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Australia wins fifth Test, bags series 4-1

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NEARBY



Cabinet nod for Logistics Infra Corporation

VIJAYAWADA
The Cabinet, chaired by Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu took key decisions, including the establishment of AP Logistics Infrastructure Corporation for developing infra projects. » Page 6

Air taxi, designed in Guntur, clears structural tests

GUNTUR
An air taxi, designed and manufactured in Guntur by Magnumwings, has successfully completed the crucial phase of structural frame testing. » Page 6

METROPLUS » PAGE 15

Mamata, ED lock horns over search at consultancy firm

West Bengal Chief Minister says the Central agency took away crucial data related to her party's strategy document, candidate lists; ED accuses her of removing key evidence during the raid

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

The Directorate of Enforcement (ED) on Thursday accused West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee of removing evidence from two locations during a raid against the political consultancy firm Indian Political Action Committee (I-PAC) in Kolkata.

The Trinamool Congress chairperson, who visited the I-PAC office and the residence of its co-founder Pratik Jain during the raid, said the search was "politically motivated to steal party data", adding that crucial information relating to the party's strategy documents and candidate lists was taken away by the Central agency.



Data tussle: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee at I-PAC co-founder Pratik Jain's residence in Kolkata on Thursday. PTI

"They [Bharatiya Janata Party] are great killers of democracy. How can they do it? What will happen if we reciprocate this ED search by raiding BJP party offices in Bengal?" Ms. Banerjee told media persons.

Ms. Banerjee reached Mr. Jain's south Kolkata residence at about 12.44 p.m. and later visited the I-PAC office in the city's Salt Lake area, leaving it at about 4.20 p.m. When she came out of the residence, she was seen with a file which she was not carrying when she entered.

In a statement, the ED said that the Chief Minister and her aides had "forcibly removed physical documents and electronic evidences".

"Ms. Banerjee took away key evidence including physical documents and electronic devices. The CM's convoy then proceeded to I-PAC's office premises, from where Ms. Banerjee, her aides, and the State police personnel forcibly removed physical documents and electronic evidences," the ED statement said.

The agency claimed that the Chief Minister's actions "have resulted in obstruction in ongoing investigation and proceedings under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA)".

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CM TO HIT THE STREETS
» PAGE 11

Trump clears Bill to slap up to 500% tariff on buying Russian oil

Tariff target

The Bill gives the U.S. President discretion to choose tariff figures over and above the 25% penalty tariffs already imposed on India

- The Bill, introduced in the Senate in April 2025, has enough co-sponsors from Republican and Democratic parties to suggest a smooth passage once brought to vote
- 84 co-sponsors in Senate out of a total of 100 members
- 151 co-sponsors in the House of Representatives

"They [India] must stop buying Russian oil... The President has only imposed a 25% tariff [thus far]"
SERGIO GOR
U.S. Ambassador-designate



Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI

Doubling down on his pressure on India to stop importing oil from Russia, U.S. President Donald Trump has 'greenlit' legislation that will empower him to levy up to 500% in tariffs on countries that buy oil or uranium from Russia, according to senior Senator Lindsey Graham.

Mr. Graham, a close associate of Mr. Trump, said the U.S. President on Wednesday "greenlit" the Russia Sanctions Bill, which could be voted in Congress "as early as next week". "This Bill would give Mr. Trump leverage against China, India, and Brazil to incentivise them to stop buying the cheap Russian oil that provides the financing for Putin's bloodbath against Ukraine," he said.

CONTINUED ON
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Speed up probe into death of TTD ex-staffer: HC

The Hindu Bureau
VIJAYAWADA

The A.P. High Court has asked the CID to speed up probe into the death of TTD former Assistant Vigilance and Security Officer (AVSO) Y. Satish Kumar.

During a hearing of the Parakamani case on Thursday, the court said that it would monitor the investigation if the situation warranted, after a charge-sheet is filed in this case.

The High Court observed that the TTD and the police appear to have weakened the Parakamani theft case by acting hand in glove with the prime accused C.V. Ravi Kumar.

It ordered that the TTD and Police should take action against those allegedly involved in the theft of foreign currency. It asked the TTD EO to submit a plan on modernising the assessing the value of offerings made to the Lord.



New scheme to aid victims of road accidents soon

Jagriti Chandra
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to launch a nationwide cashless treatment scheme for road accident victims, offering coverage of up to ₹1.5 lakh and a cash award for Good Samaritans who rush victims to hospitals.

The scheme will cover road accidents anywhere in the country, Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari said during a two-day conference of Transport Ministers, Secretaries and Commissioners States and UTs here.

The medical coverage would be under the third party insurance bought at the time of a car purchase.

A person who brings a victim to the hospital, who the government is calling "*rahavir*", would be given a cash award of ₹25,000, Mr. Gadkari said.



UN body report sets India's 2025-26 growth at 7.2%

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

A day after the Centre estimated the economy to grow at 7.4% in financial year 2025-26, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) said consumption and public investment can "largely offset" the impact of tariffs imposed by the U.S. and enable India to grow by 7.2% this fiscal.

The report warned that continuing tariffs could weigh on the economy as 18% of Indian exports are U.S.-bound. It said "tax reforms and monetary easing should provide additional near-term support", adding that strong demand from other markets will limit the tariff impact. The report predicted India's growth to be 7.4% in 2025. On a fiscal year basis, it estimated India to grow at 6.6% and 6.8% in 2026-27 and 2027-28, respectively. "In India, growth is estimated at 7.4% for 2025 and forecast at 6.6% for 2026 and 6.7% for 2027, supported by resilient consumption and strong public investment, which should offset the adverse impact of U.S. tariffs," it said.

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INBRIEF



Strict measures in place to curb crimes: Commissioner

Strict measures are in place to check the crime rate, especially those perpetrated against women, NTR District Police Commissioner S.V. Rajasekhara Babu has said. Participating as the chief guest in the valedictory of Mahila Utsavalu organised by women's organisation Taruni Tarangalu, on Thursday, Mr. Rajasekhara Babu expressed concern that many women live a stressful life due to conflicts in their relationships. He said while the rate of suicides is higher among men than women, the latter, too, go through immense stress due to problems. He urged youngsters and women not to resort to extreme steps and call the police instead in case of emergency. Later, Taruni Tarangalu vice-president Vidya Kanna said the literacy rate among women had seen an increase in the last five decades.

Text & Context and Health

Weekday features on *The Hindu* epaper (epaper.thehindu.com) carry explainers, special articles and quizzes. In the latest issue (January 9, Friday), the following articles are available:

- Why ISRO's next big challenge is to succeed on an industrial scale **newsth.live/isroandbigchallenge**
- Why awareness about folic acid is the key to prevent Spina Bifida **newsth.live/spinabifida**

You can use your smartphone's inbuilt features to access these articles. If it's an Android phone, use Google Lens to read and tap the url to access an article. If it's an iPhone, use Live Text on camera to do the same.

A.P.'s dynamism resonates with EU, says Ambassador

Herve Delphin calls 'Amaravati Avakaya Festival' a meeting of heritage, art and community; Naidu emphasises importance of conducting programmes that promote culture and traditions

The Hindu Bureau
VIJAYAWADA



Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu with European Union Ambassador to India Herve Delphin at the inaugural session of Amaravati Avakaya Festival, in Vijayawada on Thursday.

Ambassador of the European Union (EU) to India Herve Delphin on Thursday said that Andhra Pradesh with its significant economic growth has been positioning itself as a leader in terms of investments.

Speaking at the inaugural session of the three-day 'Amaravati Avakaya Festival', Mr. Delphin said, "this dynamism of A.P. resonates deeply with the European Union." Referring to the festival of cinema, culture and tradition organised on a grand scale, he said it was heritage, art and community meeting together.

"This festival testifies the vibrancy of Andhra Pradesh. Like *avakaya*, it is a wholesome experience," he said.

Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu emphasised the importance of conducting programmes that preserve and promote culture and traditions, reminding society of Telugu heritage and encouraging future generations to move forward with those values.

"This event is being conducted so that we remember Telugu heritage and move forward with it," he emphasised.

The Chief Minister said that whenever food is mentioned at a global level, India comes to mind, and within India Andhra cuisine stands out. Mr. Naidu said Andhra Pradesh was reaching a stage where it could extend hospitality to the entire world.

Mr. Naidu said that the government was taking up these initiatives with a sense of responsibility to protect the pride of the Telugu people. He said animated discussions on culture, literature, and cinema would be part of the festival.

Recalling the grand celebrations during Krishna and Godavari Pushkarams in the past, the Chief Minister said he was fortunate to have presided over these auspicious events.

"It was my fortune that during my tenure as Chief Minister, Krishna and Godavari Pushkarams occurred. As we worship nature and rivers, we began the Krishna Harathi 12 years ago," he said. Speaking of Telugu unity, hospitality, talent, and entrepreneurial spirit, he showered praises on the creativity of Telugu cinema, from *Bhakta Prahlada* to *Baahubali* and said that culture, literature, and films remain the enduring strengths of the Telugu people.

Minister for Tourism and Cinematography Kandula Durgesh, Vijayawada MP Kesineni Sivanath, senior officials of the Tourism Department and others were present.



Deputy Chief Minister K. Pawan Kalyan going through the exhibits at the MISHTI workshop, in Vijayawada on Thursday.

A.P. should be a role model in mangrove conservation: Pawan

The Hindu Bureau
VIJAYAWADA

Emphasising the critical role of mangroves in protecting coastal regions and enhancing biodiversity, Andhra Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister K. Pawan Kalyan called upon the State to emerge as a national role model in mangrove conservation and sustainable coastal development.

Addressing a national-level workshop on Mangrove Development and Sustainable Livelihoods (MISHTI) organised by the State Forest and Environment department here on Thursday, the Deputy Chief Minister said mangroves act as strong natural barriers against cyclones, floods, and coastal erosion along Andhra Pradesh's 1,052-km-long coastline.

He stressed that protecting existing mangroves while expanding new plantations is essential to minimise losses caused by frequent natural disasters, particularly in the Krishna and Godavari basins. Mr. Pawan Kalyan said the State government had already developed mangroves over nearly 700 hectares in coastal areas during 2025 and pledged to continue the effort with greater commitment.

He highlighted plans to create a three-tier green belt along the coast and involve local communities to ensure sustainable income generation.

Experts share opinions

Meanwhile, senior officials, scientists and experts from coastal States and Union Territories participated in a national workshop at the event.

Senior officers from across country made detailed presentations on the status of mangroves, progress achieved under MISHTI, and future proposals.

Threat mails to blow up 4 courts in State turn out to be hoax

The Hindu Bureau
ELURU



Bomb squad conducting searches on the District Court Complex premises in Chittoor on Thursday.

E-mails threatening to blow up four courts in Andhra Pradesh kept the police on their toes on Thursday. However, the threats turned out to be a hoax as hours-long search operations did not find any explosive material from these court premises.

Addressed to the judges and court superintendent, these e-mails claimed that bombs were planted in the courts in Eluru, Anantapur and Madanapalli and Chittoor, adding that the explosives might go off at any time.

Chittoor Additional SP S. Rajasekhar Raju told the media that the threat email was received at around 12.20 pm on the official email ID of the district court superintendent from an unknown sender, claiming that a bomb had been planted on the court premises and it would go off at 1.15 pm.

As the mails created panic, the court premises were vacated. Bomb Detection (BD) and the sniffer dog squads conducted through checking.

The offices, court hall, waiting halls and other facilities in the courts were searched," said a BD team officer.

"We searched the court premises thoroughly. Neither bombs nor explosive material were found," Eluru District Superintendent of Police K. Pratap Shiva Kishore.

After thorough checks of nearly five hours, the authorities declared the Chittoor District Court premises safe.

Meanwhile, the Cybercrime police are trying to trace the mailer. "We are trying to identify the email id and IP address and the place from which the mails were sent," Mr. Pratap Shiva Kishore said.

Chittoor District Superintendent of Police Tushar Dudi appealed to the public not to believe rumours and report suspicious information to the Police Department.

Ministers review Durga temple power supply issue

The Hindu Bureau
VIJAYAWADA

Ministers Gottipati Ravi Kumar (Energy) and Anam Ramanarayana Reddy (Endowments) reviewed the power supply to Sri Durga Malleswara Swamy Varla Devasthanam during a meeting at the Secretariat on Thursday.

Officials of the Endowments department expressed willingness to pay the pending electricity bills in instalments, while those of CPDCL agreed to install two net meters, each with a capacity of 500 kW for the temple's 1-MW solar plant.

The Ministers advised officials of both the departments to move forward with coordination and emphasised that decisions should be taken by respecting the sentiments of devotees. CPDCL CMD P. Pulla Reddy, Endowments Commissioner Ramachandra Mohan, and other senior officials were present.

Light rain likely in one or two places in State on January 10 and 11

The Hindu Bureau
VIJAYAWADA

While Andhra Pradesh will not see much impact due to the current weather system brewing over the Bay of Bengal, light to moderate rainfall can be expected at one or two places in south coastal A.P. and Rayalaseema on January 10 and 11.

According to the national bulletin issued by the Cyclone Warning Centre of the India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Thursday, the depression over southeast Bay of Bengal has concentrated into a deep depression on Thursday. At 8.30 a.m., the deep depression remained over the southwest Bay of Bengal and east Equatorial Indian Ocean, 980 km southsoutheast of Chennai. It is very likely to move westnorthwestwards during the next 36 hours and cross the Sri Lankan coast around January 9.

Under the influence of the system, while orange and yellow alerts have been issued for Tamil Nadu, no warnings have been given for A.P.. Only on January 10 and 11, one or two places in SCAP and Rayalaseema may receive rain, while on other days, dry weather is likely to prevail.

There are no warnings for fishermen in the State.

SRM University-A.P. plans to set up Quantum Institute: V-C

The Hindu Bureau
VIJAYAWADA

To address the emerging demands for building a quantum-ready workforce, the SRM University-A.P. plans to launch a Quantum Institute that focuses on developing quantum science and technology.

"The institute aims to advance quantum computing and other fields through research, education, and collaboration," said university Vice-Chancellor Satish Kumar, informing that the university will establish a Quantum Reference Centre and a Quantum Computer in collaboration with the Andhra Pradesh government.

At a 'Meet and Greet' programme organised in Vijayawada on Thursday, Mr. Satish Kumar announced the initiatives launched by the University in AI education, quantum computing, green hydrogen and emerging technologies.

He said the university had signed an MoU with Carnegie Mellon University (CMU)'s School of Computer Science for setting up an AI Institute.

"The ongoing collaboration promotes cutting-edge AI education with innovative technology solutions in all disciplines and courses for every field," he said.

TIRUMALA TIRUPATI DEVASTHANAMS, TIRUPATI
FOREST DEPARTMENT, O/o. THE DEPUTY CONSERVATOR OF FORESTS
e-TENDER & e-SHORT TENDER NOTICE
Adv. No: 10/ DCF/TTD/2025-26 Dated: 07.01.2026
e-Tenders are invited on e-Procurement platform for the works with the following NIT Nos.57 to 59/DCF/TTD-TPT/2025-26 for three (03) works.
For tender notice, the tender details and eligibility criteria log on to the website https://tender.apeprocurement.gov.in. For further details contact Phone number : 0877-2264518
TTD-40021/10/2025-PRO SEC(Adv.No.349),Date: 08.01.2026 EXECUTIVE OFFICER

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PERSONAL
CHANGE OF NAME
CHANGE OF NAME
I, PARVATHANENI BABY SAI SRI Wife of KOSURI NAVEEN KUMAR, resident of D.No. 3-49, Vamanaguntapalem (Village), Turumella (Post), Amruthalur (Mandal), Bapatla (District), Andhra Pradesh-522312, India, have changed the name of my minor son KOSURI DEEPAK KUMAR (Old Name), aged 4 years and he shall hereafter be known as PARVATHANENI DEEPAK KUMAR (New Name) S/o. KOSURI NAVEEN KUMAR and PARVATHANENI BABY SAI SRI for all purposes

PUBLIC NOTICE
It is for general information that I, ARUNASAGAR CHITIKALA Son of CHITIKALA VENKATESWARLU, working as Head Constable (GD), Service Record Regt. No. 070360592, Indo Tibetan Boarder Police Force, CGO Complex, Lodhi Road, New Delhi-3, R/o D.No. 9-21/1, Sri Sai Nagar, Perecherla, Medikonduru (Mandal), Guntur (District), Andhra Pradesh, India, Pin-522438, declare that name of mine and my father have been wrongly written as CH ARUNASAGAR and CH VENKATESWARLU in my Service Record, name of mine have been wrongly written as ARUN SAGAR CHITIKALA in my Identity Card No. 048593. The actual name of mine and my father are ARUNASAGAR CHITIKALA and CHITIKALA VENKATESWARLU respectively, which may be amended accordingly.

CHANGE OF NAME
I, GODHA LAKSHMIDEVI, W/o GODHA CHINNA MADDILETY, R/o H.No. 2-83, Jutur Village, Pamulapadu Mandal, Nandyal District, Andhra Pradesh – 518401, hereby declare that my name has been wrongly recorded as GODA LAKSHMIDEVI in the school and passport records of my son GODHA MADHU SHEKHAR YADAV. Both names refer to one and the same person. My correct name is GODHA LAKSHMIDEVI.

CHANGE OF NAME
I, GODHA CHINNA MADDILETY, S/o GODHA PULLAIAH, R/o H.No. 2-83, Jutur Village, Pamulapadu Mandal, Nandyal District, Andhra Pradesh – 518401, hereby declare that my name has been wrongly recorded as GODA MADDILETY in the school and passport records of my son GODHA MADHU SHEKHAR YADAV. Both names refer to one and the same person. My correct name is GODHA CHINNA MADDILETY.

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2350 Sft Plinth Area at Vijayawada M.G.Road, Brundavan Colony, Laxmi Villa in 4th Floor available for CORPORATE OFFICES only with all Facilities. Cont 9848278914 9966888618

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PUBLIC NOTICE
Notice is hereby given to the public at large, on behalf of my client, ICICI Bank Ltd., ("Bank"), that the original title deed and other connected documents (hereinafter collectively referred as "Documents") listed herein below pertaining to the immovable property (More particularly described in "Schedule") of Grandhi Balaji deposited with my client by way of security, have been misplaced from the custody of my client.
(1) Original Release deed of Deposit of Tittle Deed No. 8500/2022 dated 17th June, 2022 executed by State Bank of India in favour of Grandhi Balaji duly registered with the sub Registrar- Nellore (R.O.), Andhra Pradesh.(2) Original Settlement deed of immovable property No. 2767/2021 dated 9th March, 2021 between Mr. Granthi Rajagopal & Mrs. Grandhi Susheelamma and Grandhi Balaji duly registered with the sub Registrar-Nellore (R.O.), Andhra Pradesh, in respect of Door No. 393, Ward No.16-1, 28-1/2 acres, C.A.S. No. 315, Atthithota Agraharam Street, Nellore Bit -I, Nellore Municipal Corporation, SPSR Nellore - 524004.
Any person(s) coming into possession of the aforesaid Documents and / or any person(s) who is/are having knowledge of the whereabouts of the Documents, are hereby requested to intimate the undersigned forthwith, about the same at the below address.
Public are warned not to deal with the Documents and any person receiving or dealing with the said Documents would do so at their own risk and responsibility (including criminal liability) and my client shall not be liable in any manner whatsoever for any loss incurred by such person(s) on account of any such unauthorised dealing.
In the event no information is received within 15 days from date hereof, my client will proceed to take such action including applying to concerned authorities for issue of duly Certified Copies of the Documents.
Schedule
Sri Potti Sriramulu Nellore R.D. Yilaka Nellore S.R.I., Nellore City, Nellore Bit-1, C.A.S. No. 315, between Muttharaju Gopalrao Street and Atthithottara Agraharam Street, that is (opposite T.V.S. Kalyana Sadan) Ward No. 16-1, Door No. 393, 28-1/2 acres, attached to the building named "Hotel Maheshwari", the boundaries of the building etc. are as follows:-
East :- The property's own boundary wall along the Dodla Natya Reddy property
South :- Muttharaju Gopalrao Street
West : Kuppachi, Ramakrishnaiah, etc.'s own wall next to Bandi Kondareddy's Dwaraka Hotel
North : Atthithota Agraharam Road.
Sachin Kamble
Advocate High Court
Address: 101, 1st Floor, Manas Building, Kharkar Ali, Thane (west) – 400 601.
Mob: 9833503652.
Place: Andhra Pradesh.
Date : 9 Jan 2026

PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT
NOTICE BY MSCI ESG Ratings and Research Private Limited We, MSCI ESG Ratings and Research Private Limited, hereby give notice that we have initiated the process of surrendering our Certificate of Registration as an ESG Rating Provider, bearing IN/ERP/Category–II/0013. Further information will be made available on www.msci.com/india/esg in due course. If you have any questions, please contact us at compliance_India_erp@msci.com.

PUBLIC NOTICE
PUBLIC NOTICE
Under instructions from my clients M/s. LIC Housing Finance Ltd., Vijayawada the following public notice is issued:
One Mrs. Uddanti Usha Jyothi, w/o. Nageswara Rao availed Housing loan from my clients creating Equitable Mortgage of House property ie., 285 sq. yards in nearest Door No. 9-54, Plot No. 171, LP No. 10/2005, D.No. 266, KAZA village, Mangalagiri mandal, Guntur District by depositing her original Regd. Sale deed dt. 28-03-2018 (Doc. No. 1454/2018 of Peda Kakani SRO) and two original link documents Nos. 1243/2014 and 3637/2015 with my clients. The said loan was already closed by the borrower; when my clients searched for return of the Original title deeds to the borrower, the docket file consisting original Sale deed was missing from the custody of 'Stock holding Document Management Services, Vijayawada (SDMS)' of my clients while shifting to new premises from Kabela to Tadepalli and the same was informed to the borrower also; however, the borrower kindly accepted to take certified copy of the title deeds and along with this public notice and also "Certificate of missing Original sale deed' from my clients.
Public are hereby informed that finder of the Original Regd. Sale deed No. 1454/2018 and two link documents shall return the same to my clients within 15 days hereof. Any misuse of the original Title deeds shall not bind my clients or the borrower Mrs. Uddanti Usha Jyothi.
P. Ramakrishna Paramahamsa
Advocate,
Durga Agraharam,
Vijayawada-2
Cell: 9866335633.
Vijayawada Date: 07-01-2026

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Vacancy announcement
Indo-German Science & Technology Centre (IGSTC), New Delhi, India
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LEGAL NOTICE
IN THE COURT OF
MS. RUBY ALKA GUPTA
District Judge
(Commercial Court)- 02
East, Room No. 101,
(New Building)
Karkardooma Courts, Delhi
(Order 5, Rule 20 of the Code of Civil Procedure)
Case No.:- CS(COMM) 408/2023
STATE BANK OF INDIA
V/s
MR. MOODE THIMAPPA NAIK
To
MR. MOODE THIMAPPA NAIK
R/O KALLUBHAI THANDA,
MANDAL-GANDLEPENTAM,
KADIRI, KURUMANIDI,
DISTRICT- ANANTPUR,
ANDHRA PRADESH - 515521
THE RESPONDENT ABOVE NAMED
WHEREAS You are intentionally avoiding service of summons it is hereby notified that if you shall not defend the case on the 27.01.2026 the day fixed for the final disposal, it will be heard and determined ex-parte.
Given under my hand and the seal of the court, this 07.01.2026
District Judge (Commercial Court)-02
East, New Building
Karkardooma Courts, Delhi

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Defence corridor to be set up in Jaggayyapeta

The Hindu Bureau
VIJAYAWADA



₹100 crore has been sanctioned to provide a permanent solution to the drinking water woes in Jaggayyapeta, says MP Kesineni Sivanath. FILE PHOTO

Vijayawada MP Kesineni Sivanath has said the State government has sanctioned ₹100 crore to provide a permanent solution to the woes related to drinking water supply in Jaggayyapeta town and that a defence corridor will be set up in the region.

The announcement was made during a felicitation ceremony held at Jaggayyapeta Agricultural Market Committee (AMC) yard, coinciding with the assumption of office by AMC Chairperson Mallela Seethamma and thirteen other Directors.

The programme was attended by dignitaries, including Deputy Chief Minister K. Pawan Kalyan, MP Kesineni Sivanath, MLAs M.S. Raju, Nakka Anand Babu, Sriram Rajgopal, TDP leaders Gadde Anuradha, KDCC Bank Chairman Nettem Raghuram, NTR district SC Cell president Songa Sanjay Verma, and Jaggayyapeta Municipal Chairman Rangapuram Raghavendra.

The MP highlighted that appointing a Dalit woman as AMC Chairperson reflects the party's commitment to social justice.

He noted that the Hyderabad-Vijayawada National Highway six-laning project will give Jaggayyapeta strategic importance. The Kodada-Jaggayyapeta road has also been sanctioned.

Despite ban, roosterfight arenas being set up for Sankranti festival

Cases will be booked under Andhra Pradesh Gaming Act and Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act against those who organise the banned sport, says NTR District Collector

Rajulapudi Srinivas
VIJAYAWADA



NTR District officials releasing posters as part of an awareness drive against roosterfights, in Vijayawada.

Notwithstanding the claims by the authorities that stringent measures are in place to check the roosterfights during this Sankranti festival, makeshift arenas for organising the banned sports, known as Kodi Pandelu in local parlance, are being set up in different areas, especially the rural pockets of Krishna and the twin Godavari districts.

Rooster fights are being arranged on the pretext of tradition at many places in Krishna, Eluru, West Godavari, East Godavari, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Konaseema and other districts

Despite the ban, thousands of people, including women, youth, realtors, film actors, software professionals, NRIs and businessmen, enjoy roosterfights at the arenas. Organisers make elaborate arrangements, including accommodation and refreshments, for the punters and the visitors.

"There is no Sankranti celebration without roosterfights. The sport has been organised for decades during the harvest festival, along with bull shows, flying kites, Bommala Koluvulu and food festivals," said V. Anjaneyulu, a private company employee of Gudivada.

Huge tents, visitor galleries, digital screens, parking lots, fast food centres, biryani points, make-shift hotels, liquor outlets, pan and cool drink shops and gambling and 'gundata' dens are also arranged at the arenas.

"Punters bet huge stakes on each fight. The betting ranges between ₹5,000 and ₹2 lakh. The winner takes the cash along with the dead or injured bird. The meat of the rooster, known as kaju, has a good demand in the market," said B. Mani, saying that she would set up a food stall at a roosterfight arena.

Despite the ban, roosterfights are arranged near Kankipadu, Poranki, Gudivada, Kaikalur, Bhimavaram, Lankalakoderu, Palakol, Narsapuram, Razole, Eluru, Mudinepalli, Peddapulipaka and other places every year.

Trainers upload photos of trained roosters on various social media groups for sale. Price of each rooster ranges between ₹10,000 and ₹1 lakh. However, the price varies depending on the breed of the rooster, said Ch. Vara Prasad, a punter.

"We teach the birds how to attack the rival and escaping techniques. This year, the demand for roosters is good," said P. Siva Ram, a resident of Bhimavaram.

NRIs and people living in Bengaluru, Chennai, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Pune and other cities book hotel rooms in advance to enjoy the roosterfights.

Meanwhile, the police, animal husbandry, revenue and other department officials were appealing to the villagers not to organise or participate in roosterfights.

"Cases will be booked under Andhra Pradesh Gaming Act, 1974, and Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960, against those who violate the orders and conduct roosterfights. An awareness campaign in this regard is underway," NTR District Collector G. Lakshmisha said.

