and Life Support System (ECLSS) replicates the earth's atmosphere in earth orbit by managing air, water, temperature, and waste. In short-term space missions, all supplies are carried from the earth and waste is stored for disposal later. Long-duration missions recycle the waste back into useful resources like breathable air and clean water.

What is air revitalisation?

Carbon dioxide is removed from the earth's atmosphere by photosynthesis and by dissolving in the oceans. In Gaganyaan (the Indian Space Research Organisation mission to place a small crew of Indian astronauts in a 400 km orbit around the earth), astronauts' exhalation will increase the cabin's

carbon dioxide content and has to be artificially removed. Elevated levels of carbon dioxide can lead to hypercapnia, causing symptoms such as headaches, dizziness, and impaired cognitive function.

A healthy adult normally exhales around 1 kg of carbon dioxide per day, though this amount increases significantly with physical exertion. The air revitalisation system (ARS) provides fresh air, removes carbon dioxide, and filters trace contaminants or odours that would otherwise accumulate in the cabin. For short missions, oxygen is supplied from high-pressure gas bottles. According to standards, a healthy crew member needs 0.84 kg of oxygen per day to support metabolic functions.

Carbon dioxide is removed using lithium hydroxide canisters. Each canister has activated charcoal that absorbs any odours in the cabin air. A spent canister is

replaced by the crew with a fresh one typically every 20-24 hours. In a microgravity environment lacking natural convection, small fans in the ECLSS are the circulatory system that prevents lethal carbon dioxide and hazardous oxygen pockets from lingering.

How are pressure, temperature and humidity controlled?

The Gaganyaan crew module is designed to maintain a comfortable environment with a temperature of 20-26°C and relative humidity between 30% and 70% to ensure crew comfort and equipment safety. The moisture released through the crews' breath and sweat are the main sources of humidity in the cabin.

Low humidity in the crew cabin can lead to dry skin, irritated eyes, and higher risk of static electricity discharge that could damage electronics. High humidity promotes microbial growth and causes

condensation that may lead to short-circuits or corrosion.

Heat in the crew module is primarily generated by the metabolic body heat of the astronauts (100 to 150 W per crew) and continuously operating onboard electronics and avionics. An active cooling system is used to regulate temperature. Heat is removed by circulating the air through heat exchangers, which will expel the heat into space. The humidity is managed by condensing units that collect water to prevent fogging and short-circuits.

The pressure is held at 101.3 kPa. To mimic the earth's sea-level conditions, the pressure control system uses electronic sensors and safety valves to balance the air and oxygen levels.

Where does water come from?

The primary challenge in space is water doesn't 'pour' but forms floating globules that can cause short-circuits in electronics or pose a hazard if inhaled accidentally. So water must be mechanically forced from storage using pressurised bladders to avoid gas-liquid mixing.

In Gaganyaan, the crew relies on supply of potable water stored in specially designed pouches. They can be pressed to force water directly into the mouth.

How is waste managed?

In microgravity, liquid and solid waste do

not "fall", requiring suction-based airflow systems to pull waste away from the body and prevent it from floating around.

These systems must also separate and stabilise waste to avoid microbial contamination and the buildup of toxic gases like ammonia.

In Gaganyaan, specialised faecal collection bags will be used and urine will be sucked through funnels. All waste will be chemically treated to neutralise odours and inhibit bacterial growth, then stored in sealed containers for disposal after return.

How are fires suppressed?

The lack of gravity allows fires to expand into a sphere that is harder to reach with traditional suppressants. In Gaganyaan, smoke detectors will sound an alarm to alert the crew. Fire extinguishers that create fine water mists can be used to put the fire out. A water mist effectively cools the fire and also scrubs toxic smoke particles.

Russia's Soyuz has the option to depressurise the cabin as a last resort to extinguish the fire after the crew has worn a pressure suit.

(Unnikrishnan Nair S. is Former Director, VSSC and IIST; Founding Director, HSFCL; and an expert in launch vehicle systems, orbital re-entry and human spaceflight technologies. He is currently working as Dr Sarabhai Professor at VSSC)

Decoding SIR Impact in West Bengal

The post-SIR polls in West Bengal saw the BJP secure a decisive victory, with AITC chief Mamata Banerjee alleging electoral manipulation. Large-scale deletions and opaque additions of electors during the SIR had a major impact on the rolls' demographic composition; and appears to have influenced the results alongside anti-incumbency and communal polarisation

Prasenjit Bose

The BJP's win in West Bengal has evoked strong reactions across the political spectrum, ranging from celebratory acclaim to profound shock and disbelief. While the victors, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, have claimed this to be an anti-incumbency mandate for change, the vanquished former Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has complained about electoral manipulations and foul play. The truth appears to lie somewhere in between.

SIR and polarisation

What stood out in West Bengal's two-phase Assembly election was the unprecedented voter turnout rate of over 93%, compared with 82% in the 2021 Assembly election and 79% in the 2024 Lok Sabha election. This 93% figure, apparently the highest ever recorded in a general election in any major Indian State, was inflated by a low base effect, as the electorate had shrunk by around 80 lakh after the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in West Bengal.

The SIR exercise commenced in West Bengal, along with 11 other States and Union Territories, on November 4, 2025. While it was initially scheduled to be completed by the end of January 2026, a new criterion of "logical discrepancy" was introduced by the Election Commission of India (EC), only in West Bengal, to identify and remove more voters from the electoral rolls. This led to an extended process of hearings, judicial intervention, adjudication and finally an appellate tribunal process which continues till date. Reportedly, over 34 lakh appeals are pending in the appellate tribunals.

En masse deletion of electors on an unprecedented scale, alongside a significant number of opaquely made additions, had a major impact on the rolls' demographic composition. This appears to have decisively influenced the election results, besides significant anti-incumbency and communal polarisation.

While the total number of electors in West Bengal fell from 7.34 crore in 2021 to 6.81 crore in 2026, the total valid votes increased from around 6.03 crore to 6.37 crore. Total votes polled in favour of the All India Trinamool Congress (AITC) fell from 2.89 crore in 2021 to 2.60 crore in 2026—a decline of 29.5 lakh total votes. In contrast, the BJP's total polled votes increased by 63 lakh, from 2.29 crore in 2021 to 2.92 crore in 2026. The total votes and voteshare of the CPI(M) and the Congress remained broadly the same (Table 1).

The relative magnitude of each component of the twin impact of SIR and anti-incumbency-cum-polarisation can only be understood in terms of the religious-demographic breakdown of SIR deletions.

Since religio-demographic data on electors is not maintained or published by the EC, this analysis has relied on digital scrutiny of electoral rolls and deletion lists for the high-profile constituency of Bhabanipur, where BJP's Suvendu Adhikari defeated Ms. Banerjee. Due to the absence of other reliable data from recent years, the 2011 population census has been used for the calculation of projected population of Muslims at districts and State levels.

Deletions under SIR in West Bengal occurred in three phases, viz., enumeration; claims and objections; and adjudication. Out of the 58.2 lakh total ASDD (Absent, Shifted, Deceased, Duplicate) deletions in the first phase, 32 lakh were classified as Absent or Shifted. Digital scrutiny of the ASDD lists revealed that roughly 7.34 lakh (23%) out of Absent or Shifted electors were Muslims. In the 27.16 lakh voters deleted after adjudication, which were mainly the "logical discrepancy" cases, roughly 17.65 lakh (65%) were Muslims (Table 2).

Thus, out of the total of 64.7 lakh State-wide aggregate SIR deletions, excluding deletions under Deceased and Duplicate categories, over 25 lakh were Muslims, i.e., 38.6%, which is higher than their proportion of 27% in the population as per the 2011 census.

Statewide SIR impact analysis

An Assembly constituency-wise analysis of the impact of 67.26 lakh total SIR alterations—defined as the sum of the deletions under Absent, Shifted and LD cases and the additions during SIR—was conducted by a team of experts. Chart 1 shows the district-wise distribution of these SIR alterations, along with the district-wise shares of projected size of Muslim electors, calculated by applying the district-wise

percentage of Muslim population as reported in the 2011 census. This yielded the estimated number of Muslim electors to be 1.77 crore (26%) in the total electorate of 6.81 crore.

Chart 1 clearly shows that the number of SIR alterations were much higher in 12 districts with higher concentration of Muslims, namely North 24 Parganas, Kolkata, Murshidabad, South 24 Parganas, Howrah, Malda, Hoogly, Nadia, Purba Bardhaman, Paschim Bardhaman, Uttar Dinajpur and Birbhum. These 12, which accounted for over 84% of Muslim electors, also accounted for over 80% of the SIR alterations.

As six of these districts do not share any international border with Bangladesh, higher alterations under SIR cannot be easily explained in terms of suspected cross-border illegal migrants. It rather seems that the entire minority population in Muslim concentrated districts were placed under suspicion during the SIR process.

AC-wise analysis of the results reveals that out of the 207 seats won by the BJP in 2026, the magnitude of SIR alterations exceeded the winning margin of the BJP in 82 seats. Of these, 70 were located in the 12 Muslim concentrated districts. In 2021, BJP won only 9 out of these 82 ACs. In 2026, the SIR alterations appear to have decisively influenced the electoral outcome in these 82 ACs. In other words, it is not implausible that the BJP would have failed to secure a majority in the West Bengal assembly election without the impact of SIR.

SIR impact in Bhabanipur

This pattern of disproportionate deletion of Muslim electors possibly influencing the results is evident in Bhabanipur constituency, where digital scrutiny of polling station-wise ASDD lists and electoral rolls revealed that of the total 36,664 deletions under Absent, Shifted and LD categories, 9,481 (26%) were Muslims (Table 2). This proportion of 26% is notably higher than the 20% share of Muslims in Kolkata district's population in 2011. These deletions of Muslim electors were highly concentrated in Parts 1 to 112 (polling booths), falling under Wards 63, 77 and 74 of the Kolkata Municipal Corporation, with high concentration of Muslim populations. Moreover, while Muslims accounted for 26% of deletions, they accounted for only 19% (1,025) of the 5,408 additions to Bhabanipur's electoral rolls.

AITC's winning margin over BJP in Bhabanipur Assembly segment had already come down from 58,835 in the 2021 by-election, in which Ms. Banerjee won with a vote share of 72%, to 8,297 in the 2024 Lok Sabha election. The net deletion of Muslim electors (total deletions excluding additions) in Bhabanipur AC during SIR was 8,456. In the 2026 election, Bhabanipur recorded 5,524 more valid votes polled compared with the 2024, which is incidentally of a similar magnitude as the total additions during SIR at 5408.

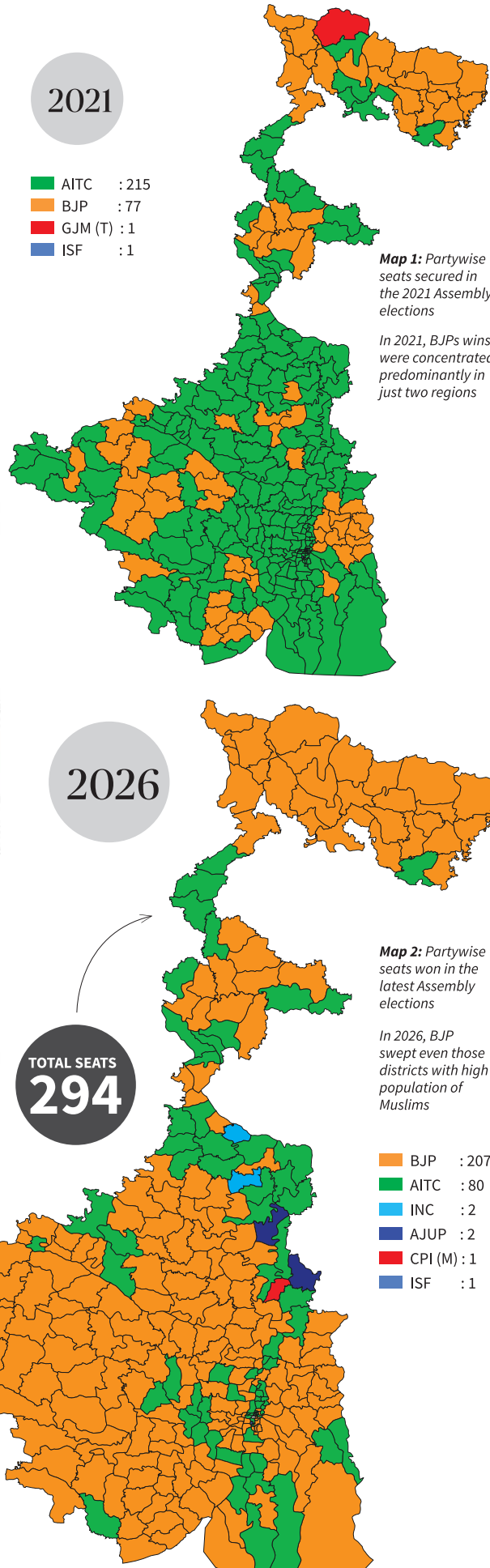
Between 2024 and 2026, votes secured by AITC dropped by 3,649 while BJP's votes increased by 19,753 (Table 3).

Additionally, votes polled by CPI(M) dropped by 10,540 and those by all others reduced by 1,448 between the two elections. It is likely that these votes went instead in favour of the BJP in 2026. However, such a swing in favour of the BJP is unlikely to have happened in the constituency, if not for the SIR that reconfigured the demography.

This raises fresh questions about the intent and legitimacy of SIR, which merits redressal by the Supreme Court, to prevent recurrence in other states. The inoperative and ineffectual appellate mechanism in West Bengal needs to be invigorated to ensure justice for all those wrongfully deleted through opaque, discriminatory and arbitrary processes.

The EC should be held accountable for conducting SIR in a manner that not only led to an *en masse* disenfranchisement of genuine electors on the eve of a general election, but also endangered the future of free and fair elections in the country, which is the cornerstone of parliamentary democracy. The EC must publish a comprehensive statistical report of all SIR related data on deletions, additions and modifications to the electoral rolls in West Bengal, which are hitherto not officially reported, to facilitate further independent analysis and judicial scrutiny.

(Prasenjit Bose is an economist. He heads the SIR Committee of the West Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee.)



Map 1: Partywise seats secured in the 2021 Assembly elections

In 2021, BJP's wins were concentrated predominantly in just two regions

Map 2: Partywise seats won in the latest Assembly elections

In 2026, BJP swept even those districts with high population of Muslims

Table 1: Aggregate Electors, Votes Polled & Voteshares secured by parties

	2021	2024	2026*
Total Electors (in crore)	7.3	7.6	6.8
Total Valid Votes Polled (in crore)	6.03	5.9	6.3
Voter Turnout Rate (%)	82.16	78.76	93.58
Total Votes and vote share (in %) secured by major parties			
BJP	2.2 cr (37.97%)	2.3 (39.08%)	2.92 (45.84%)
AITC	2.89 cr (48.02%)	2.76 (46.16%)	2.6 (40.8%)
CPI(M)	0.28 (4.71%)	0.34 (5.73%)	0.28 (4.45%)
INC	0.18 (3.03%)	0.28 (4.72%)	0.18 (2.97%)

Table 2: SIR Deletions & Additions in West Bengal & Bhabanipur AC

Roll Publication Date		No. of Electors	
		West Bengal - 294 ACs	Bhabanipur AC *
27.10.2025	SIR Base Roll	76637529	206295
	Total ASDD Deletions	5820899	44770
	Out of which		
	Total Absent + Shifted Deletions	3208115	32766
16.12.2025	Muslim Electors - Absent + Shifted Deletions *	734658	7824
	SIR Draft Roll	70816630	161525
	Additions (Form 6)	182036	5408
	Deletions (Form 7)	546053	2690
28.02.2026	SIR Final Roll	70459284	164283
	LD Deletion after Adjudication	2716393	3898
	Out of which		
	Muslim Electors - LD Deletion after Adjudication *	1765655	1657
09.04.2026	Final Electoral Roll	68125496	160563
	Unreported Additions*	389276	178

* Author's Calculations based on Digital Scrutiny of Electoral Rolls

Table 3: Elections results for Bhabanipur assembly constituency

	2021 VS	2021-VS Bye Elec.*	2024 LS	2026 VS
Total Electors	206389	206527	205553	160563
Total Valid Votes Polled	127376	118577	133889	139413
Voter Turnout Rate %	61.72	57.41	65.14	86.83
Total Votes and vote share (in %) of major parties				
AITC	73505 (57.71%)	85263 (71.91%)	62461 (46.65%)	58812 (42.19%)
BJP	44786 (35.16%)	26428 (22.29%)	54164 (40.45%)	73917 (53.02%)
CPI(M)	DNC	4226 (3.56%)	14006 (10.46%)	3556 (2.55%)
INC	5211 (4.09%)	DNC	DNC	1257 (0.90%)
Others	2304 (1.81%)	1207 (1.02%)	2502 (1.87%)	1054 (0.76%)
NOTA	1570 (1.23%)	1453 (1.23%)	756	817 (0.59%)

* Mamata Banerjee was not the AITC candidate in Bhabanipur AC in 2021 assembly election; She contested the seat in a bye-election in September-October 2021

Chart 1: District-wise distribution of these SIR alterations, along with the district-wise shares of projected size of Muslim electors

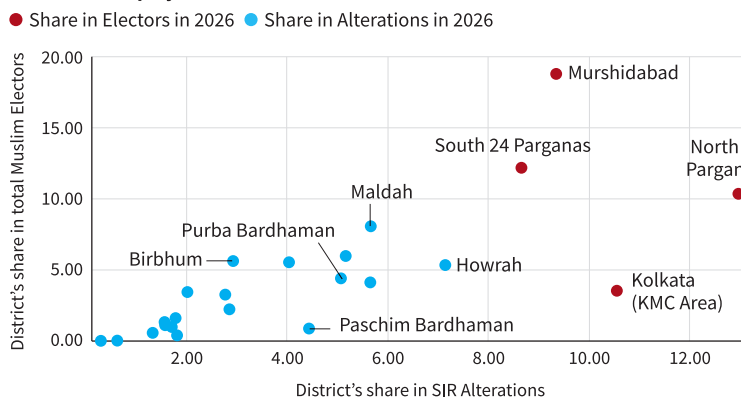
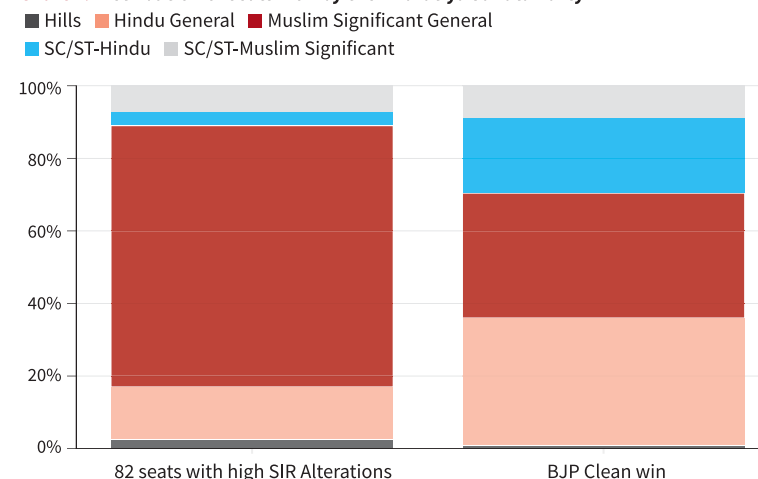
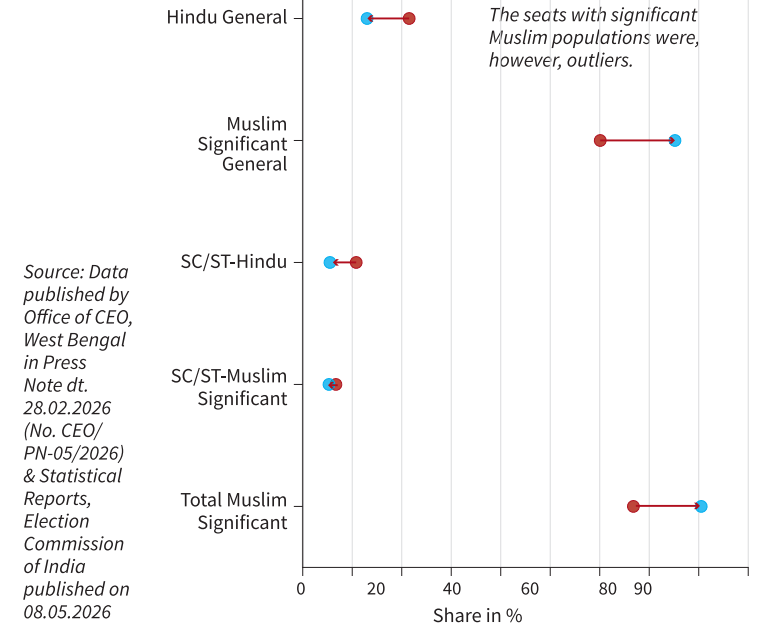


Chart 2: Distribution of seats won by the Bharatiya Janata Party



As the chart shows, Muslims accounted for a significantly higher share of the electors in the 82 seats where the magnitude of SIR alterations exceeded the winning margin.

Chart 3: Distribution of electors and alterations in 2026 Assembly elections



For every constituency category shown in the chart, the share of electors from the respective category exceeded their share in SIR alterations. The seats with significant Muslim populations were, however, outliers.

Source: Data published by Office of CEO, West Bengal in Press Note dt. 28.02.2026 (No. CEO/PN-05/2026) & Statistical Reports, Election Commission of India published on 08.05.2026

From Page One

Ebola crisis: India-Africa summit postponed

There were several other Africa-related events to be hosted by the Indian Council of World Affairs and the Indian Council for Cultural Relations that have been cancelled, though some African delegates have arrived in New Delhi for these events.

New dates for the summit and its associated meetings "will be finalised through mutual consultations and communicated in due course," the MEA said. The cancellation of the summit is being viewed as a setback to India-Africa ties, though officials insisted that the decision was taken in the best interest of all stakeholders. India expressed "solidarity with the peoples and Governments of Africa" and pledged to help them in dealing with the crisis with an "Africa-led" approach.

The fourth India-Africa Forum Summit was planned to be held between May 28 and 31, after a gap of nearly 11 years. Former Indian Ambassador to Ethiopia, Gurjit Singh, expressed confidence that the summit would be held once the latest health emergency stabilises in Africa. He pointed out that the third India-Africa Forum Summit was scheduled to be held in 2014 but had to be similarly postponed by a year, because of the outbreak of the Ebola virus in western Africa in 2014.

Health advisory

India has issued a health advisory for passengers arriving from or transiting through Ebola-affected countries, asking those with symptoms or exposure history to report to airport health authorities before immigration clearance. The Directorate General of Health Services' advisory specifically mentions travellers from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda and South Sudan, all of which have been categorised as "high-risk countries" by the World Health Organisation. The advisory has been displayed at the Delhi airport by the Airport Health Organisation.

It asks travellers who had direct contact with blood or body fluids of a suspected or confirmed Ebola patient to immediately report to the airport health officer or the health desk.

(With PTI inputs)

India's crude oil imports decline, but bill goes up

The data show that India imported 20.1 million tonnes (mt) of crude oil in April, compared with 21 mt in the comparable period last year. However, India's oil-marketing companies paid \$16.3 billion for their imports, as against the \$10.7 billion they had paid in the corresponding month last year.

Sales of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), including domestic and non-domestic and auto LPG, by public sector oil firms dipped by 12.7% on a year-on-year basis to about 2.2 mt. During the conflict, the government has allocated commercial establishments 70% of the LPG they were using before the crisis.

As for natural gas, the country consumed 4,703 million standard cubic metres (MMSCM) of natural gas in April, which was 16.7% lower than that in the corresponding month last year.

Likely as a result of this lower consumption, India imported 1,954 MMSCM of LNG in April, down from 2,778 MMSCM in April last year. In value terms, the LNG import bill fell one-fourth from \$1.2 billion to \$0.9 billion during the reported period.

India's import dependence on natural gas declined to 41.6% in April this year from 49.2% in the same month last year. The net production of natural gas, which accounts for the quantum lost due to flaring and for other reasons, dipped by 4.2% on a year-on-year basis to 2,749 MMSCM.

UNLF-P cadre held, looted weapons seized

Over 6,000 police weapons and lakhs of rounds of ammunition were looted when ethnic violence between the Kuki-Zo and the Meitei people erupted in the State on May 3, 2023. Over 4,500 police weapons have been recovered so far.

Based on credible information regarding the selling of looted arms and ammunition in the Lamshang area, the Manipur Police launched a special operation on Wednesday, the police said in a statement.

"During the operation, two active cadres of UNLF (P), Heishnam Thomas Singh (29) of Mayang Imphal Kokchhai and (ii) Arambam Tomtom Singh (29) of Lamshang Heibongpokpi Mayai Leikai, were apprehended along with one INSAS LMG, three INSAS LMG magazines and fourteen live rounds," the statement by the police said.

"The weapons are suspected to be stolen, and it's being verified where they were stolen from. While the arrest process was going on, associates of the cadres opened fire at the security forces, resulting in a brief exchange of fire," Shivanand Surve, Superintendent of Police (SP), Imphal East, said.

"Further, two more cadres who were involved in firing upon the security forces, namely, Ningthoujam Rakesh Singh and Chingakham Mahesh Singh, were apprehended. On preliminary interrogation of the arrested cadres, they disclosed that they had come to sell the seized weapon on the instruction of self-styled Lance Corporal Naorem Bijoy @ Macha of UNLF(P)," the officer said.

The arrested cadres have admitted to involvement in an earlier sale of looted arms and ammunition.

Memorial unveiled in Seoul to honour Indian troops

It pays tribute to the contributions of the 60 Para Field Ambulance of the Indian Army and the Custodian Force of India, which played a significant role during and after the Korean War

Saurabh Trivedi
NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and the Republic of Korea's Minister of Patriots and Veterans Affairs Kwon Oh-eul jointly inaugurated the Indian War Memorial at Imjingak Park in Seoul on Wednesday, commemorating the 75th anniversary of the Korean War and honouring the contribution of Indian troops during the conflict.

According to the Defence Ministry, the memorial has been constructed to pay tribute to the courage, sacrifice, and humanitarian service of the 60 Para Field Ambulance of the Indian Army and the Custodian Force of India (CFI), which played a significant role during and after the Korean War.

The two Ministers laid wreaths at the memorial and paid homage to the Indian personnel, whose service continues to be remembered with gratitude by the people of South Korea.

Speaking at the ceremony, Mr. Singh highlighted



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh during the inauguration of the Indian War Memorial in Seoul on Thursday. PTI

India's enduring contribution to peace and humanitarian assistance on the Korean Peninsula. He said the sacrifices and shared history between India and South Korea form a strong foundation for the growing Special Strategic Partnership between the two nations.

He also thanked the South Korean government, particularly the Ministry of

Patriots and Veterans Affairs, for supporting the establishment of the memorial. The South Korean Minister praised India's humanitarian role during the war and acknowledged the lasting bonds of friendship forged through the service of Indian troops.

A memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between the two countries to strengthen

cooperation in honouring Korean War veterans and promoting exchanges between them. A memoir dedicated to the sacrifices of the Indian soldiers was also released on the occasion.

The 60 Para Field Ambulance, led by Lt. Col. (Dr.) A.G. Rangaraj, earned widespread acclaim for treating thousands of wounded soldiers and civilians under difficult battlefield conditions. Their compassion and bravery earned them the title "Maroon Angels" from the Korean people.

India also played a key role after the armistice through the Custodian Force of India under the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission chaired by Lt. Gen. K.S. Thimayya, overseeing the humane repatriation of prisoners of war. The memorial stands at the site where the CFI had established "Hind Nagar" in 1954, which housed nearly 22,000 prisoners of war before their peaceful repatriation. The ceremony marked the conclusion of Mr. Singh's four-day visit to Vietnam and South Korea.

Mahila Congress seeks fresh investigation into Hathras gang rape case

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The All India Mahila Congress (AIMC) on Thursday demanded a reopening of the probe into the 2020 Hathras gang rape and death case, citing revelations made in a recently released documentary, *Hathras 16 Days*, which it claimed exposed "systemic failures" and an alleged cover-up by the Uttar Pradesh administration and police.

Addressing a press conference, AIMC president Alka Lamba alleged that the documentary raised "serious and disturbing questions" over the conduct of the police, district administration and the State government during the investigation.

Ms. Lamba said the Dalit victim was assaulted on September 14, 2020, and died at Safdarjung Hospital in Delhi on September 29. She reiterated allegations that the victim was cremated by authorities in the early hours of September 30 without the consent or presence of her family.

"The documentary shows that evidence was not collected for eight days. The victim was bathed and cleaned before medical examination," Ms. Lamba said, alleging that crucial forensic evidence was compromised. She further claimed that the documentary carried statements from a gynaecologist and a former senior police officer indicating delays and lapses in evidence collection.

Criminal justice system must adopt a more victim-centric approach: SC

Aaratrika Bhaumik
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday observed that there is a pressing need for the criminal justice system to adopt a more victim-centric approach while refusing to entertain a plea seeking the clubbing of FIRs registered across several States by an accused in a chit fund scam.

"...You have taken money from poor people, and now you want us to ensure that you are provided the luxury of facing trial in one place... We have only been referring to accused-centric jurisprudence in criminal law. The victims have always been pushed into a corner," Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant, heading a three-judge Bench, orally remarked.



The Bench, including Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M. Pancholi, was hearing a petition filed by Upendra Nath Mishra, an accused in the multi-hundred-crore chit fund scam involving Micro Finance Limited. The case was probed by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

Senior advocate Aman Lekhi, appearing for the accused, contended that where multiple acts of in-

India flags Pakistan's 'long-tainted' record of genocidal acts

Press Trust of India
UNITED NATIONS

India highlighted Afghan civilian deaths and injuries caused by cross-border violence by Pakistani military forces, saying such "heinous acts" of aggression should not come as a surprise from a country that bombs its own people and conducts systematic genocide.

In a strong retort at the UN Security Council on Wednesday, India called out Pakistan's "long-tainted record" of genocidal acts after Islamabad's envoy at the UN, Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, raised the issue of Jammu and Kashmir during a debate held during China's presidency of the Council.

"It is ironic that Pakistan, with its long-tainted record of genocidal acts, has chosen to refer to issues that are strictly internal to India," India's Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador Harish Parvathaneni, said at the annual UNSC Open Debate on "Protection of civilians in armed conflict".

He referred to estimates by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), which doc-

umented 750 civilian deaths and injuries in Afghanistan in the first three months of 2026 due to cross-border armed violence by Pakistani military forces, most of them resulting from air strikes.

According to UNAMA, 94 of the 95 incidents involving civilian casualties were attributed to Pakistani security forces.

Mr. Parvathaneni said the "world has not forgotten" that during the holy month of Ramzan in March, Pakistan carried out a "barbaric air strike" on the Omid Addiction Treatment Hospital in Kabul. Citing UNAMA estimates, he said the "cowardly" act killed 269 civilians at the facility that "by no means can be justified as a military target".

"But such heinous acts of aggression by Pakistan should not come as a surprise from a country that bombs its own people and conducts systematic genocide," he said, recalling Operation Searchlight in 1971, when Islamabad had sanctioned the "systematic" campaign of genocidal mass rape of 4,00,000 women in former East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) by its own Army.

Take forward economic reforms, PM tells Ministers

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi held a meeting of his full Council of Ministers in New Delhi on Thursday, stressing the reform agenda of his government in the midst of a changing geopolitical situation.

The last such meeting of a full Council of Ministers was held on June 4. Ministries of Labour, Power, Commerce, Finance, Agriculture, and Railways and even the NITI Aayog made presentations at the meeting of past work as well as future plans.

Addressing the meeting, Mr. Modi emphasised that economic reforms, taken forward by measures such as the recalibration of the GST regime last year, should be continued and planning for reforms that were carried beyond 2026 be put in place.

Manipur DGP moved to Cabinet Secretariat

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

Manipur Director-General of Police (DGP) Rajiv Singh was appointed Secretary (Security) in the Cabinet Secretariat on Thursday.

Mr. Singh, a 1993-batch Indian Police Service (IPS) officer of Tripura cadre, was appointed as Manipur's police chief on June 1, 2023, days after the ethnic violence between the Meitei and the Kuki-Zo people erupted in the State on May 3 the same year.

Mr. Singh was appointed DGP by relaxing the service conditions as he was not from the Manipur cadre.

On Thursday, the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet "approved the appointment of Shri Rajiv Singh, IPS, Director General of Police, Government of Manipur to the post of Secretary (Security) in the Cabinet Secretariat with ef-



Rajiv Singh

Rajiv Singh oversaw operations to recover 4,500 weapons that were looted from police armouries

fect from the date of assumption of charge of the post, or until further orders, whichever is earlier."

Mr. Singh oversaw the operations to recover around 4,500 police weapons that were looted from police armouries following the May 3, 2023 violence.

The State was placed

under President's Rule on February 13, 2025 and till it was revoked on February 4, this year, around 1,000 extortionists had been arrested in the State.

On May 29, 2023, the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) deputed Mr. Singh from Tripura to Manipur cadre. He was posted as Inspector General, Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), when the changes were made. The order said that Mr. Singh was being transferred from Tripura cadre to Manipur cadre for a period of three years in relaxation of the policy as a "special case in public interest."

He succeeded then DGP P. Doungel, who was transferred as Officer on Special Duty (Home), a newly created post. Mr. Doungel, a 1987 batch IPS officer from Manipur cadre, belonged to the Kuki community and has since retired.

27 Maoists surrender in Jharkhand: police

The Hindu Bureau
PATNA

A group of 27 Maoists surrendered before the Jharkhand police on Thursday, as part of Operation Navjeevan. The group includes commanders and strike squads of the banned Communist Party of India (Maoist), active in the Kolhan and Saranda regions, as well as two leaders of the Jharkhand Jan Mukti Parishad active in Gumla district, said the police.

The Jharkhand police, along with its anti-Naxal unit Jharkhand Jaguar and the COBRA unit of the Central Reserve Police Force, is conducting operations against the Maoists, under the Jharkhand government's surrender and rehabilitation policy.

The Maoists surrendered their arms before the Jharkhand Director General of Police Tadasha Mishra and other senior police officials at an event in Ranchi.



APPEAL

Ms. Mrittika Sarkar, Manipal Hospitals No. MH018372987, 5 years is Diagnosed to be Suffering from Congenital Heart Diseases, Tetralogy of Fallot, Confluent Branch PAS, No Major Coronary Crossing RVOT. She requires to undergo Intra Cardiac repair. The Estimated cost of the Surgery is Rs. 5,00,000/-
Please send donation however small by Cheque/D.D/M.O Fav. Save Poor Lives A/c Mrittika Sarkar. Our A/c Details: S/B A/c No. 20000913487. S.B.I. R.A.Puram, IFSC CODE: SBIN001855. Please Donate by G-pay No. 9884607377. UPI Id: savepoorlives@oksb. Donations are exempted under 80G of I.T.ACT.
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Modi govt. has 'run out of ideas' on economy, Congress says and seeks a policy reset

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Thursday said the Narendra Modi government had "run out of ideas" on economic policy-making, and called for a "radical reset", alleging that worsening economic indicators reflected deep structural problems in the economy.

"The Prime Minister is busy distributing toffees and engaging in pious pleas to the public. The ground is slipping beneath the country's feet," Congress communication chief Jairam Ramesh said in a statement.

Mr. Ramesh also took an apparent dig at the govern-



Jairam Ramesh

ment's political management, remarking that while "the Prime Minister is managing elections through Gyanesh", he "urgently needs new Gyan on the economy".

Mr. Ramesh said that sentiment surrounding the economy had deteriorated

to the extent that even the government's "professional cheerleaders" had begun expressing concern publicly.

He alleged that inflation forecasts were rising while growth projections were declining, foreign direct investment continued to shrink and supply chains had been "gravely mismanaged".

The Congress had consistently raised concerns about the investment climate and the inability of private investment to gather momentum, he said. He argued that sustained economic growth would not be possible without a significant increase in private investment.

Ladakh civil society leaders to meet Union Home Ministry officials today

Activist Sonam Wangchuk, who was released from detention in March and joined Leh Apex Body (LAB), will participate; this is the first meeting of LAB and Kargil Democratic Alliance members with top Ministry officials since February 4

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

A civil society delegation from Ladakh, including climate activist Sonam Wangchuk who was released from detention under the National Security Act on March 14, will meet Union Home Ministry officials on Friday.

This is the first meeting of members of the Leh Apex Body (LAB) and the Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA), the two bodies representing Leh and Kargil districts, respectively, since February 4 when a high-powered committee (HPC) meeting led by Mi-



Sonam Wangchuk, centre, along with Leh Apex Body and Kargil Democratic Alliance leaders at a protest for Statehood. FILE PHOTO

nister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai was held in New Delhi. The meeting had remained inconclusive.

On Friday, a sub-committee comprising Ministry

officials will meet the delegation.

This will be the first time that Mr. Wangchuk will be attending the meeting with Ministry officials.

The delegations that

had previously met did not include his name as he was only recently inducted in the LAB.

The KDA and LAB have been demanding constitutional safeguards such as Statehood and inclusion of Ladakh under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, thus giving it tribal status.

Ladakh, which was earlier a part of Jammu and Kashmir, became a Union Territory in 2019 following the reading down of Article 370 of the Constitution.

Steadfast on demands
Cherring Dorjay Lakruk, co-convenor of the LAB,

said they will stick to their demands that they have been raising since 2020, which include Statehood for Ladakh.

After the violence on September 24, 2025 in Leh city when four people, including a Kargil war veteran, were killed in police firing, the talks have hit a stalemate.

Ministry officials have so far only offered safeguards available under Article 371 of the Constitution and insisted on strengthening the hill councils. Article 371 deals with "Temporary, Transitional and Special Provisions", and exists in 12 States.

Goyal slams Rahul's 'traitor' remark, says PM's five-nation tour produced concrete outcomes

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's five-nation tour brought concrete outcomes for every citizen, Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal said on Thursday. He accused the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, of having a "negative mindset", responding to his comments criticising the trip and calling Mr. Modi a "traitor".