INBRIEF



Police urge two-wheeler riders to use helmets

Superintendent of Police V. Vidyasagar Naidu has appealed to the bike riders to wear helmets and follow safety precautions. The SP, along with other police officers, participated in an awareness rally on wearing helmets in Machilipatnam on Thursday. "On many occasions, two-wheeler riders were suffering injuries in road accidents. Helmet will protect from causing head injuries," the SP said.

Two get life imprisonment in separate murder cases

Courts in Guntur sentenced two men to life imprisonment in two murder cases on Thursday. Second Additional District and Sessions Court, presided over by Judge Y. Nagaraja, sentenced Sivaratri Srinivasa Rao, 33, a rowdy-sheeter from Labour Colony to life imprisonment and imposed a fine of ₹500. On December 23, 2014, Srinivasa Rao, angered by a police complaint filed against him for harassing a married woman, went to her house . When the woman's mother intervened, he stabbed the mother to death. Judge Ch. V. N. Srinivasa Rao of the III Additional Sessions Court convicted Kota Venkata Tirupati Rao alias Tirupathaiah, 31, of murdering his wife, Kota Sirisha, 24, and sentenced him to life imprisonment, along with a fine of ₹1,000. On March 26, 2021, Tirupathaiah, driven by suspicion and anger over his wife seeking a divorce, stabbed her when she was asleep at her mother's house at Srinivasaraopet, which was witnessed by their minor son.

Timings
VIJAYAWADA

FRIDAY, JAN. 09	
RISE 06:38	SET 17:51
RISE 23:28	SET 10:55
SATURDAY, JAN. 10	
RISE 06:38	SET 17:52
RISE 00:00	SET 11:30
SUNDAY, JAN. 11	
RISE 06:39	SET 17:52
RISE 00:16	SET 12:04

Vijayawada Weather	max	min
Machilipatnam	30	21
Guntur Town	30	17
Vijayawada City	29	20

Vijayawada City Today
29°C The weather will be dry. Morning will be pleasant with mist and haze. Day will be slight warm. Night will be pleasant and hazr.

Vijayawada City Tomorrow
30°C Morning will be sight cool with mist and haze. Day will be slight warm. Night also will be slight cool. Dry weather to prevail.

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Three more held in child trafficking racket case

The Hindu Bureau
VIJAYAWADA

The police on Thursday arrested three more people in connection with the alleged child trafficking racket case. The police have arrested 20 people and rescued 12 children so far, DCP Krishnakanth Patel said. Special teamsarrested the accused, identified as Satish, Kavitha and Anil. They were being brought to Vijayawada, he said.

"We have registered cases under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 and the Acts related to kidnap and human trafficking," the DCP said on Thursday.

Police teams were deputed in Gujarat, Mumbai and Delhi to nab the remaining accused, Mr. Patel said.

Farmer bodies seek implementation of HR policy for cooperative staff

The Hindu Bureau
VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Rythu Sangham has demanded that the State government immediately implement the Human Resources (HR) Policy for all employees working in the cooperative sector, as mandated under G.O. No. 36 issued during the previous tenure of the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) in 2019.

Speaking on the fourth day of the phased relay hunger strike being organised by the A.P. Agricultural Cooperative Employees Union and the A.P. State Cooperative Employees Associations at Dharna Chowk on Thursday, Sangham State general secretary K.V.V. Prasad said that the cooperative employees had fought for several years to secure GO No. 36. As per the order, the HR policy should be uniformly implemented for all cooperative employees, he said.

Mr. Prasad alleged that successive governments had failed to act on the G.O. The TDP government that framed the order, followed by the YSRCP government, neglected to implement it. Even after the NDA government returned to power, the G.O. continues to be ignored, forcing employees to launch an agitation. Despite repeatedly bringing the issue to the notice of the government, there has been no response, he said, adding that this indifference compelled the staff to launch relay fasts from January 5. The agitation received support from A.P. Ryots' Association State vice-president Malneedu Yellamanda Rao and A.P. Tenants Farmers Association State general secretary P. Jamalaiah.

STATE BANK OF INDIA
Premises & Estate Dept. Local Head Office, 8th Floor, Gandhi Maidan, Patna-800001
E-mail : agmpe.lhopat@sbi.co.in

TENDER ID-LHOPAT/2025-26/01/001
Dated: 06.01.2026

Prequalification of Architectural and Project Management Consultancy firm for the proposed construction of multi-storey building for SBILD, Patna at Bank's plot J.C. Road, Patna

Premises & Estate Department, LHO Patna, on behalf of State Bank of India invites applications in two envelopes system (technical and price bid) for the prequalification of Architectural and Project Management Consultancy firm having experience in multi-storey building for Public Sector Organization / Public Sector Bank / Government Department /Multinational Corporate Houses of repute, for the proposed construction of Multi-storey Building for SBILD, Patna at Bank's plot J.C. Road Patna.

The eligible and interested firm may download the prescribed application form from the Bank's website: **"https://sbi.bank.in/web/sbi-in-the-news/procurement-news**

The tender can be downloaded from 06.01.2026 to 26.01.2026 upto 15:00 Hrs. The addendum/corrigendum, if any will be published in the Bank's website only.

Place: Patna
Date: 06.01.2026

Assistant General Manager (P&E)

TO ADVERTISE PLEASE CONTACT
Vijayawada : 0866-2553033/44
Guntur : 83414 43366
Ongole : 98481 70977
W.Godavari : 96429 93433
Tirupati & Kadapa : 97041 06892
Nellore & Anantapur : 98497 93093
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Central Office,763, Anna Salai,Chennai - 600002

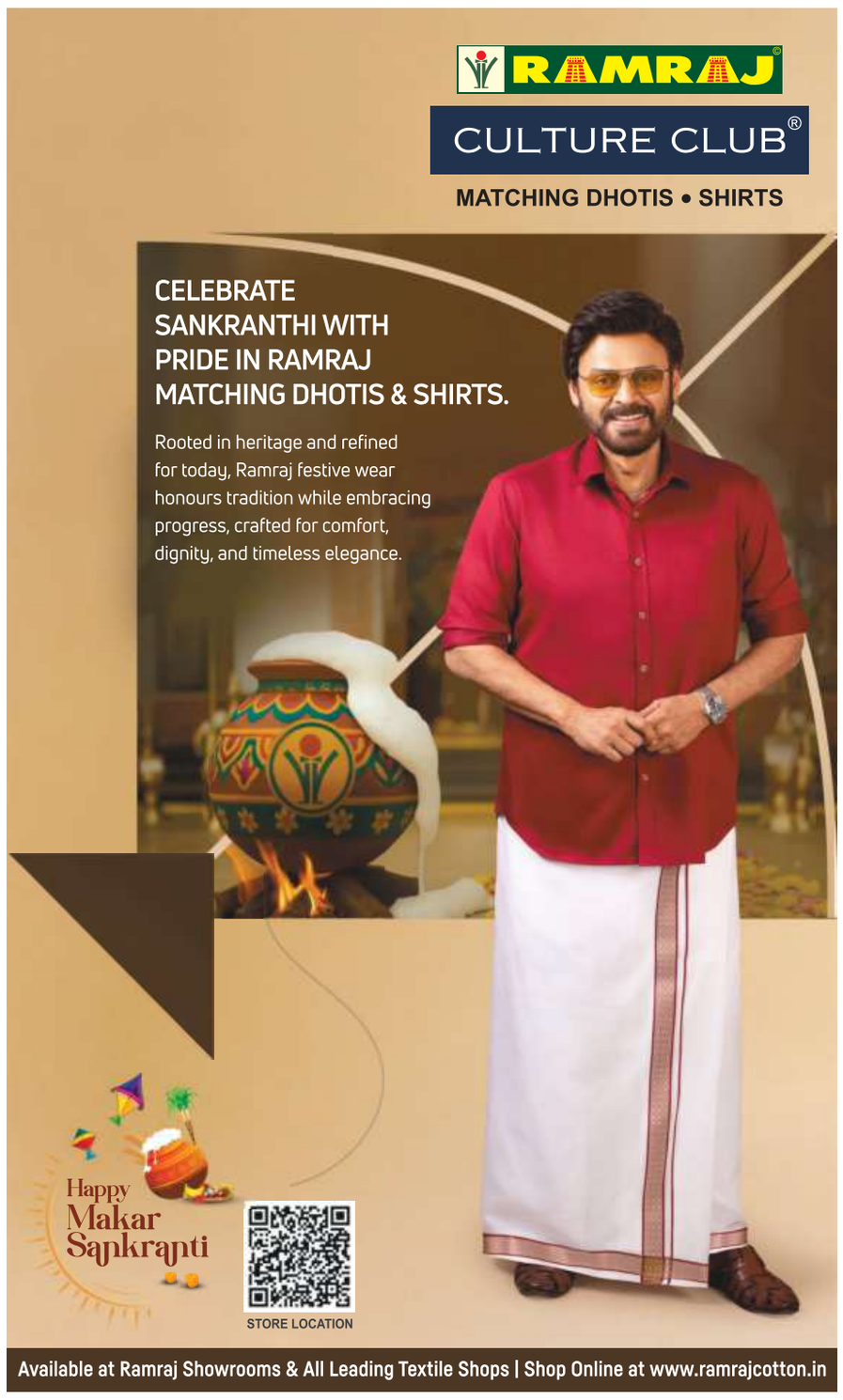
Indian Overseas bank (IOB) invites bids for the following: GOVERNMENT E-MARKET PORTAL - ENGAGEMENT OF CISCO PROFESSIONAL SERVICES AND RESIDENT ENGINEER SERVICES BID NO: GEM/2025/B/7077913 DATED 07.01.2026

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

Date: 07.01.2026 **Deputy General Manager (GAD)**







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ANDHRA PRADESH GRAMEENA BANK
(Scheduled Bank owned by Government)
HEAD OFFICE : GUNTUR

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Andhra Pradesh Grameena Bank invites Request for Proposal (RFP) for Comprehensive Annual Maintenance Contract vendor (AMC) for maintenance of Security Alarms for the period from 01.04.2026 to 31.03.2027, The application forms shall be submitted in the GeM portal. Non-refundable application fee of Rs.5,000/- (Rupees Five Thousand only) by way of Demand Draft drawn in favour of Andhra Pradesh Grameena Bank, payable at Guntur shall be submitted directly at below address. The last date for submission of bids in Gem Portal is 29.01.2026 up to 5.00 PM. For further details, please contact: The General Manager, Andhra Pradesh Grameena Bank, Head Office, 2nd Floor, Services Department, 5/2th Lane, Opp. HP Petrol Bunk, Brodipet, Guntur-522002, Phone: 9490158007 or Visit the Bank's website https://apgb.bank.in or GeM Portal: https://bidplus.gem.gov.in/all-bids. GEM portal Bid Number: GEM/2026/B/7088681. The Bank reserves the right to modify any terms and conditions of the tender or to reject any or all bids without assigning any reason whatsoever. *Terms & Conditions apply.

GENERAL MANAGER, HEAD OFFICE, ANDHRA PRADESH GRAMEENA BANK, GUNTUR.

KERALA STATE ELECTRICITY BOARD LIMITED

Application invited for Engagement of Business Data Analyst (Enterprise level)- Contract Basis

Re-Notification No. KSEBL/CE/IT/CU/92/Data-Analyst/2025-26 Dated 03.01.2026

Kerala State Electricity Board Ltd. Invites fresh applications from qualified and experienced professionals for the post of **Business Data Analyst (Enterprise Level)** on contract basis (initially for one year, extendable).

No. of Posts: 1, Last Date for Receipt of Applications: 20.01.2026

Detailed notification and application format are available on: www.kseb.in

Jaysingpur Municipal Council, Jaysingpur (M.S.)
Municipal Office, Jaysingpur

E-Tender Notice 2026

JNP/C.D/E-Tender Notice/5142/2026 **Date - 08/01/2026**

Jaysingpur Municipal Council invites E-Tender for construction of compound wall & Elevation treatement work at Jaysingpur Municipal Council Building at Jaysingpur. Tal - Shirol, Dist - Kolhapur, State- Maharashtra. For more details kindly visit **http://mahatenders.gov.in** from **Date - 09/01/2026, 11.00 A.M. upto Date-16/01/2026, 4.00 P.M.**

Sd/-
Chief Officer,
Jaysingpur Municipal Council

Sd/-
President,
Jaysingpur Muncipal Council

केनरा बैंक Canara Bank
REGIONAL OFFICE : AMARAVATI
#24-2-87, 2nd Floor, Near Palnadu Auto Stand, Behind Hindu College, Chennai Trunk Road, Guntur-522003, A.P

POSSESSION NOTICE
[SECTION 13(4)] (For Immovable Property)

Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the **Canara Bank** under Securitization And Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (Act 54 of 2002) (hereinafter referred to as "the Act") and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13 (12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002, issued a **Demand Notice dated 28.10.2025** calling upon the **Borrower : M/s Santosh Automotives, Represented by Prop: Marripudi Komali,** Plot No.53, Ground Floor, Opp SSN College, Narasaraopet, Guntur, Andhra Pradesh-522601. **Co-Borrower : Smt. Marripudi Komali, W/o Srinivasa Rao,** Plot No.506, 1st Line, NGOS Colony, Narasaraopet, Andhra Pradesh-522601. **Guarantor/Mortgagor : Sri. Marripudi Srinivasa Rao, S/o Nageswara Rao,** Flat No 506, Srinivasa Construction, NGOS Colony, Narasaraopet, Andhra Pradesh-522601 to repay the amount mentioned in the notice, being **Rs.10,22,498.81/- (Rupees Ten Lakhs Twenty Two Thousand Four Hundred Ninety Eight and Eighty One Paise Only)** within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

The Borrower having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower, guarantor and the public in general, that the undersigned has taken **possession** of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him / her under Section13 (4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 & 9 of the said Rule on this **06th day of January of the year 2026.**

The borrower in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of the **Canara Bank, Narasaraopet-I (8696) Branch** for an amount of **Rs.5,35,842.81/- (Rupees Five Lakhs Thirty Five Thousand Eight Hundred Forty Two and Eighty One Paise Only) as on 31.12.2025** plus interest and cost thereon.

The borrower's attention is invited to the provisions of Section 13 (8) of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

Description of the Immovable Property

Narasaraopet (RD), Macherla (SRO), Macherla Municipal Area, Guntur Road, Near Market Yard, Macherla Municipal Block No. 15, Macherla Village D.No.604/1-1 and D.No.604/1-2, in it Northern Side Door No. 15-2-16 and Eastern Side Door No. 15-2-18, an extent of 726.02 Sq.Yards or 606.95 Sq.mts (after measurement exact arrived extent) of Vacant Site, is being **Bounded by: East:** Dondeti Narayana Reddy Site and others - 250 links, **South:** Dondeti Narayana Reddy Site and others - 59 links, **West:** Mandalapu Venkata Narsireddy Site - 246 links, **North:** Guntur to Macherla Road - 62 links. **CERSAI ID: 400058584580.**

Date : 06.01.2026 **Sd/- Authorised Officer**
Place : Guntur **Canara Bank**

KARNATAKA STATE ROAD TRANSPORT CORPORATION

NOTICE INVITING TENDER No 10 Dated: 07/01/2026

Tenders (Pre-qualification and/ or Commercial offers) through e-procurement portal http://kppp.karnataka.gov.in are invited for supply of the following Goods/Services

Tender Nos as per E-portal	Nomenclature of Items	Tender Value in crores. (Approx)	Last date for submission of tender @ 17.00 hrs
KSRTC/2025-26/ IND0262	Procurement of Pre-cured Tread Rubber and Allied Materials (Short term tender)	11.00	14.01.2026
KSRTC/2025-26/ IND0263	Procurement of Enamel Paints and allied Materials	2.5	16.02.2026
KSRTC/2025-26/ IND0264	Procurement of Window Flock Channel with Rubber	0.40	27.01.2026
KSRTC/2025-26/ SE2206	Providing Fumigation Services for Buses of KSRTC	0.60	27.01.2026

Further any addendum /corrigendum in respect of change in calendar of events, specifications, scope of work, other tender terms and conditions etc, will be uploaded/ published through e-portal only.

NOTE: Interested suppliers need to register in the e-procurement portal. For further information log into http://kppp.karnataka.gov.in. In case of further assistance, contact e-procurement cell (Phone. No. 080-46010000/ 080-68948777). Interested bidders may also contact e-procurement cell for training on bid submission. Mail to support@eprochelpdesk.com for further information if required. In case of bidders need assistance from KSRTC can communicate at cosp@ksrtc.org (contact: 7760990224).

Sd/- CONTROLLER OF STORES & PURCHASES
(Tender Inviting Authority)

DIPR/CP/4939/AKAR/2025-26

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

No. IADB/ENGG/ETND-DPR-03/459/2025-26 **Date:08.01.2026**

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

KIADB invites tenders from reputed consultants/firms under two cover bid system having an office at Bengaluru with vast experience and proven record of similar nature of works for project mentioned below:

Name of the Works : (1) Providing Consultancy Services for Preparation of Detailed Project Report (DPR) for Scientific Disposal of Industrial Solid Waste by Integrated Material Recovery Facility(MRF) and Alternate Fuel Raw Material Facility (AFR) including survey analysis, qualitative & quantitative study, design of MRF & ARF facility etc., at Plot No. 311 to 314, Belur Industrial Area, Dharwad Taluk & District. **(2)** Providing Consultancy Services for Preparation of Detailed Project Report (DPR) for the formation of new industrial areas including Economic Analysis, Surveying, Layout Plan Design, Preparation of Cost Estimates, Cost Structure etc., for the proposed Tidagundi Village, Vijayapura Taluk & District. (Extent 1203A.06G).

The last date and time of receipt of tender is : **28.01.2026 upto 04:00 p.m.**

Applicants May Download Bidding Documents from the E-Procurement Portal **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in.**

Sd/-
Chief Engineer - 2

DIPR/CP/JA/4929/2025-26

ANDHRA PRADESH CAPITAL REGION DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
(APCRDA) AMARAVATI, Rayapudi Village, Thullur Mandal - 522237.

Form-VI(A)
(Under section 11(1) of the Act, 30 of 2013 read with Sub Rule (1) of Rule 19)

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION

Rc.No.01/2026-CRDA(Admn.)-Undavalli **Dt. 08.01.2026**

Whereas it appears to the District Collector Guntur that the lands specified in the schedule below are needed for a public purpose, to wit, for **"Amaravathi Capital City Project",** notice to that effect is hereby given to all to whom it may concern in accordance with the provisions of Section-11(1) of the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 (Central Act No.30 of 2013).

The Government of Andhra Pradesh exempted the social impact study vide Memo. No. REV01-LANA0LAND/370/2025-LANDS-V, dated 06.11.2025 for Amaravati capital city Project.

The Joint Collector is appointed as Project Administrator vide notification issued in G.O. Ms. No.1 Revenue (LA) Dept. Dated 02.01.2015 under Section-43(1) of the Act for the purpose of Rehabilitation and Resettlement of the affected families / Displaced families.

Now, therefore, in exercise of the powers conferred under Section-12 of the Act, the District Collector, Guntur hereby, designates the Special Deputy Collector, Unit No.08, Undavalli, his staff and workmen to exercise the powers conferred under the above section.

Under Section 11(4) of the Act, no person shall make any transaction or cause any transaction of land i.e., sale / purchase etc. or create any encumbrances on such land from the date of this notification without prior approval of the Collector.

Objections to the acquisition, if any, may be filed by the person(s) interested within 60 (sixty) days from the date of publication of this Notification as provided under Section-15 of the Act before the Designated officer i.e. Special Deputy Collector & Land Acquisition Officer, Unit No.08, Undavalli village.

SCHEDULE

Name of the Project: Capital City Development Project-Seed Access Road.
District: **Guntur** Mandal: **Tadepalli** Village: **Undavalli**

Sl.No.	Survey No.	Total Extent A.Cs.	Extent Under Acquisition A.Cs.	Land Owner Name	Boundaries				Details of Trees, Structures etc., if any
					North	South	East	West	
1	6	0.80	0.25	Kanasani Prabhakar Rao	5 & 6	6	5	11	Lilly Crop and joint motor pump
2	11-1A	1.00	0.50	Bonthu Vijaya Lakshmi (Lakshma Reddy)	18	6 & 11/1B	5 & 6	11/1B, 12 & 18	Motor pump-2, Coconut trees-4 Teak tree-1, Mango tree-1, Lemon tree -1, Amla tree-1, Neem tree-3, ACC shed (Banana Crop, Mint Crop, Coriander leaves crop)
3	11-1A	1.125	0.40	Chaganti Radhika (Srinivasa Reddy)					
4	11-1A	0.92	0.90	Bonthu Lakshma Reddy (Gopi Reddy)					
5	11-1A	0.10	0.10	Kallam Lakshmi Kumari	18	6 & 11/1B	5 & 6	11/1B, 12 & 18	Rose Crop
6	11-1A	0.08	0.08	Burramukku Dhana Lakshmi	18	6 & 11/1B	5 & 6	11/1B, 12 & 18	Rose Crop
7	19- B2 A2 B1	0.33	0.22	Allam Visalakshi (Sivashankar)	19/A1	16	19/C2A & C2B	19/A2B & A2A	Banana crop, lemon tree-1, Mango tree-2, RCC motor shed, Guava tree-1
8	22-C2	0.80	0.265	Dandamudi Sambasiva Rao (Ramaswamy)	22/C1	22/C3	22/B	24	Lilly Crop
9	26-A3	0.64	0.01	Manam Kesava Narayana Reddy (Subba Reddy)	26/A2	27	26/B3	26/A3A	Lilly Crop
10	27-A3	0.33	0.33	Dandamudi Sambasiva Rao (Ramaswamy)	26 & 27/A2	27/B	27/A2	28	Coriander crop
11	28-B1	1.45	0.28	Gade Hanumantha Rao Naidu (Balaram Murthy)	29	41	28/B2	28/A	Palmyra Trees - 2, Motor pump, Rose crop.
12	34-B	0.17	0.10	Chinta Rohini (Venkata Krishna Rao)	34/B1	34/A	32 & 39	34/C	Banana crop, Neem tree -1
13	34-B	0.79	0.60	Kandula Aabhar Gayatri's mother Kandula Lakshmi (Siva Kumar)					
14	34-C	0.21	0.16	Kandula Aabhar Gayatri's mother Kandula Lakshmi (Siva Kumar)	34/C	34/A	34/B2	36	
15	34-C	0.45	0.30	Kandula Lakshmi (Venkata Siva Kumar)					
16	39-A1	0.70	0.70	PLOTS	31 & 29	40	29	39/B	Teak Trees -12, ACC Motor pump Shed-1, Coconut trees-2, Neem Tree-1
17	218	1.07	0.21	Alla Shiva Anjaneyulu	218/2	217	218/1	219	Coriander crop
18	219	0.20	0.20	Alla Shiva Anjaneyulu	218/2	217	218/2	219/2	Coriander crop
19	237	0.1668	0.1668	Uppu Padma Rao (Surya Narayana)	237/1A & 240	237/1 & 236	231	237/1 & 238	Lilly Crop, Onion Crop, Joint Motor Shed
20	238-1	1.065	0.30	Gurrala Gopal Minor Guardian Father Edu Kondala Rao	240	236	238/2	239	Drum Stick Crop & Banana Crops
21	238-1	1.06	0.30	Gurrala Sai Chitti Babu (Srinivasa Rao)	240	236	238/2	239	
22	239	0.25	0.13	Sandu Peda Basavayya (Subayya)	239/3A	239/3D	239/3B	254	Joint RCC Motor Shed, Lilly Crop
23	239	0.25	0.25	Sandu China Basavayya (Subaiah)	239/3A	239/3D	239/3B	254	
24	262-A2	0.50	0.08	Meka Vijay Kumar Reddy (Dharma Reddy)	263	Penumaka Village	262/B	Penumaka Village & 262/A1	Banana Crop, Motor pump
25	262-C	1.88	1.455	Kallam Narendra Reddy (Vema Reddy)	263	Penumaka Village	262/D	262/B	Poly House Roof, RCC Slab Structure, Rcc Pump House, RCC Head Tank, Motor Pump, Neem Tree-1, Teak Tree-1, Rose Garden
26	262-B	1.79	1.165	Kallam Aravinda Reddy	263	Penumaka Village	261	262/C	Banana Crop, Motor Pump, Neem Tree-1
27	266-2A2	0.615	0.43	Singamsetty Anupama	266/2B	263	266/1B	266/2B	Acc Roof -1, Iron Roof-1, Motor Pump, Onion Crop
28	267-2C	0.29	0.27	Sigirisetti Anantha shiva Rao (Issaiah)	267/2B	263	266	267/2B	Banana crop
29	268-2B3A	2.32	0.35	Polisetty Sambasivarao	268/1B	263	267	268/2B3A	Banana crop
	TOTAL	21.3518	10.5018						

Place : Undavalli
Date : 08-01-2026

Sd/- Smt. A.Thameem Ansariya, I.A.S.
DISTRICT COLLECTOR, GUNTUR.

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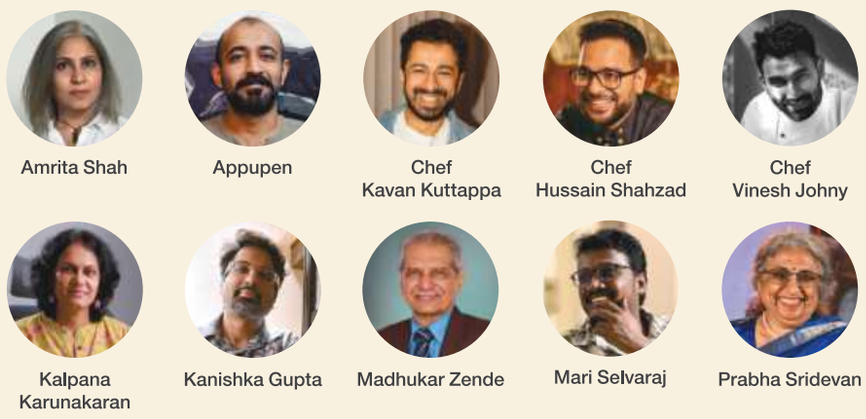
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Kalpana Karunakaran | Kanishka Gupta | Madhukar Zende | Mari Selvaraj | Prabha Sridevan

January 17 & 18, 2026
9.00 am Onwards

Sir Mutha Venkatasubba Rao Concert Hall,
The Hindu Pavilion & The Hindu Showplace,
Lady Andal School premises, Chennai

Scan the QR code or visit **newsth.live/LFL2026** to register for the event.

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Tourism Partner: Bihar Tourism
Bookstore Partner: CROSSWORD

Chennai Petroleum Corporation Limited
(A Govt. of India Enterprise & a Group Company of IndianOil)
Manali, Chennai - 600 068, Tamil Nadu, India

Public Notice

It is hereby informed that the Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change (Impact Assessment Division), Government of India vide letter File No. J-11011/42/2016-IA.II(I) dated 19/01/2024 has accorded Environmental Clearance for Installation of New Catalytic Dewaxing Unit and Modification of Once Through Hydrocracker Unit (OHCU) for Production of Group II/III LOBS within the Existing Refinery Complex (Modernization Project) by M/s. Chennai Petroleum Corporation Ltd. (CPCL) at CPCL Manali Refinery, Chennai, Tamil Nadu.

Copy of clearance letter is available with Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board and may be seen on the website of Ministry of Environment Forest & Climate Change at https://parivesh.nic.in/ and on CPCL website at www.cpcl.co.in.