Addressing a press conference at the BJP headquarters, Mr. Goyal said the tour's accomplishments reflected that India, under the leadership of Mr. Modi, stood strong on the world stage and was viewed as a reliable and trusted partner.

"This was not just an international diplomatic or political visit. It produced major outcomes for India's future. The 57 outcomes



Union Minister Piyush Goyal addressing a press conference at the BJP headquarters in New Delhi on Thursday. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

shape India's future development strategy, economic journey, strengthening self-reliance, and ensuring that goods are available conveniently to the people," he said.

"The entire world looks toward India and the Prime Minister with great confidence, whereas Rahul Gandhiji carries a negative mindset, as repeatedly revealed in his behaviour, words and speeches," Mr.

Goyal said. At an event in Rae Bareilly on Wednesday, Mr. Gandhi slammed the Prime Minister for going on an international tour after a speech urging Indians to practice austerity in a time of crisis.

'Real treachery'
Mr. Gandhi called Mr. Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah "traitors", accusing them of attacking the Constitution.

Mr. Goyal attempted to flip the moniker onto Mr. Gandhi and his party.

"Is eradicating nexalism treachery, or was allowing it to flourish for years under the Congress rule the real treachery? The country knows very well that keeping India secure demonstrates Modiji's patriotism. The way the Congress party and the Gandhi family support infiltrators is treachery," the Minister said.

"Is breaking the backbone of terrorism and giving a fitting reply to terrorists treachery, or is serving biryani to terrorists and compromising with them treachery," Mr. Goyal asked.

"If the Prime Minister has emerged today as a global leader, then naturally Rahul Gandhiji may feel some discomfort, but this jealousy is very unfortunate," he said, claiming that the people of India

have repeatedly rejected Mr. Gandhi.

Crisis to opportunity
Under Mr. Modi, the Minister said, the country acts proactively in addressing global and local challenges, and converts every crisis into an opportunity. "As soon as the signals of war were evident, India immediately started finalising newer trade routes, tying up newer partnerships on the energy front, finalising agreements with other countries, and securing petroleum products, crude, LPG, and LNG from a more diversified set of countries," he said.

"Due to the current situation, many of our neighbours and almost all developing or less-developed countries have experienced massive disruptions in supply chains, and soaring energy prices... India remains an oasis in the desert," Mr. Goyal said.

Hope India will play a role in ending Russia-Ukraine conflict: Finland PM

Suhasini Haidar
OSLO

Finland hopes the India-EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA) is ratified by all 27 European Union members and is signed at the earliest, Finland's Prime Minister Petteri Orpo has said. He has expressed the hope that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will use his relationship with Russia's President Vladimir Putin and Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to find an end to the conflict on the country's borders.

"The conflict in Ukraine is the biggest security threat to the whole of Europe, especially for Finland, because we are a small neighbour country to Russia," Mr. Orpo said in an interview to *The Hindu* on the sidelines of the Nordic-India summit here. "I was very satisfied when Prime Minister Modi told that we had discussed [with] both President Putin and President Zelenskyy, that they have to go to the negotiation table and they need to find a solution," he said, referring to Mr. Modi's visits to Moscow and Kyiv in 2024.

Mr. Orpo said that he had raised the issue of India's import of Russian oil, which he called a part of Mr. Putin's "war machine", in a "general" way with Mr.



Finland PM Petteri Orpo says he has raised the issue of India's import of Russian oil during bilateral talks on May 19. AFP

Modi during their bilateral talks on May 19. Mr. Orpo was critical of the U.S. decision to extend waivers on sanctions over Russian oil for a third month, but said that Finland did not regret joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) security alliance in 2023, after the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

"Oil exports is part of Putin's war machine, and it's clear that we are not satisfied that they are exporting oil, and at the same time countries pumping money to the war machine. We believe the only way to push Putin to the negotiation table is to keep sanctions on and support Ukraine," Mr. Orpo said, adding that he had asked Mr. Modi to "use his relations" with both Russia and Ukraine to stop the war.

Prior to his visit to Europe, Mr. Modi held talks with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov this month, and the Kremlin has announced that Mr. Putin will visit Delhi for the BRICS Summit on September 12-13, while Mr. Modi will also visit Moscow later this year for a summit with Mr. Putin.

Mr. Modi, who has been intensifying his meetings with European leaders in Delhi this year, returned from a four-nation tour of the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway and Italy on Thursday, and will visit Europe again in June for the G-7 summit in France and make a bilateral visit to Slovakia. Later this year, sources say, the Prime Minister is expected to make another trip, to Brussels, for the signing of the India-EU FTA.

India's engagement with Finland's leadership this year has been particularly close. Mr. Modi hosted Mr. Orpo during the Artificial Intelligence Summit, and President Alexander Stubb was the chief guest at the External Affairs Ministry's signature event, the Raisina Dialogue, in March in Delhi. In Oslo, Mr. Modi held bilateral talks with Mr. Orpo again, and then engaged with him at the Nordic-India summit this week.

"I have had the honour to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi two times in three months, and we have had excellent discussions on how to deepen our cooperation," Mr. Orpo said, adding that Finland's focus on doubling bilateral trade by 2030, from presently low levels of \$1.5 billion, was particularly in the areas of digitisation, and sustainability, including green technology transfers.

Both leaders underlined the importance of early entry into force of the India-EU FTA, a Ministry readout of the meeting said. "They exchanged views on regional and global developments, and on greater cooperation in international organisations," the Ministry said, without details of the conversation on the Ukraine conflict.

88% turnout in peaceful Falta repoll in West Bengal

The Hindu Bureau
KOLKATA

The repolling in the Falta Assembly constituency of West Bengal witnessed a high voter turnout on Thursday amid heavy presence of Central forces. Repolling was largely peaceful after complaints of malpractices had surfaced on the original polling day on April 29.

According to the latest Election Commission data, the turnout was 88.13%.

"People of Falta spent this day with a sense of festivity. The EC has always tried to establish the elections like a festival, and the Falta repolling has proved that," a senior official at the Chief Electoral Officer's office said on Thursday. The official said the poll body received five complaints from the polling stations, but they were technical issues, and not malpractices or law-and-order problems.

The repoll was conducted amid massive security deployment with armoured cars, drone surveillance, and hundreds of Central forces personnel. The EC announced a repoll after a fact-finding team from the ground published a report on large-scale malpractices in the poll held on April 29.

KARNATAKA POWER TRANSMISSION CORPORATION LIMITED
(CIN: U40109KA1999SGC025521)

BRIEF TENDER NOTIFICATION
(THROUGH KARNATAKA PUBLIC PROCUREMENT PORTAL ONLY)

KPTCL Invites Bids on electronic mode for the following works against following enquiry numbers on **Partial Turnkey basis**.

No.	CEE/T&P/SEE-1/2/2026-27/1707-40	Date: 20.05.2026
Enquiry Nos. and Name of the works		
1.	KPTCL/2026-27/SS/WORK_INDENT3783 Upgradation of existing 2x20MVA, 66/11kV Hirehalli sub-station in Tumakuru Taluk & District to 2x150MVA, 220/66/11kV GIS sub-station along with construction of associated 220kV transmission line for a distance of 0.805kms, and 66kV Lines for a distance of 46.961kms and laying of 66kV UG Cable for a distance of 1.6kms.	
2.	KPTCL/2026-27/SS/WORK_INDENT3781 Establishing of 2x160MVA, 220/110kV and 1x10MVA, 110/11kV sub-station at Chadachan (Devarnimbaragi) in Chadachan Taluk, Vijayapura District with KIOSK based arrangement along with construction of associated 220kV transmission line for a distance of 29.628kms and 110kV Lines for a distance of 60.78kms along with construction of 2 nos. of 220kV terminal bays and 05 nos. of 110kV terminal bays.	
3.	KPTCL/2026-27/SS/WORK_INDENT3782 Combined Package of the following works: Work-A: Establishing 2x160MVA, 220/110/11kV & 1x10MVA, 110/11kV sub-station at Byadagi (Lakamajikoppa) in Byadagi Taluk, Haveri District and construction of 220kV Transmission line for a distance of 0.752kms and 110kV Transmission Line for a distance of 56.58kms along with construction of 4 nos. of 110kV Terminal Bays. Work-B: Upgradation of 2x5MVA, 33/11kV sub-station to 2x20MVA, 110/11kV sub-station at Bommanahalli in Hanagal Taluk, Haveri District and construction of 110kV DC line with Panther conductor from 110kV Akkialur (Balambeeda) sub-station to the proposed 110kV Bommanahalli sub-station for a distance of 16.626kms and construction of 2 nos. of 110kV Terminal Bays at ongoing 110kV Akkialur (Balambeeda) sub-station. Work-C: Upgradation of 2x5MVA, 33/11kV sub-station to 2x20MVA, 110/11kV sub-station at Belagalapet in Hanagal Taluk, Haveri District and Construction of 110kV DC line with Panther conductor from 110kV Akkialur (Balambeeda) sub-station to the proposed 110kV Belagalapet sub-station for a distance of 8.664kms along with construction of 2 nos. of 110kV terminal bays at ongoing 110kV Akkialur (Balambeeda) sub-station in order to terminate proposed 110kV DC line from the proposed 110/11kV Belagalapet sub-station. Work-D: Establishing 2x20MVA, 110/11kV sub-station at Hanumanamatti in Ranebennur Taluk, Haveri District and construction of 110kV LILo line from 110kV Ranebennur-Byadagi SC line to the proposed 110/11kV sub-station at Hanumanamatti for a distance of 2.414kms.	
4.	KPTCL/2026-27/SS/WORK_INDENT3774 Establishing 2x150MVA, 1x12.5MVA, 220/66/11kV sub-station at Vemagal in Kolar Taluk and District along with construction of associated 17.817kms of 220kV line & 27.403kms of 66kV line & 66kV Terminal Bays.	
5.	KPTCL/2026-27/SS/WORK_INDENT3778 Establishing 2x150MVA and 1x12.5MVA, 220/66/11kV sub-station at Hanur (Mangala) limits in Hanur Taluk Chamarajanagara district along with construction of associated 13.458kms of 220kV and 58.733kms of 66kV Transmission lines and 220kV & 66kV Terminal Bays.	
6.	KPTCL/2026-27/SS/WORK_INDENT3788 Establishing 2x150MVA, 220/66kV & 1x12.5MVA, 66/11kV sub-station at Jagaluru (Gowripura) in Jagaluru Taluk, Davanagere District and construction of associated 220kV Transmission line for a distance of 20.502kms and 66kV Transmission Lines for a distance of 34.789kms along with construction of 2 nos. of 220kV terminal bays and 03 no's of 66kV terminal bays.	
7.	KPTCL/2026-27/SS/WORK_INDENT3776 Establishing 2X20MVA, 110/11kV sub-station at Rajeev Grama in Shiggaon Taluk, Haveri District with associated line for a distance of 9.874kms along with construction of 110kV terminal bay at existing Shiggaon sub-station.	
8.	KPTCL/2026-27/SS/WORK_INDENT3777 Upgradation of existing 2x5MVA, 33/11 kV sub-station to 2X20 MVA, 110/11kV sub-station at Mudnur in Ranebennur Taluk, Haveri District with associated line for a distance of 15.656kms along with construction of 2 nos. of 110kV terminal bays at existing 110/33/11kV Tumminakatte sub-station.	
9.	KPTCL/2026-27/SS/WORK_INDENT3779 Establishing 2X20 MVA, 110/11kV sub-station at Chalageri in Ranebennur Taluk, Haveri District with associated line for a distance of 18.169kms along with construction of 2 nos. of 110kV terminal bay at existing Aremallapura sub-station.	
10.	KPTCL/2026-27/SS/WORK_INDENT3780 Establishing 2x20MVA, 110/11kV sub-station at Nittur in Hirekerur Taluk, Haveri District with associated line for a distance of 5.013kms.	
11.	KPTCL/2026-27/SS/WORK_INDENT3786 Establishing 2x20MVA, 110/11kV GIS sub-station at BIMS(Civil Hospital) in Belagavi Taluk & District and laying of 110kV class, 630Sq.mm XLPE UG cable for a distance of 2.164kms from existing 110/33/11kV Nehru Nagar sub-station to proposed 110/11kV GIS sub-station at BIMS (Civil Hospital) along with construction of 01 no. of 110kV Terminal Bay at existing 110/33/11kV Nehru Nagar sub-station.	
No. CEE/T&P/SEE-1/2026-27/1753-65 Date: 21.05.2026		
12.	KPTCL/2026-27/SS/WORK_INDENT3682 Establishing 2x12.5MVA, 66/11kV sub-station at Kalathmadu with associated 66kV LILo line for a distance of 1.925kms in Virajpete Taluk, Kodagu District.	

The bids will be received through electronic tendering mode only. The details regarding participation in the e-tendering process can be obtained by logging on to KPTCL website <https://kptcl.karnataka.gov.in> with hyperlink "E Procurement KPTCL" or <https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in> on or after Dated: 30.05.2026 at 15:00hrs for works from Sl. No. (1) to (11) and on or after Dated: 25.05.2026 at 15:00hrs for work at Sl. No. (12). **Last date & time for receipt of Bids and any extension of Due date for Bid submission will be intimated in the KPP Portal.** Any details required in this regard can also be obtained from the office of the undersigned during office hours.

All Corrigendum/Addendums shall be noticed by the bidders before the last date of submission of the Bids.

Sd/- Chief Engineer (Electy.), Tendering & Procurement,
KPTCL, 9th Floor, Indhana Bhavan, A.R Circle, Bengaluru-560009.

IN BRIEF



Over 10,000 pilgrims rescued after landslide in Uttarakhand

Joint rescue teams safely evacuated 10,450 pilgrims stranded on the Kedarnath route in Uttarakhand's Rudrapur following a sudden landslide at Munkatiya, officials said on Thursday. According to the officials, the landslide occurred between Sonprayag and Gaurikund on Tuesday late night after heavy rainfall in the region. The debris blocked the main highway and trapped several pilgrims. Continuous rockfalls, heavy rainfall, darkness, and challenging mountainous terrain created a highly difficult situation for the stranded travellers. The District Control Room Rudrapur alerted the State Disaster Response Force at 9.16 p.m. A rescue team from Sonprayag immediately rushed to the spot. PTI

'Thin line' between criticism and defamation: HC on Chadha plea

The Delhi High Court on Thursday expressed prima facie reservations over a plea by Rajya Sabha MP Raghav Chadha alleging violation of his personality rights through AI-generated deepfakes, manipulated videos, and allegedly defamatory social media posts targeting him over his political shift from the Aam Aadmi Party to the Bharatiya Janata Party. The court observed that the case appeared, at least at first glance, to concern criticism of a political leader's actions rather than infringement of personality rights, underscoring the "quite thin" line between political criticism and defamation. The remarks come amid legal scrutiny of AI-generated content and its impact on the reputation of public figures.

India skips vote on UN climate resolution

Press Trust of India
UNITED NATIONS

India abstained from voting on a United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) resolution calling on countries to comply with their obligations on climate change, voicing concern that the draft "undermines" the "sacrosanct architecture" of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

The resolution was adopted in the 193-member General Assembly on Wednesday with 141 votes in favour, eight against, and 28 abstentions. India said it had engaged constructively in negotiations, clarifying its concerns and positions.

"We are therefore disappointed that our concerns were not addressed, despite our best efforts to find common ground," it said.

In the Explanation of Vote, First Secretary in India's Permanent Mission to the United Nations, Petal Gahlot, said adoption of the resolution by the General Assembly does not create binding commitments for India.

The resolution welcomed the July 2025 unanimous advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on States' obligations on climate change.

SC declines plea on forest clearances for Adani project in M.P.

Petitioner says the coal block project will lead to felling of 6 lakh trees in Singrauli district; top court points to delay in challenging the approvals

Aaratrika Bhaumik
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday declined to interfere with the environmental clearances granted to the Adani Group's coal block project in Madhya Pradesh's Singrauli district, pointing to the delay in challenging the approvals.

A Bench comprising Justices P.S. Narasimha and Alok Aradhe was hearing a plea filed by environmental activist Ajay Dubey challenging an April 22 order of the National Green Tribunal (NGT), which had dismissed his plea against the May 2025 environmental clearance granted to Mahan Energen Ltd., a subsidiary of Adani Power, on the ground of limitation.

Questioning the delay, the Bench orally observed, "Your original application itself was filed on January 22... why was there such a delay?"

Under Section 16 of the National Green Tribunal Act, 2010, challenges to orders passed by statutory authorities must ordinarily be filed within 30 days,



Dust grind: A labourer working in a coal yard at Singrauli in Madhya Pradesh on November 18, 2021. AFP

with a further 60-day extension permissible upon sufficient cause being shown.

Appearing for Mr. Dubey, advocate Siddharth Gupta contended that the matter involved grave environmental concerns and that technical objections ought not to stand in the way of the Supreme Court exercising its extraordinary powers under Article 142 of the Constitution to examine the validity of the clearances.

Mr. Gupta argued that the project would lead to the felling of nearly six lakh trees in Singrauli.

The Bench observed that the NGT had relied upon the Supreme Court's 2025 ruling in *Talli Gram Panchayat v. Union of India*, where the court had examined the scope of limitation under Section 16. "The matter was heard at length," the Bench observed.

The Bench suggested that Mr. Dubey could pursue the matter through a writ petition. Following this, Mr. Gupta sought permission to withdraw the plea, which the court allowed while granting him liberty to "avail other legal remedies, if any".

CJP's X handle withheld; founder starts new account

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

The X account of Cockroach Janta Party, the satirical political outfit that has taken social media by storm, has been withheld in India in response to a legal demand, according to founder Abhijeet Dipke.

"Cockroach Janta Party's account was started on 16th May. Within 4 days the account got banned because it got more than 200K following," the founder posted on X on Thursday. Mr. Dipke also claimed that attempts were made to hack the CJP's Instagram handle.

Mr. Dipke later announced that he had started a new account named "Cockroach Is Back" on X. He informed the agencies that the team would pursue the matter "legally". A little over an hour after it was started, the "Cockroach Is Back" X handle had 16,800 followers.

The CJP is a satirical political movement founded on May 16 by Mr. Dipke, a former political strategist for the Aam Aadmi Party. The platform was started in response to Chief Justice of India Surya Kant's comment describing young, unemployed Indians as "cockroaches". The CJI had later said that the me-



A poster announcing the CJP's new X account after the original was taken down. X/@COCKROACHISBACK

dia had "misquoted" him.

The movement became an Internet sensation, garnering over 14.5 million followers on Instagram, surpassing the BJP's 8.8 million follower count. Several other accounts using the 'cockroach' nomenclature remain active on X, including 'The Cockroach Youth', 'Cockroach News', 'I Am Cockroach', 'Cockroach Party of India' and 'Cockroach Janta Party (Gen Z)'.

Politicians, including Trinamool Congress leaders Mahua Moitra and Kirti Azad, engaged with or expressed interest in the movement, alongside activists such as Prashant Bhusan and Anjali Bharadwaj. (With PTI inputs)

From rallies to reels: political catchphrases turn dance anthems in Kolkata

Shreya Banerjee

A video uploaded by Indic Society on X shows club-goers in Kolkata dancing to the song *Hamba Hamba* inside a nightclub in the city. *Hamba Hamba*, an imitation of the bellowing of cows, taken from former Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's speech in Murshidabad ahead of the 2021 West Bengal Assembly election, has now been remixed into a techno number that has got the city dancing, especially after the Trinamool Congress's loss in the 2026 election.

The song was uploaded in January 2024 on popular streaming platforms by Bajania Ghar, a music production house.

Over the past few years, Bengal's political soundscape has given rise to a strange but sticky new genre: political techno remixes built on repetitive choruses, meme-friendly punchlines, and danceable

beats, often remixed by local DJs and amplified through reels and short-form videos.

The trend arguably began in 2021 with *Khela Hobe* (let the games begin), the Trinamool Congress anthem written by their youth leader Debangshu Bhattacharya and remixed by DJ Bulbul. Originally adapted from a slogan popularised by Bangladeshi politician Shamim Osman, the phrase quickly escaped politics and entered everyday speech.

Since then, songs like *Hamba Hamba*, *Mach Chor* (fish thief), and *File Chor* (file thief) have followed a similar template, using catchy hooks, and direct political mockery to travel rapidly across social media.

Arkaprabha Mahata, a software development engineer, says he has been enjoying the *Hamba Hamba* song for a while now. He says, "So basically the words 'hamba hamba rum-

ba rumba kamba kamba' - all of these words are in between two beats. Now, in any techno track, every beat usually has a backing melody or rhythm behind it, and in this particular song these words, with their rhyming scheme, fit perfectly into that structure and work well together."

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), following and preceding its landslide victory in Bengal on May 4, has released tracks like *Mach Chor* and *File Chor*, aimed at certain former Ministers and Trinamool members.

Indrayudh Bose, an MBA graduate from Trinity College Dublin, says the moment he heard the BJP's latest song, *Thanda Thanda Cool Cool Mayer Bhoge Trinamool* (calm and cool Trinamool is on offer to the goddess), he shared it with his friends.

Indrayudh explains that many people dancing to or enjoying these songs do not necessarily subscribe to the



Groovy mix: A screen grab from the music video 'Hamba Hamba' on YouTube. BAJANIA GHAR

political ideology of the party behind them. "I think it boils down to one really catchy tune and the lyrics are so funny. Like *Khela Hobe* (the game is on), which came out in 2021, became a chant and we brought it up in every conversation. Even when I was discussing the Derby, East Bengal versus Mohun Bagan, people were saying *khela hobe*. So that phrase kind of caught on not necessarily because people liked Mamata or Trina-

mool. And the same thing in 2026, BJP also realised that a way to get into people's heads who may not subscribe to the ideology - especially the one which I shared to my friends, *thanda thanda cool cool mayer bhoge Trinamool* - objectively has no head or feet. It is just something really funny and groovy which caught my attention," says Indrayudh.

Giving these songs a boost and an afterlife is social media. Sohan Saha, a

cybersecurity student specialising in ethical hacking, uploaded a video of himself and a friend dancing to the BJP's song *Mach Chor* on Instagram on May 5. The song is targeted at Saikat Molla, a former Trinamool MLA. As of May 21, the video had received 1.4 million views.

Sohan first heard the song on a friend's mobile phone a week before the 2026 West Bengal election. "It didn't hit me at first. After listening to it two or three times on Instagram reels, the repetitive hook got stuck in my head and I felt that it had something in it, it had a 'vibe'. After that I started hearing the song in buses, autos, toots (three-wheeled public transport), and roadside stalls. Even if we take out the party angle, the lyrics were so engaging and funny it was relatable. The catchy tune makes people move and dance. Nowadays in the techno songs

made in Bollywood, they have a repetitive hook as well and a catchy beat. These kinds of beats are trending and make you want to move. Instagram or YouTube Shorts are great for making these songs go viral."

After uploading the reel, Sohan gained more than 700 followers, with comments pouring in from users across States praising the groovy number.

Using crudeness
Discussing this new genre of satirical techno-inflected remixes, Chandril Bhattacharya, a political commentator and former lyricist for the band Chandrabindoo, explains, "Earlier in Bengali protest songs, a certain class would be attacked or songs would be against the oppressor. During the Left Front rule, some of the songs centred around some mishaps and thus criticised the ruling party.

But now songs are directly, without any scope of suggestion, naming and attacking specific parties or specific persons and often crossing the limits of decency. That forms the core of their appeal, at the same time a lack of refinement is not usually known to enhance art. So these songs are treading a thin line, they reflect people's attitude but they use crudeness to become popular."

Speaking of their popularity, Chandril says, "In today's age these songs are gaining popularity because we are seeing the creation of a culture of insult-flinging on social media. Humiliating others is creditable. At the same time these songs give vent to a lot of valid anger against the political leaders who abuse power. These songs also have a good level of skill or craft. They have crunchy punchlines, hummable refrains, and catchy rhythms that make people dance."

THE CROSSWORD+ 14800 (set by Karaoke)

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

ACROSS

- Scene at the end maybe premature end? (5,8)
- Life in Beirut occasionally could be without issue (9)
- Reportedly he brings charges against channel (5)
- Lady supervisor cooking roti and naans mainly in dining hall (9)
- A plant originally camouflaged insect (5)

DOWN

- Maybe the Latin rectified modern English (8,7)
- Voice box for blitzkrieg (3,6)
- Author of Hotel upset with Emily on vacation (6)
- Church service is all the same, no good (8)
- Inventor's writing tablet recycled (5)
- When ghost train with passenger in the middle crashes that surprises me (3,6,1,5)
- Dear friend regularly dropped and made a booby (5)
- Frequent flyers earn them while travelling to exotic Israel with family essentially (3,5)
- Mohican dancing around Arabic music maker (9)
- Bird with weather-beaten neck mainly (8)
- Bite loaf at sea, It may be your source of survival (8)
- Photograph that revealed a small ulcer (6)
- Maiden appearance, good for model, correct? (5)
- Wines brewed for stamina (5)

SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

Solution to previous puzzle

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

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

IN BRIEF



Maruti Suzuki to hike prices by up to ₹30,000 from June

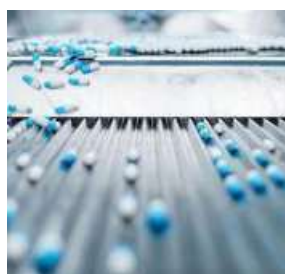
In view of the sustained increase in input costs, Maruti Suzuki India Ltd. (MSIL), India's biggest passenger vehicles company by market share, has decided to increase the prices of its models across its portfolio by up to ₹30,000 with effect from June 2026. "For the past few months, the company has been making continuous efforts to mitigate the cost impact to the extent possible through cost reduction measures. However, with inflationary pressures now at elevated levels and the adverse cost environment persisting, the company has to pass on a portion of the increased costs to the market, while continuing to ensure that the impact on customers is kept to the minimum extent possible," MSIL said in a statement. PTI

'Diesel demand spiked on agri-season, retail boost'

Certain geographical areas of the country observed 20-30% growth in demand for diesel – coinciding with the agricultural season and bulk consumers of diesel shifting to retail outlets – with the government working to ensure adequate supply across all outlets, Sujata Sharma, Joint Secretary at the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (MoPNG) told reporters on Thursday. "Buying [of diesel] has increased in certain areas, there has been a growth in demand," she stated, adding, "Some of it is related to the agricultural season, some of it is also related to bulk diesel purchases shifting to retail [outlets], and the difference between the price of retail fuel being charged by state-run oil marketing companies and private players." Separately, the senior official said that pumps typically hold two to three days of stock. Thus, the sudden spurt in demand also calls for adjustment of last-mile logistics, she added.

India seeks inputs on issues in pharma export to SAARC, Iran

N. Ravi Kumar
HYDERABAD



Pharma exports to SAARC in 2024-25 stood at about \$1.2 bn.

SAARC member India has begun an exercise to spot and resolve market access issues its drugs and pharmaceuticals face in other SAARC nations and Iran.

The Foreign Trade (South Asia) Division in the Department of Commerce is collecting inputs on the Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS), Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) and market access issues, pharma exporters body Pharmexcil said seeking details from its members recently.

Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Maldives, Pakistan, Bhutan, all SAARC members, as well as Iran are the countries for which the details are

sought. The inputs are essential for an upcoming crucial meeting with all export promotion councils, Indian Missions, Ministry of External Affairs and the EP Pharma Division of the Department of Commerce, Pharmexcil DG Raja Bhanu had said recently.

Also, the Pharmaceuticals Export Promotion Council of India (Pharmexcil) sought specific suggestions or possible solutions to address the identified challenges as well as a list of potential products which have scope of growth country wise.

LIC Q4 net up 23%, to pay ₹10 dividend

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

The Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) reported standalone net profit climbed more than 23% year-on-year in the March-ended quarter to ₹23,420.43 crore.

The higher profit came on an over 14% increase in total income to ₹2,76,827.17 crore which included net premium income of ₹1,64,691.21 crore (₹1,47,585.56 crore). Income from investment stood at ₹1,09,022.04 crore (₹93,132.67 crore).

For FY26, net profit climbed 19.25% to ₹57,419 crore. Total income rose to ₹9,73,288.26 crore (₹8,84,148.22 crore). Total premium income was al-

most 10% higher at ₹5,35,984 crore.

CEO and MD R.Doraiswamy said with strong overall growth across every business vertical leading to record performance, 2025-26 was a satisfying year.

₹10 dividend

The insurer's board declared a final dividend of ₹10 per equity share.

On the impact of the West Asia crisis, the CEO said every sector is expected to be impacted and savings through insurance can certainly be impacted. "We are in tough times... [nevertheless] will try to move towards our targeted, double-digit new premium growth... expect growth in renewal premium [to continue]."

Transporters announce 4% increase in freight rates

To offset the diesel price hike, transporters introduce new calculation method, which will regulate the pass-on price of the increase in diesel rates, which accounts for 65% of the operational cost

Lalendu Mishra
MUMBAI

With diesel prices increasing and fuel shortage impacting free movement of trucks, transporters have decided to increase freight rates by 4% with effect from May 20, to pass on the extra burden to the customers. This includes a 3% hike on non-diesel components and 0.65% on the diesel component.

The move, announced by the All India Transporters Welfare Association (AITWA), is expected to fuel inflation. The move, announced by the All India Transporters Welfare Association (AITWA), is expected to fuel inflation.

To offset the diesel price



Cascading effect: The hike in fireight charges is expected to fuel inflation. BISWARANJAN ROUT

hike, the transporters have introduced a new calculation method called fuel adjustment factor (FAF), which will regulate the pass-on price of the increase in diesel rates, which accounts for 65% of the operational cost.

Transporters have appealed to customers to pay the extra rate so that they do not default on their loans. They have also requested customers not to impose any penalty for delayed arrival of consignments as trucks are getting

stuck due to diesel shortage in several pockets.

Since the prices of non-diesel components, i.e., toll, tyre and lubricants, have gone up, the transporters have increased the non-diesel charges by a flat 3%. This is to offset the additional burden due to the ₹3 increase in diesel price announced on the first occasion.

In the case of the diesel component, for every ₹1 increase in diesel price per litre over the base rate prevailing on May 15, 2026, there would be a 0.65% increase in freight rates, as per the FAF.

It may be recalled the first increase in diesel price was effected from May 15, which has become the base date.

RBI revived intervention strategy to arrest rupee fall, say bankers

Reuters
MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) reverted to its familiar intervention strategy on Thursday, deploying heavy dollar sales via state-run banks before market open to halt a persistent slide in the rupee after a string of all-time lows, bankers said.

The rupee surged on the

interbank order matching system to near 96 against the U.S. dollar following heavy intervention, with the currency rallying by about 70 paise within minutes. It opened at 96.30 in the onshore spot market, up 0.5% on the day.

The central bank's pre-open intervention mirrored past episodes where it has acted aggressively to break a negative feedback

loop of persistent depreciation and mounting pressure on the rupee.

The currency fell to within a whisker of 97 on Wednesday. The RBI last deployed this strategy in March and has, at times, intervened heavily either before market open or shortly after. The rupee rebounded 50 paise to settle at 96.36 against the U.S. dollar on Thursday

Zepto to float ₹11,000-crore IPO in July

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Quick commerce platform Zepto plans to launch its ₹11,000-crore initial public offering (IPO) in July, people familiar with the matter said on Thursday.

If the listing goes through, Zepto will join rivals Zomato and Swiggy, which are already listed on stock exchanges.

'Oil India will change the narrative of its production in the next 18 months'

Saptaparno Ghosh
NEW DELHI

With the recent government interventions in infrastructure and allocation, Oil India would ramp up production immensely in the next 18 months, Chairman and Managing Director Ranjit Rath told *The Hindu*.



Ranjit Rath

"Government has authorised the [expansion of] Duliagan feeder line. So, that will mean more gas can be evacuated," Mr. Rath stated, adding, "Further, the government has also authorised an additional new well gas [allocation] of up to 1.5 million standard cubic metres to Numaligarh refinery, which will help scale up from the current production level of 8 million standard cubic metre to 13 million standard cubic metre."

"Now, in the next eighteen months we will change the narrative," Mr. Rath said. The Oil India chief also mentioned that the feeder line would help evacuate increased gas out of associated wells, that is, wells where both oil and gas are present.

Thus, the safe evacuation facility in such wells ensures that both oil and gas can be captured without losing any for flaring.

Mr. Rath said Oil India was targeting to drill 100 wells in the ongoing financial year, from 74 wells in FY 2025-26.

The explorer-producer

is seeking to allocate ₹10,000 crore in capital expenditure this fiscal, up from about ₹8,900 crore it had spent last year.

The wells would span across both onshore and offshore basins. "The number would include drilling activities in northeastern India, in Gujarat's Cambay Basin, Baghwa and Dandewala in Rajasthan, the second well in Kerala-Konkan basin alongside Andaman-Nicobar," he stated.

On the international front, Mr. Rath said with the force majeure withdrawn from the Area 1 LNG project in Mozambique's Cabo Delgado province, the explorer-producer expects gas production to commence by the "end of 2028 or early 2029".

Mr. Rath said Oil India conducted petroleum system modelling studies as part of their strategy to choose the blocks to bid for in the upcoming rounds of Open Acreage Licensing Policy (OALP), and to "de-risk" the potential explorations.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER, RURAL WORKS CIRCLE, SUNABEDA
e-mail - serwsbd2003@yahoo.com
Date: 19/05/2026
Letter No.2369
1st Corrigendum

In continuation to this office Bid Identification No. CCEERWCSBD-Online-01/2026-27 invited vide this office Notice No.1953 Dtd.30.04.2026, partial modification of NCB has been made as follows:

1. Availability of Tender online for bidding Extended up to Dtd.28.05.2026 at 5.00 PM
2. Last Date and Time of seeking tender clarification Dtd.26.05.2026 up to 2.00 PM
3. Date & Time of opening of tender (Technical Bid) on Dtd.29.05.2026 at 11.00 AM.
4. Date & Time of opening of tender (Price Bid) will be intimated later

All other terms and conditions will remain unaltered.

Chief Construction Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Sunabeda.
25001/199/2627 OPR-25001/25182/126-27/0023

Sl. No.	Name of Items	Bid No. & Date	Pre Bid Meeting Date & Time
1.	Cleaning, Sanitation & Disinfection Service - Outcome Based-Healthcare; General Cleaning (Sweeping, Mopping, dusting); Indoor & Outdoor	GEM/2026/B/Service-7563900 Dated 21-05-2026	25-05-2026 15:00

KALYAN SINGH SUPER SPECIALTY CANCER INSTITUTE
C.G. City, Sultanpur Road, Lucknow-226002.
(An Autonomous Institute of the Govt. of Uttar Pradesh)
Website: www.cancerinstitute.edu.in, Email ID: office.scsih@gmail.com

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

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

Advt no: KSSSCI/Tender-02/2026-27 **Director**

TNPL TAMIL NADU NEWSPRINT AND PAPERS LIMITED
Kagithapuram - 639 136, Karur Dist. Tamil Nadu.
Kagitha Nagar, Mondipatti - 621 306, Trichy Dist, Tamil Nadu.

NOTICE INVITING TENDERS

Tender No.	Description	Due date
262713 001156	Steaming (Non-Coking) Coal in Bulk (Imported) with 4200 GAR of Indonesian origin.	08.06.2026
262713 001181	Procurement of Fuel oil for Unit-I	29.05.2026
262723 000643	Procurement of OBA (Slurry / Liquid) for Wet End - VAP for Board Machine (CCK) of TNPL Unit-II.	01.06.2026
262723 000644	Procurement of Native Starch for Board Machine (CCK) of TNPL Unit-II.	03.06.2026
262723 000645	Procurement of Carboxy Methyl Cellulose (CMC) for Board Machine (CCK) of TNPL Unit-II.	05.06.2026
262723 000664	Procurement of Acrylic Binder - I for TNPL Unit-II	29.05.2026

Corrigendum if any will be issued in TNPL Website and NIC Portal only. For further details, please visit websites : www.tnpl.com / https://tntenders.gov.in/nicgep/app

DIPR/1941/Tender/2026 **TNPL - Maker of bagasse based eco-friendly Paper**

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, DHENKANAL (R&B) DIVISION, DHENKANAL
Email - eedklpwd@gmail.com
INVITATION FOR BIDS THROUGH e-Procurement
Bid Identification No. SE DKL (R&B). 08 / 2026-27
Invitation for Bids

1.	The Superintending Engineer, Dhenkanal (R&B) Division, Dhenkanal, on behalf of Governor of Odisha, invites percentage rate bids in single cover system in ONLINE MODE only, for Construction of Building work as detailed below.
2.	Nature of work : 6 Nos Electrical Works
3.	No. of work : 06 Nos.
4.	Bid Cost : ₹ 6,000/- & 4,000/-
5.	Class of Contractor : "Specialise Agency with associate electrical contractor having valid license from ELBO" License
6.	Availability of Bid Documents in the website : From 10.00 AM of 21.05.2026 to 5.00 PM of 04.06.2026
7.	Date of Opening of Bid : Dt.05.06.2026 at 11.00 AM
8.	The Bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website: https://tendersodisha.gov.in. Any addendum / corrigendum / cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said website only.