Chief General Manager
(Corporate Planning and Business Development)

ANDHRA PRADESH INDUSTRIAL INFRASTRUCTURE CORPORATION LTD
(A Government of Andhra Pradesh Undertaking)
Industrial Estate, Visakhapatnam 530007, Phone No. 0891-2550227, Email: zm_viz@apiic.in

Andhra Pradesh Industrial Infrastructure Corporation Limited (APIIC) fully owned by the GoAP, is the nodal agency of Government of Andhra Pradesh for allotment of Industrial Land across the state. APIIC received application for allotment of land though an online application portal in Industrial Park Gurrampalem, Visakhapatnam Zone. APIIC has certain land parcel as shown in the marginal table which have high demand. In view of this, APIIC decided to conduct an open e-auction of the Plot No. C4 and allot land to successful bidders (S) on Out Right Sale (ORS) basis. Successful bidder (S) are allowed to use the Plot No. C4 for commercial purpose as permitted under APIIC land Allotment Regulations 2023. For the proposed e-auction of land parcel, APIIC has engaged the services of https://konugolu.ap.gov.in. Interested parties are requested to visit the konugolu website and register as buyer on or before **23.01.2026**. Interested bidders can download the location details, plot layout and terms and reference (TOR) from APIIC website www.apiic.in • Successful bidder shall be allotted land on Out Right Sale (ORS) basis, Details of Plot is as follows. • Last Date for registration is **23.01.2026** • Date of E-Auction **28.01.2026**.

S.No	Plot No.	Extent (sq.Mts.)	Basic price	Auction Time and Date
1	Plot No. C4	860.00	Rs. 12,490/- per Sq. Mtr.,	28.01.2026 Time 11.00 AM to 1 PM

For further details please contact **The Zonal Manager, APIIC LTD.**, Visakhapatnam Contact Number : **919848933874**, Email id: **zm_viz@apiic.in**

Zonal Manager,
Regular Zone, APIIC Ltd., Visakhapatnam Dist.

CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR ENERGY TRANSITION (CoEET), A.P.
APEPDCL Training Centre, Sagar Nagar, Visakhapatnam–530045.
Society Reg.No.618 of 2025 Under Andhra Pradesh Societies Registration Act, 2001.

NOTIFICATION

Applications are invited from eligible candidates for filling up of the post of 1 No. Centre Head - CoEET on Fixed Term Basis in CoEET. The format of application and other details may be downloaded from APEPDCL Website @ **www.apeasternpower.com**

Place: Visakhapatnam
Date: 09.01.2026
Advt-136

Sd/- VICE CHAIRMAN
CoEET

ASCI — ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF COLLEGE OF INDIA
Bellavista, Raj Bhavan Road, Hyderabad, Telangana-500082.

CORRIGENDUM TO TENDER ADVERTISEMENT
PROCUREMENT OF LABORATORY EQUIPMENT FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SURVEILLANCE LABORATORY

The Administrative Staff College of India (ASCI) invited sealed bids from eligible and experienced manufacturers/authorized dealers/suppliers for the supply, installation, commissioning, training and warranty support of laboratory equipment as per the tender document. A corrigendum is released in this regard. Corrigendum to the Tender is available for download from the ASCI website: https://asci.org.in/tender (refer to Tender Notice No. ASCI/ESL/PROC-LAB/2025-26/01 along with the corrigendum).

Extended Timeline for Tender Submission: 22nd January 2026.

GIRIJAN COOPERATIVE CORPORATION LIMITED
East Point Colony, Visakhapatnam-17, Ph:0891- 2796164,2581661
website:https://gcc.ap.gov.in/ Email ID:apgirijan1956@gmail.com

Rc.No.137/2025/Industries/02 Dated:05-01-2026

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI) FOR SUPPLY OF RAW MATERIALS TO SOAP UNITS OF GCC Ltd. (SECOND CALL)

The Girijan Cooperative Corporation Ltd. (GCC), Visakhapatnam, invites Expression of Interest (EOI) from experienced firms for supply of **Raw Materials, Chemicals, Oils, Perfumes and other ingredients, etc.** to its toilet Soap units at Vizianagaram and Araku valley for its wide range of toilet soaps for a period of two years from date of tenders finalization, through A.P. e-procurement portal https://tender.apeprocurement.gov.in/. e-Tender documents, can be obtained from the Office of GCC Ltd., at above Address on all working days **(from 08.01.2026 to 22.01.2026 between 10:30 AM to 05:00 PM) or download at https://tender.apeprocurement.gov.in/.** e-Bid closing date and time:**22.01.2026, 05:00** P.M. For details of tender document **visit https://gcc.ap.gov.in/,Contact details: 7799998696, 7396759500.**

Sd/-VC&Managing Director

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www.thehindugroup.in/subscribe

The Andhra Pradesh Mineral Development Corporation Limited
Door No.294/1D, 100 feet Road (Tadigadapa to Enikepadu Road), Kanuru, Vijayawada-521137.
Andhra Pradesh. India.Tel: +91-866-2429999 Fax: +91-866-2429977 Email: contracts-ho@apmdc.in

SHORT TERM TENDER NOTICE

Tender No: APMDC/HO/P&C/Establishment of CDW Beneficiation Plant-Mpet/2025-26/11 Dt:09.01.2026

APMDC invites Short Term E-tender from reputed Agencies for **"Selection of Technical Consultant For Preparation of DPR For Establishment of CDW Beneficiation Plant at Mangampet Barytes Project"** For more information on the eligibility criteria, tender fees, timelines and other details, please visit e-procurement website of GoAP **www.tender.apeprocurement.gov.in**) or APMDC website (www.apmdc.ap.gov.in). The Tender document is available for downloading from **09.01.2026** and the last date for bid sumission is **19.01.2026** by **17:00 Hrs.**

Place :Vijayawada
Date : 09.01.2026
DIPR 4735PP/CL, Dt.08/01/2026

Sd/- Managing Director,
The A.P.Mineral Development Corporation Limited

कार्यालय अतिरिक्त मुख्य अभियन्ता, सार्वजनिक निर्माण विभाग संभाग-प्रथम, उदयपुर

क्रमांक :- ACE/NIT/2025-26/D-609 दिनांक : 31/12/2025

निविदा संख्या 18/2025-26

राजस्थान के राज्यपाल महोदय की ओर से सडक निर्माण कार्यों हेतु उपयुक्त श्रेणी में सार्वजनिक निर्माण विभाग राजस्थान में पंजीकृत संवेदकों एवं राज्य सरकार / केन्द्र सरकार के अधिकृत संगठनों / केन्द्रीय लोक निर्माण विभाग/डाक एवम् दूर संचार विभाग / रेल्वे इत्यादि में पंजीकृत संवेदकों, जो कि राजस्थान सरकार के ए, एए श्रेणी के संवेदकों के समकक्ष हो, से निर्धारित प्रपत्र में सडक निर्माण कार्यों के लिए ई- प्रोक्यूरमेन्ट प्रक्रिया से ऑन लाईन निविदायें आमंत्रित की जाती हैं।

कार्य का नाम	कुल 2 (दो) सडक कार्य
निविदा की कुल लागत	राशि रु. 3828.00 लाख
ऑनलाईन निविदा आवेदन डाउनलोड एवं अपलोड करने की तारीख	08.01.2026 प्रातः 9:30 बजे से 28.01.2026 सांय 6.00 बजे तक
ऑनलाईन निविदा खोलने की तारीख	30.01.2026 सांय 4.00 बजे से

निविदा से सम्बन्धित विवरण वेब साईट http://dipr.rajasthan.gov.in, http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in व sppp.rajasthan.gov.in पर देखा जा सकता है। सम्पूर्ण निविदा प्रक्रिया http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in पर ऑनलाइन सम्पादित की जावेगी।

NIB:- PWD2526A4928 UBN: PWD2526WLOB19694, PWD2526WLOB19695
DIPR/C/118/2026

अतिरिक्त मुख्य अभियन्ता, सा.नि.वि. सम्भाग-प्रथम उदयपुर

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER, CENTRAL (R&B) CIRCLE , BHUBANESWAR.
Mail i.d. : seccbbsr@gmail.com

E-procurement Tender Call Notice No.22 of 2025-26

No.7708 (Estg.) Bhubaneswar the 30th December-2025

The Chief Construction Engineer, Central (R&B) Circle, Bhubaneswar on behalf of the Governor of Odisha invites percentage rate bids for one number road work to be received in online bidding, double cover system for Improvement work as detailed in:**https://tendersodisha.gov.in**. The details of bid documents will be available in the above website **from 5.00 P.M. of 12.01.2026 to 5.00 P.M of 22.01.2026**. The bidders must possess compatible Digital Signature Certificate of Class II or III. Bids received online shall be opened **at 5.30 P.M of 22.01.2026** in the Office of the Chief Construction Engineer, Central (R&B) Circle, Bhubaneswar.

Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal **www.tendersodisha.gov.in**. Addendum / Corrigendum, if required, will be available only in the Website.

Sd/- Er. M.K.Mahananda
Chief Construction Engineer,
Central (R&B) Circle, Bhubaneswar.

B-913:

MUNICIPAL CORPORATION KADAPA
"ap'e-procurement Tender Notice. 883031 to 886617/ATO/MCK dt:08.01.2026

S.No.	Description	No. of Works	ECV Rs. in lakhs
01	RFP on Public Toilets	06	0.00
02	SAC Grant (Public Toilets)	02	25.30
03	15th FCG	02	254.56
04	NCAP	03	85.85
05	General Funds	29	110.70
	TOTAL:-	42	476.42

	Bid Document Download Start Date	Bid Document Download End Date	Bid Submission Closing Date & Time
01	06/01/2026 5.30 PM	23/01/2026 03.00 PM	23/01/2026 03.30 PM
02	06/01/2026 5.30 PM	03/02/2026 03.00 PM	03/02/2026 03.30 PM
03	08/01/2026 6.00 PM	23/01/2026 03.00 PM	23/01/2026 03.30 PM

Further details can be seen at 'e' Procurement market place in **www.apeprocurement.gov.in** officer inviting bid, Commissioner, Municipal Corporation of Kadapa, A.P.

Sd/- COMMISSIONER,
Kadapa Municipal Corporation, YSR District.

Dr. B.R. AMBEDKAR UNIVERSITY DELHI
(Established by the Act of Legislative Assembly of National Capital Territory of Delhi)

RECRUITMENT NOTICE FOR TEACHING & OTHER ACADEMIC STAFF POSTS
(Notice Regarding Extension of Last Dates to Apply)

No. AUD/55-1(49)/Rect./2025/519 **Dated: 07.01.2026**

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar University Delhi, a State University established through an Act by the Legislature of the National Capital Territory of Delhi, invites online applications from the eligible candidates for the Faculty positions (Professor, Associate Professor and Assistant Professor) and other Academic Staff positions (Librarian, Assistant Librarian and Assistant Director of Physical Education and Sports) on regular basis.

Extended last dates to apply are as follows:
Last date to apply online: 23.01.2026 (up to 23:59 hrs)
Last date of receiving applications in hard copy: 30.01.2026 (up to 05:30 hrs)

For Qualifications, Eligibility Criteria, General Instructions, Online Application Form, Payment of Fee & other details, please visit University website **https://aud.delhi.gov.in**

DIP/Shabdarth/Classified/0399/25-26. REGISTRAR
Directorate of Higher Education, Govt. of NCT of Delhi

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In association with CHRIST, NITTE

LITERARY TRIVIA CHALLENGE

1. Which Harper Lee novel, set in the racially segregated American South, is narrated by Scout Finch and centres on a lawyer defending a Black man falsely accused of rape?
2. Which global bestselling series features a young demigod who learns he is the son of Poseidon?
3. Which novel, told through letters and diary entries, recounts the chilling tale of a blood-drinking Transylvanian count?

*T&C apply.

Scan QR code or visit https://newsth.live/LFLQUIZ to take the quiz. Top 3 winners* every day win gift vouchers.

Answer to yesterday's quiz:
1. A Christmas Carol | 2. The Queen's Gambit | 3. Jon Fosse

Yesterday's Winners:
1. Aayush.K, Hisar | 2. Dilip Viswaraj, Chennai | 3. Kazi Sabrin, Lucknow

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
e-mail:- serw_ctc@yahoo.com
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER, RURAL WORKS CIRCLE, CUTTACK

No:-Tender Online RWC -01/26, Letter No.:- 44 Date : 3/1/26

e - Procurement NOTICE

1. Name of the Work : Construction of Road & Bridge works.
2. Class of Contractor
c) Estimated cost more than Rs.6.00 Crore & upto Rs.50.00 Crore : Special Class (of Odisha PWD) & relevant class of other licensing authorities.
d) Estimated cost more than Rs.1.00 Crore & upto Rs.20.00 Crore : A Class (of Odisha PWD) & relevant class of other licensing authorities.
e) Estimated cost more than Rs.20.00 Lakh & upto Rs.3.00 Crore : B Class (of Odisha PWD) & relevant class of other licensing authorities.
3. Time for Completion : As specified in the Column-7 of the Annexure
4. Detail Projects : As per Annexure attached
5. Other Details :

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of Tender on-line for bidding From	To	Last Date & Time of seeking tender clarification	Date & Time of opening of tender Technical Bid	Financial Bid
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Chief Construction Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Cuttack.	Tender Online RWC - 01/26	12.01.2026 at 11.30 A.M.	02.02.2026 up to 05.00 P.M	02.02.2026 up to 02.00 P.M	03.02.2026 at 11.30 A.M	Will be intimated later

Further details can be seen from the website **www.tendersodisha.gov.in** .

O-1934: Chief Construction Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Cuttack.

ANDHRA PRADESH CAPITAL REGION DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
Project office, Rayapudi

NIT No. 107/PROC/MAU61-USI0HB(OTH)/3/2026-HB Dt. 07.01.2026

E Procurement Tender Notice

Name of Work: APCRDA - "RFP for Engagement of Project Management Consultant for Construction of Governor's Residence Complex consisting Governor Mansion, Assembly Durbar Hall, Governor office, 2 Nos of Guest Houses, 6 Nos of Officer Quarters, 10 Nos of Senior Staff Quarters,12 Nos of Junior Staff Quarters, 40 Nos of Supporting Staff Quarters, Barracks with 20 Rooms and 144 Barrack Accommodation, Boundary Wall with 4 Nos of Sentry Post, etc at Amaravati Government Complex area, Amaravati, Andhra Pradesh (RCC Structure with High side MEP only)"

The bid can be downloaded on AP e-procurement portal from **09.01.2026 to 23.01.2026 upto 14.00 Hrs.** Due date for submission of Bid is **23.01.2026 upto 15.00 Hrs,** Technical bid opening **23.01.2026 @16.00Hrs.** For further details Please refer to **www.apeprocurement.gov.in and www.crda.ap.gov.in.**

E Procurement Short Tender Notice

Sl.No	NIT Number	Name of Work
1	109/PROC/MAU61-USI0HB(ARCH) /1/2026-HFR, Date: 07.01.2026	RFP for Selection of Consultant for Comprehensive architectural services (Site planning, Architecture, Engineering, Structural Engineering, Interiors, Landscape, MEP, HVAC, IT, Acoustics, Safety System, Signages& Way Finding, Lighting Design, Graphics Design, Primary Survey etc) for the AP Judicial Academy at Amaravati
2	105/MAU61-USI0HB (BG)/17/2025-HB, Date: 08.01.2026	RFP for Selection of Service Provider for Technical Facility Management Services for APCRDA Project Office Building at Rayapudi, Amaravati Capital City.
3	106/MAU61-USI0HB (BG)/17/2025-HB, Date: 08.01.2026	RFP for Selection of ServiceProvider for IT Operations & Maintenance Services for APCRDA Project Office Building at Rayapudi, Amaravati Capital City.

The above bids may be downloaded on AP e-procurement portal from **09.01.2026 to 20.01.2026 upto 14.00 Hrs.** Due date for submission of Bid is **20.01.2026 upto 15.00 Hrs,** Technical bid opening **20.01.2026 @16.00Hrs.** For further details Please refer to **www.apeprocurement.gov.in and www.crda.ap.gov.in.**

Sd/- Commissioner, APCRDA, Amaravati.

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH

With deep grief we would like to inform you that
Shri GN Chandrasekaran
RTD Add. Commisioner, Central Excise
reached the Lotus Feet of God on **7 Jan 2026,** surrounded by his loved ones in Bangalore. Rituals will be performed from **Friday, 9 Jan** onwards at Bangalore
- With family and friends.

DEATH ANNIVERSARIES

THIRD ANNIVERSARY

C. R. NARAYANAN
Retd Deputy Director General
Geological Survey of India
DOB : 4th May 1936
DOD : 9th January 2023

He was our guiding light and lived life on his own terms, being the rock we all depended on. He shall be cherished in our hearts forever.

Dhruv Vijairam, Ramya Vijayram, Priya Vijayram and C. Vijayram, C. Vijayanand

DEATH

Merged with GOD
A
Rare Genius
My Mentor
Sri Koduri Venkata Ramanayya Pantulu
Advocate

DOB: 09/01/1937 DOD: 22/12/2025.

His Student: **Anil Kumar Turaga.**
Advocate, Hyderabad.
email: surya_teja@hotmail.com

DEATH ANNIVERSARIES

8TH DEATH ANNIVERSARY

Born 02.03.1937 Death 09.01.2018

B. PURUSHOTTAM & CO
Chartered Accountants
Pay respectful homage to
Sri. B. ANANTHARAMAKRISHNA
Fondly remembered by:
Partners, Staff, Family and Friends

Dr. B.R. AMBEDKAR SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS UNIVERSITY, BENGALURU

No: BASEU/42/ADM/2025 Date: 07.01.2026

ADMISSION NOTIFICATION: 2026-27

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar School of Economics University, Bengaluru invites applications for admissions to the below three programmes. All the programmes offered at the University are Full-time Residential.

- Five-year Integrated M.Sc. Economics programme [75 seats for Indian candidates +5 seats for PIO/Foreign Nationals)
- Five-year Integrated M.A. Economics programme [50 seats for Indian candidates +5 seats for PIO/Foreign Nationals)
- Three-year B.Sc. Data Analytics programme [50 seats for Indian candidates +5 seats for PIO/Foreign Nationals)
- Two-year M.Sc. Economics [30 seats for Indian candidates + 5 seats for PIO/Foreign Nationals]
- Two-year M.Sc. Financial Economics [30 seats for Indian candidates + 5 seats for PIO/Foreign Nationals)
- Two-year M.A. Economics [30 seats for Indian candidates + 5 seats for PIO/Foreign Nationals)
- Two-year M.Sc. Development Economics [30 seats for Indian candidates + 5 seats for PIO/Foreign Nationals)
- Two-year M.Sc. Data Analytics [30 seats for Indian candidates + 5 seats for PIO/Foreign Nationals)
- Two-year M.Sc. Public Policy [30 seats for Indian candidates + 5 seats for PIO/Foreign Nationals)

Candidates are required to fill in a Common University Entrance Test (CUET) 2026-27 online application form and appear for the test conducted by National Testing Agency (NTA). Further details please visit **https://exams.nta.nic.in/cuet-pg/** for PG program and **https://cuet.nta.nic.in/** for UG program Admissions to the above-mentioned courses are based on performance in CUET 2026-27 and as per the eligibility criteria and other details please visit **http://base.ac.in.** Candidates willing to take admission in this University need fill separate online application at www.base.ac.in. Selection process for the PIO/ Foreign National is based on the merit list of the performance in the respective qualifying examination.

Application Fee: (1) Rs.600/- for GM, OBC, (2) Rs.300/- for SC/ST/Persons with Disability and (3) Rs.1000/- for PIO/FN

- **Start date for online application: 08.01.2026**
- **Last date for online application: one week after NTA CUET 2026 UG and PG results declaration**

Note: All dates are subject to change depending on Government regulations.

Sd/-
Prof. Vishwanatha
Vice Chancellor

DIPR/CP/4943/Shirdi Sai/2025-26

Sd/-
Mamatha Devi G S (K.A.S)
Registrar

Contact us: Jnanabharathi Main Road, Nagarabhavi P.O. Bengaluru, Karnataka-560072.
Email: info@base.ac.in, Active Helpdesk: 080-29557767

FORM – 1
ONGOLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY, ONGOLE

(Notification of GIS based Draft Proposed Master Plan for Kanigiri Municipality Inviting for Objections and Suggestions)

NOTICE UNDER SUB-SECTION (1) OF SECTION 12 OF THE ANDHRA PRADESH METROPOLITAN REGION AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITIES ACT, 2016 READ WITH SUB-RULE (3) OF RULE 16 OF THE ANDHRA PRADESH METROPOLITAN REGION AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITIES RULES, 2018

Roc.No.249/ONUDA/MP/2022, Dated.08.01.2026.

(1) The Draft Land Use Map of Kanigiri Municipality prepared by the Ongole Urban Development Authority, a copy of which is attached here to for the area described in the Schedule below, is hereby published under sub-rule (3) of Rule 16 of the rules framed under the Andhra Pradesh Metropolitan Region and Urban Development Authorities Rules, 2018.

(2) The map depicting various Land Uses may be inspected without any charges on all working days during the office hours at the Office of the Collector and District Magistrate, Markapur District, Markapur and at the office of the Ongole Urban Development Authority, Door No. 25-36-462, Opposite Acharya Ranga Bhavan, Nehru Veedhi, Santhapet 3rd lane, Ongole - 523001 and at the office of the Kanigiri Municipality, Kanigiri and at the offices of Tahsildar of Kanigiri Mandal, MPDO of Kanigiri.

(3) Any person interested in the Land Use Map may communicate the objections and suggestions relating thereto in writing to the Municipal Commissioner, Kanigiri Municipality/ Vice-Chairman of the Ongole Urban Development Authority or through email to **npkanigiri@gmail.com** (or) **vconuda@gmail.com** within **30days i.e., from 09.01.2026 to 07.02.2026.**

SCHEDULE

GIS Based Draft Proposed Master Plan & Land use Map for Kanigiri Municipality.

I. Existing Land Use Map
II. Proposed Land Use Map

Planning Area Boundary

East : Peramgudipalli Revenue Village, P.P.Kandriga Revenue Village, Punugodu Revenue Village, Somanapally Revenue Village
West : Chakirala Revenue Village, Thummagunta Revenue Village.
North : Challagirigala Revenue Village
South : Polavaram Revenue Village, Manamadugu Revenue Village

Date : 08.01.2026
Place : Ongole.

Sd/-
Vice Chairman (FAC)
Ongole Urban Development Authority

INBRIEF



Book on life of Murmu released in Visakhapatnam

A book on the life of President Droupadi Murmu was released by Lakshmamma, a woman sanitation worker who cleans the roads at Andhra University, in Visakhapatnam on Thursday. Titled, 'Agni Sarassulo Vikasinchina Kamalam Droupadi Murmu', the book is authored by Yarlagadda Lakshmi Prasad, a former Member of Parliament and president of the Viswa Hindi Parishad. The book release function was held in an unconventional, yet evocative setting – under a tree on the Andhra University campus.

Panel reviews plans for NTR statue, memorial park

A Cabinet Sub-Committee met at the Secretariat to review plans for installation of the statue of former Chief Minister N.T. Rama Rao and development of a Smriti Vanam (memorial park) in Amaravati. Ministers P. Narayana (Municipal Administration and Urban Development), Payyavula Keshav (Finance), Anagani Satya Prasad (Revenue) and Kandula Durgesh (Tourism) attended. The Ministers examined model designs of the proposed statue. The government plans to install the statue atop a hill at Neerukonda. According to officials, the bronze statue weighing 3,500 tonnes would be one of the most prominent landmarks in the capital city.

Centre approves ₹60.76 crore sports projects in State

The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports has given administrative approval for the construction of sports infrastructure projects worth ₹60.76 crore under the Khelo India scheme in Andhra Pradesh. According to the letter from the Ministry to the SAAP, some of the projects included laying of a 400 metre and 8-lane synthetic athletic track, 25-m-high floodlights at IGMC Stadium in Vijayawada, multi-purpose indoor block at NTR sports complex in Kuppam, and construction of artificial grass football field, a basketball court and a tennis court at IGMC Stadium in Vijayawada.

'Fertilizer prices, subsidies determined by Central govt.'

Agriculture Director Manazir Jeelani said in a statement on Wednesday that the Department of Fertilisers (DoF), under the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, was solely responsible for fixing fertilizer prices and deciding subsidy allocations. Overall, the Central government was providing a subsidy of approximately ₹1.92 lakh crore to support farmers nationwide, he said.

Cabinet nod for setting up Logistics Infra Corporation, Logistics Fund

Among others, it clears allotment of 150 acres to Ethereal Exploration Guild Pvt. Ltd. for setting up rocket launch vehicle and engine manufacturing unit in Space City and proposal to bear the burden of true-up electricity charges by repaying to the DISCOMs in six monthly instalments

The Hindu Bureau
VIJAYAWADA

The Cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu on Thursday took several important decisions, including the establishment of AP Logistics Infrastructure Corporation (APLINC) as an integrated holding company for developing infrastructure projects and constitution of a AP Logistics Fund as an Alternative Investment Fund (AIF) for mobilising institutional capital for those projects.

The Andhra Pradesh Government would be the initial sponsor of this fund with up to 20% share.

Besides, the Cabinet gave its nod for changing the name of ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel India Pvt. Ltd. to AMNS Ports Rajayyapeta Pvt. Ltd, designating it as a Special Purpose Vehicle for constructing a 2.90 km-long waterfront captive port at D.L. Puram in Anakapalli district.

The Cabinet cleared the allotment of nearly 150 acres to Ethereal Exploration Guild Pvt. Ltd. for setting up a rocket launch vehicle and engine manufacturing unit in the upcoming Space City in Tirupati district at a subsidised rate of 5 lakh per acre and 56 acres to Pioneer Clean Amps Pvt. Ltd. in Chittoor district for manufacturing Hansa-3(NG) trainer aircraft and establishing a flight training school there.

The Cabinet also approved the establishment of a greenfield electrical steel and wind mast manufacturing facility by Shirdi Sai Electricals in Kadapa district and sanctioned special incentives to Ramco Cements Ltd. for a ₹1,500 crore expansion project in Nandyal district and incentives to Websol Renewable Pvt. Ltd. and Tata Power Renewable Energy Ltd.'s projects in Tirupati and Nellore districts.

Further, the Cabinet gave its nod to AP Cluster Development Programme with an outlay of ₹200 crore for setting up 45 MSME Common Facility Centers and making the charging of 5% premium on the Value of Estimated Resources in respect of non-captive commercial leases granted on a nomination basis mandatory.

Retail excise tax

The Cabinet allowed the withdrawal of additional retail excise tax on bars to align prices with those of retail shops, increasing the MRP of IMFL by ₹10 per bottle (excluding ₹99 MRP IMFL, beer, wine and RTD) to generate an annual revenue of ₹1,391 crore and increasing retailer margin by approximately 1%.

Govt. guarantee

The Cabinet gave consent to the provision of a government guarantee for a ₹5,000 crore loan from NaBFID to AP Jal Jeevan Water Supply Corporation to enable it mobilise financial resources, administrative approval for ₹945 crore for the procurement of student kits (Classes I to X) for 39.52 lakh students for the 2024-25 year, regularising previous orders and permission for transferring a 15 acre plot in Visakhapatnam to AP Tourism Authority for the construction of hill resorts.

The Cabinet authorised AP-CRDA to make consultancy payments to Foster+Partners and gave approval for ₹166 crore for the construction of AP Judicial Academy in Amaravati.