Superintending Engineer, Dhenkanal (R&B) Division.
34001/226/2627 OIPR-34001/34016/126-27/0010

MAHATRANSCO
Maharashtra State Electricity Transmission Co. Ltd.
NOTICE INVITING TENDER CPD/14 - 2026-27

Tenders are invited through e-Tendering in SRM Two Bid system from the registered vendors for Supply of following:

Tender No. & Description of Material	Estimated Amount (in Rs. Lakhs) Tender Fee (in Rs.)	Due Date & Time (Hrs.) for Submission & Opening of Tender
SP/T-09/0526_TKC2 RFx 7000039950 (1 st Call) for Work of replacement of existing 0.2 ACSR conductor along with hardware by High Performance Conductor (HPC) in r/o 132kV Bhandara-Kardha Ckt I & Bhandara-Kardha Ckt II and allied works at 220kV Bhandara S/S & 132kV Kardha S/S under EHV PC (O&M) Zone, Nagpur.	Rs. 2347.43 Lakhs (Incl. GST) Rs. 1989.35 Lakhs (Excl. GST)	09.06.2026 17:00 Hrs 09.06.2026 17:15 Hrs

Contact Person: Office of the Executive Engineer (GrTKC-2)
CPA, C.O. MSETCL, 1st Floor, Prakashgad Building, Bandra (E), Mumbai
Tel. No.: 022-69852717
Email id: ceppa@mahatransco.in, secpa@mahatransco.in, eetkc2cpa@mahatransco.in, eepp@mahatransco.in
For further details visit our website https://srmetender.mahatransco.in/
Any further amendments / clarifications will be published on the MSETCL website www.mahatransco.in & https://srmetender.mahatransco.in/. Bidders are therefore requested to check these websites for further updates.
Sd/-
Executive Engineer (P&C)

MAHATRANSCO
Maharashtra State Electricity Transmission Co. Ltd.
NOTICE INVITING TENDER CPD/13 - 2026-27

Tenders are invited through e-Tendering in SRM Two Bid system from the registered vendors for Supply of following:

Tender No. & Description of Material	Estimated Amount (in Rs. Lakhs) Tender Fee (in Rs.)	Due Date & Time (Hrs.) for Submission & Opening of Tender
SP/T-08/0526_TKC2 RFx 7000039921 (1 st Call) for Work of replacement of existing 0.2 ACSR conductor along with hardware by High Performance Conductor (HPC) in r/o 132kV Khapri-Butibori Ckt I (21.27 km) & 132kV Khapri-Butibori Ckt II (21.65 km) and allied works at 132kV Khapri Substation & 220kV Butibori-1 Substation under EHV PC (O&M) Zone, Nagpur	Rs. 3100.54 Lakhs (Incl. GST) Rs. 2627.57 Lakhs (Excl. GST)	18.06.2026 17:00 Hrs 18.06.2026 17:15 Hrs

Contact Person: Office of the Executive Engineer (GrTKC-2)
CPA, C.O. MSETCL, 1st Floor, Prakashgad Building, Bandra (E), Mumbai
Tel. No.: 022-69852717
Email id: ceppa@mahatransco.in, secpa@mahatransco.in, eetkc2cpa@mahatransco.in, eepp@mahatransco.in
For further details visit our website https://srmetender.mahatransco.in/
Any further amendments/clarifications will be published on the MSETCL website www.mahatransco.in & https://srmetender.mahatransco.in/. Bidders are therefore requested to check these websites for further updates.
Sd/-
Executive Engineer (P&C)

TEHRAN

Pakistan Army chief due in Iran as Trump says talks on 'borderline'



REUTERS

Pakistan's Army chief Field Marshal Asim Munir was due in Iran on Thursday, Iranian media reported, with Islamabad mediating as the Islamic republic examines a new U.S. proposal. The visit comes a day after Donald Trump warned that negotiations to end the war were on the "borderline" between a deal and renewed strikes. AFP

MANILA

Philippines orders arrest of senator wanted by the ICC over killings



REUTERS

The Philippine justice chief Frederick Vida ordered authorities on Thursday to enforce an International Criminal Court warrant for the arrest of Senator Ronald Dela Rosa wanted on an alleged crime against humanity. He warned that anyone helping the senator evade a nationwide hunt would face criminal charges. AP

LAHORE

Mastermind of Pulwama terror attack, Hamza Burhan, killed in PoK



REUTERS

Hamza Burhan, believed to be one of the masterminds behind the 2019 Pulwama terror attack that claimed the lives of over 40 CRPF personnel, was killed on Thursday when unknown gunmen opened fire on him in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), sources said. He had been living undercover as a teacher in PoK. PTI

WASHINGTON

U.S. lifts sanctions on UN expert on Palestinians following court order



AFP

The United States on Wednesday removed sanctions on Francesca Albanese, a UN expert on the Palestinian territories who has harshly criticised Israel, following a court order. "Protecting the freedom of speech is 'always' in the public interest," U.S. District Judge Richard Leon wrote in an opinion accompanying the order. AFP

Mojtaba forbids export of enriched uranium: officials

Exporting the material would increase Iran's vulnerability to future U.S. or Israeli attacks, believe top officials; Iran's Hormuz authority claims regulatory jurisdiction extending into UAE waters

Reuters
DUBAI

Iran's Supreme Leader has issued a directive that the country's near-weapons-grade uranium should not be sent abroad, two senior Iranian sources said, hardening Tehran's stance on one of the main U.S. demands at peace talks.

Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei's order could further frustrate U.S. President Donald Trump and complicate talks on ending the U.S.-Israeli war on Iran.

Israeli officials have said that Mr. Trump has assured Israel that Iran's stockpile of highly enriched uranium, needed to make an atomic weapon, will be sent out of Iran and that any peace deal must include a clause on this.

"The Supreme Leader's



Pro-government demonstrators chant slogans as they wave Iranian flags during a gathering at a square in downtown Tehran. AP

directive, and the consensus within the establishment, is that the stockpile of enriched uranium should not leave the country," said one of the two Iranian sources, who spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the matter.

Iran's top officials, the sources said, believe that

sending the material abroad would leave the country more vulnerable to future attacks by the United States and Israel. Mr. Khamenei has the last say on the most important state matters.

Meanwhile, Iran's new body overseeing the Strait of Hormuz said its claimed area of control extends to

Emirati waters, drawing a sharp rebuke from the Gulf neighbour.

In a post on X on Wednesday accompanied by a map, the newly-established Persian Gulf Strait Authority said it had outlined "the regulatory jurisdiction for the management" of the strait.

It said this covered the area between the line extending from "Kuh-e Mubarak in Iran to the south of Fujairah in the UAE... to the line connecting the tip of Qeshm island in Iran to Umm Al-Quwain in the UAE."

It added that "transit through this area for the purpose of passing through the Hormuz Strait requires coordination with, and authorisation from, the Persian Gulf Strait Authority". (With AFP inputs)

Israel's govt. begins deporting hundreds of flotilla activists

Associated Press
TEL AVIV

Israel has released hundreds of activists who attempted to breach Israel's naval blockade of Gaza and is in the process of deporting them, according to a legal organisation working with the flotilla.

The Israel-based legal advocacy group, the Legal Centre for Arab Minority Rights in Israel, said that all of the international activists are in transit to a civilian airport near the southern Israeli city of Eilat for deportation.

Prime Minister Benjamin



Benjamin Netanyahu

Netanyahu said on Wednesday he instructed that the activists be deported "as soon as possible". He added that Israel has every right to stop "provocative flotillas of Hamas terrorist supporters".

Myanmar military recaptures 2 border towns from militias

Associated Press
BANGKOK

Myanmar's military-backed government says it has regained control of two towns near the country's borders with India and Thailand, marking a significant advance in the civil war as it seeks to reassert control of regions long held by resistance forces.

A report in the state-run Myanmar Alinn newspaper on Thursday said Tonzang, near the border with India, was captured by the Army on Wednesday after 10 days of operations to retake it. The paper pu-

blished photos of soldiers who recaptured the town in front of the township's administrative office and other departments.

That report came a day after Myanmar Alinn reported that the army on Tuesday retook control of Mawtaung, a strategically important border town for trade with Thailand, after a two-week operation.

The army's recapture of Tonzang in northwestern Chin state and Mawtaung in the southern Tanintharyi region came as the army has regained the upper hand in the nationwide conflict since mid-2025.

Bangladesh-China talks under way for Tarique Rahman's first foreign visit

Kallol Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

Bangladesh's new Prime Minister, Tarique Rahman, is in talks with Beijing to visit China in the coming weeks. According to a report in Prothom Alo, Beijing is keen to welcome Mr. Rahman for his first foreign trip in the last week of June.

Sources indicate that the schedule for the visit has not yet been finalised, but plans are under way to begin the several-day visit with high-level meetings between Prime Minister Rahman and top Chinese leaders, including Presi-

dent Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Li Keqiang.

The conversation about the visit was also disclosed last week by his Foreign Affairs Adviser, Humayun Kobir, who highlighted China's importance as a "development partner" and said that the visit will definitely take place.

Earlier, on May 8, during a conversation at a Dhaka hotel, China's ambassador to Bangladesh, Yao Wen, had indicated that the visit was being planned, though he did not mention a schedule at that time. The newspaper reported that Bangladesh may raise the need for in-



Tarique Rahman

frastructure development, the relocation of Chinese industries to Bangladesh, the establishment of Chinese economic zones in Bangladesh, and the Teesta Master Plan, in addition to the modernisation of Mongla port. Enhancing

aviation connectivity is also expected to be discussed.

Mr. Rahman, who will complete his first hundred days in office next week, has been holding talks within his team about his first visit abroad since coming to power in February. The first destinations were expected to be India, China, or Saudi Arabia. However, the crisis in the Gulf reduced the likelihood of a trip to Saudi Arabia, and Bangladesh's relations with India in recent weeks have been strained by rhetoric from West Bengal and Assam concerning illegal immigration.

Associated Press
KYIV

Ukrainian drones smashed into another Russian refinery overnight, starting a fire that produced huge clouds of black smoke, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on Thursday, in what appeared to be the latest long-range attack on Moscow's vital oil industry.

The drones targeted the Syzran oil refinery, located more than 800 km inside Russia, Mr. Zelenskyy said on social media, where he posted a video of the aftermath.

The governor of Russia's Samara region, Vyacheslav



Series of strikes: Smoke rises after a drone attack on the oil refinery and terminal in Tuapse in Russia on April 29. AP

Fedorishchev, said that two persons were killed by Ukrainian drones in Syzran but he didn't mention the refinery. Russia's Astra

news outlet said that Ukrainian

drones struck the Syzran refinery owned by oil and gas giant Rosneft.

Ukraine has expanded its mid- and long-range strike capabilities, deploy-

ing eye-catching drone and missile technology that it has developed domestically as it battles to defeat Russia's 4-year-old invasion. Ukrainian weaponry and expertise are now sought by other countries, whereas earlier in the war Kyiv had to plead for massive foreign military aid.

"Overall, our long-range plan for May is being carried out largely in full," Mr. Zelenskyy said in a social media post late on Wednesday.

"The key targets are Russian oil refineries, storage facilities, and other infrastructure tied to these oil revenues."

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Information Technology Department
Central Office: 763, Anna Salai, Chennai-600002

Indian Overseas bank (IOB) invites bids for the following:

GOVERNMENT E - MARKET PORTAL - ENGAGEMENT OF A CONSULTANT FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EXPECTED CREDIT LOSS (ECL) FRAMEWORK
BID NO: GEM/2026/7560810 DATED 19.05.2026

The Above RFP tender document is available and can be downloaded from the following websites www.iob.bank.in & www.gem.gov.in For Tender details and future amendments, if any, keep referring to the following website www.gem.gov.in

COCHIN PORT कोचिन पत्तन प्राधिकरण
Cochin Port Authority

Applications are invited from qualified candidates for appointment to the following class I posts on regular basis :-

- Sr. Asst. Secretary (Public Relation) - 1 No. UR (Rs.50,000 -1,60,000)
- Exe. Engineer (Civil) - 3 Nos. (10BC, 2UR) (Rs.50,000 -1,60,000)

For more details visit in:
www.cochinport.gov.in/Careers

Sd/- SECRETARY
0484-258-2113

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Information Technology Department
Central Office: 763, Anna Salai, Chennai-600002

Indian Overseas bank (IOB) invites bids for the following:

GOVERNMENT E-MARKET PORTAL - SELECTION OF SYSTEM INTEGRATOR (SI) FOR UNIFIED IT SUPPORT SERVICES FOR THE BANK
BID NO: GEM/2026/7564045 DATED 20.05.2026

Kindly note that the earlier tender floated vide bid ref no: GEM/2025/7322785 dated 06.03.2026 is cancelled

The Above RFP tender document is available and can be downloaded from the following websites www.iob.bank.in & www.gem.gov.in For Tender details and future amendments, if any, keep referring to the following website www.gem.gov.in

KSEB KERALA STATE ELECTRICITY BOARD LIMITED - Tender Notice
O/o The Executive Engineer, Transmission Division, Nedumkandam, Idukki.

E-Tender ID No. 2026_KSEB_835235, PAC: Rs. 1,31,46,489,843/-, Last Date: 28.05.2026, 03.00 pm.

E-Tender ID No. 2026_KSEB_826640_2, PAC: Rs.1,98,79,968,74/-, Last Date: 29.05.2026, 03.00 pm.

O/o The Chief Engineer, (S.C.M) & C.S.C. Vidyuthi Bhavanam, Thiruvananthapuram.

E-Tender ID No. 2026_KSEB_851668_1, PAC: Rs. 79,53,52,100/-, Last Date: 10.06.2026, 04.00 pm.

E-Tender ID No. 2026_KSEB_851752_1, PAC: Rs. 43,18,16,839/-, Last Date: 09.06.2026, 03.00 pm.

Visit www.etenders.kerala.gov.in and www.kseb.in Ref: PR/MC1/E614 - E-tender/2026

SRI VENKATESWARA INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES: TIRUPATI
(A University established by an Act of A.P. State Legislature)
TIRUMALA TIRUPATI DEVASTHANAMS

NOTICE INVITING SHORT TENDERS

Tenders are invited through e-tendering process in ap-aprocurement platform (Two bid system) for Purchase of Medical Equipment, Video Management System and Video Analytics Surveillance System, Internet Leased Line & Equipment on Reagent Rental basis. For details log on to the website <https://tender.aprocurement.gov.in> & <https://svimstpt.apnic.in>. The Director-cum-VC reserves the right to reject any or all tenders without assigning any reason whatsoever.

DONATE LIBERALLY TO "SWIMS GENERAL DONATION SCHEME" SWIMS ACCOUNT NO: 62121045670.
SBI IFSC CODE: SBIN0020926, *90G BENEFITS AVAILABLE TO THE SCHEME"

Rec.No./P1/19/aprocurement/PD/SWIMS/10, Dt:19-05-2026 Sd/- DIRECTOR-CUM-VC.

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
DEPARTMENT OF SPACE
HUMAN SPACE FLIGHT CENTRE
CONSTRUCTION & MAINTENANCE GROUP
DEVANAHALLI, KARNATAKA - 562164
Ph: 080-2991-6308

E-tender Notice No.:HSFC/CMG/2(21)Comp/174/2026-27 Date: 21.05.2026

BRIEF NOTICE INVITING E-TENDER

On behalf of the President of India, Online Item rate tenders are invited through E-tendering for the following works:

Title of work	Establishment/Construction of 11kV Substation Augmentation at HSFC, Devanahalli (Electrical & Civil Works)
Estimated Cost put to tender	₹ 1074.00 Lakhs
Period of Completion in months reckoned from the 15th day of date of issue of work order	(09) Nine Months
Period during which the tender document can be requested	From 11:00 Hrs. on 22.05.2026 To 23:30 Hrs. on 12.06.2026
Period during which the tender document can be downloaded	From 11:10 Hrs. on 22.05.2026 To 23:59 Hrs. on 12.06.2026
Bid clarifications	From 11:30 Hrs. on 22.05.2026 To 14:30 Hrs. on 14.06.2026
Reply to Bid clarifications	Up to 17:00 Hrs. on 16.06.2026
Last date and time for receipt of tenders	Up to 10:30 Hrs on 17.06.2026
Due date and time of opening of tenders (Technical bid)	11:00 Hrs. on 17.06.2026
Earnest Money Deposit (EMD)	₹ 20,74,000/-

For eligibility criteria and other details, Interested tenderers may please refer Detailed bilingual (Hindi-English) Notice Inviting Tender (NIT) from website www.isro.gov.in for further details and Purchase of tender documents visit www.tenderwizard.com/ISRO.

Sd/- Head CMD, CMG, HSFC

BENGALURU CENTRAL CITY CORPORATION
Office of the Superintending Engineer Zone-2, BCCC, 4th Floor, Annex Building-3, Bengaluru - 560 002

No: SE/BCCC/Z-2/TEND/01/2026-27 Date: 21.05.2026

INVITATION FOR SHORT TERM TENDER-CALL-4 (Two Cover System)

(Through GOK KPP Portal <https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in> only)

The Superintending Engineer, Zone-2, BCCC, Bengaluru invites tenders from eligible Contractors firm registered in Bengaluru Central City Corporation or equivalent registration with Labour Department or any State Government Organizations for the Collection of Parking Fees for Various roads in Bengaluru Central City Corporation, Zone-2 as detailed in the table below.

Sl. No.	Description
1.	Collection of Parking Fees Dispensary Road (OPH Road) to Kamaraj Road & Ibrahim Sahib Street Road. Minimum Reserve Annual License fee : Rs. 95.22 Lakhs, EMD : Rs. 1,90,440.00
2.	Collection of Parking Fees for Millers Road Junction, Planetarium Road, St. John's Church Road & St. John's Road. Minimum Reserve Annual License fee : Rs. 113.23 Lakhs, EMD : Rs. 2,00,000.00
3.	Collection of Parking Fees for 2nd temple road in Dattatreya Temple Ward, Sampige Road, Railway Parallel Road & BVK Iyengar road. Minimum Reserve Annual License fee : Rs. 96.10 Lakhs, EMD : Rs. 1,92,200.00
4.	Collection of Parking Fees for Mavalli Tank Bund road, DVG Road in Sunkenahalli Ward, Shankarmatt Road & PMK Road. Minimum Reserve Annual License fee : Rs. 109.38 Lakhs, EMD : Rs. 2,00,000.00
5.	Collection of Parking Fees for Vani Vilas Road, Vasavi Temple Street, Kanakapura Road, Diagonal Road, Patalamma Road & T Mariyappa Road. Minimum Reserve Annual License fee : Rs. 122.34 Lakhs, EMD : Rs. 2,00,000.00

Calendar of Events : (1) Tender documents may be downloaded from the KPP portal of the Government of Karnataka from 21.05.2026 (2) Tenders must be submitted online through KPP portal on or before 16.00 hours on 05.06.2026. (3) Queries may be uploaded in KPP Portal on before: 26.05.2026 upto 16:00 hrs. (4) Technical Bids will be opened on the website <https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in> in the office of the Superintending Engineer, Zone-2, BCCC, Bengaluru on 06.06.2026 at 16:30 hrs.

Sd/- Superintending Engineer Zone-2, BCCC

SUSPENSE CONTINUES

We will know about Dhoni's IPL future only next year: Rituraj



REUTERS

You will get to know about it (M.S. Dhoni's potential IPL 2027 participation) next year. Even I will get to know about it next year. Obviously, he was a big miss for us this season. He can cause fear in the opposition in the late overs. He can change the momentum just by staying at the crease — CSK captain Rituraj Gaikwad.

CSK THINKING

Simons' view on Short's promotion and why Samson won't complain



VIJAY SONEJI

We thought Matthew Short plays the short ball well. That's why the openers were changed... I know Sanju Samson wouldn't say that he got dismissed early because of being hit on the finger. Cricketers have to deal with it, especially wicketkeepers. It's just one of those things — CSK bowling coach Eric Simons.