Also, the Cabinet cleared the proposal to bear the burden of true-up electricity charges by repaying to the DISCOMs in six monthly instalments in order to spare the public from a tariff hike, and approved the DPR and gave administrative sanction for the 950 MW pumped storage hydroelectric project at Kamalapadu in Anantapur district with an estimated cost of ₹7,377.

Pedamadduru ryots give away 313 acres in an hour of LPS launch

The Hindu Bureau
AMARAVATI



A farmer giving the consent letter to MA&UD Minister P. Narayana, at Pedamadduru on Thursday.

Municipal Administration and Urban Development (MA&UD) Minister P. Narayana on Thursday formally launched the Land Pooling Scheme-2.0 at Pedamadduru village of Amaravati mandal in Palnadu district.

This is the third village out of seven notified by the APCRDA for LPS 2.0.

Mr. Narayana launched the LPS in the other two villages – Endrayi in Palnadu district and Vaddamanu in Guntur district – on Wednesday.

Along with Pedakurapadu MLA Bhashyam Praveen, the Minister collected the consent letters from the farmers willing to offer their lands under the LPS. He also inaugurated the Land Pooling Competent Authority office in the village.

Within an hour of the launch, farmers submitted consent letters through Form-1 for 313 acres of land. Officials said this accounted for nearly 30% of the total land being pooled at Pedamadduru.

Addressing the gathering, Mr. Narayana said farmers were voluntarily coming forward for land pooling due to their trust in Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu. He pointed out that a day earlier, farmers at Endrayi had offered 403 acres.

Criticising former Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, he alleged that despite supporting the capital construction in the Legislative Assembly, the YSRCP government later subjected farmers to harassment and stalled development. He said the opposition leaders were unable to digest the renewed farmer participation in LPS.

Naidu exhorts Self-Help Group women to become entrepreneurs

The Hindu Bureau
GUNTUR



Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu going round the stalls at the SARAS Mela in Guntur on Thursday.
T. VIJAY KUMAR

Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu has asked Union Minister of State for Rural Development Pemmasani Chandra Sekhar and MSME Minister Kondapalli Srinivas to ensure that every Self-Help Group (SHG) woman member becomes an entrepreneur under the State government's 'One family, one entrepreneur' initiative.

Mr. Naidu was speaking after inaugurating the SARAS Aajeevika Mela-2026, organised by the Sale of Articals of Rural Artisans Society, in Guntur on Thursday. The exhibition will be underway till January 18.

The exhibition, held for the first time outside Delhi, showcased products made by SHG women from across the country.

On the occasion, Mr. Naidu handed over a cheque for ₹1,375 crore from Stree Nidhi Credit Cooperative Federation Limited to the SHGs and sanctioned another ₹2,171 crore in loans through the SERP. Mr. Naidu said the DWCRA and MEPMA SHG movements had created history at the national level. He recalled that DWCRA groups were established with the sole aim of ensuring economic self-reliance for women, and noted that consistent savings by women strengthened their financial stability.

Calling the SARAS Mela a "mini India," he said the future belonged to women and stressed the need for branding traditional handicrafts and local food products. Mr. Naidu said Andhra Pradesh had 80 lakh women in DWCRA groups and 24 lakh in MEPMA, who together mobilised nearly ₹26,000 crore. He urged the SHGs to focus on marketing and sales to enhance profits, noting that 93,000 women had already become micro and MSME entrepreneurs.

He also highlighted welfare initiatives such as Talliki Vandanam, Deepam-2, free RTC travel under Stree Shakti, and digital services through Mana Mitra WhatsApp. Mr. Naidu later visited several stalls, interacted with artisans, tasted Madugula halwa, purchased a handloom saree for his wife Bhuvaneswari, and sanctioned ₹6 lakh from the Chief Minister's Relief Fund to a woman potter whose husband was unwell.

Air taxi, designed and manufactured in Guntur, clears key structural tests

The Hindu Bureau
GUNTUR



Abhiram Chava, Managing Director of Magnumwings, explaining the features of the air taxi, in Guntur on Thursday. T. VIJAY KUMAR

An air taxi, designed and manufactured in Guntur by Magnumwings, has successfully completed the crucial phase of structural frame testing, marking a significant milestone towards advanced air mobility solutions.

The tests are aimed at assessing how the aircraft's structure performs under demanding, real-time operating conditions.

During the trials, the air taxi was intentionally subjected to intense roll-and-pitch movements, generating strong motion and vibration to evaluate how the its frame absorbs stress, controls movement and safely returns to a stable state. According to the test footage released by the company, the air taxi remained structurally intact even under aggressive conditions and was able to quickly regain balance.

The results validate the robustness of the design and reliability of the airframe when exposed to sudden or extreme forces that could occur during actual operations.

Magnumwings Managing Director Abhiram Chava said the tests focused on "structural response and controllability under stress."

"The test evaluated load absorption, vibration management and recovery behaviour during aggressive manoeuvres, " he explained.

Jagan warns of agitation for RLIS

The Hindu Bureau
VIJAYAWADA



YSRCP president Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy addressing the media on Thursday.

YSRCP president Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has said the Rayalaseema Lift Irrigation (RLI) scheme will be completed at "lightning speed" once the party returns to power. The party will also continue its legal and political fight against "privatisation" of government medical colleges, he asserts.

Addressing the media on Thursday, Mr. Jagan Mohan Reddy said the RLI scheme was critical not only for the drought-prone Rayalaseema region but also for the entire State, as it ensured access to Krishna river waters.

Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu had placed personal interests above State's welfare. Neither Mr. Naidu nor Water Resources Minister Nimmala Ramanaidu condemned Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy's statement in the Telangana Assembly claiming that Mr. Naidu had agreed to halt the project at his request, the YSRCP chief said.

The present NDA government was shelving the RLI scheme, he alleged. The YSRCP would launch agitations for the project, he warned, and vowed to complete it if the party comes to power. He asserted that he never intended harm to Telangana, but would not accept injustice to Andhra Pradesh.

Bhogapuram airport

On the Bhogapuram airport, Mr. Jagan Mohan Reddy accused Mr. Naidu of attempting to claim credit for work done by the YSRCP government.

'Jagan trying to stay relevant'

The Hindu Bureau
VIJAYAWADA

Responding to former Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy's comments on Thursday, Minister for Health, Medical Education and Family Welfare Satya Kumar Yadav said the YSRCP leader was making frantic efforts to ensure that he stays politically relevant.

In a statement on Thursday, Mr. Satya Kumar Yadav reminded the YSRCP leader of his defeat in the 2024 Assembly elections and urged him to reflect on the reasons. "He should introspect why the people of Rayalaseema, who led him to victory in 2019, withdrew their support for him," the Health Minister said. Before resorting to slinging mud against Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, he should remember how he took up several projects without permissions in the name of RLI scheme, which were later halted by the NGT, Mr. Satya Kumar said.

Big plans to develop tourism in State

The Hindu Bureau
VIJAYAWADA



APTDC Chairman N. Balaji addressing the media in Vijayawada on Thursday.
K.V.S. GIRI

Andhra Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation (APTDC) Chairman N. Balaji on Thursday said the name of 'Haritha Hotels' operated by the Tourism Department across the State had been changed to 'Haritha Punnami'.

Speaking to the media after attending the APTDC Board meeting, Mr. Balaji said signboards with the new name would be set up at all the 67 properties across the State. He also informed that MoUs worth around ₹19,000 crore were signed for development of the tourism sector in the State. Mr. Balaji said the board meeting discussed employee welfare and it was decided to give promotions to all the regular and contract employees as per eligibility, a salary increment of ₹2,000 every six years to outsourcing employees, and contract employees, who were not eligible for promotions, would also get a salary hike of ₹2,000, and accident insurance coverage for all employees had been enhanced from ₹5 lakh to ₹10 lakh. He said works at Gandikota and Simhachalam would be taken up with ₹450 crore allocated by the Centre and Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu would launch houseboats and floating boats as part of the ongoing 'Amaravati Avakaya Festival' at Haritha Berm Park. He said efforts to obtain 'Blue Flag" certification for Suryalanka beach had been intensified.

INBRIEF



Four students killed as car rams tree in Telangana

Four students were killed and one sustained injuries after the car they were travelling in rammed a tree near Mirzaguda Gate in Chevella, Telangana, in the early hours of Thursday. Of the deceased, three were students of ICFAI Business School (IBS), while one was an engineering student at Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Technology. The fifth occupant, who was a BBA student at IBS, sustained injuries in the crash and was shifted to a private hospital in Gachibowli.

Two detained for trying to tarnish image of TTD

The police on Wednesday busted an alleged conspiracy aimed at tarnishing the image of the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam (TTD) and detained two persons including a photographer associated with a leading daily. Investigators said the plot was masterminded by YSRCP worker Allapaka Koti, who has been accused of dumping empty liquor bottles near the police guest house adjacent to the wall of the TTD Kousthubham rest house. The act was staged to suggest a breakdown of law enforcement in the region.

ED officer who probed gold smuggling case made to retire

Enforcement Directorate (ED) Deputy Director P. Radhakrishnan, who probed politically significant cases such as the diplomatic gold smuggling and the Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board case, has been reportedly forced to go on compulsory retirement from the service. He had made crucial arrests, including that of M. Sivasankar, former Principal Secretary to the Kerala's Chief Minister.

Karnataka mulls measures to oppose MGNREGA repeal

The repeal of the Act has hit the right to work, and will centralise powers, says State's Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister; the Centre has enacted the Act without consulting States, he adds

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU



Building further on its opposition to the repeal of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) and enactment of the Viksit Bharat- Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) Act by the Centre, Karnataka will explore legal possibilities to challenge the repeal.

The State Cabinet on Thursday decided to seek legal remedy and go to "people's court" to highlight the "damage" to the Constitution's 73rd amendment that proposes decentralisation of power.

"After a detailed deliberations at the Cabinet, we have asked the Advocate-General to explore legal possibilities whether to approach the High Court or the Supreme Court," Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister H.K. Patil told presspersons.

He said that the Union government has enacted the Act without consulting States.

> The Centre will now decide the nature of work to be taken up, thus denying panchayats their power
>
> **H.K.PATIL**
> Karnataka Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister

"Financial burden on States has also increased. The repeal of MGNREGA has hit the right to work, and will centralise powers. The Centre will now decide the nature of work to be taken up and in which village, thus denying panchayats their power," he added.

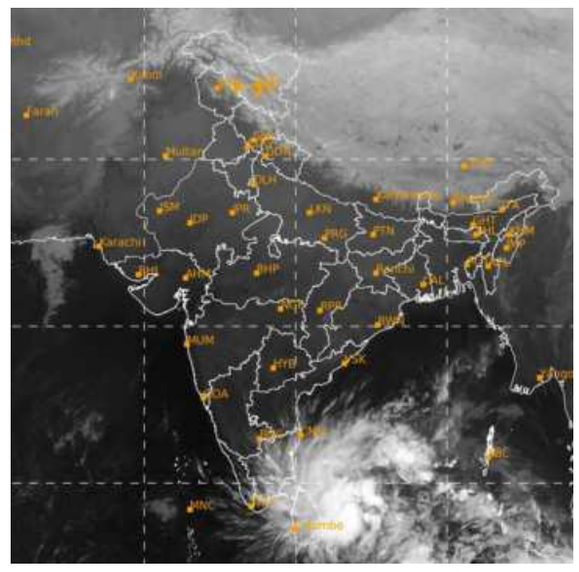
Revanth plans Statewide agitation

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy sensed a deep-rooted conspiracy to weaken the poor by targeting the MGNREGS and voter rights, and announced that massive public meetings would be held in nine districts from February 3, with senior Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi to be invited to a major rally in Mulugu.

WEATHERWATCH

Rainfall, temperature & air quality in select metros yesterday



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 18.15 HRS)

Forecast for Friday: Heavy to very heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Karaikal. Cold wave conditions likely at isolated places over Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Delhi, Odisha, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	—	23.2	9.5	Kozhikode	—	33.6	22.5
Ahmedabad	—	26.5	14.4	Kurnool	—	30.5	16.2
Aizawl	—	26.4	11.8	Lucknow	—	16.9	6.4
Allahabad	—	11.4	6.0	Madurai	—	31.3	19.6
Bengaluru	—	25.5	14.9	Mangaluru	—	33.0	21.9
Bhopal	—	27.2	9.0	Mumbai	—	32.1	16.4
Bhubaneswar	—	28.1	9.4	Mysuru	—	27.2	14.4
Chandigarh	—	16.1	7.6	New Delhi	—	17.5	5.8
Chennai	—	29.1	24.0	Patna	—	14.9	9.1
Coimbatore	—	29.2	17.4	Port Blair	—	29.8	26.3
Dehradun	—	21.6	4.4	Puducherry	—	28.2	20.3
Gangtok	—	16.4	6.6	Pune	—	29.7	14.5
Goa	—	33.6	20.5	Raipur	—	27.7	12.4
Guwahati	—	24.6	11.6	Ranchi	—	21.8	8.0
Hubballi	—	28.0	13.0	Shillong	—	17.0	7.0
Hyderabad	—	27.6	13.1	Shimla	—	16.4	4.0
Imphal	—	22.9	7.7	Srinagar	—	11.1	-5.1
Jaipur	—	19.0	4.4	Thiruvananthapuram	—	33.0	22.8
Kochi	—	31.4	23.0	Tiruchi	—	29.3	20.4
Kohima	—	15.2	6.0	Vijayawada	—	29.0	17.2
Kolkata	—	23.8	11.0	Visakhapatnam	—	27.4	18.9

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO_2	NO_2	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	.80	.77	.70	...166	...157	
Bengaluru	...4	.19	.38	...165	...207	
Chennai	...6	...3	.52	98	...118	
Delhi	.48	.61	111	...317	...283	
Hyderabad	.12	.16	.72	...102	...123	
Kolkata	.18	.48	.29	...266	...207	
Lucknow	...8	.44	.89	...219	...223	
Mumbai	.23	107	.11	...186	...126	
Pune	..—	.62	.37	...235	...200	
Visakhapatnam	.21	.59	.39	93	...122	

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Chikkaballapur, Karnataka recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 309 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Damoh, Madhya Pradesh recorded a healthy AQI score of 21

Air Quality Code: Poor | Moderate | Good (Readings indicate average AQI)

SO_2: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO_2: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

TTD's children hospital to be ready soon

The Hindu Bureau
TIRUPATI

Sri Padmavati Children's Hospital, which is being constructed by Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams at Alipiri, will be ready for inauguration soon.

TTD Executive Officer Anil Kumar Singhal inspected the hospital under construction on Thursday and interacted with medical and engineering personnel. He told the engineering wing to make advance arrangements for installing medical equipment, furniture, electrical works and other essential infrastructure. During the review of the G+6 hospital building, the doctors informed him that the sixth floor would be used for operation theatres, while seventh floor would have an exclusive helipad to receive emergency cases.

7 BJP-RSS workers awarded life term

The Hindu Bureau
KANNUR

An Additional District and Sessions Court in Thalassery on Thursday sentenced seven BJP-RSS workers to life imprisonment with rigorous imprisonment for the murder of Communist Party of India (Marxist) [CPI(M)] local secretary and Centre of India Trade Unions (CITU) leader K. Latheesh on December 31, 2008. The court found the accused one to seven guilty and sentenced them to 35 years of imprisonment on four counts. The sentences will run concurrently. Each of them were also imposed a fine of ₹1.40 lakh.

Latheesh was hacked to death on the Chakyathmukku beach, near Thalassery, after the assailant gang allegedly hurled bombs to create panic.

Karnataka to regularise illegally built properties

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Karnataka government on Thursday decided to extend the relief to owners of properties in illegal/unauthorised layouts that is now under B-Khata in the jurisdiction of urban local bodies across the State. While about 10 lakh properties are estimated to benefit, the quantum of money to be collected by the State government to regularise the properties has not been estimated.

The relief is on the lines of an earlier announcement for properties in the Greater Bengaluru Authority region where the government is levying 5% of the guidance value to regularise sites. The scheme does not include regularisation of buildings that have deviated from building bylaws.

According to Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister H.K. Patil, the scheme will be extended to B-Khata properties that includes sites, buildings, apartments, and flats that have not received approval from the respective planning authorities. The A-Khata will be issued subject to these properties taking approval from planning authorities, he added.

He said the proposal is to restrict unauthorised developments. A note said it aims at restricting the sale of properties in layouts that have been formed without approval from the planning authorities, and to bring those layouts that have already been developed within the legal ambit. When asked about the conditions, he said: "If we are to regularise, we will also penalise."

Offered with devotion



Staff counting the hundi collection received at Subrahmanya Swamy temple in Mopidevi in Krishna district. Temple executive officer D. Srirama Prasad said the collections stood at 1.07 crore. K.V.S. GIRI

MSC Elsa 3 owner deposits ₹1,227.62 cr. to free sister vessel

John L. Paul
KOCHI

The owner firm of container ship *MSC Elsa 3* that sank off the Kerala coast in May 2025 has deposited a compensation of ₹1,227.62 crore with the High Court as bank guarantee, following which the court permitted the release of its sister vessel *MSC Akiteta-2*.

The sister vessel that had been detained off Vizhinjam following a court order of November 11, has thus left the port. A Bench of Justice M.A. Abdul Hakhim posted the matter (regarding compensation) for hearing on February 13.

The court had in September reduced the security amount that had to be paid by the owners of *MSC Elsa 3* from ₹9,531 crore to ₹1,227.62 crore. It thus modified its July 7 order, in an admiralty suit filed by the State government, following which *MSC Akiteta-2* was detained at Vizhinjam.

The government had claimed the compensation for the marine and coastal pollution and the loss caused to fishers after the sinking of the ship, following which the court had ordered the conditional arrest of its sister vessel till the compensation was paid.



The containers from *MSC Elsa 3* that sank in the Kochi outer washed ashore near Kollam Sakthikulangara coast last year. FILE PHOTO

SC sets aside A.P. High Court order quashing FIRs filed by ACB

The Hindu Bureau
VIJAYAWADA

The Supreme Court on Thursday set aside the Andhra Pradesh High Court order nullifying 13 First Information Reports (FIRs) registered by the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) under the provisions of Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988.

The apex court directed the accused public servants to cooperate for the expeditious conclusion of the investigation. It directed the ACB to file final reports within six months and not to take any coercive steps against the public servants.

Further, the Supreme Court also directed the High Court not to entertain any more challenges to the FIRs or pending investigation.

After the State bifurcation in 2014, the ACB and Criminal Investigation Unit of ACB was functioning from Hyderabad till 2016, after which they were shifted to Vijayawada.

On August 14, 2022, the State government issued a G.O. notifying Joint Director, CIU, ACB as police station with jurisdiction for the entire State. Prior to August 2022, the CIU, ACB registered cases against corrupt public servants for amassing wealth disproportionate to their known source of income.

Ahead of Makaravilakku fest, Erumely teems with festive spirit as foreign tourists join pilgrims' rituals

Hiran Unnikrishnan
KOTTAYAM

With their faces painted in bright colours and peacock plumes in hand, a group of pilgrims danced through the streets of Erumely. As they moved onto another street, a group of foreign tourists, adorned with elaborate crowns, joined in. The drumbeats rose to a crescendo as the lively crowd gradually made their way to the Nainar Mosque.

These scenes have become increasingly common in Erumely these days, with a growing number of international tourists visiting Kerala stopping by this temple town, which is already alive with festive spirit.



Foreign tourists watching Sabarimala pilgrims moving through the streets of Erumely. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

With just days remaining before the Petta Thullal and Chandanakkudam ceremonies, followed by the Makaravilakku festival at the Sabarimala Ayyappa temple, many visitors are keen to experience the celebrations here. They are also seen capturing photographs amid the milling crowd of pilgrims, draped in the customary black attire.

The trend is largely attributed to increasing media coverage highlighting the town's unique display of communal harmony. Most of the visiting tourists are Europeans, drawn to Erumely, located on the eastern outskirts of the district, a key base for their onward journeys to Kumily or Munnar.

"There appears to be growing tourist interest during the Sabarimala pilgrimage season in Erumely, which serves as a key base for these pilgrims. We have been receiving several groups of foreign visitors who stop by to explore the town and even participate in the rituals," says Mithulaj Puthenveettil, secretary of the Erumely Mahallu Muslim Jama-ath.

The primary attraction for foreign visitors seems to be the celebration of religious harmony, where two temples and a mosque stand close by, and pilgrims honouring all of them in their rituals. " Many are fascinated to capture on camera the unique sight of Ayyappa devotees circumambulating a Muslim mosque," he added.

Information source

Police stationed at various points in the town have become the main source of information for visitors, answering questions about safety, key issues, and must-visit locations.

Confirming the trend, an official with the Travancore Devaswom Board says that during the Chandanakkudam festival and the historically renowned Petta Thullal of Ambalappuzha and Alangad teams, large numbers of foreign tourists flock to Erumely.

Conditional ease

The CDSCO guidelines should not regress into a 'pay and pass' scheme

The new guidelines to compound minor drug violations that the Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO) has released, operationalise a legal change in the works since 2023. Until recently, many instances of relatively minor or technical non-compliance under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940, invoked criminal prosecution. The new guidance and standard operating procedures are meant to standardise compounding instead, whereby, at the regulator's discretion, firms can settle certain offences by reporting them and applying to pay a fine, instead of litigating. The legal backdrop is the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Act that was framed as an exercise in "decriminalising and rationalising offences ... for ease of living and doing business". In the 1940 Act, Jan Vishwas broadened the scope of Section 32B by adding heads into the group of offences that could be compounded; this now includes making a drug to sell or distribute in breach of the 1940 Act but not covered by its Section 27(a-c) and stocking or exhibiting such a non-spurious or non-adulterated drug, among others. If compounding is granted and paid for, the key benefit is "immunity from prosecution" for that case, subject to conditions. This change is for the better if the regulatory apparatus implements it in good faith. For offences based on record keeping and disclosure, compounding prevents needless criminalisation and lets enforcement focus on direr violations.

The main pitfalls are the guidelines regressing into a 'pay and pass' scheme and the CDSCO's transparency. Firms can seek compounding "before or after" prosecution. If, however, the CDSCO does not publish (even redacted) compounding orders and the underlying case details, the public may lose faith in the legal proceedings and in the regulator. Even if repeat offenders cannot avail of the benefit, there needs to be a publicly auditable trail. The guidance's emphasis on discretion and conditions cannot substitute for public reporting that lets independent actors check whether the same firms are repeat offenders. Similarly, the published process does not create room for consumer groups or whistleblowers to make representations before immunity is granted. Next, the way the errors that can be compounded are written is broad enough in practice to cover a wide range of behaviours, from lapses in paperwork to more substantive compliance failures. If the compounding fines are also set too low, applied inconsistently or used routinely in place of deterrence, compliance will only falter. Perhaps most of all, the CDSCO also needs to link compounding to corrective and preventive actions, follow-up inspections, and, where relevant, public-facing actions such as issuing alerts or directing firms to recall products. Otherwise, there may not be a durable reduction in risk over time.

Shrill reactions

India's cricket is being held hostage to political compulsions

Caught in a crossfire, India's cricketing ties with its subcontinental neighbours are in a free fall. If border tensions with Pakistan and the scourge of terrorism affected sporting links across the Wagah, turbulence within Bangladesh and extreme reactions to it within India, have turned out to be another stumbling block. The ghastly lynching of members of the minority Hindu community in Bangladesh drew rightful condemnation across the Indian landscape, and yet the reflexive sporting churn should have been avoided. In a social media age wherein violence and insults tend to get amplified, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) responded prematurely in forcing Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) to release its Bangladeshi left-arm seamer Mustafizur Rahman. That the Indian Premier League (IPL) is only commencing on March 26 and much water would have flowed down by then in the Ganges and the Padma, was lost on the officials. The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) was quick in its rejoinder. A security threat to its squad was propped up as an excuse and a missive was sent to the International Cricket Council (ICC) to relocate Bangladesh's games in the forthcoming ICC T20 World Cup, away from host India. Bangladesh also proposed a ban on the telecast of the IPL in the country.

With the T20 World Cup launching on February 7 in India and Sri Lanka, a last minute scrambling for venues will be difficult. Incidentally, Pakistan's games are slotted in Sri Lanka and even its big contest against India will be staged at Colombo on February 15. With Bangladesh set to play four preliminary league games in India, a reallocation will affect hosting logistics. This is a conundrum that could have been avoided had the BCCI waited for the hostile tide to turn. The ties that bind India and Bangladesh, a nation birthed through the assistance of the former in 1971, now stand frayed. Diplomacy is a complex interplay of adjustment and pragmatism. The deposed former Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina sought refuge and was granted one in Delhi, while the Indian government also paid its last respects to her arch-rival and former Prime Minister, the late Khaleda Zia. The ICC chairman, Jay Shah, has an unenviable task of maintaining neutrality while dealing with the present crisis. The shrill reactions on either side of the border need to be tempered; sport should not be handcuffed by political compulsions.

GSDP share as criterion for central-State transfers



K.R. Shanmugam
is Economic Consultant, Government of Tamil Nadu, and former Director, Madras School of Economics



Sankarganesh Karuppiah
is an IRS officer

The central government shares its gross tax revenues with States based on the recommendations of successive Finance Commissions (FCs), which determine both the overall share to States and the formula for tax devolution. The Centre also transfers resources through grants-in aid and centrally sponsored schemes (CSS). While the recommendations of 15 FCs have been implemented, those of the 16th FC have yet to be tabled in Parliament.

Central transfers have become a subject of intense debate. Key concerns include the erosion of the fiscal autonomy of States following the implementation of Goods and Services Tax (GST), revenue losses arising from GST rate cuts, the increasing dominance of CSS that constraint State-level spending flexibility, the Centre's growing cesses and surcharges that are not shared with States, and declining devolution shares of high-performing States. Moreover, most FCs have prioritised equity over efficiency, having relied heavily on debatable criteria such as income distance and population, and frequently altered the weights assigned to these variables. Significant regional disparities also persist across States in expenditure needs and fiscal capacity.

Tax collection versus tax contribution

States such as Karnataka, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu argue that they contribute disproportionately to central tax revenues but receive relatively smaller shares through tax devolution. This claim, however, is often contested on the grounds that direct tax figures reflect the location of collections rather than the actual place where income is generated. Individuals and companies may pay taxes in locations different from where economic activity occurs.

> GSDP share is a meaningful indicator of the accrual of central taxes at the State level

For example, automobile manufacturers in Tamil Nadu may sell vehicles across India, but their tax payments are recorded in the State where their registered office is located. Similarly, plantation companies in Kerala earn profits nationwide, though taxes are paid in Kerala.

Therefore, jurisdiction based on PAN data fails to accurately capture State-wise contributions to direct taxes. This is due to the presence of multi-State firms, labour migration, temporary or multi-location work arrangements, and the absence of detailed data on inter-State transactions among associated enterprises. Therefore, an indirect and more reliable proxy is needed to estimate the accrual of central taxes at the State level.

GSDP as proxy for State-level tax accrual

Although the Centre levies direct taxes, Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) represents the underlying tax base within each State. If tax administration efficiency is broadly uniform across States and the ratio of direct tax revenue to GSDP does not vary significantly, a State's share in national GSDP can reasonably approximate its contribution to central tax revenues. Since the GST is destination-based and the principal source of indirect taxation, its attribution across States is relatively uncontroversial.

Empirical evidence supports this approach. Using 2023-24 data, the correlation between States' GSDP and direct tax collections is 0.75, while the correlation between GSDP and GST collections is as high as 0.91. This strong relationship suggests that GSDP share is a meaningful indicator of the accrual of central taxes at the State level.