LOSING IT

Hardik gets fined 10% of match fee and handed one demerit point



PTI

Mumbai Indians captain Hardik Pandya has been fined 10% of his match fee and handed one demerit point for abuse of cricket equipment after he knocked off the bails during a frustrating spell in the match against Kolkata Knight Riders in Kolkata on Wednesday. Hardik admitted to the offence and accepted the sanction.

AN ASSET

Pandey adds value to the team, he's super experienced: Watson



K.R. DEEPAK

Kolkata Knight Riders assistant coach Shane Watson heaped praise on Manish Pandey, the Player-of-the-Match against Mumbai Indians. "He adds value to the team. He's a super experienced guy, an amazing fielder. The way he's looking after himself shows that he's still got a number of years of cricket in front of him".

Imperious Titans showcase their might, knock out Super Kings

After a batting masterclass by Sai Sudharsan, Gill and Buttler, the bowling unit takes charge; Siraj, Rabada and Rashid scalp three each; the Rituraj-led Chennai franchise fails to make it to the playoffs for the third successive season

IPL-19

Sankar Narayanan E.H.
AHMEDABAD

Chennai Super Kings' yellow outnumbered Gujarat Titans' cosmic blue in the Narendra Modi Stadium stands, but it was the home team that handsomely outscored the visiting side on Thursday.

GT's 89-run victory not only brightened its Qualifier 1 chances but also knocked out the five-time champion from IPL 2026.

True to its form and fame, the Titans top-order delivered the goods. Sai Sudharsan (84, 53b, 7x4, 4x6), Shubman Gill (64, 37b, 7x4, 3x6), and Jos Buttler (57 n.o., 27b, 5x4, 4x6) displayed batsmanship of the highest order as the hosts amassed 229 for four.

The GT openers began with their typical elegance, hitting the first six only in the last over of the Power-Play.

The second phase of the innings, however, had



Hunting as a pack: GT delivered a dominant all-round show to outclass CSK. VIJAY SONEJI

more power-hitting. While Gill's first six off Noor Ahmad placed him in the 6000-run club in T20s, the second maximum off the Afghan spinner signalled the GT captain's 23-ball

half-century. Gurjapneet Singh could have removed Gill had CSK gone for a review for caught-behind. The Super Kings players' reaction on replays confirmed

that the 26-year-old had caught an edge encompassed the story of the match.

Sai Sudharsan quickly shifted gears as GT reached the 100-run mark in the

10th over. It was also the 10th time Sai Sudharsan and Gill breached the three-figure barrier as partners, putting them level with the Royal Challengers Bengaluru duo of Virat Kohli and A.B. de Villiers for most 100-plus stands in the IPL.

Gill's departure in the 13th over did not affect the scoring rate. In fact, Buttler only enhanced it; his brutal range-hitting provided the finishing kick to GT's innings.

The run-chase — which started with Super Kings being reduced to 29 for three inside three overs and 63 for five in seven — was virtually non-existent before Shivam Dube's 17-ball 47 (4x4, 4x6) injected some life into the pursuit.

However, once Dube was sent back by Rashid Khan with the scoreboard reading 116 for six, CSK's fate was all but sealed. The early damage inflicted by Mohammed Siraj (three for 26) and Kagiso Rabada (three for 32) proved too much as the Chennai outfit was bundled out for 140.



Over the moon: The East Bengal players savour the moment as the trophy is lifted. PTI

East Bengal's 22-year wait for top-division title ends

ISL

Amitabha Das Sharma
KOLKATA

East Bengal FC roared back from a goal down to defeat Inter Kashi FC 2-1 and emerged the new Indian Super League champion on Thursday. The triumph ended the Red and Gold Brigade's 22-year wait for the country's premier title.

A remarkable counter-attack saw Inter Kashi take the lead in the 15th minute. Alfred Planas latched on to a deep cross from David Munoz and produced a spectacular volley to silence the East Bengal fans who had thronged the Kishore Bharati Stadium in large numbers to cheer the team.

The hosts responded strongly after the break, showing more urgency as they looked for the equaliser.

The efforts were rewarded in the 50th minute when Youssef Ezzejari swooped in on a through ball from Anwar Ali and calmly slotted the ball home.

East Bengal nudged ahead in the 73rd minute when Mohammed Rashid timed his run to perfection, reaching a cross from Bipin Singh and guiding



Best on show: Figueira was adjudged 'player-of-the-league' while Ezzejari emerged the top scorer. X@INDSUPERLEAGUE

the ball home with an outstretched leg. East Bengal held on to the lead, sparking celebrations in the dugout and the stands.

Bagan finishes second
In the other match held simultaneously at the Salt Lake Stadium, defending champion Mohun Bagan Super Giant registered a comeback 2-1 victory over Sporting Club Delhi.

East Bengal and Bagan finished with 26 points in 13 matches. As their Kolkata derby had ended in a 1-1 stalemate, goal difference proved to be the tie-breaker (19 to 14).

In New Delhi, Mumbai City FC defeated Punjab FC 2-0 through goals by Hmingthanmawia 'Valpuia' Ralte and Vikram Parthap Singh to ensure itself a third-placed finish.

Punjab ended fifth in the standings with 22 points from 13 games.

The results:
At Kolkata: Inter Kashi 1 (Planas 15) lost to East Bengal FC 2 (Ezzejari 50, Rashid 73). Mohun Bagan SG 2 (Manvir 90, Maclaren 90+9) bt Sporting Club Delhi 1 (Fernandes 63). **At New Delhi:** Punjab FC 0 lost to Mumbai City FC 2 (Valpuia 80, Vikram Singh 90+11). **At Jamshedpur:** Jamshedpur FC 0 drew with Odisha FC 0.

SCOREBOARD

GUJARAT TITANS
Sai Sudharsan c Short b Kamboj 84 (53b, 7x4, 4x6), Shubman Gill c Dube b Johnson 64 (37b, 7x4, 3x6), Jos Buttler (not out) 57 (27b, 5x4, 4x6), Rahul Tewatia run out 0 (1b), Washington Sundar c Urvil b Mukesh 7 (3b, 1x6); Extras (lb-3, nb-1, w-13): 17; Total (for four wkts. in 20 overs): 229.

FALL OF WICKETS
1-125 (Gill, 12.2 overs), 2-207 (Sai Sudharsan, 18.2), 3-207 (Tewatia, 18.3), 4-229 (Washington, 19.6).

SUPER KINGS BOWLING
Mukesh 4-0-36-1, Johnson 4-0-47-1, Gurjapneet 4-0-31-0, Kamboj 4-0-56-1, Noor 3-0-41-0,

Dube 1-0-15-0.

CHENNAI SUPER KINGS
Sanju Samson c Buttler b Siraj 0 (1b), Matthew Short c Prasidh b Rabada 24 (14b, 3x4, 1x6), Rituraj Gaikwad b Siraj 16 (7b, 1x4, 2x6), Urvil Patel c Prasidh b Siraj 0 (2b), Kartik Sharma (Impact Player for Gurjapneet) run out 19 (15b, 3x4), Dewald Brevis c Holder b Rashid 8 (10b), Shivam Dube c Gill b Rashid 47 (17b, 4x4, 4x6), Anshul Kamboj c Holder b Rashid 19 (8b, 1x4, 2x6), Noor Ahmad c & b Rabada 1 (5b), Mukesh Choudhary (not out) 2 (2b), Spencer Johnson c Buttler b

Rabada 0 (1b); Extras (w-4): 4; Total (in 13.4 overs): 140.

FALL OF WICKETS
1-0 (Samson, 0.1), 2-29 (Rituraj, 2.2), 3-29 (Urvil, 2.4), 4-51 (Short, 5.1), 5-63 (Kartik, 6.6), 6-116 (Dube, 10.3), 7-136 (Kamboj, 12.1), 8-138 (Brevis, 12.4), 9-140 (Noor, 13.3).

TITANS BOWLING
Siraj 3-0-26-3, Rabada 3-4-0-32-3, Arshad 2-0-24-0, Holder 2-0-27-0, Rashid 2-0-18-3, Prasidh (Impact Player for Tewatia) 1-0-13-0.

Toss: Super Kings.
Player-of-the-Match: Siraj.
Titans won by 89 runs.

Points table

	M	W	L	NR	PTS	NRR
Royal Challengers (Q)	13	9	4	0	18	1.065
Gujarat Titans (Q)	14	9	5	0	18	0.695
Sunrisers Hyderabad (Q)	13	8	5	0	16	0.350
Rajasthan Royals	13	7	6	0	14	0.083
Punjab Kings	13	6	6	1	13	0.227
Kolkata Knight Riders	13	6	6	1	13	0.011
Chennai Super Kings (E)	14	6	8	0	12	-0.345
Delhi Capitals	13	6	7	0	12	-0.871
Mumbai Indians (E)	13	4	9	0	8	-0.510
Lucknow Super Giants (E)	13	4	9	0	8	-0.702

Q: Qualified | E: Eliminated

Contrasting draw for Sinner and Djokovic

FRENCH OPEN

Reuters
PARIS

World No. 1 Jannik Sinner will open his French Open campaign against French wildcard Clement Tabur after Thursday's draw handed the Italian top seed a favourable-looking path through the top half of the men's singles bracket.

Sinner could meet another Frenchman in 30th seed Corentin Moutet in the third round and, if the seedings hold, Canadian Felix Auger-Aliassime in the semifinals.

Twenty-four-time Grand Slam champion Novak Djokovic faces a far more testing route after being drawn against Frenchman Giovanni Mpetshi Perricard in the opening round. Djo-

kovic could run into Brazilian teenager Joao Fonseca in the third round, Casper Ruud in the last 16 and Alexander Zverev in the semifinals. Zverev, seeded second, begins against France's Benjamin Bonzi.

In the women's draw, Coco Gauff begins her title defence against fellow American Taylor Townsend while World No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka faces Spain's Jessica Bouzas Maneiro.

Gauff and Sabalenka, who met in last year's final, cannot face each other in this year's championship match as they are projected to meet in the semifinals. Four-time Roland Garros champion Iga Swiatek opens against Australia's Emerson Jones, while second seed Elena Rybakina starts against Slovenia's Veronika Erjavec.

Alcaraz's absence a morale-booster for Sinner at French Open: Sania

Anirudh Velamuri
HYDERABAD

Jannik Sinner's chances of clinching a maiden French Open crown received a major boost when defending champion Carlos Alcaraz withdrew with a wrist injury.

The Italian, who reclaimed the World No. 1 ranking last month, heads to Paris in red-hot form after capturing the last six Masters titles, which included a dominant run through the clay-court swing in Monte Carlo, Madrid and Rome.

The prospect of completing a career Grand Slam is an extra push.

Indian tennis star Sania Mirza believes the 2026 Roland Garros crown is Sinner's to lose. "Today, Sinner and Al-



Hot favourite: Sinner is someone who can't be ignored because of the sheer form he's coming in with, feels Sania. AP

caraz have the biggest rivalry, which at one point was between Roger [Federer] and Rafa [Rafael Nadal] until Novak [Djokovic] came into the mix, followed by Andy Murray. We will feel the Alcaraz void but I'll tell you what, Sinner is not going to be too

unhappy with that," Sania said in an interaction facilitated by Sony Sports Network.

"Sinner is someone we cannot ignore because of the sheer form he's coming in with.

"He's probably the hot favourite. And not having

to face Alcaraz is going to be a huge mental boost for him," Sania added.

The 39-year-old labelled Djokovic as the tournament's "dark horse", stressing that the Serb remains capable of denting Sinner's hopes.

Sania, however, feels that the title race in the women's draw will be tough to predict.

"For the first time in a while, it's quite open. Aryna Sabalenka is not playing at her best.

"Iga Swiatek is usually unbelievable on clay but has had a quiet few months. My gut says that we might have a new champion. Maybe Mirra Andreeva or Elina Svitolina... someone who has been knocking on the door of the Grand Slams for a while".

WORLD CUP SQUADS

Nagelsmann goes back to Neuer to prop up Germany

FRANKFURT: Veteran goalkeeper Manuel Neuer was handed a surprise recall to Germany's 26-man World Cup squad on Thursday, coming out of international retirement to play in the tournament for a fifth time. The 40-year-old retired from international duty in 2024.

The squads:
GERMANY: Goalkeepers: Oliver Baumann, Manuel Neuer, Alexander Nuebel.
Defenders: Waldemar Anton, Nathaniel Brown, Joshua Kimmich, David Raum, Antonio Rudiger, Nico Schlotterbeck, Jonathan Tah, Malick Thiaw. **Midfielders:** Nadjem Amiri, Leon Goretzka, Pascal Gross, Jamie Lewelling, Jamal Musiala, Felix Nmecha, Aleksandar Pavlovic, Angelo Stiller, Florian Wirtz. **Forwards:** Maximilian Beier, Kai Havertz, Lennart Karl, Leroy Sane, Deniz Undav, Nick Woltemade.
CZECH REPUBLIC: Goalkeepers: Lukas Hornicek,

Matej Kovar, Jindrich Stanek. **Defenders:** Vladimir Coufal, David Doudera, Tomas Holes, Robin Hranac, Stepan Chaloupek, David Jurasek, Ladislav Krejci, Jaroslav Zeleny, David Zima. **Midfielders:** Pavel Bucha, Lukas Cerv, Vladimir Darida, Tomas Ladra, Lukas Provod, Michal Sadilek, Hugo Sochurek, Alexandr Sojka, Tomas Soucek, Pavel Sulc, Denis Visinsky. **Forwards:** Tomas Chory, Adam Hlozek, Mojmir Chytil, Christophe Kabongolav, Jan Kuchta, Patrik Schick. **SENEGAL: Goalkeepers:** Edouard Mendy, Yehvann Diouf, Mory Diaw. **Defenders:** Krepin Diatta, Antoine Mendy, Abdoulaye Seck, Kalidou Koulibaly, Ilay Camara, Moussa Niakhate, Mamadou Sarr, El-Hadji Malick Diouf, Moustapha Mbow, Ismail Jakobs. **Midfielders:** Idrissa Gueye, Habib Diarra, Pape Matar Sarr, Pape Gueye, Lamine Camara, Pathe Ciss, Bara Ndiaye. **Forwards:** Sadio Mane, Bamba Dieng, Iliman Ndiaye, Nicolas Jackson, Assane Diao, Ibrahim Mbaye, Cherif Ndiaye, Ismaila Sarr.

INBRIEF



We didn't want to take risks with Patidar, says Bobat

Rajat Patidar is good to go. He came through all of the concussion protocols successfully, but then started to display a few symptoms the day after. So we were quite cautious and didn't take any risks. We thought we'd give him a little bit longer to rest. We didn't want to expose him to trouble. But yeah, he's here and he's practising – Mo Bobat, RCB's director of cricket.



Head's form not a concern: SRH asst. batting coach

SRH's assistant batting coach Hariesh Jaikumar brushed away any concerns about Travis Head's lean form. "He is one of the best batters in the world, so him failing for two matches doesn't matter. He has scored runs for the last three years. He will come good in the rest of the games, we're very positive about it."



Aida clinches a treble in IGU Maharashtra golf

Aida Thimmaiah of Karnataka capitalised on Yogya Bhalla's slip to earn a treble (overall, category 'A' & 'B') in the IGU Maharashtra Ladies & Junior Girls Golf Championship in Mumbai on Thursday. Aida, a 12-year-old from Coorg, finished with a three-day total of three-over 198 in the main event.

The scores: Ladies & overall: 1) Aida Thimmaiah — 198 (64, 66, 68); 2) Yogya Bhalla — 200 (65, 66, 69). **Category 'A' (15-17 years):** 1) Aida — 198; 2) Yogya — 200. **Category 'B' (13-14):** 1) Aida — 198; 2) Rabab Kahlon — 206. **Category 'C' (11-12):** 1) Nandini Rathee — 220; 2) Gairat Kaur Kahlon — 223.

Discus thrower Banvir banned for seven years

Discus thrower Banvir Singh has been banned for seven years by the National Anti-Doping Agency's Appeal Panel (ADAP) for flunking a dope test, adding two years to the punishment handed out to him by the Disciplinary Committee. Last year, NADA's Anti-Doping Disciplinary Panel (ADDP) had suspended Banvir for five years for using steroid methandienone. Apart from this, long distance runner Harendra Kumar has been handed another four-year suspension effective from August 2 this year. He was earlier handed a four year ban by the ADPP effective from August 3, 2022 after testing positive for banned Darbepoetin.



Europa League: Villa beats Freiburg to end title drought

Aston Villa strolled to a 3-0 victory over Freiburg in the Europa League final in Istanbul on Wednesday to end the club's 30-year trophy drought. Youri Tielemans fired Villa ahead with an exquisite volley and Emiliano Buendia curled in a superb strike from outside the box before half-time. Morgan Rogers stabbed in a third as Villa dominated in its first major European final for 44 years to secure manager Unai Emery his record-extending fifth Europa League title.

The result: Freiburg 0 lost to Aston Villa 3 (Tielemans 41, Buendia 45+3, Rogers 58).

Much-improved SRH braces up for RCB test

Malinga's fine form and the emergence of Sakib and Praful have bolstered the Cummins-led bowling attack; the home team will be determined to seal a Qualifier 1 berth

IPL-19

Anirudh Velamuri
HYDERABAD

Nearly two months ago, Royal Challengers Bengaluru and Sunrisers Hyderabad kicked off this IPL season carrying expectation and different kinds of pressure. RCB arrived as the defending champion while SRH sought to turn promise into authority.

The sides meet again on Friday at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium, this time in the business end of the tournament. Royal Challengers, moving with ruthless efficiency, are close to sealing top spot, with Sunrisers hoping to break into the top two.

Vastly different unit SRH will challenge the visitor with a vastly different bowling attack from their previous meeting, when Jaydev Unadkat and Harshal Patel led the unit in captain Pat Cummins' absence.

Eshan Malinga has emerged as Sunrisers' talisman with 17 wickets, while Sakib Hussain (14) and Praful Hinge (11) have offered



Shining bright: Pravul and Kishan have played vital roles in SRH's rise after a slow start to the season. NAGARA GOPAL

strong support.

Since returning to action, Cummins has added pace and intensity to the bowling pack, taking eight wickets in six appearances.

This will be SRH's first line of attack against a team that hardly appears to be vulnerable.

RCB, too, boasts a formidable bowling unit led by former SRH medium-pacer Bhuvneshwar Kumar, who has claimed 24 wickets in 13 matches.

He has been ably backed by Josh Hazlewood (12), Raskh Salam (12), and Krunal Pandya (10).

Today's match

Hyderabad, 7.30 p.m.
HEAD-TO-HEAD
Played: 26
SRH 14 | RCB 12
PREVIOUS MEETING
RCB won by six wickets, 2026
LIVE ON STAR SPORTS 1 & JIHOTSTAR

With the bat, Virat Kohli has led the charge with 542 runs in 13 matches. Devdutt Padikkal (412) and skipper Rajat Patidar (337) have also played key roles, with Tim David and Romario Shepherd providing firepower down the order.

For SRH, the openers' contributions remain crucial, but Heinrich Klaasen has been the standout batter with 555 runs in 13 games. Abhishek Sharma (507) and Ishan Kishan (490) have been influential, while Travis Head (367), despite having a quieter season, remains capable of turning a match on its head.

If the first fixture set the tone for IPL 2026, this clash could deliver the perfect crescendo before the playoffs.

Gray fights troublesome back and Sasikumar for semifinal berth

TENNIS

Ashwin Achal
BENGALURU

Mukund Sasikumar was handed a great chance to seal a semifinal berth at the S.M. Krishna Memorial Open here on Thursday, but he failed to capitalise on it.

In the middle of the third set, his opponent Alastair Gray called for a medical time out. Weighed down by a troublesome back, Gray moved gingerly when he came back to the court.

Sasikumar would have liked to keep the rallies going long to trouble an injured Gray, but a slew of unforced errors damaged his chances. With nothing to lose, second seed Gray went on the offensive, ripping



On the offensive: Gray ripped one-handed down-the-line backhand winners to stay afloat. K. MURALI KUMAR

one-handed down-the-line backhand winners to stay afloat. An animated Sasikumar (world no. 524) exclaimed loudly after every good play, but it was the fighting Briton who prevailed 6-2, 5-7, 7-6(3).

Gray will face fourth seed Petr Bar Biryukov in

the semifinal on Friday.

The results: Quarterfinals: Alastair Gray (GBR) bt Mukund Sasikumar 6-2, 5-7, 7-6(3); Hamish Stewart (GBR) bt Ognjen Milic (Ser) 6-2, 6-1. Petr Bar Biryukov bt Mitsuki Wei Kang Leong (Mas) 6-2, 5-7, 6-3; Ilya Ivashka bt Alex Hernandez (Mex) 6-1, 6-2.

Pragg held by Deac; Firouzja withdraws

Press Trust of India
BUCHAREST

Grandmaster R. Praggnanandhaa was held to a draw by Deac Bogdan-Daniel while Alireza Firouzja decided to finally call it quits in the sixth round of the Super Chess Classic, part of Grand Chess Tour.

Germany's Vincent Keymer, who got a walk over from the injured Firouzja, is on 4.5 points, ahead of Jordan Van Foreest, Anish Giri, top seed Fabiano Caruana and Praggnanandhaa, who all have 3.5.

The results (round 6): Deac Bogdan-Daniel (2) drew with R. Praggnanandhaa (3.5); Vincent Keymer (4.5) walk over Alireza Firouzja (1); Fabiano Caruana (3.5) drew with Javokhir Sindarov (2.5); Jordan Van Foreest (3.5) drew with Anish Giri (3.5); Wesley So (3) drew with Maxime Vachier-Lagrave (3).



Cousins.

Cousins is compound chief coach ahead of LA28

Press Trust of India
KOLKATA

With an eye on the 2028 LA Olympics where compound archery will make its debut, India has appointed multiple-time former World champion Dave Cousins as the chief compound coach, with the American set to join within two weeks ahead of the Stage 3 World Cup in Antalya next month. LA 2028 has only the mixed team event, and the Archery Association of India believes Cousins fits perfectly into its long-term plans.

Last chance for CWG hopefuls to make the grade for Glasgow

ATHLETICS

Y.B. Sarangi
RANCHI

Notwithstanding some major withdrawals, a clutch of big names – including Tejaswin Shankar, Animesh Kujur, M. Sreesankar, Tajinderpal Singh Toor, Sachin Yadav and Annu Rani – promise to make the 29th National Federation athletics meet a mouthwatering affair.

The event, starting at the Birsu Munda Stadium, Morabadi, here on Friday, is the last qualifying event for the Commonwealth Games. Athletes achieving prescribed qualification marks will be eligible to compete in Glasgow.

World and Olympic champion javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra, who is nursing injuries, Asian Games champion and



Happy tidings: Sprinter Kujur and decathlete Tejaswin share a light moment on the eve of the Federation athletics meet. RITU RAJ KONWAR

Commonwealth Games silver medalist steeplechaser Avinash Sable, who delayed his return from an injury lay-off, Commonwealth Games champion triple jumper Eldhose Paul and Asian Games medallist Parul Chaudhary are some leading names who are skipping the event.

Parul, who clocked an impressive 9:12.84 in the 3000m steeplechase in the

who take permission and achieve the qualifying mark in 'recognised events.'

A conducive weather at the peak of summer here enthused the athletes here.

Tejaswin, who trained and competed in the USA for about five months, sounded optimistic. "The weather is good. If I qualify for high jump in decathlon, that will be unprecedented," said Tejaswin, the National decathlon and high jump record holder who has done 2.26m in high jump and 7947 points in decathlon this season.

Kujur, too, was confident. "I'm focusing on the 200m, that's my favourite event," said Kujur.

The event, witnessing the introduction of SRY Gene Test at the domestic level, will also serve as the qualifying event for the Asian under-23 championships.

Sports Ministry proposes harsher punishments, fines for doping enablers

Uthra Ganesan
NEW DELHI

The Sports Ministry is seeking to target the doping ecosystem and formalise criminalisation of possession, trafficking, distribution and administration of banned substances in the upcoming Parliament session.

The ministry has uploaded the draft note with necessary amendments under a new Chapter VI-A to the recently modified National Anti Doping Act 2022 for public consultation seeking feedback till June 18.

After vetting the suggestions, the modified Bill would be tabled in the Parliament.

"At the moment, we are only punishing those who are consuming and the sanctions are limited to sporting activities including bans or suspensions. But doping is not just a sporting violation now; it has evolved into an organised ecosystem and we need to target everyone involved right from those prescribing to those procuring and supplying to the ones administering it to the athletes. Anyone who is involved at any level will be liable," Union Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said on Thursday.

The proposed amendments, once ratified, could have far-reaching implications for both the transgressors and government officials with the latter em-

Important amendments to the scope of offence and punishment:

Up to five years' imprisonment, ₹2 lakh fine, or both for selling, trafficking, prescribing or distributing banned substances or methods linked to doping

Up to five years' imprisonment, ₹2 lakh fine, or both for giving banned substances or methods directly to an athlete

Up to three years' imprisonment, ₹2 lakh fine, or both for selling prohibited substances without prescribed labelling

Up to 10 years' imprisonment and ₹5 lakh fine for offences involving athletes under-18, organised crime networks and commercial operations

All offences specified in the amendment will be cognizable and non-bailable. Offences deemed illegal in India will be actionable even if they happen outside the country

powered to search any suspected individual or premises, seize any suspected prohibited substance or documentary evidence of it therein or in any public place and detain the suspect for 24 hours before producing before a judicial authority.

Exemption

In an attempt to protect genuine medical cases, athletes possessing Therapeutic Use Exemption (TUE) and registered medical practitioners prescribing or administering a banned substance in an emergency with the consent of the athlete will be exempted, provided the athlete applies for a retrospective TUE at the earliest.

NEW DELHI ROUND-UP

Abhay, Rehan play starring roles

Abhay Chauhan's 125 and Rehan Singh's five for 43 helped Madras CC rout Dazz Sports by 78 runs in the 51st all-India Tyagmurthi Goswami Ganesh Dutt Memorial cricket tournament at S.G.T.B. Khalsa College ground in Delhi on Thursday.

The scores: Madras CC 350/9 in 40 overs (Abhay Chauhan 125, Sujal Singh 50, Jasvir Sehrawat 30) bt Dazz Sports 272 in 39.3 overs (Abhishek Goswami 40, Uvais Ahmad 68, Divyansh Joshi 44, Satyam Sangu 43, Rehan Singh 5/43).

Yash steers Bal Bhavan to victory

Yash Bhatia led the way with a knock of 88 as Bal Bhavan chased down 282 against Delhi Cricket Hub with four wickets in hand in the 49th Lala Raghubir Singh Hot Weather cricket tournament at Modern School in Delhi on Thursday.

The scores: Delhi Cricket Hub 281/8 in 40 overs (Noor Mohammad 43, Harish Dagar 58, Deepak 68, Bhagwan Singh 36 n.o.) lost to Bal Bhavan 282/6 in 33.1 overs (Yash Dhull 39, Dev Lakra 81, Yash Bhatia 88, Agamjyot Singh 35 n.o., Saiansh Vohra 3/64).

Ashmita advances to quarterfinals

Press Trust of India
KUALA LUMPUR

Ashmita Chaliha moved into the quarterfinals of the Malaysia Masters Super 500 badminton tournament on Thursday, with a 21-13, 21-16 victory over Malaysia's Goh Jin Wei in the pre-quarterfinals.

Other results: Women: Malvika Bansod lost to Hojmark Kjaersfeldt (Den) 21-16, 8-21, 15-21; Devika Sihag lost to Chen Yufei (Chn) 16-21, 13-21; **Men's doubles:** A. Hariharan & M.R. Arjun lost to Hu Ke Yuan & Lin Xiang Yi (Chn) 14-21, 15-21; **Mixed doubles:** Sathwik Kanapuram & Radhika Sharma lost to Presley Smith & Jennie Gai (USA) 12-21, 25-27.

LIVE TELECAST

► **IPL:** Star Sports 1 & JioHotstar, 7.30 p.m.

► **Formula One:** Canadian GP (Sprint shootout), F1 TV, F1 TV Pro App & FanCode, 2 a.m. (Saturday)

TELANGANA CO-OPERATIVE MARKETING FEDERATION LTD.
Email: proc.tsmarkfed2018@gmail.com, Ph.No: 040-2460 7108

Rc.No.615/P&M/Disposal of Maize/2025-26 Date: 21.05.2026
TENDER NOTIFICATION FOR ONLINE E-AUCTION FOR THE SALE OF MAIZE VANAKALAM 2025-26 PROCURED BY TG MARKFED.

Tender notification for online e-Auctions on disposal of Maize Vanakalam 2025-26 procured by TG MARKFED for the quantity of 3,80, 187 MTs in 25 Lots through e-procurement.telangana.gov.in or <https://auction.telangana.gov.in/> i.e. Telangana e-procurement portal (Applications in e-procurement portal will be available from 10:30 AM on 22.05.2026).

1. E-auction bidding will commence on 29.05.2026 from 10:00 AM to 05:00 PM.
2. Last date for submission of EMD: 27.05.2026 upto 05:00 PM. For online registration and further technical support please contact Service providers Mobile No: 7337445545 / 6309339690 / 7337445546 / 9912756216
For further details please contact. Ph: 7288879806, and 7288879829

DIPR R.O.No.154-PPICL-AGENCY/ADVT/2026-27 Dt: 21-05-2026 Sd/-MANAGING DIRECTOR

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

// सर्व संबंधित को सूचना //

भारत सरकार, पर्यावरण वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय, नई दिल्ली की ई.आई.ए. अधिसूचना दिनांक 14/09/2006 (यथा संशोधित) के अन्तर्गत सर्व साधारण को सूचित किया जाता है कि मेसर्स छत्तीसगढ़ मिनरल डेवलपमेंट कार्पोरेशन लिमिटेड, (नर्मदापुर एवं कुनिया बाक्सार्डट माईनिंग), ग्राम-नर्मदापुर एवं कुनिया, तह.-मैनपाट, जिला-सर्गुजा स्थित कुल क्षेत्रफल - 139.500 हेक्टेयर (निजी भूमि- 57.563 हेक्टेयर एवं शासकीय भूमि -81.937 हेक्टेयर) में प्रस्तावित बाक्सार्डट (मुख्य खनिज) उत्खनन क्षमता- 9,36,586.46 टन प्रतिवर्ष, रोम- 4,61,538.46 टन प्रतिवर्ष, ओल्डर बर्डन क्षमता- 4,75,048.0 टन प्रतिवर्ष, अपशिष्ट 1,61,538.50 टन प्रतिवर्ष के पर्यावरणीय स्वीकृति हेतु लोक सुनवाई मुख्यालय, छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल, नवा रायपुर अटल नगर, रायपुर में आवेदन किया गया है। उक्त परियोजना के संबंध में आपत्तियां/सुझाव/विचार, टीका-टिप्पणियों, इस सूचना के जारी होने के दिनांक से 30 दिवस के भीतर क्षेत्रीय कार्यालय, छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल, कन्या परिसर रोड, शासकीय आयुर्वेदिक चिकित्सालय के पास, नमनाकला गंगापुर, अंबिकापुर, जिला- सर्गुजा (छ.ग.) के कार्यालय में मौखिक या लिखित रूप से कार्यालयीन समय में प्रस्तुत की जा सकती है। इस परियोजना के लिए लोक सुनवाई दिनांक 23/06/2026 को समय 11:00 बजे, स्थल-तहसील कार्यालय नर्मदापुर के सामने, तह.-मैनपाट, जिला-सर्गुजा (छ.ग.) में नियत की गई है।

ई.आई.ए. अधिसूचना दिनांक 14/09/2006 (यथा संशोधित) के प्रावधानों के अनुसार ड्राफ्ट ई.आई.ए. रिपोर्ट, कार्यपालक सार की प्रतियां (हिन्दी व अंग्रेजी में) एवं इसकी सी.डी. (साफ्ट कॉपी) जन सामान्य के अवलोकन/पठन हेतु डायरेक्टर, पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय, भारत सरकार, इंदिरा पर्यावरण भवन, जोरबाग रोड, नई दिल्ली, साईटिस्ट 'डी' एकीकृत क्षेत्रीय कार्यालय, पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय, अरण्य भवन, नार्थ ब्लॉक, सेक्टर-19, नवा रायपुर अटल नगर, जिला-रायपुर, कार्यालय कलेक्टर, अंबिकापुर, जिला-सर्गुजा (छ.ग.), कार्यालय मुख्य कार्यपालन अधिकारी, जिला पंचायत, अंबिकापुर, जिला-सर्गुजा (छ.ग.), अनुविभागीय अधिकारी (रा.), कार्यालय अनुविभागीय अधिकारी (रा.) सीतापुर, जिला- सर्गुजा (छ.ग.), मुख्य कार्यपालन अधिकारी, जनपद पंचायत, मैनपाट, जिला-सर्गुजा (छ.ग.), कार्यालय महाप्रबंधक, जिला व्यापार एवं उद्योग केन्द्र, अंबिकापुर, जिला-सर्गुजा (छ.ग.), उपसंचालक/ खनिज अधिकारी, कार्यालय कलेक्टर (खनिज शाखा), अंबिकापुर, जिला-सर्गुजा (छ.ग.), सचिव/सचिव, कार्यालय ग्राम पंचायत - कुनिया, नर्मदापुर, कमलेश्वरपुर, कुदारीडीह, बरौमा, उरंगा, रोपाखार, मालतीपुर, लुरेना, पथरई, सपनादर, बंदना, उडुमकेला, केसरा, तह.-मैनपाट, जिला-सर्गुजा (छ.ग.), सदस्य सचिव, मुख्यालय, छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल, पर्यावास भवन, नार्थ ब्लॉक, सेक्टर-19, नवा रायपुर अटल नगर, जिला-रायपुर (छ.ग.) एवं क्षेत्रीय अधिकारी, क्षेत्रीय कार्यालय, छत्तीसगढ़ पर्यावरण संरक्षण मंडल, कन्या परिसर रोड, शासकीय आयुर्वेदिक चिकित्सालय के पास, नमनाकला गंगापुर, तह.-अंबिकापुर, जिला-सर्गुजा (छ.ग.) में रखी गई है।

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

Government of Punjab
Tender Reference No:-Tender No. 01 of 2026-2027

The Department of Punjab Water Supply and Sewerage Division Gurdaspur invites Bid for Civil Work.

Sr. No.	Name of Work
1	Providing & supplying, laying, cutting, testing, Commissioning of Water Supply DLK-7 / K9 Pipe line with house connection, installation of Tubewells, Construction of Inspection Chamber, Pump House, Sluice valve, Fire Hydrant Haudies including Dismantling & reconditioning of roads in all other work complete in respect thereto at Gurdaspur. (UNDER UJDF SCHEME)
2	Providing, Laying, Jointing, Cutting, Testing of Sewer R.C.C. NP-3 with HDPE lining & Rising Main D.I. K-9 Piping & Construction of Manhole Chamber, Hatch Box, Main Pumping Station and Survey, Design, Supply & Soil Testing Construction, Installation, Commissioning of 20.00 MLD Sewerage Treatment Plant Cum (60.0 KLD) FSTP respectively based on any suitable sustainable & proven biological technology including O & M for sixty months only for STP & FSTP after stabilization period of 3 months or more at Town & Distt. Gurdaspur. (SBM 2.0 Scheme).

Closing Date & Time : 15-06-2026 Time upto 5.00 PM
Openign Date & Time : 16-06-2026 at 12.00 PM
Pre-Bid Meeting Venue : Sr. No. 01 Date 02-06-2026 Time 10.00 AM
Sr. No. 02 Date 02-06-2026 Time 01.00 PM
At O/o Executive Engineer, Pb. W/S & Sew Division, Gurdaspur Near Fish Park, Rullia Ram Colony, Gurdaspur.
Mobile Number- 76966-39080
Email- pwssdsgs1@gmail.com

For Detail login to : (<https://eproc.punjab.gov.in>)
Note:- Any Corrigendum(s)/addendum, to the Tender notice shall be published on the above website only.

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Sl.No.	Tender Number	Tender Name	Tender Quantity	Published date	Last date of submission
1	KSDL/2025-26/SE0222/CALL-2	Appointment of Agency for supplying Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) Licenses for KSDL	Services	19.05.2026	29.05.2026
2	KSDL/2026-27/IND1249	Procurement of Wooden Pallet Two side closer 63 inch length X 48 inch width X 6 inch thickness at KSDL, Bengaluru Complex	1000 Nos.	20.05.2026	06.06.2026
3	KSDL/2025-26/SE0229/CALL-2	Secondary Freight for the transportation of KSDL Products from KSDL DPG/C&FA godowns to requisite destinations (Institution sales and RDS) in Karnataka and Goa	Services	21.05.2026	01.06.2026
4	KSDL/2026-27/IND1221/CALL-2	Procurement of Habanolide/Globalide (Short-Term Tender)	8300 Kgs	21.05.2026	29.05.2026

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Session 1: Navigating The Financial Capital: 10:15 am - 10:50 am
Ashwini Bhide, IAS, BMC Commissioner in conversation with Vinaya Vilas Deshpande, Chief of Bureau, The Hindu

Session 2: Kumbh: The Spiritual Boost for a Regional Economy: 11:00 am - 12:00 noon
Girish Mahajan, Cabinet Minister for Kumbh Mela
Shekhar Singh, IAS, Commissioner, Nashik Kumbh Mela
Manisha Khatri, IAS, Municipal Commissioner, Nashik Municipal Corporation
Lubaina Rangwala, Programme Head, Urban Development, WRI India
Moderated by Lalatendu Mishra, Senior Deputy Editor, The Hindu

Session 3: From Davos to Singapore: The Big Investment Picture: 12:00 noon - 12:15 pm
Special Address by Kaustubh Dhavse, Chief Advisor to the Chief Minister

Lunch: 12:15 - 13:00 pm

Session 4: Mumbai and Beyond: The Plan for an Expanding Metropolis: 13:00 - 14:00 pm
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

Session 5: Mumbai to Surjagad: Expressway to Prosperity: 14:00 - 15:00 pm
Special Address by Eknath Shinde, Deputy Chief Minister, Maharashtra, followed by a conversation with Vinaya Vilas Deshpande, Chief of Bureau, The Hindu

Session 6: The Untapped Opportunities: Maharashtra's Maritime Sector: 15:00 - 15:45 pm
Nitesh Narayan Rane, Minister for Ports & Fisheries in conversation with Vinaya Vilas Deshpande, Chief of Bureau, The Hindu

Session 7: Amrit Kaal 2047: What the Industry Expects for Maritime Development: 15:45 - 16:00 pm
Special Address by Capt (Retd.) Jagmohan, Chairperson & Managing Director, Mazagon Dock Limited

Session 8: More than a Financial Hub: Mumbai from the Eyes of the World: 16:00 - 16:30 pm
Paul Murphy, Consul General, Australia
Erik Hallstrom, Consul General, Finland
Moderated by Vinaya Vilas Deshpande, Chief of Bureau, The Hindu

Break: 16:30 - 17:00 pm

Session 9: India's Infrastructure Growth Trajectory - The Last Decade of Growth in Rail, Road & Shipping Sectors: 17:00 - 17:30 pm
Special Address by M Jamshed, Distinguished Fellow CRF Sr. Adviser to World Bank (Former Member Traffic Railway Board)

Vote of Thanks: 17:30 onwards

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SCAN TO KNOW MORE

R. Kaushik

Earlier this week, when Ajit Agarkar's selection panel met to pick the Indian teams for the one-off Test and three One-Day Internationals against Afghanistan next month, a third different vice-captain for the longest format in as many home series was installed.