From 2020-21 to 2024-25, the Centre devolved 41% of its gross tax revenues to States in line with the 15th FC's recommendations, along with additional transfers through grants-in-aid and CSS. According to the Ministry of Finance (Rajya Sabha Unstarred Question No. 236, dated December 2, 2025), total transfers during this five-year period amounted to ₹ 75.12 lakh crore (*see Table*).

Uttar Pradesh received the largest share of transfers (15.81%), followed by Bihar (8.65%), and West Bengal (6.96%). However, these States accounted for only 4.6%, 0.67% and 3.99%, respectively, of combined direct tax and GST collections. In contrast, Maharashtra contributed the highest share of tax collections (40.3%), but received only 6.64% of total transfers. Karnataka and Tamil Nadu contributed 12.65% and 7.61%, while receiving 3.9% and 4.66%, respectively. Haryana (1.1%), Himachal Pradesh (1.58%) and Uttarakhand (1.65%) received low shares of transfers, despite contributing 5.39%, 0.43% and 0.81%, respectively.

The 15th FC's devolution shares show an almost perfect correlation (0.99) with actual transfers over the five-year period, but a weak correlation (0.24) with tax collection shares. By contrast, GSDP shares display a high correlation with tax collections (0.81) and a moderate correlation with devolution shares (0.58). This suggests that GSDP strikes a balance between efficiency, by reflecting tax contributions, and equity, by allowing redistribution.

Only in Haryana, Karnataka and Maharashtra, the GSDP share is less than tax collection share, likely due to the concentrations of registered offices of multi-State firms. In Tamil Nadu, GSDP share exceeds tax collections, reflecting production activity whose tax payments are recorded elsewhere.

Gainers, losers under a GSDP-based formula

If total central transfers were distributed purely on the basis of GSDP shares, nine of the 20 major States would gain. Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu would benefit the most, while Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh would experience the largest reductions. Importantly, these gains and losses would be moderate, as GSDP shares differ less sharply from tax collection shares than current devolution outcomes.

A higher weight for GSDP share would better reflect the accrual of central tax revenues, acknowledge the contributions of States to national income, and improve the perceived fairness and the credibility of India's inter-governmental fiscal transfer system.

The views expressed are personal

Central tax collections, transfers and GSDP

GSDP, reflecting accrual of central taxes, strikes a balance between efficiency and equity in tax devolution

State-wise direct tax and gross GST collections, central transfers and GSDP from 2020-21 to 2024-25

States	Direct tax and GST collection		Central transfers		FC devolution	GSDP		Transfers using GSDP share	Loss or gain
	(₹ lakh crore)	% share	(₹ lakh crore)	% share	% share	(₹ lakh crore)	% share	(₹ lakh crore)	(₹ lakh crore)
Andhra Pradesh	3.32	2.97	3.23	4.30	4.07	64.35	4.97	3.74	0.51
Assam	0.75	0.67	2.93	3.90	3.13	24.48	1.89	1.42	-1.51
Bihar	0.76	0.68	6.5	8.65	10.06	38.48	2.97	2.23	-4.27
Chhattisgarh	1.68	1.50	2.36	3.14	3.41	23.03	1.78	1.34	-1.02
Gujarat	7.69	6.88	2.55	3.39	3.48	108.38	8.37	6.29	3.74
Haryana	6.02	5.39	0.83	1.10	1.09	48.82	3.77	2.83	2.00
Himachal Pradesh	0.48	0.43	1.19	1.58	0.83	9.58	0.74	0.56	-0.63
Jharkhand	1.58	1.41	2.22	2.96	3.31	20.69	1.60	1.20	-1.02
Karnataka	14.14	12.65	2.93	3.90	3.65	113.94	8.80	6.61	3.68
Kerala	1.81	1.62	2.03	2.70	1.93	51.19	3.96	2.97	0.94
Madhya Pradesh	2.17	1.94	5.56	7.40	7.85	61.26	4.73	3.56	-2.00
Maharashtra	40.3	36.06	4.99	6.64	6.32	179.83	13.90	10.44	5.45
Odisha	2.61	2.34	3.32	4.42	4.53	36.40	2.81	2.11	-1.21
Punjab	1.47	1.32	1.57	2.09	1.81	34.71	2.68	2.02	0.45
Rajasthan	2.83	2.53	4.57	6.08	6.03	67.96	5.25	3.94	-0.63
Tamil Nadu	8.5	7.61	3.5	4.66	4.08	120.41	9.30	6.99	3.49
Telangana	4.32	3.87	1.84	2.45	2.10	64.81	5.01	3.76	1.92
Uttar Pradesh	5.14	4.60	11.88	15.81	17.94	116.28	8.98	6.75	-5.13
Uttarakhand	0.9	0.81	1.24	1.65	1.12	14.84	1.15	0.86	-0.38
West Bengal	4.46	3.99	5.23	6.96	7.52	74.64	5.77	4.33	-0.90
8 small States	0.82	0.73	4.63	6.16	5.79	20.07	1.55	1.17	-3.46
Total	**111.75**	**100.00**	**75.12**	**100.00**	**100.02**	**1294.15**	**100.00**	**75.12**	**0.00**

Top court's green governance, cause for uncertainty



Vasudevan Mukunth

Over the last decade, the Supreme Court of India has increasingly moved from reviewing the legality of administrative decisions to issuing forward-looking directions mimicking regulation in important environmental cases. This shift has emerged in a series of matters in which regulators have dropped the ball, pulling the Court into a managerial role. But the Court has then compounded the problem by continuing to substitute for the regulator instead of correcting the regulator's process and stepping back.

This tendency to remain involved, especially within a single continuing mandamus across domains, has consequences for regulated actors, the state, and the people, and needs to be tempered.

Rulings and shifts

In June 2022, the Court laid down that protected areas across India should have an eco-sensitive zone (ESZ) of at least one kilometre from their boundaries. But in April 2023, the Court modified the direction and said the rule would not apply where the Environment Ministry had already issued ESZ notifications, partly because States had argued that the blanket rule was hard to implement.

Earlier, in December 2015, the Court had banned the registration of private diesel cars and sport utility vehicles with an engine capacity of 2,000 cc or more in the Delhi-National Capital Region (NCR). However, by August 2016, it lifted the embargo and replaced it with a charge to compensate, reported widely as 1%-2% on the ex-showroom price. In 2025, the Court again started with a broad protection that was easy to articulate, calling for no-coercive action against owners of diesel or petrol vehicles that were more than 10 or 15 years old, respectively. Then the Court narrowed the rule by restricting action only against those vehicles below the Bharat Stage-IV standard.

The firecracker matter followed the same trajectory. The Court sometimes imposed a near-total ban in the NCR because of air pollution, only to relax it around specific festivals and limited categories such as "green crackers", in both instances citing enforcement constraints and public order realities.

> The Supreme Court should protect the environment by disciplining the state back into regulation

While fragmented enforcement, delayed notifications, poor monitoring and ad hoc exemptions left gaps that invited judicial intervention, the Court has often responded by stepping into the regulator's shoes rather than by holding regulators to their statutory duties.

In these matters, the Court's justification has often shifted from being rooted in legality to that in consequences. In May 2025, in *Vanashakti vs Union of India*, the Court said ex post facto environmental clearances run against core environmental principles. But in November, it recalled that position in a review, with the majority judgment expressing concerns about disrupting ongoing commercial activity. In these instances, the Court's impulse to govern caused it to treat a doctrinal statement as the starting point and to manage the fallout later.

The issue of expertise

'Expertise' has also been a source of support as well as dispute once the Court starts issuing forward-looking directives. In the Aravalli matter, for instance, the Court's November 20 order adopted a unified definition for "Aravalli hills and ranges" in the context of controlling mining, based on a committee's findings. Within weeks, however, it placed that order in abeyance and moved to constitute a new committee after concerns that the definition would have unintended legal effects. In the ESZ issue as well, a uniform buffer sounded decisive at first but once stakeholders realised that the ecological basis and feasibility varied considerably across landscapes, the rule met with resistance. The Court has used expert inputs to compensate for its limits but has also contested expertise. This push-pull relationship, while implicitly not a bad thing, has also set the stage for U-turns.

Perhaps where the Court conducting itself as an approving authority has bitten the hardest is the consequences for public challenge. As environmental lawyer Ritwick Dutta has argued, project proponents and governments have been forced to approach the Court for permissions even before statutory authorities have finished examining a project, at the same time conferring a sense of finality that discourages contestation later. The bigger problem here is not that the Court may get a technical detail wrong but that its early entry into the approval process can smother meaningful judicial review in other fora. As a result, when the Court modifies an older rule, it also reshapes who is heard and on what evidentiary basis.

Need for stability

Many of these disputes also sit inside continuing mandamus structures – serial interim directions, committee reports, affidavits, and modifications – so it has been easy for the Court to correct course but often at the expense of stability. Instead, the Court should consider adopting a steadier hand, i.e., protecting the environment by disciplining the state back into regulation. It can do this by specifying thresholds for when it will issue managerial directions and insisting on time-bound regulatory action with reasons and public data, while retaining its prerogative to review legality and procedures. It can also reduce uncertainty by avoiding sweeping rules that also immediately invite exceptions and by explaining in advance what kinds of evidence or implementation constraints would justify modification.

This way, regulated actors will deal with strict rather than negotiable rules, governments will not have to contend with parallel decision-making, and the people will know where and how to contest activities that render environmental harm.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Trump and his actions

U.S. President Donald Trump's classifications of foreign relations fall into 'Very Happy', 'Very Unhappy' and 'Others'. National leaders of the first category are escorted with great ceremony to be his guests in the U.S. for as long as he wants. They attain their nirvana. Those in the last category are his playmates in games such as hide and seek or boxing practice. Here only Ukraine's Zelenskyy finds himself in switched classifications and neither he nor Mr. Trump is clear on this, while the rest seem to be enjoying it all till it lasts. It is those in Mr. Trump's 'Very Unhappy' group who find themselves free of the passing fancies of a President who is yet to learn separating business from pastime. It enables them to go about their own business and, in the process, clock enviable GDP.

R. Narayanan,
Navi Mumbai

The actions by the United States under President Trump are totally against international law and the United Nations charter. Mr. Trump's 'claim' over Greenland exposes the 'Hitler in Trump'. One wonders what more lies ahead in his strange expansionist plans. It is time that like-minded nations joined hands, and under the auspices of the UN, to end the evil designs of America.

S.V. Venkatakrishnan,
Singapore

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

Is the 10-minute delivery model necessary?



Prashant Kamal

National general secretary, Yuva Hallabol



Kamal Karanth

Co-founder of XPheno, a specialist staffing company

PARLEY

On December 31, more than a lakh gig and platform workers held a strike. In a memorandum to Union Labour Minister Mansukh Mandaviya, their unions demanded that the 10 to 20-minute service delivery system be immediately withdrawn to prioritise worker safety. The Union government sees the four Labour Codes, which were implemented recently, as a solution to the problems of gig workers, especially for bringing them into the ambit of social security. **Kamal Karanth** and **Prashant Kamal** discuss this topic in a conversation moderated by **A.M. Jigeesh**. Edited excerpts:

What are the major concerns over 10 to 20 minutes delivery?

Prashant Kamal: The debate around gig workers' plight is not just about 10-minute delivery. There is so much beyond that. A few powerful people are deliberately trying to make it a binary between consumers' comfort and gig workers' misery. The 10-minute delivery is not a need of consumer, it's a competition. Zepto started it, Blinkit, Amazon, Swiggy, Instamart and others followed it. There is no real difference between the delivery of groceries in 10 minutes or say 20-30 minutes. But there is a huge difference for the person delivering it. I have three points to make here. First, this is not just software that runs the system. It only works because a massive human workforce which is kept under unstable pay, changing rules, and the constant threat of getting their IDs blocked by an app. Second, do we allow these logic in other industries? Speed is not created by technology. It is extracted from real people. Third, let's look at the economics. Tech costs are considered a given and they are protected. Marketing budgets are treated as a given and are protected. So, why only labour is treated as adjustable? Who is really paying here for the 10-minute delivery?

Kamal Karanth: Going by the volumes and dependency, it seems that it's a model that is becoming a part of our lives. Given the demand generated by a few of these companies, I would like to believe that it has created itself as a necessity. From 2024 to 2027, quick commerce has grown threefold – from ₹50,000 crore in 2025, it's closing in to ₹1 lakh crore to ₹1.5 lakh crore in the next two years. Industry is growing at 28%. Online grocery market is expected to grow at almost 40% to 50%.

From a delivery platform's point of view, creating a crore of a jobs requires at least five years. In India, 20 million people are passing out to make way for the workforce coming in, and we are hardly able to create two million jobs for them every year. So, in the context of people who do not have high skills but need a job, I think it's a huge gap that these platforms have fulfilled. So we should ask the primary question, is some job better than no job?



Food delivery workers waiting outside a restaurant. B. VELANKANNI RAJ

What ideally should be the regulatory framework for platforms and gig economy?

KK: Globally, it's considered that India's labour laws are one of the most protected, means that full-time employees have greater amount of protection when it comes to the regulation we had. But when it comes to gig, because it was a new concept, it was not covered [in regulations] to a great extent. But now I think the regulators are getting into the act of saying worker protection is important. But if you make it like a full-time employment, then I guess the gig will lose the shine of it. Considering many of them work full time in this, there should be possibly more flexibility provided in the form of any protection. But making it completely a full-time employment may actually kill the model

PK: Studies have shown that 80% of workers engaged with gigs and platforms are working full time. For millions, this is their primary livelihood. They are asking for predictable minimum income, fair pay, protection from sudden ID blocks and for clear rules for pay and penalties. They're asking for basic safety cover. They're asking for data transparency. Platforms set prices, they decide who gets work, they control ratings, they can switch people off overnight. If you control the work, you must carry obligations. That means a minimum earning for accident insurance, pensions; or at least there should be a process

> Studies have shown that 80% of gig workers engaged are working full time. They ask for basic safety cover and data transparency. If you control work, you must carry obligations
> **PRASHANT KAMAL**

before blocking or punishing workers. So this is not a radical demand. This is where the world is going. India cannot keep pretending that platforms are just like software, and if you can switch someone's income off with an algorithm, you must carry legal responsibility as well.

Are Labour Codes sufficient to create a social security system for gig workers?

PK: No. They came very late and highly insufficient. The Code is vague and non-mandatory in nature. The Code authorises few welfare programmes like accident insurance, maternity benefits and all, but it doesn't make them mandatory or enforceable right away. Gig workers have to register themselves on e-SHRAM portal, get an ID card, but they get no tangible benefits like covered hospital bills or pensions. They offer a social security scheme but no broader labour rights, and explicitly exclude gig workers from being classified as employees. This means no access to minimum wages, regulated working hours, paid leaves or overtime pay or collective bargaining under other Labour Codes.

Thirdly, the funding provisions for social security are inadequate. There is a vagueness on exact rates, enforcements and how funds shall be allocated. The most important thing is [there is] no regulation of algorithmic practices. The actual problem that the workers face here is the blind spots where they face lack of transparency. Algorithm controls task assignment, who gets the work, and incentives, ratings, and even de-activations. These black boxes cause stress, unfair penalties, and income instabilities. But the Code nowhere mandates transparency, accountability, or appeals against algorithmic decisions. So workers are at the mercy of technology that prioritises profit over fairness, and there is no mechanism for grievance redressal and dispute resolution.

KK: I think even in a full-time employment in the private world today, there is no such guarantee. There is no such transparency. Let us see how many of the workers will remain if gig works are made permanent. There is an attrition of 1 lakh to 1.5 lakh workers who are leaving and joining somewhere else every month. Instead of killing the golden goose, which is growing, I think what India should focus on is creating more employment opportunities.. The Labour Codes are still evolving as of now. I think when they come up with something stronger, we possibly can qualify it further.

A NITI Aayog report envisages that about 2.35 crores will join the gig economy by 2029-2030. So, what is the future of these platforms and gig workers in the background of everyday changes that AI and the technological innovations bring?

KK: I think we should protect what are the good things of it, possibly engage with platforms more than disrupting their business models and saying, how can we bring social security and allow the otherwise unskilled people to get a job? I think we have no recourse.

AI will come in, AI will work for, I think, more entry-level repeat tasks which can get automated. So, I don't think the current model of this gig platforms that are employing gig workers will get disrupted in the short term. Having said that, manufacturing is a sector that we are focusing on very strongly as a country. And manufacturing does not create overnight jobs like a tech sector did in the past. The faster movement is in the quick commerce sector, and we should do everything to protect it.

PK: The huge crisis of unemployment cannot be addressed without improving our manufacturing sectors, particularly those sectors which are labour-intensive. So, government should make policies to improve these sectors.

I think if you don't change the rules and the way we think, the future of gig workers is very brutal. AI will bring more control, less voice, and more people living one algorithm update away from losing their income. Today, a delivery worker can be switched off by an app, or tomorrow AI will be deciding that faster, cheaper, and at a larger scale. So, no conversation, no explanation, no appeal, just a silent drop in orders, then nothing. So, AI will make platforms efficient at replacing people, rotating people, and squeezing more work out of whoever is still logged in. That means workers become more disposable, like not more secure.

To listen to the full interview
Scan the code or go to the link
www.thehindu.com

NOTEBOOK

Reporting from a red light area

An assignment in Sonagachi busted the myth about the place, showing the women there as just another section of working members of society

Shrabana Chatterjee

As a resident of Kolkata, I always knew that Sonagachi in north Kolkata has the largest red light area in Asia. But, in my mind it existed only as a concept, a myth almost. Little did I know what it amounted to, even though I was born and brought up in the same city. These were the parts no one talked about, the "other neighbourhood" as Bengalis put it, which people either mentioned with a mischievous smile or with an uncomfortable silence.

When I stepped into an ambitious reporting assignment, the myth dissolved and real people came through in these densely populated bylanes of Sonagachi where over 12,000 sex workers reside across 700 buildings and thousands of single-room homes. Their lives unfold in one of the busiest parts of the city, so it is not hidden; it is simply ignored.

As an outsider, I was acutely aware of being watched. As I walked through Sonagachi on a rainy day, the smell of alcohol, cigarettes, fried food, and fresh rainwater mixed into an unsettling cocktail. Many doors opened as women exchanged whispers about who I was.

These women have been violated by many in their lives, by clients, by family members, by systems meant to protect them, and often by journalists who arrive seeking "stories" without consent or care. So, they are sceptical about sharing their stories; suspicion has become a survival instinct. It took me months of trust building to even get them to speak a few words with me. Over the years, they have met so many journalists. They now see through them and how their stories are all about headlines, stereotypes, or statistics for many in the media.

Once I did manage to break through the many layers of walls they have around themselves to protect their privacy, they asked me to put my phone away and not take pictures and respect their personal space. With my phone inside my bag, I had no recording device, so the good old notebook and pen came to the rescue as I listened, observed, and wrote down bits and pieces of what I saw.

Over these three months of reporting on this single story, I was humbled. Somewhere in that process, a lesson that journalism schools repeat but rarely prepare you for–no one owes us their story–got drilled into my head.

I interviewed over six sex workers, went to their homes which is also their place of business, sat with them, had tea, and listened to their stories for hours. Slowly realising, every single one of them is a very resilient woman, living their life with honesty and dignity. They are not looking for sympathy. They are only looking to be treated as equals in society. As they put it, "We work with our bodies, like every other labourer, why can't we have workers' rights?"

As an outsider and as a journalist, it is not my duty to pretend and try to look like an insider and force myself into the story. It is always best to maintain honesty, count your own privileges, shed your biases as much as possible, and not look down upon anyone while reporting. Throughout the development of this story I wanted to abandon it. I felt out of depth and unsure if I had the emotional range to see the layered lives they lived. They are not just sex workers. That is just their occupation, like every other member of society who is offering their labour for bread and butter. They are humans of flesh and blood. They have families. Many of them go to school, hold protest marches, run sexual health awareness drives, win awards, pray to god, and buy their favourite make up at the local stores, much like any of us.

The myth I had about Sonagachi no longer exists. Now it is the place of the women who have offered me tea, welcomed me into their homes, and shared tears and laughter with me.

In the end, the anxiety gave way to the story. With much apprehension, I got two copies of the printed piece and went to the sex workers' Durga Puja event. They saw the paper, they read, they smiled. I shared a sigh of relief. It felt like a reminder of why journalism demands patience, humility, and the willingness to sit with discomfort long before it delivers clarity.

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PICTURE OF THE WEEK

Standing remnants



Reduced to debris: A structure which was brought down by the Municipal Corporation of Delhi near the Faiz-e-Elahi mosque, Turkman Gate, in the Ramlila Maidan area, on Thursday. The Corporation carried out a drive to demolish alleged encroachments near the mosque on Tuesday night. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

FROM THE ARCHIVES

The Hindu.

FIFTY YEARS AGO JANUARY 9, 1976

Chinese PM En-lai dead

Tokyo, Jan. 9: Chou En-lai, Prime Minister of the People's Republic of China since its creation in 1949 and its leading force for moderation and detente with the United States, died yesterday (Thursday) in Peking after a long illness.

The 78-year-old descendent of Mandarin forbears who turned a communist revolutionary in his youth, had been confined to a hospital for much of the time since the spring of 1974 when he was stricken with a heart ailment.

Mr. Chou's death was announced by the official Hsinhua news agency. Mr. Chou did not see President Ford on his visit to China in December. He talked in the hospital with visiting foreign leaders over the last year and a half.

During Mr. Chou's illness, his duties had been taken over by Mr. Teng Hsiao-ping, who also has been mentioned as a possible successor to the ageing and ailing Chairman Mao Tse-tung.

Throughout his illness, Mr. Chou continued to interest himself in political affairs. He met important foreign visitors in his hospital suite and kept a finger on the pulse of Chinese life.

He presided over a national people's congress session which filled in many government gaps left by the cultural purge and laid down the blueprint for a massive new economic effort aimed at bringing China into the front rank of industrial nations by the end of the century.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JANUARY 9, 1926

National memorial to Queen Alexandra

Leafield (Oxford), Mid., Jan. 7: It is proposed that the national memorial to late Queen Alexandra shall take the form of a further endowment to Queen Victoria's Jubilee Institute for Nurses, which ministers to sick poor in their own homes. An appeal for subscriptions for this object is made today in a letter signed by the Lord Chancellor, the Lord Mayor of London, the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, Cardinal Vaughans, Archbishop of Westminster, and Doctor Hertz, Chief Rabbi. The letter concludes, "We feel sure that this work for the suffering poor, presided over first by Queen Victoria, then by Queen Alexandra, and now by our present gracious Queen, will appeal to our countrymen and countrywomen as a splendid and appropriate object of memorial of the nation's love for Queen Alexandra."

From Page One

Mamata, ED lock horns over search at I-PAC

The ED also clarified that the search that was in connection with coal smuggling syndicate and entities linked to Hawala money is conducted strictly in accordance with established legal safeguards.

"It is clarified that the search is evidence based and is not targeted at any political establishment. No party office has been searched. The search is not linked to any elections, and is part of regular crackdown on money laundering," the agency claimed.

The ED also approached the Calcutta High Court seeking judicial intervention. In its petition, the agency alleged hindrance caused by the Chief Minister's actions during the searches.

FIRs against ED

Two FIRs were registered against ED officials at the Shakespeare Sarani police station. One was based on a *suo motu* complaint by the police that ED officials had not informed the local police before conducting the raids. The other FIR was based on a complaint by Mr. Jain's wife, alleging that important documents had been stolen during the search at his residence.

The Trinamool Congress has engaged I-PAC as a political consultant over the past few years and the firm had helped the party shape its electoral and political strategy in the 2021 Assembly election and subsequent elections in West Bengal.

Ms. Banerjee said that the people of the State would respond to the ED raids and asked her party's rank and file to protest against them. In response, a huge crowd of Trinamool supporters gathered outside the I-PAC office, raising slogans as ED officials left the venue after completing their searches.

Trump clears Bill to impose 500% tariffs

The Russia Sanctions Act, a bipartisan Bill introduced in the Senate in April 2025 has thus far got 84 co-sponsors in the Senate (out of a total of of 100 Senate members), and 151 co-sponsors in the U.S. House of Representatives, suggesting it will be passed smoothly once brought to a vote. The move came just ahead of the arrival of U.S. Ambassador-designate Sergio Gor to New Delhithis weekend, who had said in September that ensuring India ends its import of Russian oil is a "top priority".

Mr. Gor, who was confirmed and sworn in to the position months ago will begin his tenure as Ambassador to India and "Special Envoy to South and Central Asia" on Monday, and is expected to outline his mission with a public statement.

Earlier this week, Mr. Trump, who had jointly addressed the press along with Mr. Graham, announced they had a "great legislation coming", as Mr. Graham said the Bill would give the U.S. President discretion to choose the figure of the tariffs over and above 25% penalty tariffs already imposed on India.

As a result, Mr. Gor's first order of business in Delhi would likely be to push for a full stop to Indian oil imports from Russia, not just a reduction. This week, Reliance announced that it has not received any cargo of Russian oil at its Jamnagar refinery through most of December, and does not expect any in January, indicating that it has stopped orders of the oil for now.

Indian PSUs increased their intake sharply in November 2025, but with Reliance stopping all such imports and Nayara Energy, the other big importer under sanctions from Western countries unable to import, it is unlikely that India's Russian oil purchases can recover to previous levels. In 2018, under similar pressure from the previous Trump administration, India had "zeroed out" its oil imports from two key suppliers Iran and Venezuela as well.

India to grow at 7.2% in 2025-26: UN body

On the other hand, the report, presented in the UN DESA's World Economic Situation and Prospects 2026, added that, while the tariffs may adversely affect some product categories, key exports such as electronics and smartphones are expected to remain exempt.

"On the supply side, continued expansion in manufacturing and services sectors will remain a key driver of growth throughout the forecast period," the report said.

The report noted that investment trends among developing economies diverged in 2025. "India recorded strong growth in gross fixed capital formation, led by higher public spending on physical and digital infrastructure, defence, and renewable energy," the report said. "The Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC) countries continued to undertake large-scale capital investments aligned with long-term economic diversification strategies." However, in contrast, the report noted that China saw a contraction in its fixed asset investment through the first three quarters of 2025.

"The Indian rupee stabilised against the U.S. dollar in the first half of the year, supported by broad dollar weakness," the report said. "However, in the second half, the Indian rupee edged lower following stronger-than-expected growth in the U.S. and ongoing trade negotiations." It added that portfolio outflows and higher U.S. tariffs added to depreciation pressures on the Indian rupee.

SC weighs Rajya Sabha Chair role in Justice Varma case

Top court reserves ruling; it asks if notice of motion for removal can be placed before current RS Chair; S-G asks if judge can demonstrate any bias against him in committee formed by LS Speaker

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court orally asked on Thursday whether the notice of motion for the removal of Justice Yashwant Varma could be placed before the new Rajya Sabha Chairman, Vice-President C.P. Radhakrishnan. This came even as it reserved for judgment the sitting Allahabad High Court judge's challenge to the "unilateral" establishment of an inquiry committee by Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla to examine allegations of burnt currency found on his residential premises last March.

"Can this be explored? If the Rajya Sabha Chairman agrees with the Speaker, it is the end of the matter," Justice Dipankar Datta, heading the Bench, addressed Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta at one point during the hearing.

The court remarked that no procedural irregularity or illegality had been found as far as the quorum of the committee was concerned.



> The ultimate test of removal or not would be before the Houses. All the MPs would participate and take a decision
> **TUSHAR MEHTA**
> Solicitor-General



> According to me, both Houses had to apply their minds to the notices of motion. Not doing that has caused prejudice to me
> **MUKUL ROHATGI,** Senior advocate

"There is a Supreme Court judge, a Chief Justice of a High Court, and a jurist," Justice Datta said.