Ravindra Jadeja was Shubman Gill's deputy for the two-Test series against West Indies in October, a development stemming only because Rishabh Pant was unavailable, recovering as he was from a broken foot sustained in Manchester in July. Pant, who was the vice-captain in England, returned to that role - conferred on him for the first time before the England tour as India embarked on a new adventure in Test cricket - for the South Africa showdown and led the country in Guwahati when Gill was ruled out with a neck injury.

It wasn't the most auspicious of captaincy debuts for the wicketkeeper-batter, who oversaw India's heaviest defeat by runs (408) ever in the history of the five-day game. Pant himself had a match to forget as batter, dismissed for 7 and 13, the former to an ill-advised hoick against Marco Jansen in the second over after lunch on day three when his side was already on the ropes, at 105 for four in response to the visitors' 489.

Now, it would appear as if Pant won't be leading the country in a Test for a while to come after being stripped of his vice-captaincy, which has been conferred on K.L. Rahul. Perhaps in a tacit, roundabout, face-saving way, Agarkar and his band of wise men have acknowledged without saying it in as many words that they made a mistake by overlooking Rahul's leadership credentials when they decided to move on from the Rohit Sharma era. Rahul is already an all-format international captain, is in his 12th year at the highest level and has plenty of top-flight cricket left in him, but it is learnt that when the selectors met ahead of the England tour to identify the next leadership group, they didn't even so much as give the Karnataka batter a thought.

Anyway, we digress. Where does this latest development leave Pant? On the same day when he was divested of the vice-captaincy, the 28-year-old was also dumped from the 50-over squad to take on the Afghans. He is already superfluous to India's T20I plans, not having played in

It's been a dismal year thus far for Pant. The abdominal injury was perhaps an indication of what was in store, maybe a portent of things to come

that variant since July 2024; he hasn't also figured in a 50-over international since August 2024, though he appeared to be back in favour when he was picked in the squad to play New Zealand at home this

January before picking up an abdominal injury at nets before the first match which ruled him out of the entire series. Pant has been supplanted as the second wicketkeeper in the ODI squad by Ishan Kishan, whose international comeback is gathering pace since his return to the national side ahead of the T20 World Cup earlier this year. It means the Lucknow Super Giants captain, the highest paid player in IPL history, has been pigeonholed for the time being as only a Test player, a remarkable turnaround in perception given that he made his T20I debut a good year and a half before first donning the Test cap.

It's been a dismal year thus far for Pant. The abdominal injury was perhaps an indication of what was in store, maybe a portent of things to come, because this has been a singularly unedifying IPL campaign for Pant, both as batter and captain. In 12 innings, the still exciting left-hander has managed just 286 runs at a strike-rate of 140.19, his only half-century (68 n.o.) coming very early in the season in a winning cause against Chennai Super Kings.

He has looked laboured, out of sync and more than a little confused about what approach to embrace. Neither all-out aggression nor sporadic, maybe half-hearted, attempts at innings-building have paid off, and Pant has given the impression of having left the free spirit he has been for over a decade back in the changing room.

Under his watch, LSG have notched up just four wins from 13 outings, the sum of their parts not contributing to the larger whole. While the bowling has been reasonably up to scratch, the big batting boys didn't come to the party until it was too late, until their fate had been sealed. Some of the decision-making has been addled and beyond belief, not least the call to send Nicholas Pooran to face Sunil Narine in the Super Over, for two reasons. One, Pooran doesn't have the most encouraging head-to-head against the spin wizard. Two, the left-hander was in abysmal form at the time (only slightly better now) and one got the impression that Pooran for the Super Over was more out of hope and optimism than any great sense of conviction.

There is no denying the fact that these are troubled times for Pant, who no longer commands the same excitement



It's all been going downhill for Rishabh Pant

The southpaw appears to be a pale shadow of the player who once lit up the world stage; he has been relieved of vice-captaincy duties in Tests, dropped from India's ODI set-up and is nowhere close to making the T20I squad

quotient as he once did. Upstaged by the likes of Vaibhav Suryavanshi, Priyansh Arya and Abhishek Sharma, among others, Pant suddenly doesn't enjoy the same leeway he once was accorded when he did entertainingly daft things at the batting crease. Of course, he is no longer an emerging star; he is in his tenth year as an India player, boasts more than 150 international appearances and a T20 World Cup winner's medal and, at the risk of being repetitive, has already captained the nation.

Enormous expectations

That being said, the expectations on him continue to be enormous. He has to both entertain and deliver, a victim of the image people have of him rather than an image he has carefully cultivated. When he is at the batting crease, fans believe the falling scoop and the charge-and-clatter against the faster bowlers are *de rigueur*, but if he perishes while playing those very shots, he is held up as irresponsible and unwilling to play the situation. It's a difficult cross to bear, it's bound to impact one's psyche. It's at that crossroads that Pant now finds himself, with plenty of cricket still in him but apprehensive if he will get the right platforms to showcase his unquestioned brilliance.

The best of Pant was on view in England last summer, in the three-and-a-half Tests in which he featured. Centuries in both innings in Leeds (even if in a losing cause) and three further scores of more than 50 in his next five knocks, some produced with typical chutzpah and others in a more studied manner, embellished his standing as one of the premier Test wicketkeeper-batters of his generation, at the very least. The spunk, spirit, bravery and courage he showed in coming back to bat after breaking his foot and making 54 in the first innings of the Old Trafford Test was in keeping with his reputation of putting mind over matter. Popular with the opposition fans as well as with his opponents, Pant was the talk of England even though his captain and good friend amassed a stunning 754 runs and even though it was in his absence that India pulled off a magnificent series-levelling win at the Oval in early August.

Less than 10 months on, Pant has been put on tenuous notice even in Test cricket, potentially. Agarkar was quick to dismiss suggestions that there was no threat to his place in the longer format scheme of things, but if there is one thing we have learnt over the years, it is to not take these utterances at face value. "We want him (Pant) to become the best Test player that he has always been," the



Sliding Super Giant: The 19th edition of the IPL has been a disappointing one for Pant, both as batter and captain. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP & R.V. MOORTHY

New Chandigarh will mark Pant's 50th Test appearance, a milestone moment if there ever was one. Don't be surprised if it is also a stepping stone

former India all-rounder remarked. "I don't think there is any concern with his spot in the Test team. I think he is one of our main batters in that line-up. (He) had a really good tour of England till he got injured. He has always been very good in Test cricket."

That, Pant certainly has been. Since making 114 in his third appearance, at the Oval in September 2018, he has relished the challenge of the red ball, especially overseas. Six of his eight centuries have come away from home, and the showman with the sense of occasion in him surfaced in Chennai in September 2024 when, in his first Test in 22 months - many of them spent recuperation from a horror road accident in December 2022 - he smashed an extraordinary 109 in the second innings against Bangladesh. Despite scoring at 74.24 per 100 balls, he averages 42.91 from 49 matches, and his pre-eminence in the batting line-up has been recognised with a permanent No. 5 slot, which is often the bridge between the accomplished top order and the somewhat slightly less skilled lower half.

Without being uncharitable, it must be said that captaincy doesn't seem to sit comfortably on Pant's sturdy shoulders, captaincy not to be confused with leadership. Pant is inherently instinctive,

relying primarily on gut-feel and intuition. He will remain a leader forever, especially from behind the stumps when he has the best view of the ground and is ideally placed to read angles and therefore dictate field placements. But the jury will continue to be out on whether he is cut out for captaincy, *per se*. One has repeatedly got the impression that Pant doesn't entirely relish the straitjacket that accompanies the suffix of (captain), an impression that has been echoed by others who have both played for and skippered the team in Test cricket.

A footsoldier now

Pant has little control over the off-field developments that have made him a footsoldier (from deputy general not long back) all over again in Test cricket. He will also obviously be disappointed at being cast out of the 50-over line-up, but again, what can he do about it? If there is one thing he has showcased aplenty, especially in the last three and a half years, it is resilience, inner strength and a burning desire to be true and honest to himself. He knows that starting next fortnight, there are 10 Tests ahead of India between June and March, 10 opportunities for him to invoke the spirit of Pant and do the Pant things that are so unique to him. If that leads to other doors opening, so be it.

New Chandigarh will mark Pant's 50th Test appearance, a milestone moment if there ever was one. Don't be surprised if it is also a stepping stone, a springboard to a glorious second coming. After all, with Pant, there are no surprises anymore. Or are there?

THE GIST

There is no denying the fact that these are troubled times for Pant, who no longer commands the same excitement quotient as he once did

On the same day when he was divested of the Test vice-captaincy, he was also dumped from the 50-over squad for the Afghanistan series

It must be said that captaincy doesn't seem to sit comfortably on Pant's sturdy shoulders, captaincy not to be confused with leadership

HEALTH

For pregnant women in Chennai's tenements, summer offers no escape

Living in densely packed houses with little to no green cover, these women spend most days managing fatigue and the heat; studies have found that pregnant women exposed to high temperatures face significantly higher risks of miscarriage, preterm birth, low birthweight and intrauterine growth restriction

Geetha Srimathi

The queue outside the Primary Health Centre (PHC) in Perumbakkam, a neighbourhood on the southern outskirts of Chennai, begins forming early, before the sun climbs fully overhead and the concrete starts radiating heat. By 10.30 a.m., pregnant women occupy most of the verandah — clutching medical files and water bottles that are already warm.

Ceiling fans push thick air around the room but offer little relief. Outside the PHC, row after row of grey tenements built by the Tamil Nadu Urban Habitat Development Board stand packed tightly together, their numbered blocks stretching into the distance, a maze of concrete. There are few trees, barely any open ground, and little room for air to move. Twenty-four-year-old Priya has been here since morning. Five months pregnant with her second child, she shifts uncomfortably in her seat while keeping one eye on her four-year-old son. She says the worst part of summer is not the daytime heat but the nights. "From midnight till almost 4 a.m., I don't sleep properly," she says. "It's too stuffy inside our house."

In the single-room apartment she shares with her family, the heat settles into the walls and lingers long after sunset. Sweat leaves rashes and pale patches across her hands and face. Doctors at the PHC tell her she is anaemic and underweight, and repeatedly advise her to drink more water, eat iron-rich foods and rest. But rest is difficult to come by. Sleep comes in fragments between heat, work and household responsibilities.

Across Chennai's resettlement colonies such as Perumbakkam and Ezhil Nagar, families relocated from informal settlements into public housing now live in dense clusters of low-cost apartment blocks built by the State government.

Trapped heat

In many buildings, narrow staircases trap heat through the day, corridors remain dim even at noon, and windows open into walls of neighbouring blocks rather than open spaces. In some apartments, a weak cross-breeze reaches the upper floors, but in many others the air feels stagnant. The absence of green cover is striking. Concrete dominates the landscape — concrete roads, terraces and courtyards absorbing and radiating heat through the day and into the night.

Thirty-one-year-old Anandhi, pregnant with her fourth child, has recently stopped working at a canteen in an IT company because of exhaustion and health complications. Diabetic and dependent on insulin injections during pregnancy, she spends most days trying to manage fatigue, childcare and the heat.

"The doctor tells me to drink enough water and eat foods with more water content," she says. But hydration is a challenge: most residents in the TNUHDB tenements rely on purchased drinking



Beating the heat: A policy document from the Tamil Nadu Urban Habitat Development Board calls for climate-resilient and people-centric housing with better ventilation, social amenities, mixed-use planning and improved green cover. B. VELANKANNI RAJ

water cans, and many say they struggle to afford additional cans during the summer months, even as rising temperatures increase household water consumption and strain already tight budgets.

Jaishree Gajaraj, head of the department and senior consultant in obstetrics and gynaecology at Varam Women's Superspecialty Centre, MGM Healthcare Chennai, says pregnancy naturally increases the body's metabolic rate, which in turn raises sweating and the risk of dehydration during hot weather. "When we talk about dehydration, we often think only about water loss, but the body also loses electrolytes," she says, adding that fluids such as buttermilk, citrus fruits and traditional drinks with salt content can help replenish them.

The body usually regulates its core temperature despite external heat or cold, says Dr. Gajaraj, but prolonged exposure to extreme temperatures can overwhelm this mechanism. "When the body is unable to maintain its normal core temperature, that is when problems arise," she says.

A 2024 study published in the journal *BJOG* by researchers from Sri Ramachandra Institute of Higher Education and Research, Chennai found that pregnant women exposed to high temperatures faced significantly higher risks of miscarriage, preterm birth, low birthweight and intrauterine growth restriction. The study followed 800 pregnant women in Tamil Nadu between 2017 and 2022 and found that nearly half were exposed to unsafe heat levels.

Vidhya Venugopal, who led the study, says the risks are particularly severe for women living in informal settlements and overcrowded housing. For women already vulnerable because of anaemia, undernutrition, poor housing and demanding work, extreme heat

compounds existing risks. "These women cannot stop working when temperatures peak because losing even a day's wages is not an option," Prof. Venugopal says. "After spending hours in dangerous heat, they return to homes that trap warmth and allow no recovery. Their bodies never get the chance to recuperate."

For women without permanent housing, the realities are harsher still. Along the crowded stretch of Rattan Bazaar in north Chennai, 27-year-old Abirami sits beneath a tree with her three children beside her, arranging flowers for sale. The patch of shade beneath the branches is temporary; as the sun shifts, so does the family. She is waiting for allotment of a TNUHDB house. Until then, pavements and patches of shade are all she has.

Centre's guidelines

The Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs has directed States and Union Territories to ensure regular supply of drinking water, oral rehydration solutions and cooling facilities such as fans and ventilation systems in shelters under the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Urban Livelihoods Mission. However, there is limited awareness about these shelters and many people living on the streets remain reluctant to move into them because of concerns around safety, poor accessibility, and the fear of being separated from family members.

Tamil Nadu's own policy documents recognise heat as a public health threat. The State Planning Commission, in its Heat Mitigation Strategy report, identifies pregnant women among the groups most vulnerable to extreme temperatures. The report notes that nearly 74% of the State's population is exposed to temperatures exceeding 35 degrees Celsius and warns that prolonged heat exposure can worsen cardiovascular and respiratory illnesses

while posing serious risks to pregnant women, children and the elderly.

Urban planners and housing activists argue that the design of many resettlement colonies worsens heat stress. A policy document by the TNUHDB itself acknowledges that public housing in the State has historically prioritised cost and efficiency over residents' lived experiences. The document calls for climate-resilient and people-centric housing with better ventilation, social amenities, mixed-use planning and improved green cover.

Yet implementing such ideas remains difficult. Vanessa Peter, founder of IRCUDC, says public housing in Tamil Nadu has evolved after years of advocacy. But current housing projects continue to struggle with density and climate resilience.

Financial limitations shape many of these decisions. While the Union government contributes part of the funding for housing schemes, States must bear a substantial portion of the cost, which forces a compromise between affordability and liveability, she adds.

A 2025 advisory by the National Disaster Management Authority recommends identifying and mapping heat-vulnerable settlements and populations; improving access to shaded spaces, cooling centres, drinking water and emergency shelters; promoting affordable cooling solutions such as cool roofs, ventilation, insulation and reflective materials; increasing green cover through trees, urban forests and water-sensitive planning; strengthening heat action plans and early warning systems; and integrating heat resilience into housing schemes and urban planning.

(This story is part of the Asian College of Journalism's Climate Change Media Hub Mentorship Programme.)
(geetha.srimathi@thehindu.co.in)

THE GIST

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HUMERUS



Experts clarify the link between screen time, autism

Athira Elssa Johnson

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is increasingly being discussed on social media, often alongside claims linking excessive screen time to autism in children. However, neurologists and developmental experts say the science is far more complex.

Sheffali Gulati, paediatric neurologist and former professor at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), said autism cannot be reduced to one trigger alone. "Autism is still an enigma. There are strong genetic influences, environmental factors and epigenetic mechanisms all interacting together," she said.

Multiple causes

Experts say autism begins very early in brain development and has a strong hereditary basis. Dr. Gulati noted that studies show concordance rates of 60% to 90% in identical twins, indicating a major genetic contribution. Autism is also associated with several genetic conditions including Fragile X syndrome, Down syndrome, tuberous sclerosis and neurofibromatosis.



Checking in: Autism is a complex, lifelong neurodevelopmental condition primarily rooted in genetics and prenatal brain development. FILE PHOTO

She added that environmental associations being studied include air pollution, pesticide exposure, parental age and certain medications taken during pregnancy. "Screen time is being studied as one environmental factor among many. It should not be sensationalised as the sole cause," she said. Chakkeri Priyanka, consultant neurologist, Kauvery Hospital, said current scientific evidence does not support the claim that screens directly cause autism. "What studies have shown is association, not causation,"

she said. "Children who already have early traits of autism may naturally prefer screens because they are repetitive, predictable and less socially demanding."

She explained that parents of children with developmental concerns may also rely more on screens for calming or regulation, creating what researchers call "reverse causality," where increased screen use may actually be a consequence rather than the cause of developmental differences.

Abhinayaa J., consultant in Developmental Paediatrics at Apollo Children's Hospitals, says excessive screen exposure can still affect children's development, especially during the first few years of life when the brain undergoes rapid growth. "The first thousand days of life are extremely important for brain development," Dr. Gulati said. "This is when neural networks are forming and synapses are being strengthened and pruned."

Recent research has shown children living with autism began using screens earlier than neurotypical children, with significantly higher problematic media-use scores. However, experts stress that these behavioural effects are different from autism itself.

Experts also cautioned parents against extreme reactions such as suddenly eliminating all screen exposure overnight. They said screen habits should instead be reduced gradually while increasing human interaction, play and communication, especially at a time when technology is increasingly being integrated into healthcare, education and developmental therapies for children. (athira.elssa@thehindu.co.in)