Mr. Mehta, representing the Lok Sabha Speaker and the Secretaries-General of both Houses of Parliament, said he would say 'yes' if the suggestion to approach the RS Chair fell from the Bench. However, he also asked whether Justice Varma had been able to show any "real and demonstrable prejudice" done to him by the constitution of the committee by the Speaker.

"If I ask the Chairman to take a relook, and he agrees on the same committee, would that take the matter any further? For what was this petition filed invoking Article 32 of the Constitution?" Mr. Mehta countered.

"The ultimate test of removal or not would be before the Houses. All the MPs would participate and take a decision," the Solicitor-General submitted.

Senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, for Justice Varma, said that separate notices of the removal motion had been given on the same day, July 21, 2025, to the then RS Chairman, Jagdeep Dhankhar, and to the LS Speaker. Mr. Dhankhar had resigned the same day. The notice was rejected by the Deputy Chairman on August 11. The next day, Mr. Birla had admitted the notice submitted to him and constituted the inquiry committee.

Mr. Rohatgi said both notices of motion were given in "co-equal" Houses. One authority had rejected the notice, while the other admitted it. The first proviso of Section 3(2) of the Act mandated that both Houses had to admit notices of motion given on the same day and a committee was to be formed jointly by the Chairman and the Speaker in such cases. He said the motion had to start afresh as the proviso was silent on the course of action if the notices given on the same day were rejected by one House and admitted by the second House.

"Both Houses had to apply their minds to the notices of motion. Not doing that has caused prejudice to me," Mr. Rohatgi argued on behalf of Justice Varma.

MHA for talks with Ladakhi leaders in last week of Jan.

Two bodies from the region were asked to give draft framework for constitutional safeguards

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

The Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has decided to call the next round of talks with the civil society leaders of Ladakh in the last week of January, according to a communication sent by the Ministry to the Chief Secretary of Ladakh on Thursday.

The talks were last held on October 22, 2025.

The Leh Apex Body (LAB) and the Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA), the two key constituents representing Leh and Kargil districts respectively which are part of the high-powered committee (HPC), were asked by the MHA officials to submit a draft framework for constitutional safeguards as being demanded by them.

The HPC is headed by Minister of State Nityanand Rai.

Despite the two bodies submitting the draft proposal in November, the dates for the next round of meeting were not announced.

On Thursday, Tashi Gyalson, BJP member and former chairman of the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC), shared on X a letter sent by the MHA to the Chief Secretary, Ladakh indicating that the HPC meeting will be held in "last part of January."

The January 8 letter said, "It is requested to consult the members of the HPC for their convenient set of dates and inform the Ministry."

The October 22 talks were resumed a month after four persons were killed in police action against protesters seeking Ladakhi Statehood.

The LAB and KDA also demand inclusion under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, which recognises tribal status and provides a measure of autonomy and self-governance.

They also continue to demand the release of climate activist Sonam Wangchuk and other protesters detained since September 24 violence in Leh city.

Govt. seeks feedback on draft Bill to regulate pesticides, promote 'safe and effective' use

A.M. Jigeesh
NEW DELHI

The Union Agriculture Ministry has invited public comments on the draft Pesticides Management Bill that aims to repeal the Insecticides Act of 1968.

According to the draft, the new Bill will regulate manufacture, import, packaging, labelling, storage, advertisement, sale, transport, distribution, use and disposal of pesticides to "ensure availability of safe and effective pesticides".

The Bill strives to minimise risk to human beings, animals, living organisms other than pests, and the environment, and promote pesticides that are "biological and based on traditional knowledge".



The Bill strives to minimise risk to human beings, animals, living organisms other than pests, and the environment. FILE PHOTO

It defines "pesticide" as a substance or mixture of substances, including a formulation, of chemical or biological origin intended to prevent, destroy, attract, repel, mitigate or control any pest in agriculture, industry, pest control operations, public health, storage or for ordinary use. The definition includes any substance intended for use as a plant growth regulator, defoliant, desiccant, fruit thinning agent, or sprouting inhibitor and also any substance applied to crops either before or after harvest to protect them from deterioration during storage and transport.

The draft provides for constituting the Central Pesticides Board to advise the Central government and State governments on scientific and technical matters on administering the proposed Act. It will advise the Union government in making criteria for good manufacturing practices, including processes for pesticide manufacturers, best practices for pest control operators, procedure for the recall of pesticides, the criteria for the disposal of pesticides and packages in an environmentally sound manner and standards for the advertisement of pesticides.

As per the draft Bill, the Union government can appoint a registration committee to make decisions on registration of pesticides, specify conditions subject to which a certificate of registration is granted, periodically review the safety and efficacy of registered pesticides and amend or cancel certificates of registration. The committee shall also maintain a national register of pesticides in digital form.

The draft Bill also provides for a punishment of imprisonment up to five years, or fine from ₹10 lakh to ₹50 lakh or with both for the manufacture, import, sale, exhibit for sale, transport, distribute, use or cause to use of pesticide in "death or grievous hurt of another."

Authorities 'hid' my calls for peace: Wangchuk

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

Sonam Wangchuk, a climate activist turned Ladakhi Statehood campaigner, impressed upon the Supreme Court that malice on the part of authorities was at the bottom of his detention, evident from the fact that local authorities chose to "hide" his public messages calling for peace after protests for Statehood led to violence.

Opening the case for his release before a Bench on Thursday, senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for Mr. Wangchuk and his wife Gitanjali Angmo, submitted that "his messages for peace were misconceived as calls for violence".

Lawyers' body begins fast against shift of Gauhati HC

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

Most members of the Gauhati High Court Bar Association (GHCBA) began a three-day hunger strike on Thursday to protest the Assam government's decision to shift the Gauhati High Court complex from the Uzanbazar area of Guwahati to North Guwahati across the Brahmaputra River.

The fast followed a resolution adopted at the GHCBA's general meeting held on Tuesday to abstain from participating in the ceremony to lay the foundation stone of the proposed judicial township, at Rangmahal in North Guwahati on January 11.

GHCBA president Kamal Nayan Choudhury and secretary general Girin Pegu are leading the hunger strike, a "peaceful and democratic expression" of the association's opposition to the relocation, for six hours a day on January 8, 9, and 11.

Allow institutions to start their own animal cells: DU law centre faculty urge SC

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Campus Law Centre at Delhi University, one of the oldest legal education centres in the country, urged the Supreme Court on Thursday not to bank on bureaucracy or municipal authorities to humanely resolve the problem of stray dogs. The faculty said the trick to resolve the problem is simple – do it yourself.



Animal lovers stage a protest in support of stray dogs at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi on January 4. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

The centre said the inaction of the authorities galvanised students and faculty members to start an "animal cell". The cell members identified 49 stray dogs on their premises. The members have already vaccinated and sterilised 28 of the canines. Counsel for the centre said the stray population has not increased.

Counsel drew the attention of a three-judge Bench headed by Justice Vikram Nath to how stray cattle continue to roam the roads of the national capital and suburbs despite repeated orders of the courts to municipal authorities to remove them. "A day before the court hearing, the municipal authority would come to court and say that they had removed eight cattle. If the court still appeared dissatisfied, the authority would reveal that *gaushalas* (cow sheds) were filled beyond capacity, and there was absolutely no room for more," counsel submitted.

The centre said there were only five government-owned dog shelters across the country. The private shelters were filled to the brim. Infrastructure required a lot to be done, it submitted.

Justice Nath asked if the municipal authorities had offered to help the centre deal with the stray dogs humanely. Counsel replied in the negative.

He said the court ought to pass an order directing institutions to have their 'animal cells'.

FIR against coach for assaulting teenage shooter inside hotel

The Hindu Bureau
GURUGRAM

A national shooting coach has been accused of sexually assaulting a teenage shooter inside a five-star hotel in Haryana's Faridabad. The accused, Ankush Bhardwaj, has been suspended following the registration of the case.

The incident took place on December 16, but the FIR was registered on January 6 after the 17-year-old victim confided in her mother about the alleged assault. The case has been registered on charges of aggravated penetrative sexual assault under the Prevention of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act and criminal intimidation under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita.

National Rifle Association of India secretary Rajiv Bhatia said the coach was suspended following the registration of the case. Ankush's contract was running till March this year, he said. Repeated calls and messages to Ankush to seek his response went unanswered.

APPEAL



Ms. Aditi Tukaram Dalwe, Mazumdar Shaw Medical Center MRN No.10020001672194, 16 years D/o Mr.Tukaram Marotrao Dalawe is suffering from Thalassemia Major. The only Curative Treatment is Bone Marrow Transplant. We are Planning TCR ALPHA/BETA and CD 45RA Depletion Therapy for this Patient. The Estimated cost of the Treatment is Approximately Rs.42,30,000/-

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Mamata to hit the streets against searches by ED

Bengal CM to lead rally in Kolkata today to protest against the ED action; searches show BJP's desperation, this is Shah's politics: fear, force, and files, Trinamool says; party MPs back Mamata

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA



Voicing disagreement: Trinamool Congress members staging a demonstration against the Enforcement Directorate's search at the office of political consultancy firm I-PAC on Thursday. PTI

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee will take to the streets in Kolkata on Friday to protest against the searches conducted by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on the I-PAC office and residence of its co-founder Pratik Jain. Ms. Banerjee will lead the procession from Jadavapur 8 B Bus Stand to Hazra More.

"Tomorrow, our Hon'ble Chairperson Mamata will lead a rally against the BJP's blatant misuse of central agencies and its assault on democracy," the Trinamool Congress posted from its official social media handle.

On Thursday, Ms. Banerjee visited the residence of Mr. Jain and the office of the political consultancy firm in Kolkata during the ED searches, and said the action was "politically motivated to steal party data", including candidate list for the coming election.

Speaking at an event later in the day, the Chief Minister criticised the action of the Central agency, and said such activities "take place before the elections". "They have stolen everything, all data, SIR list," she said referring to the ED searches.

Political observers feel that the searches on the political consultancy firm have given a fresh handle to the Chief Minister to target the Bharatiya Janata Party.

The Trinamool Congress said the searches on I-PAC reflected the desperation of the BJP. "When BJP4India knows it will lose Bengal, it unleashes ED. This is Amit Shah's politics: fear, force, and files. His desperation is exposed. If you have guts, come to the people. FIGHT US POLITICALLY! Not through central agencies acting as your puppets," the party posted from its official handle.

Support for CM

Trinamool Congress leaders Mahua Moitra and Saket Gokhale joined the party chairperson in taking on the Central investigation agency.

"ED suddenly wakes up in a 10-year-old case on the eve of elections? Inconceivable after so long that info on any scam will be on IPAC devices – likely only current Trinamool political data will be. Faced with this political burglary, Mamatadi as head of party fully justified to take possession of devices & files which would otherwise be irretrievably lost if ED allowed to get its hands on contained data," Ms. Moitra, MP for Krishnanagar, posted on social media.

Mr. Gokhale, on the other hand, shared data of cases handled by the ED. "In the last 11 years, a total of 5,297 cases were filed by ED. How many were taken to court for trial? ONLY 47," the Trinamool Rajya Sabha member said. He said about 98% of ED cases against politicians were filed on Opposition leaders and the remaining 2% were those who went and joined the BJP's "washing machine".

Bengal Opposition parties call CM's actions during ED search 'unconstitutional'

The Hindu Bureau
KOLKATA/SRINAGAR



Suvendu Adhikari

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's visits to the residence of I-PAC director Pratik Jain and the office of the political consultancy firm during ED searches on Thursday drew strong criticism from Opposition parties in the State.

Senior Bharatiya Janata Party leader Suvendu Adhikari termed the visits "unconstitutional". "The visit by the Chief Minister and Kolkata Police Commissioner was unethical, unconstitutional and a direct interference in the Central agency's investigation. I-PAC is a corporate organisation, not a political party. If there are allegations against the firm, it can show papers, tax files, and face the officials," said the Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly.

He said the ED must act against Ms. Banerjee's visits as such actions may send a wrong message to the people of West Bengal. He further said Ms. Banerjee had a "habit" of interfering in Central agency searches.

In 2019, the Chief Minister attempted to stop a Central Bureau of Investigation search at then Kolkata Police Commissioner Rajeev Kumar's house.

"This is an attempt to shield criminals and hide evidence... She left the premises with files and attacked the [Union] Home Minister [Amit Shah]. How is the Home Minister related to this," BJP State president Samik Bhattacharya asked. He alleged that Thursday's incidents proved that the Trinamool Congress was involved in the corruption that the ED was investigating.

Earlier, after visiting I-PAC's office, Ms. Banerjee said, "If Amit Shah wants to win the election, he should fight it at polling booths. Why raid our party's IT wing and snatch away all our documents?"

'Interference in probe'

Communist Party of India (Marxist) State secretary Mohammad Salim said the Trinamool and the BJP used government agencies for political purposes. "Is the Chief Minister's behaviour legal," Mr. Salim asked. "If Ms. Banerjee interfered in a Central agency search and took away documents, then the houses and offices of Ms. Banerjee and Abhishek Banerjee should be searched. Cases must be registered against her and police officers who interfered in the raids."

Congress State president Subhankar Sarkar alleged that Ms. Banerjee walking out of the ED raid with files showed the entire episode was a political show and done with mutual understanding of the two entities.

Mehbooba slams BJP

However, Ms. Banerjee also found support from outside West Bengal. Former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) president Mehbooba Mufti said ED raids in West Bengal were an "outrageous abuse" of Central agencies ahead of election and reeked of the "BJP's desperation". "When EVM manipulation and voter roll tampering under SIR aren't enough, raids become their weapon," Ms. Mufti posted on X.

Power is being misused in Maharashtra, say Thackeray cousins

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray and Maharashtra Navnirman Sena chief Raj Thackeray on Thursday levelled serious allegations against the BJP-led Mahayuti government in Maharashtra. They said that people were being neglected and that power was being misused.

In an interview against the backdrop of the coming local body elections, the Thackeray cousins highlighted their agenda concerning how the *Marathi Manoos* have been exploited and betrayed, and how migration had taken away the rights of locals.

Referring to the Shiv Sena split in 2022 and the alleged money given to the MLAs who walked out with Eknath Shinde, Mr. Raj asked, "40 MLAs mean ₹2,000 crores, where did this money come from?" Mr. Raj said the connection between the increased money in politics and drugs on the streets needs to be analysed. They spoke about pollution, deforestation, drug abuse, crime against women, and governance. They said that the State and Union governments were responsible for drugs reaching schools.

Cong. seeks clarification on deaths in Indore, terms it 'collective failure' of govts.

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI



Pawan Khera

The Congress on Wednesday demanded that the Centre and the Madhya Pradesh government clarify whether the recent deaths in Indore, allegedly caused by the consumption of contaminated drinking water, were due to cholera.

The party termed the incident a result of criminal negligence and a collective failure of the "triple-engine" governments, at the Centre, in the State and at the Indore Municipal Corporation.

Addressing a press conference here, Congress spokesperson and chairman of the Media and Publicity Department Pawan Khera said the tragedy had exposed the "ugly, brutal and utterly callous face of the BJP government".

He alleged 18 people, including a six-month-old infant, had lost their lives, while more than 40,000 residents were affected, with several still battling for survival in intensive care units.

Officially, though, the State government had put the number of deaths at four.

Mr. Khera pointed out the irony that the incident occurred in Indore, which has been ranked the country's cleanest city for eight consecutive years under the Centre's Swachh Survekshan survey.

The party spokesperson said the deaths laid bare decades of systemic failure, despite flagship schemes such as the Jal Jeevan Mission and Swachh Bharat Abhiyan that promised clean drinking water and improved sanitation.

Mr. Khera demanded an immediate probe by the Prime Minister's Office, escalation of the issue to the Asian Development Bank, and an independent Supreme Court-monitored inquiry to fix accountability.

During three-day Gujarat trip, PM to visit Somnath temple and offer prayers

The Hindu Bureau
AHMEDABAD



Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel on the occasion of 'Somnath Swabhiman Parv' in Gandhinagar on Thursday. X/@BJP4GUJARAT

The four-day "Somnath Swabhiman Parv" began on Thursday at the Somnath temple near Veraval in Gir Somnath district of Gujarat.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is scheduled to begin a three-day visit to Gujarat from Saturday, will offer prayers at the temple on Sunday and lead a "Shaurya Yatra", officials said.

It will be a one-km roadshow featuring 108 horses.

The celebrations also mark 1,000 years since the first attack on the shrine by the Mahmud of Ghazni. Mr. Modi, in a post on social media platform X on Thursday, recalled his earlier visits to Somnath and highlighted the resilience of faith despite repeated attacks on the shrine.

He said the assault in 1026 and subsequent invasions failed to weaken India's spiritual resolve and instead strengthened cultural unity, leading to the temple's repeated reconstruction.

Union Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat and Gujarat Ministers Jitu Vaghani and Pradyuman Vaja were present at the inauguration of the "Somnath Swabhiman Parv".

Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel said the event has provided people an opportunity to celebrate India's heritage and cultural identity.

Cong. flags growing 'turbulence' in India's relations with U.S.

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI



Jairam Ramesh

The Congress on Wednesday flagged what it described as growing turbulence in India's relations with the United States, despite Prime Minister Narendra Modi being among the first leaders to visit the White House after the start of President Donald Trump's second term.

In a post on X, Congress general secretary (communications) Jairam Ramesh said Indo-U.S. ties were passing through "very turbulent times", pointing to recent legislative and political signals from Washington that have caused some discomfort in New Delhi.

Mr. Ramesh drew attention to a Bill being pushed by Senator Lindsey Graham, a close ally of Mr. Trump, which seeks to impose wide-ranging sanctions on India over its trade and other engagements with Russia.

He said the proposed legislation directly targeted India's foreign policy choices and strategic autonomy.

He also referred to an earlier Bill introduced by Senator Bernie Moreno that proposed a 25% tax on American companies making what are termed "outsourcing payments".

According to Mr. Ramesh, such a measure could have serious implications for India's services sector, particularly information technology firms that have a significant presence in the U.S. market.

Adding to what he described as India's "extreme discomfiture", Mr. Ramesh noted that Mr. Trump had continued to publicly praise Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff, Field Marshal Asim Munir.

He suggested that these remarks carried political and strategic overtones that New Delhi could not ignore, given the regional context.

"These developments point to a 'new abnormal' in the bilateral relationship," Mr. Ramesh said, arguing that India now faces fresh challenges on a near-daily basis in managing ties with Washington.

He added that conciliatory or "appeasing" public messaging by the Prime Minister was unlikely to be sufficient to address the underlying shifts in U.S. policy and political attitudes towards India.

Broader debate

The comments come amid broader debate within Opposition circles over the trajectory of India-U.S. relations under the Trump administration, with concerns being raised about economic protectionism, geopolitical signalling in South Asia, and pressure on India's strategic partnerships.

Mr. Trump has imposed 50% tariffs on India, among the highest in the world, including 25% levies for its purchases of Russian energy.

Earlier this week, Mr. Graham had said that Indian Ambassador to the U.S. Vinay Kwatra had informed him about New Delhi reducing its purchases of Russian oil and asked him to convey to Mr. Trump to relieve the tariff imposed on India.

Mr. Graham, accompanying Mr. Trump on Air Force One on January 4, was talking about his tariff Bill.

(With inputs from PTI)

Shah urges agencies to remain alert at J&K security review meet

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah has directed all security agencies to remain alert and continue to work in synergy to ensure that the gains achieved after the dilution of Article 370 are sustained and the goal of "terror-free Jammu and Kashmir" is achieved at the earliest.

Mr. Shah chaired a meeting to review the security situation in J&K on Thursday. The meeting was attended by Manoj Sinha, Lieutenant-Governor of J&K; Govind Mohan, Union Home Secretary; Tapan Kumar Deka, Director, Intelligence Bureau; Atal Dullu, Chief Secretary, J&K; Nalin Prabhat, Director-General of Police, J&K; heads of Central Armed Police Forces; and other senior officers.

He said that the Centre was committed to establishing lasting peace in J&K and completely eliminate terrorism. Reiterating the zero-tolerance policy against terrorism, Mr. Shah said that due to sustained and coordinated efforts of the Narendra Modi government, the terror ecosystem in J&K was crippled.

He appreciated the efforts of the security agencies in strengthening the security scenario of J&K. He stated that Counter Terror operations targeting terrorist infrastructure and terror financing in a mission mode should be continued, a statement said.

Parties in U.P. gear up to enrol eligible voters amid deletions on draft rolls

Mayank Kumar
LUCKNOW



People check for their names on the draft electoral rolls in Uttar Pradesh. ANI

Political parties in Uttar Pradesh are gearing up to enrol voters after 2.89 crore names were deleted from the draft rolls after the special intensive revision (SIR) exercise.

Samajwadi Party (SP) president Akhilesh Yadav on Thursday directed party leaders to conduct a thorough investigation at the booth level, adding "we must all unite again to save every single vote". The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) also held meetings to identify eligible voters who were not on the list.

The Election Commission had earlier announced that claims and objections on additions and deletions would be received from January 6 to February 6, with the publication of the final voter list scheduled for March 6.

"There must be a thorough investigation at every booth, and, with our slogan 'Not a single vote should be cut', we must all unite again to save every single vote. Remind every voter of the importance of having their names on the voter list," Mr. Yadav wrote on X, calling upon SP workers to act as sentinels for the "PDA" (Pichda, Dalit, Alpashankhak), a term he uses to refer to the oppressed sections, Dalits and minorities.

Nasser Salim, the SP spokesperson, said, "Citizens whose names may have been omitted from the draft rolls are being encouraged to verify their details through the official mechanism provided by the Election Commission and make use of the claims and objections process within the stipulated timeline. The SP is bringing about awareness through legal literacy initiatives, and engagement with election authorities strictly within the framework of electoral law to ensure that no eligible voter is inadvertently excluded."

BJP spokesperson Rakesh Tripathi said, "Ever since the SIR exercise was announced, our State unit and workers encouraged people to submit their forms as per EC guidelines. We will continue to hold awareness drives to ensure no one is left out."

Ajay Rai, Uttar Pradesh Congress president, told *The Hindu* that committees have been formed to run awareness drives across the State. "District-level monitoring committees of the Congress are working across 75 districts of U.P. To encourage voter addition and keep a check on any malpractices, our teams are holding meetings at the village level to make sure that all those who are eligible make it to the final draft," said Mr. Rai.

INBRIEF



NHRC issues notice to Gujarat govt. over typhoid case spike

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) on Thursday issued notice to the Gujarat government over a surge in patients with typhoid in hospitals in Gandhinagar allegedly due to consumption of contaminated drinking water. According to a communique by the commission, news reports stated that the State Health Department has confirmed a total 70 active cases of typhoid concentrated in a particular area of the city. The surge has exposed flaws in the city's newly laid water-supply system. Seven points of leaks have been identified in the water pipeline network causing sewage to mix with the drinking water supplied.

6 more held in connection with Turkman Gate violence

A day after a court-ordered anti-encroachment drive triggered clashes and stone-pelting in central Delhi's Turkman Gate area, six more arrests have been made in connection with the violence, which left police personnel injured. The total number of arrests made in the matter now stands at 11. Those arrested on Thursday have been identified as Afaan, Adil, Shahnawaz, Hamza, Atharr and Ubed, all are residents of the Turkman Gate area. "We have arrested six more people. So far total of 11 people, including one juvenile, have been apprehended," Additional Commissioner of Police (Central) Nidhin Valsan stated. PTI

Voice for people-driven conservation

Madhav Gadgil, who passed away in Pune on Wednesday, shifted the paradigm in global conservation discourse, giving primacy to human rights over exclusive wildlife protection; Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel he headed recommended strict but people-driven protection for the ghats

Divya Gandhi
BENGALURU

Madhav Gadgil, a pioneering scholar and iconic people's conservationist, passed away in Pune on Wednesday after a brief illness. He was 83.

As someone who started off with the upper-class "urban conservationist approach to nature conservation", Mr. Gadgil metamorphosed into an ecologist who advocated the rights of the marginalised communities for whom the forest was home. He called them the "common people of India", and saw them as "constituents of the ecosystem".

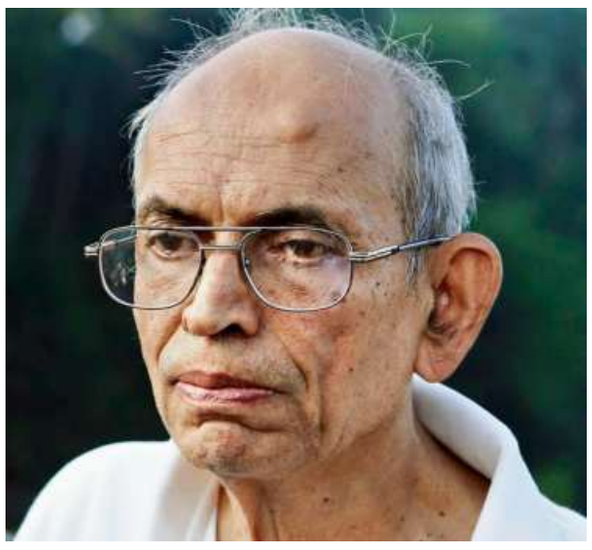
Nothing sums this up better than his own admission in his autobiography, *A Walk Up the Hill: Living with People and Nature*, published in 2023. Writing about his early days as a young conservationist, Mr. Gadgil confessed: "I subscribed to the urban conservationist approach to nature conservation, namely, protection through the devices of wildlife sanctuaries and national parks... I also subscribed to the view that it was necessary to remove habitations from within such habitats to safeguard them."

All that changed in the 1980s, when Mr. Gadgil "started thinking about alternative ways of following my passion to conserve nature, working with rather than against the common people of India".

Writing in the foreword to the book, the late M.S. Swaminathan, veteran agriculture scientist, said of Mr. Gadgil: "Madhav has had an illustrious career as one of India's leading researchers in the fields of ecology and environment, but more importantly, his thinking has been combined with action on environmental and ecological security in the service of humanity."

Paradigm shift

Mr. Gadgil would go on to shift the paradigm in the global conservation discourse, giving primacy to human rights over exclusive wildlife protection. He was distraught by the obsession of governments with commercial interests and their disregard for the rights of farmers and indigenous people. In fact, he began to view the Wildlife (Protection) Act of 1972 as weapon at the hands of the Forest departments "to subjugate the common people of India", especially by criminalising hunter-gatherer communities and farmers.



MADHAV GADGIL (1942 - 2026)

Gadgil was an ecologist who advocated for rights of the marginalised communities

The Western Ghats, where he was born in 1942, received his particular attention. This interest acquired the sharpest clarity in his 2011 report as chairman of the Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel. The Manmohan Singh government, having responded to an alarm sounded by experts and local populations on the destruction of the fragile ecosystem and people of the Western Ghats by industrialisation, climate change and commercial greed, had tasked Mr. Gadgil with rendering advice on how to save the ghats from an ecological disaster.

Mr. Gadgil scoured the region he knew so intimately, interacted with communities, both forest- and village-based, panchayats and forest officials, and recommended strict but people-driven protection for the ghats. Advocating the setting up of a Western Ghats Ecology Authority, he asked for the major part of it to be declared environmentally sensitive. No new polluting industries were to be set up in the zones earmarked as particularly endangered and existing industries were to be phased out.

Vested interest groups resisted the ideas, leading, typically and predictably, to the setting up of another panel. Headed by the eminent space scientist K. Kasturirangan, the panel recommended in 2013 that a reduced area (37% of the ghats) be protected. But even that was not accepted.

Till today, the Western Ghats remains a zone of contestation between the dogma of development and the calls for conservation.

Mr. Gadgil also championed the "Save the Silent Valley" movement in Kerala in the 1970s and early 1980s to protect the rainforests, as he campaigned for the forests of Bastar. A "product" of Harvard and a citizen of the world, he focused on the fragilities of India's ecosystems and the human inhabitants.

Paying tributes on X, former Union Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh said Mr. Gadgil "was a top-notch academic scientist, a tireless field researcher, a pioneering institution-builder, a great communicator, a believer in people's networks and movements, and friend, philosopher, guide, and mentor to many..."

Historian Ramachandra Guha, who co-authored two books with Mr. Gadgil in the 1990s, described him as "an exemplary scientist and citizen, and, to me, a friend and mentor for forty years and more".

Mr. Gadgil leaves behind a rich legacy for the future generations. He had hoped that this "will be the third generation of people born in free, democratic India whose Constitution professes values of social justice, equity, equality, non-racism and non-sexism, human dignity, an open society, accountability and the rule of law." To achieve that, the ecologist must, as he said, "talk of many things, not just air and water and the bird that sings, but of men and money and economic reforms..."

(With inputs from Vinaya Deshpande Pandit)

Madhav Gadgil's enduring legacy in the Nilgiris Biosphere Reserve

Rohan Premkumar
UDHAGAMANDALAM

The passing of ecologist Madhav Gadgil on Wednesday has left a void in the Nilgiris, where he had done phenomenal work.

"Almost everyone working on ecology in the Nilgiris Biosphere Reserve and across the Western Ghats, directly or indirectly, is connected to, or is influenced by the work of Madhav Gadgil," said a scientist who spoke to *The Hindu* about the ecologist's lasting legacy.

Ecologists and academics who either worked directly with Gadgil or were familiar with his work say his research and that of his students in the Western Ghats, particularly in what is today known as the Nilgiris Biosphere Reserve (NBR), laid the foundation for the recognition of the region's importance to biodiversity and to its protection.



The passing of Madhav Gadgil has left a void in the Nilgiris, where he had done phenomenal work. FILE PHOTO

"It was during his students' work on elephants in the landscape that Gadgil understood the importance of a landscape-level conservation framework that was required to protect the Asian elephant," said a senior scientist who requested anonymity.

"He established the Centre for Ecological Science in the Indian institute of Sciences, Bangalore. And as Director of the Centre for Ecological Sciences, he authored the Nilgiris Biosphere Reserve concept document, the first Biosphere Reserve, under the Man and Biosphere Reserve (MAB) Program of UNESCO, in India," said the former member of the Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel (WGEEP) B.J. Krishnan.

"As a member of the WGEEP, I had the privilege of working with Professor Gadgil and contributing to the panel's report. Gadgil was a gentle colossus in the field of all-inclusive, people-centric, nature conservation regime. His demise is a huge loss for nature conservation and biodiversity dependant livelihoods, Mr. Krishnan said.

Karthick Balasubramanian, scientist at the Agharkar Research Institute in Pune, said that Mr. Gadgil's legacy extended even further than the formation of the NBR and the recommendations of the WGEEP, as it helped shape the careers of young, aspiring scientists and conservationists. "Through his Western Ghats Network Programme, he managed to connect faculties and students from across the Western Ghats, from Gujarat to Tamil Nadu," Mr. Balasubramanian said.

Ecologist's advocacy shaped political and ecological narratives in Kerala

K.S. Sudhi
KOCHI

Kerala will remember Madhav Gadgil, ecologist who passed away on Wednesday, as a one-man green army who shaped the socio-political and ecological narratives of the State for the past decade and a half in an unprecedented manner.

The report of the Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel (WGEEP), led by Mr. Gadgil, which convulsed the political and conservation landscape of Kerala, classified the mountain range into different Ecologically Sensitive Zones (ESZs) based on their ecological significance. It categorised the 142 taluks in the Ghats boundary into ESZs 1, 2 and 3 while prescribing that no new polluting industries, including coal-based power plants, should be allowed in the first two zones. The panel report almost divided the State's political leaders into two camps: those who supported it and those who opposed it.



Madhav Gadgil, who led the Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel, visiting the Chembanmudy Hills in Kerala in 2013. FILE PHOTO

While the pro-conservationists revered Mr. Gadgil as the saviour of the Western Ghats and the vanguard of the ecosystem, he was fiercely hated by those who advocated that development needs must be prioritised over ecology. The Assembly election that followed the submission of the WGEEP report in 2011 also witnessed the political battle being fought in the hilly districts of Kerala on the question of conservation and development. However, Gadgil was often worried that his report was "misinterpreted by interest groups", which propagated that people should be evacuated from hilly districts such as Idukki. The report sealed the fate of the 163-MW Athirappally hydel project in the Chalakkudy river, pushed by the then State government.

"The views of Mr. Gadgil have left an influence on the green movements and ecological campaigns of the State. His stand on issues concerning development and environment was widely discussed in the State," Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said in his condolence message.

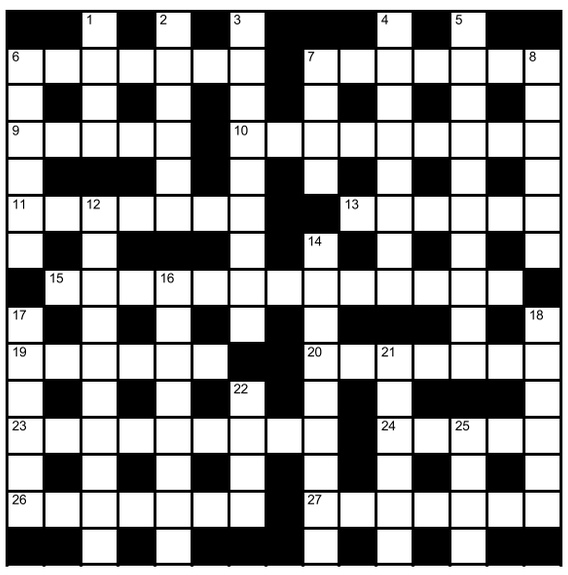
Communist Party of India leader Binoy Viswom said Mr. Gadgil taught that it was not the intervention to improve the living standards of ordinary people, but the violent intervention of profit-oriented capitalist development that polluted soil, water and nature everywhere and makes human life impossible.

TH CROSSWORD + 14687

(set by Vidwan)

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

SCAN TO PLAY



Across

6 Symphonic component highlighting energetic, rhythmic, zippy oscillation basically (7)
7 Salted element possibly miscalculated (7)
9 A day that is universal for farewell (5)
10 Israel soldier in pub is senseless (9)
11 Shiv accepts holding back confession of guilt (7)
13 Comic's writhing is universal (6)
15 Hold flower for metempsychosis (13)
19 Noble in short Paris top (6)
20 Go on about one suffering without a headdress fastener (7)
23 Irresolute headless fool! Coach runs to the front! (9)
24 Chilli - large, cut and turned into a sweet fruit! (5)
26 Wandering out north, ignoring the impairment of motor functions (7)
27 Priest is back on cam'ra, for instance (7)

Down

1 One exiled from Haiti, working from Bangkok or Pattaya (4)
2 Mostly capture bare human pain (6)
3 Most courteous one, mostly composed about governing (9)
4 Piece of online writing by learner trapped in toilet job! (8)
5 No, no! Pop CM! I can be an idiot! (10)
6 Small party on island, large prawns fried and served with breadcrumbs (6)
7 Pass a drink (4)
8 State and Church of England's enmity (6)
12 Visa provides one with due attention, mostly on first day (6,4)
14 I managed, crossing line with single arm (3-6)
16 Authenticate unconventional kind of vote increase (8)
17 Rip off Gaza without a bump after leader's eliminated (6)
18 Some teens ignore colours (6)
21 Kind of decorated, stylish boy overwhelming India (6)
22 Occasionally praises for complimentary entry (4)
25 Hairdo considered offbeat in France initially (4)

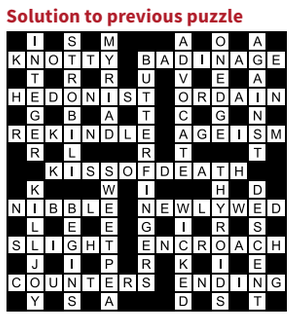
SUDOKU

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

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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★☆☆☆☆

Solution to previous puzzle



Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

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

FAITH

Murugan idol with six faces

Virali Malai is on the Madurai-Tiruchi road. The Murugan temple here is located on a small hillock. Here Murugan is seated on a peacock, and has six faces and twelve hands, said Desa Mangayarkkarasi in a discourse. Murugan's six faces are Isana, Tatpurusha, Aghora, Vamadeva, Satyojata and Athomukha. The story about Murugan is that He appeared as six babies, who were all fused together into one form by Ambal. Murugan therefore came to have a rupa with six faces and twelve hands. This is described by Kachiappa Sivachariyar in his Kanda Puranam.

The story about the temple is that a hunter once chased a tiger, which disappeared near a tree. Those who followed the hunter concluded that the place was divine and began to worship there. A temple for Shanmukha came up later in this place. Arunagirinatha had been summoned from Thiruvannamalai to Vayalur by Murugan. When he was in Vayalur, Murugan appeared in his dream and asked him to come to Virali Malai. Arunagirinatha immediately left for Virali Malai. But it was midnight and he lost his way. A hunter who happened to pass by offered to show him the way. With the hunter's help, Arunagirinatha reached his destination. He wanted to thank the hunter who had guided him. But when he tried to thank him, he found that the hunter had vanished. Arunagirinatha then realised that the hunter was none other than Murugan. In Virali Malai, Arunagirinatha was blessed by Murugan with the ashtamasiddhis – eight super powers. In his verses, Arunagirinatha describes the beauty of the place, the abundance of *kondrai* flowers in the area and the peacocks on the hill, besides giving us philosophical truths.

MARKETS

MARKET WATCH

	THURSDAY	% CHANGE
Sensex	84,181	-0.92
US Dollar	89.90	-0.03
Gold	1,40,500	-0.63
Brent oil	61.04	1.31

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Enter	2214.00	-60.10
Adani Ports	1465.20	-0.10
Apollo Hosp	7364.50	-83.00
Asian Paints	2786.50	-22.90
Axis Bank	1286.80	-8.70
Bajaj Auto	9760.50	-29.00
Bajaj Finserv	2008.90	-23.00
Bajaj Finance	971.95	3.15
Bharat Elec	415.65	0.00
Bharti Airtel	2066.30	-17.90
Cipla	1460.60	-7.30
Coal India	425.25	-6.40
Dr Reddys Lab	1206.90	-35.90
Hindustan Unilever	40.20	0.00
Eicher Motors	7551.00	-31.50
Eternal Ltd.	283.55	2.60
Grasim Ind	2792.00	-45.10
HCL Tech	1646.70	-1.00
HDFC Bank	946.70	-2.35
HDFC Life	758.15	-14.20
Hindalco	903.95	-34.50
Hind Unilever	2386.70	-12.70
ICICI Bank	1435.00	7.30
IntGlobeAvi	4906.50	-44.50
Infosys	1613.30	-25.70
ITC	340.90	-0.35
Jio Financial Services Ltd.	293.55	-9.95
JSW Steel	1155.90	-33.90
Kotak Bank	2133.00	-11.00
L&T	4028.40	-128.60
M&M	3724.00	-24.80
Maruti Suzuki	16664.00	-145.00
Max Healthcare	1029.80	-4.90
NestleIndia	1306.90	-7.90
NTPC	344.40	-4.45
ONGC	231.42	-7.64
PowerGrid Corp	259.30	-4.80
Reliance Ind	1470.60	-33.60
SBI Life	2082.90	12.10
State Bank	998.00	-9.15
Shriram Finance Ltd.	992.90	-2.95
Sun Pharma	1760.70	-21.90
TataConsumerProduct	1197.40	-15.20
Tata Steel	180.12	-3.68
TCS	3203.90	-91.70
Tech Mahindra	1577.90	-47.30
Titan	4249.00	-24.20
Tata Motors PV	359.45	-3.90
Trent Ltd.	3990.40	-70.10
UltraTech Cement	12064.00	-120.00
Wipro	262.20	-8.60

India to scrap curbs on Chinese firms that bid for govt. contracts

Plan follows ministries' requests to ease shortages and project delays; projects awarded to Chinese bidders fell 27% from a year earlier in 2021

Reuters
NEW DELHI



Boomerang effect: Curbs on Chinese imports for the power sector hindered India's plans to raise thermal power capacity. FILE PHOTO

The finance ministry plans to scrap five-year-old restrictions on Chinese firms bidding for government contracts, two government sources said, as New Delhi seeks to revive commercial ties in an environment of reduced border tensions.

The curbs, imposed in 2020 after a deadly clash between the countries' troops, required Chinese bidders to register with an Indian government committee and obtain political and security clearances.

The measures effectively barred Chinese firms from competing for Indian government contracts that were estimated to be worth $700 billion to $750 billion.

Reuters is the first to report on the plan to ease the restrictions.

One of the sources said officials were working to remove the registration requirement. Both sources said Prime Minister Narendra Modi's office will make the final decision.

The finance ministry and the PMO did not respond to *Reuters* requests for comment. The restrictions had a significant impact: months after they were made public, China's State-owned CRRC was disqualified from bidding for a $216 million train-manufacturing contract. The Ministry of Finance's plan to ease the curbs followed requests from other government departments that face shortages and project delays due to the 2020 restrictions, the sources said.

Soon after India imposed its restrictions, the value of new projects awarded to Chinese bidders fell 27% from a year earlier to $1.67 billion in 2021, according to toObserver Research Foundation.

Specifically, curbs on imports from China of equipment for the power sector have hindered India's plans to raise its thermal power capacity to about 307 GW over the next decade.

India to continue to work with ISA, back solar adoption

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The U.S. had sought to withdraw from 66 'wasteful, ineffective organisations' which also included the ISA

India will continue to work with the International Solar Alliance (ISA) and support solar adoption and energy transition goals, government sources said on Thursday, even as the U.S. announced its withdrawal from the alliance.

In an executive order signed on January 7, the U.S. sought to withdraw from 66 "wasteful, ineffective or harmful international organisations", which also included the solar alliance.

"These withdrawals will end American taxpayer funding and involvement in entities that advance globalist agendas over U.S. priorities, or that address important issues inefficiently or ineffectively such that U.S. taxpayer dollars are best allocated in other ways to support the relevant missions," read a White House fact sheet.

The 125-member alliance was conceptualised on the sidelines of COP21 in Paris in 2015 and was formally instituted by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President of France Francois Hollande.

It aspires to unlock $1 trillion in solar investments by 2030 whilst reducing technology and financing costs relating to solar implementation.

The sources stated that the alliance's programmes are operational in more than 95 countries and had supported creation of national pipelines, regulatory frameworks, and market creation.

They added that the alliance had been "successful" in demonstrating the "feasibility and effectiveness" of solar solutions.

Taking note of the latest development, the sources held, "ISA will continue to work with member countries, particularly least developed countries and small island developing states, in development and deployment of solar energy, mobilising finance, building capacity, and reducing risk perceptions."

INBRIEF



'Ministry gives nod for power equipment testing tech'

The power ministry has accorded in-principle clearance to institute a ₹3,000 crore package to build power equipment testing technology in the country, sources privy to the development informed on Thursday. The sources added that the idea was to reduce the present dependency on The Netherlands for the testing equipment. The sources also said that the initial projects would be coming up in Noida and Haryana.

SEBI revamps stockbroker rules to ease compliance

SEBI has overhauled three-decade-old stockbroker regulations, allowing brokers to carry out activities under the framework of other financial regulators, in a move aimed at providing ease of compliance and ease of doing business. The new rule, replacing SEBI's (Stock Brokers) Regulations 1992 with the SEBI (Stock Brokers) Regulations 2026 (SB Regulation), simplified regulatory language, removed outdated provisions, and introduced clearer definitions. PTI

Corporate India earnings expected to grow faster in Q3

Corporate India's earnings are expected to grow at a slightly faster rate in the third quarter of fiscal 2026 against the same period last year, according to analysts' research. The earnings for firms that Kotak Institutional Research covers is expected to grow at a pace of 8.8% in the Q3 of fiscal 2026, while Motilal Oswal is more optimistic at 16%, which is the fastest in eight quarters. Excluding OMCs, its companies are expected to grow at 13% on a year-on-year basis.

Textiles ministry signs MoUs with 15 States under Tex-RAMPS scheme

The Hindu Bureau
COIMBATORE

The Ministry of Textiles has signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs) with 15 States as part of the 'Textiles focused Research, Assessment, Monitoring, Planning And Start-Up' (Tex-RAMPS) scheme.

The MoUs were signed on the first day of the two-day national textile ministers' conference in Guwahati on the theme 'India's Textiles: Weaving Growth, Heritage & Innovation'.

The scheme is designed to improve the coverage, quality, timeliness, and credibility of textile-related statistical products and research, according to a press release.

The initiative drives integrated planning for key sectors including handlooms, handicrafts, apparel, and technical textiles by focusing efforts directly at the cluster and district levels, the release said.

The Ministry provides an annual grant of ₹12 lakh to each State or Union Territory. An additional grant of ₹1 lakh a year will be provided for each district, based on the development and execution of specific district action plans.

Gen Z, millennials in India believe finding jobs will be tough in 2026: LinkedIn study

Mini Tejaswi
BENGALURU



Young professionals need guidance and career clarity amid AI-powered hiring.

A majority of Gen Z and millennials in India believe that it will be more challenging for them to find jobs in 2026, as their ambition for a career change faces the new pressures of uncertainty and unpreparedness, LinkedIn reported on Thursday

According to data exclusively shared by the professional platform with *The Hindu*, as job search gets challenging, India's younger professionals are seeking clarity and transparency to streamline career growth.

Some 80% of Gen Z and 75% of millennials say it will be more challenging to find a job this year, LinkedIn found.

These observations also made the platform conclude that young Indian professionals need guidance and career clarity amid AI-powered hiring.

Nirajita Banerjee, a LinkedIn career expert and senior managing editor, LinkedIn India News, said, "AI is now a foundational part of how careers are built and how talent is evaluated across India's job market. What professionals need most is a clear understanding of how their skills translate into opportunity and how hiring decisions are actually made."

However, 77% of Gen Z and 71% of millennials also said it was hard to find reliable advice and guidance to help in the job-seeking process, LinkedIn said. "They [job seekers] sought clarity from recruiters on what they could've done better," LinkedIn reported based on its recent research. "When used with purpose, AI tools can bridge that gap by helping people identify the roles they're right for, prepare with intent, and focus their learning where it matters most," Ms. Banerjee added.

LinkedIn also found that nine in 10 millennials and 89% of Gen Z felt confident using AI at work, well ahead of older cohorts (Gen X 79%, Boomers 77%). This readiness, LinkedIn said, was driving ambition – 84% of Gen Z and 74% of millennials plan to look for a new job in 2026, compared with 53% Gen X and 42% Boomers.

As per another data set released by LinkedIn, some 84% of professionals feel unprepared to find a new job, although 72% said they were actively seeking a new role in 2026.

This mindset comes amid the rise of AI in the hiring process, rapidly shifting skill requirements for today's jobs, and an increasingly competitive, but selective job market, it said further.

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TTD-40021/10/2025-PRO SEC(Adv.No.350),Date: 08.01.2026 EXECUTIVE OFFICER

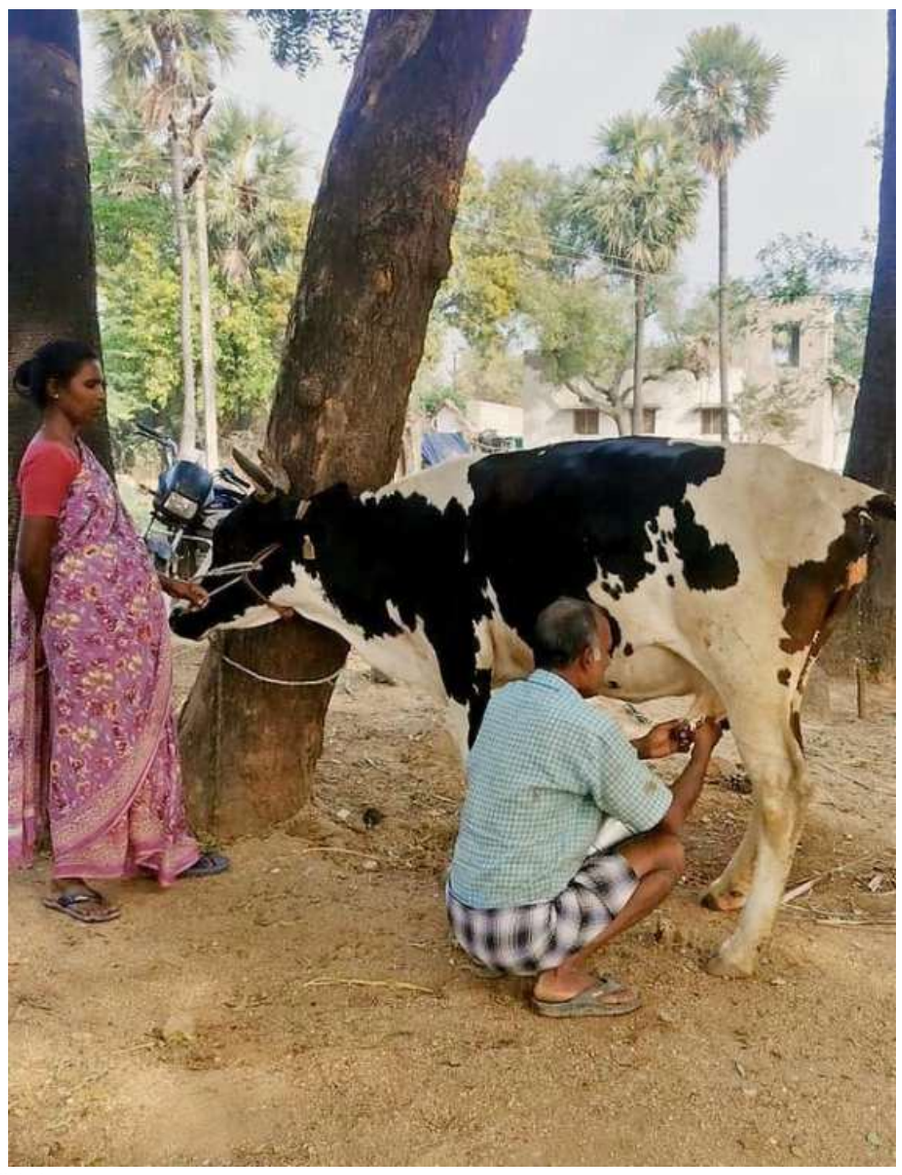
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पो० ऑ० न्यू फॉरेस्ट, देहरादून– 248006 (उत्तराखण्ड)
P.O. New Forest, Dehradun – 248 006 (Uttarakhand)
विज्ञप्ति संख्या 20 / उप महानिदेशक (प्रशासन) / निदेशक–व0अ0सं0, देहरादून व निदेशक–उ0क0व0अ0सं0, जबलपुर / 2026–भा0वा0अ0शि0प0
Advt. No. 20/ DDG(Admin.)/ Dir-FRI & Dir-TFRI/2026-ICFRE
भारतीय वानिकी अनुसंधान एंव शिक्षा परिषद देहरादून के अन्तर्गत निम्न पदों को प्रतिनियुक्ति के आधार पर भरने हेतु आवेदन आमंत्रित किए जाते हैं।
1. उप महानिदेशक (प्रशासन), भा.वा.अ.शि.प., देहरादून – 7वें वेतन आयोग के वेतन स्तर 15 के वेतनमान में
2. निदेशक, वन अनुसंधान संस्थान, देहरादून – 7वें वेतन आयोग के वेतन स्तर 15 के वेतनमान में
3. निदेशक, उष्णकटिबंधीय वन अनुसंधान संस्थान, जबलपुर – 7वें वेतन आयोग के वेतन स्तर 15 के वेतनमान में
उपरोक्त पद हेतु इच्छुक अभ्यर्थी भा0वा0अ0शि0प0 की वेबसाइट **http://www.icfre.org** में दिये गये विस्तृत विज्ञापन के अनुसार आवेदन कर सकते है। आवेदन प्राप्त करने की अन्तिम तिथि **16.02.2026** है।
Applications are invited for filling up of following post(s) on deputation basis at Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education, Dehradun.
1. Deputy Director General (Administration), ICFRE(HQ), Dehradun– Pay level 15 of 7th CPC Pay Matrix
2. Director, Forest Research Institute, Dehradun – Pay level 15 of 7th CPC Pay Matrix
3. Director, Tropical Forest Research Institute, Jabalpur- Pay level 15 of 7th CPC Pay Matrix
The interested candidates may apply for the above said post as per detailed advertisement available at ICFRE website **http://www.icfre.org**. The last date of receipt of applications is **16.02.2026.**
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Dairy farmers tending cattle at Mahasamudram village near Chittoor. Producing an estimated 18–20 lakh litres of milk daily, Chittoor district ranks among India's most productive milk belts. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Chittoor poised for a white revolution

On the road to recovery from a severe setback it suffered years ago following the closure of the Cooperative Milk Producers' Union, the district's dairy sector is set for a big leap riding on the relentless efforts of small and marginal farmers who constitute the bulk of its operations, and the multi-pronged strategy rolled out by the government may turn out to be the much-needed push to help shift the gear, writes **K. Umashanker**



From the lush villages of Kuppam and Palamaner bordering Tamil Nadu and Karnataka to the semi-arid plains of Bangarupalem, Puthalapattu and Nagari, milk flows through a dense network of collection routes.

Muneppa (65) of Jangala Agraharam village in Palamaner Assembly constituency sits by a forest road leading to the Koundinya Wildlife Sanctuary, watching his eight milch cows and a bull graze at a distance. His day begins at 3 a.m., when he milks his cattle and transports to a nearby collection centre over 20 litres of milk – which, he fondly calls, "white liquid gold."

He repeats the routine in the evening. "Early to rise, early to sleep. I have no plans except to increase my herd," Muneppa's words seem to flow out of confidence, as he bets big on the future of his dairy business.

"I was a pauper in 2020. I struggled to pay my grandchildren's school fees. I owned just two cows then," he recalls. "Today, I have eight. My grandson studies engineering in Bengaluru, and my granddaughter's marriage was conducted decently recently," he says, exuding pride and contentment.

Like Muneppa, thousands of dairy farmers across Chittoor district harbour similar aspirations. The formidable presence of the dairy sector is something even a casual visitor to the district will not fail to notice.

Producing an estimated 18-20 lakh litres of milk daily, Chittoor ranks among India's most productive milk belts. Its output feeds not only local populations but also major urban centres such as Tirupati, Bengaluru and Chennai, besides hundreds of other towns across Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.

From the lush villages of Kuppam and Palamaner bordering Tamil Nadu and Karnataka to the semi-arid plains of Bangarupalem, Puthalapattu and Nagari, milk flows through a dense network of collection routes, sustaining tens of thousands of rural households.

Yet, beneath this scale of prosperity lies a sector grappling with price volatility, fragmented procurement, rising input costs and institutional gaps.

> "I was a pauper in 2020. I owned just two cows then. Today, I have eight. My grandson studies engineering in Bengaluru
>
> **MUNEPPA**
> Dairy farmer

Small farmers, big stakes

Over 80% of dairy farmers in Chittoor are small and marginal, typically owning two to four cattle. For them, milk is not merely an agricultural commodity but an alternative source of sustenance to keep the wolf from the door.

Dairy serves as a critical livelihood buffer, supplementing rain-dependent agriculture and ensuring steady cash flow during crop failures or lean seasons. In mandals such as Baireddipalle, V. Kota, Ramakuppam, Gangavaram, Palamaner and Gudupalle, dairy income pays for groceries, school fees, electricity bills, veterinary medicines and medical emergencies.

A household selling 20 litres a day earns about ₹600, an amount that often determines its survival.

Women, the invisible pillars

Women shoulder the unseen burden of this economy. From feeding and cleaning to milking, bookkeeping and milk delivery, they run the sector end to end. With men migrating seasonally for construction or industrial work, dairy operations in regions like Kuppam and Palamaner are almost entirely in women's hands.

Across Chittoor's villages, women are the sector's silent managers: maintaining accounts, coordinating deliveries and negotiating with procurement agents. When prices fall, it is they who recalibrate household budgets, defer healthcare or take on additional wage work.

Women-led Bulk Milk Chilling Units (BMCUs) have demonstrated how decentralised institutions can stabilise incomes and improve governance. However, funding constraints, power supply issues and maintenance costs limit their scalability.

"Dairy gives us dignity and daily cash, but only when prices are fair," says Kathali Jamuna (34) of Kuppam.

Severe blow

The collapse of the Chittoor Cooperative Milk Producers' Union nearly two decades ago, following the shutdown of Vijaya Dairy, left the sector at a crossroads.

Once a flagship institution processing lakhs of litres a day, Vijaya Dairy offered stable prices, assured payments and collective bargaining power. Its closure shattered that ecosystem, allowing private dairies, traders and commission agents to dominate procurement.

Prices now vary not just across mandals, but between neighbouring villages, depending on buyer dominance and volumes.

"Milk must be sold within hours. If we reject today's price, we lose the entire quantity," says Anjamma (45) of V. Kota.

Currently, cow milk prices range between ₹27 and ₹32 per litre, while buffalo milk fetches ₹35-₹38, depending on fat and SNF content. Rising feed, fodder, transport and veterinary costs, however, have sharply reduced net margins.

Even a ₹2 drop in procurement price per litre can cost a small farmer ₹1,200-₹1,500 a month, a serious blow.

The spread of BMCUs has been a game-changer. Chittoor has nearly 100 functional chilling units, managed by women's SHGs, village cooperatives and producer collectives. With capacities of 2,000-3,000 litres a day, they collectively chill over three lakh litres daily.

Chilled milk fetches ₹3-₹7 more per litre than normal milk sold to middlemen.

> We face shortages of veterinarians, delayed emergency care and limited access to affordable insurance
>
> **JHANSI**
> from Nagari

"Digital testing, printed receipts and fixed payment cycles have improved transparency," says Ganapathi (54) of Kuppam.

Another major relief has been the entry of Amul through State-backed initiatives, reintroducing a competitive benchmark. Farmers report better prices, transparent testing and assured payments, forcing private dairies to revise rates upward.

Yet, pleas to revive a cooperative dairy structure remain unheard.

"During the cooperative era, Chittoor was known as Andhra's Anand. That tag will remain history if no action is taken to revive it," says Krishnappa Mani (62) of Palamaner.

Fodder, other shortages

As a rain-dependent and partly rain-shadow region, Chittoor faces chronic fodder shortages, especially in eastern mandals. Summer heat from March to August reduces yields and fertility.

Officials estimate a 30-35% green fodder shortfall during summer, with fodder prices rising by 25-30% and milk yields dropping 20-30%.

While fodder conditions are relatively better in Kuppam and Palamaner, mandals such as Nagari, G.D. Nellore and S.R. Puram remain vulnerable.

"We face shortages of veterinarians, delayed emergency care and limited access to affordable insurance," says Jhansi (50), a farmer from Nagari.

On the other hand, youth participation too remains uncertain. Many view dairy as labour-intensive with uncertain returns. In some villages, households are quietly exiting the sector, even though schemes promoting fodder crops, silage preparation and community fodder banks have been rolled out and over 2,000 cattle sheds sanctioned.

The road ahead

Animal Husbandry officials project that Chittoor could scale up to 30 lakh litres per day by the end of the decade through improved breeds, expanded chilling infrastructure and organised procurement.

Kuppam alone contributes over eight lakh litres daily, and officials say milk output there could rise by another 10 lakh litres soon.

Responding to farmers' concerns, Dr. D. Uma Maheswari, Joint Director, Animal Husbandry, Chittoor, says a multi-pronged strategy has been adopted to give the sector the much-needed push.

"We are strengthening veterinary services, expanding artificial insemination using sex-sorted and high-genetic merit semen, improving feed security and creating robust market linkages," she says.

The focus, she adds, is on securing livelihoods while maintaining Chittoor's position as one of Andhra Pradesh's leading milk-producing districts.

Even as urban centres across Rayalaseema and Tamil Nadu continue to depend on Chittoor's milk, farmers pose a fundamental question: "Can a district that feeds millions afford to let its dairy households run at a loss?"

As Chandrasekhar (35) of Irala mandal puts it across, "The real measure of success is not litres produced, but secure livelihoods and a future worth striving for."



Over 80% of dairy farmers in Chittoor are small and marginal, typically owning two to four cattle. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Telugu cinema's anticipated films



From *The Raja Saab* and *Dacoit*, to *Peddi* and *The Paradise*, the industry will look to regain some of its lost ground in 2026

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In 2025, it was clear that it was not going to be easy to draw moviegoers into cinema halls in large numbers. Stories that do not feel dated, a tighter rein on the scripts, and films that make the audiences feel that the time, effort and money spent to be at the cinema hall are worth it are non-negotiables for Telugu cinema to regain momentum.

2026 began with director Sandeep Reddy Vanga revealing the first look poster of *Spirit*, starring Prabhas and Triptii Dimri. The makers, however, are yet to announce a release date. Meanwhile, SS Rajamouli and Mahesh Babu's highly-anticipated *Varanasi*, is slated for a 2027 release.

Festive beginnings

The big action for 2026 will kick off from the Sankranti festival season.

The mid-January harvest season is synonymous with good tidings and a willingness to spend on entertainment. This year, five films are vying for attention.

Director Maruthi helms *The Raja Saab*, a horror fantasy entertainer starring Prabhas, Sanjay Dutt, Boman Irani, Malavika Mohanan, Nidhhi Agerwal, Riddhi Kumar and Zarina Wahab. The Telugu film with its eye on the nationwide market has Prabhas navigating a haunted house from which exit is easier said than done.

Writer-director Anil Ravipudi would hope that his success streak during Sankranti continues this year, in his first collaboration with Chiranjeevi. *Mana Shankara Vara Prasad Garu* will also feature the director's lucky charm actor Venkatesh Daggubati in an extended cameo; the film stars Nayanthara as the female lead.

With *Bhartha Mahasayulaku Wignyapthi* directed by Kishore Tirumala, Ravi Teja would hope for a turnaround from his rough patch.

The mention of *Nari Nari Naduma Murari* might make movie buffs recall the 1990 film. Like the older film, the new one also features a male protagonist (Sharwanand) caught between two women. Hopefully, the similarities end there. The film directed by Ram Abbaraju stars Samyuktha Menon and Sakshi Vaidya. Ram's 2023 film *Samajavaragamana* was a surprise hit and the new film, also billed as a comedy, banks on the festive season.

Naveen Polishetty stars in a massier character than usual in *Anaganaga Oka Raju*, alongside Meenakshi Chaudhary. This film comes from director Kalyan Shankar of *MAD, MAD Square* and *Tillu Square* fame.

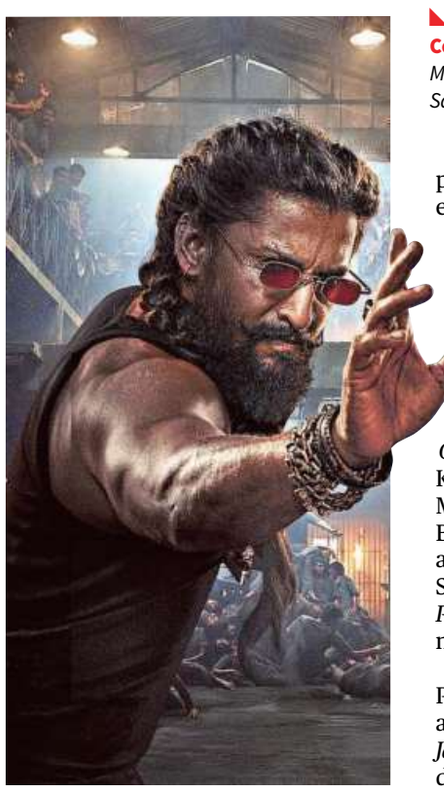
The Sankranti season will also feature the Telugu dubbed versions of the Tamil films *Parashakti,* and *Jana Nayagan* as *Jana Nayakudu*.

Beyond the season and star-led releases, the real test lies in the ability of more films managing to pique curiosity.

Tharun Bhascker and Eesha Rebba's *Om Shanti Shanti Shanti* will arrive late January, giving a native spin to the Malayalam film *Jaya Jaya Jaya Jaya Hey*. Director Gunasekhar's *Euphoria*, which marks his departure from

Beyond the festive season and star-led releases, the real test lies in the ability of more films managing to pique curiosity.





Coming up (Clockwise from far left) Stills from *Mana Shankara Vara Prasad Garu, The Raja Saab* and *The Paradise*. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

period and mythological dramas, is expected in February. Nikhil Siddhartha's *Swayambhu* directed by Bharat Krishnamachari is also scheduled for a February release.

After three years, Adivi Sesh will court theatres with two films this year – *Dacoit* directed by Shaneil Deo, co-starring Mrunal Thakur, and *G2: Goodachari 2,* directed by Vinay Kumar Sirigineedi. *Dacoit* arrives in March, followed by director Buchi Babu Sana's *Peddi* led by Ram Charan and Janhvi Kapoor, and director Srikanth Odela's ambitious *The Paradise* featuring Nani in a never-before-seen character.

Director Hanu Raghavapudi and Prabhas's *Fauzi*, Vijay Deverakonda and director Ravi Kiran Kola's *Rowdy Janardhana*, Naga Chaitanya and director Karthik Dandu's *Vrushakarma*, Sharwanand and Abhishek Reddy's *Biker*, the much-delayed Chiranjeevi-starrer *Vishwambhara* directed by Vassishta, and Gowtam Tinnanuri's teen musical *Magic* are some of the other films expected this year.

On the floors

While a few have announced their release dates, others are yet to officially lock in the date. Pawan Kalyan and Harish Shankar's *Ustaad Bhagat Singh*, Atlee and Allu Arjun's new film, Nagarjuna Akkineni's 100th film, NTR and Prashant Neel's *Dragon*, the sequel of *Mirai*, Venkatesh and Trivikram Srinivas's *Adarsha Kutumbam House no.47 - AK 47, Drishyam 3*, Nandini Reddy and Samantha's *Maa Inti Bangaram*, Ravikanth Perepu and Siddhu Jonnalagadda's *Badass*, and Swaroop RSJ and Siddhu's new film are among the others under production.

Aditya Hasan, who produced the blockbuster *Little Hearts,* is now working on *Epic*, starring Anand Deverakonda and Vaishnavi Chaitanya.

At the turn of the pandemic, it appeared as though Telugu cinema had cracked a magic formula with more hits than other industries. However, the bubble burst in 2025. Now, there is a need to revert to the basics – stories that resonate with the audience.

South-side story

As India intends to build Maitri II in Antarctica, Harsh K Gupta looks back



Past forward India's first permanent base would go on to shape the future of the country's Antarctic programme. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

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Harsh K Gupta vividly remembers the sequence of events that led to the establishment of Dakshin Gangotri, India's first permanent research station in Antarctica. A year after he had moved to Thiruvananthapuram as director, Centre for Earth Science Studies, in 1982, a call for proposals to carry out scientific work in Antarctica was issued, says the earth scientist and seismologist who led India's Third Antarctic Expedition between 1983-84 and established Dakshin Gangotri there.

"I am a geophysicist, and my expertise is in earthquake seismology. So, I put up a proposal to set up five stations in Antarctica," says the Hyderabad-based Harsh, a fellow of the International Science Council (ISC), president, Geological Society of India, and member, Atomic Energy Regulatory Board of India. He was soon called to make a presentation of his proposal at the Department of Ocean Development (DOD), New Delhi. However, it was not selected.

Instead, Sayed Zahoor Qasim, the marine biologist who had led India's first expedition to Antarctica in 1981, told him that India was planning to set up a permanent base there and asked him if he was willing to lead the expedition.

Harsh said yes right away. Soon after, he met with the then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi. "She was delighted to see that a young man would be the leader of the expedition," says the Padma Shri awardee, in whose honour South Sudan named its first seismological centre this July.

The task ahead, however, was daunting. India's Antarctic Programme was only two years old then, and "no country had, till then, set up a permanent base in Antarctica and populated it in one Antarctic summer, barely two months", says Harsh.

On December 3, 1983, Harsh and his team set out from Goa aboard the Finnpolaris, a Finnish ice-class cargo ship capable of breaking ice.

They reached Antarctica on Christmas Eve, and began construction. They successfully built a 620-square-metre station with living quarters for 12 by February 25, 1984.

In the following decades, India sent over 40 expeditions to the continent, and established two more research stations.

Harsh qualified for the National Defence Academy, but instead chose to follow his older brother and study Engineering.

He went on to work at the Central Seismological Observatory (CSO) at Shillong, where he began looking at the records of the earthquakes. He is the author of several research papers, popular articles and over 20 books. Harsh was also instrumental in establishing India's Tsunami Early Warning System after the 2004 Sumatra earthquake.

Though in his 80s, he shows no sign of slowing down, currently working on developing a framework for how societies can become earthquake-resilient.

Chew on this

Remember Caramilk from the 1990s? The golden-brown chewy toffee gets a revival of sorts with makers across the country reinventing the toffee

Nidhi Adlakha
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Remember the joy of chewy toffee? Of late, there has been a nostalgia-driven revival of the traditional confectionery.

Nestled in Raison, a village in Himachal Pradesh, Big Bear Farms has been making toffee since 2022. Co-founder Nikita Kapur, 36, says they began in their home kitchen in Kullu Valley. "We first introduced them during the festive season, expecting them to be a limited offering. The response, however, was overwhelming, and it soon became a permanent part of our range," she says. Today, they retail three variants: original caramel toffee, chocolate caramel and coffee caramel toffee.

Regional ingredients

Down South, Le Cordon Bleu chef Pooja Srinivasan launched Inippu Indulgence to spotlight heritage toffee. "I noticed that my kids and my nephews don't enjoy chocolate cake! The joy of indulging in a piece of shared pastry or dessert has been swapped for caramel, ice cream, and toffee," says Pooja of the Chennai-based brand, adding how this mindset led her to create bite-sized toffees.

South Indian heritage ingredients are the heroes at Inippu Indulgence and bestselling flavours include filter coffee, and Tuticorin sea salt. "Our original heritage toffees also include pure vanilla bean, Malabar spice, and Dakshina cocoa. We introduced rum- flavoured toffees for this festive season," explains Pooja, who will launch nut inclusions for her upcoming Wedding Edit.

But what is it about toffee that has got these brands invested? Nikita says the love received from customers across the country has been a driving factor. "The toffee is made by hand in small batches, and slow cooked. "Nothing is mechanised. We stir by hand, watching closely as colour and texture develop, and relying on experience rather than metrics."

Another brand born out of kitchen trials is Tarvoti. Based in Goa, Preethi Hirendra Dhekne, 44, launched the label in 2023. "My husband is in the merchant navy and while sailing with him I discovered the joy of picking up local treats from various countries. During Covid, my husband took a break from sailing and we missed our dose of foreign chocolates. One day, we curated a unique toffee at home using local cashew, and an idea to market this unique concept as a 'gift of Goa' was born." And hence the name Tarvoti, which means 'sailor' in Konkani.





Sweet treats (Clockwise from far left) Toffee at Big Bear Farms; and Inippu Indulgence. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The brand offers three flavours: roast almond, cashew coffee, and country cashew. "The latter is a rustic combination inspired by the ginger used in traditional Goan sweets. We will soon introduce flavours such as coconut, banana, and mint". She explains how sugar and butter are cooked together to form a creamy caramel that is then mixed with nuts and other secret ingredients to form the core of the toffee. "Toffee squares are then coated with chocolate and sprinkled with nuts."

Keeping it handmade

As with any business, the challenges of running an artisanal confectionery business in India are many. Nikita says one of the biggest challenges is consumer awareness. "Reaching customers and helping them understand why an artisanal product behaves differently from a factory-made one. For instance, while some consumers immediately recognise shorter shelf lives as a sign of freshness, many still associate longer shelf life with better value, not realising it often comes at the cost of high usage of artificial preservatives," she says.

Given that the concept of artisanal confectionery is not very popular in India, Preethi says most people tend to associate toffee with mass retail products. Manufacturing is also not easy. "We need to maintain strict atmosphere control during the production process as our toffee is very sensitive to humidity and temperature," says Preethi who once tried using freeze-dried fruits in the toffee, but they went soft.

At Big Bear Farms, the initial hiccups faced were in trying to figure out how to ship a fresh product across the country. "Through the seasons, particularly the summer months, they would begin to melt. We were determined not to use artificial preservatives. There were moments when we chose not to ship at all, or redesigned our packaging entirely, simply to protect the toffee," says Nikita.

A win-win

It took Pooja four months of trials in her home kitchen to launch the brand. "I had made the toffee entirely out of brown sugar and jaggery, focussed on each piece being sizeable enough that it was comparable to an Indian sweet like a Mysurpa." Initial feedback was that it was too sweet and too big, and that led her to modify the recipe to what it is today, by experimenting with different types of sugars and cooking processes.

And all this effort by brands has not been in vain given the rise in demand for artisanal toffee, and proof is in the many gifting hampers with boxes of these chewy treats.

DHAKA

Dhaka suspends visa service in India, seeks U.S. visa bond relief



ANI

Bangladesh's interim government on Thursday said it has asked its key missions in India, including at New Delhi, to suspend visa services over security concerns. Foreign Affairs Adviser M. Touhid Hossain said that Bangladesh has also sought reversal of a recently imposed visa bond requirement by the United States. PTI

BEIRUT

Lebanese military concludes first phase of disarming Hezbollah



AFP

Lebanon's military said on Thursday it had concluded the first phase of a plan to fully deploy across southern Lebanon and disarm non-state groups, notably Hezbollah. Israel said the development was encouraging but "far from sufficient," and its Foreign Ministry said the group still has dozens of compounds. AP

GAZA CITY

Israeli attacks kill seven, including four children: Gaza civil defence



REUTERS

Gaza's civil defence agency said Israeli attacks in the Palestinian territory on Thursday killed seven people, including four children, despite a ceasefire that has largely halted the fighting. Four people including three children were killed when a drone struck a tent sheltering displaced people in southern Gaza, it said. AFP

WASHINGTON

U.S. Senate to vote on reining in Trump on action in Venezuela



GETTY IMAGES VIA AFP

The U.S. Senate is due to consider a resolution on Thursday that would block President Donald Trump from taking further military action against Venezuela without congressional authorisation, and backers said the measure could pass in a close vote. Mr. Trump's party holds a 53-47-seat majority in the Senate. REUTERS

U.S. govt. unveils plans to control Venezuela's oil sales 'indefinitely'

Energy Dept. says it has begun marketing Venezuelan crude globally; Trump claimed that 30-50 million barrels of oil would be transported to U.S., adding that South American nation will use funds from sales to purchase only U.S.-made products

Stanly Johny

The U.S. Department of Energy said on Wednesday it has begun marketing Venezuelan crude in the global market and plans to control the sales of the South American country's oil "indefinitely", a day after President Donald Trump claimed that Caracas would "turn over" up to 50 million barrels of oil to the United States.

"We have engaged the world's leading commodity marketers and key banks to execute and provide financial support for these crude oil and crude products sales," it said in a fact sheet.



The U.S. attacked Venezuela on January 3 and captured Nicolas Maduro, who now faces narcoterrorism charges in the U.S. AP

The U.S. attacked Venezuela on January 3 and captured its President Nicolas Maduro, who is currently in the U.S. facing charges of narcoterrorism. Mr. Trump claimed on Tuesday that 30 to 50 million barrels of Venezuelan oil would be taken by storage ships, and brought directly to unloading docks in the U.S. He said he has authorised Energy Secretary Chris Wright to execute the plan.

According to the fact sheet, Mr. Wright and the Department of Energy are "working with the Interim Venezuelan Authorities and private industry to execute this deal".

It said proceeds from the sale of Venezuelan crude oil and oil products would initially be kept in U.S.-controlled accounts before being disbursed "for the benefit of the American people and the Venezuelan people at the discretion of the U.S. government".

"These oil sales begin immediately with the anticipated sale of approximately 30-50 million barrels. They will continue indefinitely," added the Department.

In a social media post on Wednesday, Mr. Trump said Venezuela will purchase "only American made products" with the money the country receives from oils sales by the U.S. "These purchases will include American Agricultural Products, and American Made Medicines, Medical Devices, and Equipment to improve Venezuela's Electric Grid and Energy Facilities. In other words, Venezuela is committing to doing business with the United States of America as their principal partner - A wise choice," wrote Mr. Trump.

India-Europe ties growing, can bring stability to global politics: Jaishankar

Sriram Lakshman

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar's first official visit for 2026 began in Europe, with a visit to Paris and Luxembourg, against the backdrop of major shifts in global politics including the capture of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro by the U.S. and the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war. In Paris, the Minister met his French, German and Polish counterparts for the India-Weimar Triangle meeting. Mr. Jaishankar said he chose Europe to kickstart the year because India-Europe ties were growing and because the two sides could bring stability to the international economy and global politics.



Deepening relations: S. Jaishankar during the first India-Weimar format meeting in Paris on Wednesday. ANI

"Why did I come to Europe? I think it was a very conscious choice. It was a choice which reflected our belief that this relationship with Europe is really poised to grow, grow to the next level," he said at a joint press conference in Paris on Wednesday, with his Weimar Triangle counterparts.

"I think we can bring more stability, both into the international economy and global politics, and that really is why I'm here," he said.

India's relationship with the EU and with Europe had the most room to grow, among all its major relationships, Mr. Jaishankar said. The discussions in Paris included India sharing perspectives on challenges in the Indo-Pacific and on the Ukraine conflict, he said on X.

The European Union and India are working to announce a 'Free Trade' Agreement (FTA) during the visit of EU leaders Ursula von der Leyen and António Costa to India for Republic Day later this month. Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal is in Brussels on a two-day visit (January 8-9) for discussions with his EU counterpart, Commissioner Maroš Šefčovič. German Chancellor Frederik Merz is due in Ahmedabad and Bengaluru next week while French President Emmanuel Macron is due in New Delhi next month for the India AI Impact Summit.

Mr. Jaishankar also held bilateral discussions with France's Foreign Minister Jean-Noël Barrot.

'Build bridges'

Mr. Barrot emphasised that it was the first time a non-European partner had been invited to the Weimar Triangle meeting format at the Foreign Minister level. The rationale, as per Mr. Barrot, was that France currently held the G7 presidency and India, the presidency of BRICS. He also pointed to the FTA that is approaching finalisation.

"In an increasingly violent world where balances are being questioned, it is important to build bridges between centres of stability, dialogue and responsibility," the French Minister said.

Europe has been reeling from U.S. President Donald Trump's ambiguity about the transatlantic relationship, including his qualified and wavering support for Ukraine in its war against Russia. More recently, following the U.S.'s capture of Mr. Maduro, Mr. Trump has renewed his push to acquire Greenland, an autonomous region of Denmark. This has alarmed European allies of the U.S., many of whom have defended Denmark and Greenland's sovereignty to determine their future.

"There's no such thing as a collective West. There's no such thing as a Global South," the French Foreign Minister said at Wednesday's press conference.

"There are but nations who can dialogue for their mutual interests," he said, adding that countries could come together to defend international law and sovereignty.

Trump withdraws U.S. from UNFCCC, a key climate treaty

Agence France-Presse
WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump's decision to withdraw the United States from a bedrock climate treaty was slammed on Thursday by the EU, which vowed to keep tackling the crisis with other nations.

The White House on Wednesday flagged the U.S. exit from 66 global organisations and treaties – roughly half affiliated with the United Nations – it identified as "contrary to the interests of the United States".



Donald Trump

Most notable among them is the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the parent treaty underpinning all major international climate agreements.

The treaty adopted in 1992 is a global pact by nations to cooperate to drive down planet-warming greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

European Union climate chief Wopke Hoekstra said the UNFCCC "underpins global climate action" and brings nations together in the collective fight against the crisis.

"The decision by the world's largest economy and second-largest emitter to retreat from it is regrettable and unfortunate," Mr. Hoekstra said.

Russian strikes leave one million without water, heat in Ukraine

Agence France-Presse
KYIV

Russian strikes on Ukraine overnight left more than one million people in the Dnipropetrovsk region without water supplies or heating, a Ukrainian Minister said on Thursday, as temperatures dipped below freezing.

As in previous winters, Russia has intensified its strikes on Ukraine's energy sites, leading to heating and water outages in what Kyiv and its allies call a deliberate strategy to wear down the civilian population.

The large-scale Russian drone attack also knocked out power in the Zaporizhzhia region, leaving thousands without electricity or heating, the state grid operator Ukrenergo said late Wednesday.

Kyiv has responded to the long-running targeting of its energy grid with strikes on Russian oil depots and refineries, seeking to cut off Moscow's vital energy exports.

Sport

Tajinderbir, Arshjot help Punjab pip Chandigarh

BASKETBALL

S. Dipak Ragav
CHENNAI

Punjab prevailed over Chandigarh 81-74 and entered the pre-quarterfinals of the 75th Senior National Basketball championship at the Nehru Indoor Stadium on Thursday.

It was an engrossing contest that saw the lead kept swinging between the neighbours in the first half before Punjab, last year's runner-up, pulled away after the break. Tajinderbir Singh scored 19 points for Punjab.

Punjab seized the early momentum, taking a 13-4 lead, but Gandham Sai Roshan turned things around for Chandigarh, which scored the following 11 points to wrest back the initiative. Punjab skipper Gurwinder Singh then nailed two three-pointers to close out the first quarter 23-21 in his side's favour.

In the next quarter, Chandigarh was more successful in creating chances, as Sanju Gabhiye and Rohan Roy put their side ahead by one point at half-time.

In the third quarter, Arshjot Singh (12) was in the thick of things for Punjab, scoring six points quickly while also creating chances and effecting steals. Though Chandigarh did its best to claw back into the game, Punjab held its nerve.

Other important results:
Women: Group A: Maharashtra 79 (Ankita Kumari 15, Reva Kulkarni 15, Siya Seodhar 15) bt Chhattisgarh 68 (Gulabsha Ali 24, Priya Sharma 14, Ishika Sharma 13, Nisha Kashyap 12); Karnataka 88 (Sruthi Arvind 26, H.M. Bhandhavya 13, Nidhi Umesh 12) bt Delhi 52 (Suman 12, Neha Hooda 11).
Group B: Madhya Pradesh 62 (Manvi Srivastava 17, Kushi Pal Singh 14, Gunvi Agarwal 10) bt West Bengal 47 (Ananya Mandal 13); Tamil Nadu 118 (Shree Varshini 18, S. Krithika 18, Antheya Daisy Evangeline 16, Harithra 14, Ashmitha 14) bt Gujarat 39 (Aahana George 18).
Men: Group A: Rajasthan 83 (Mohammed Ishan 31, Mahaveer 19, Lokendra Singh 15, Ashish Trivedi 12) bt Gujarat 75 (Vinay Kaushik 25, Sahaj Kumar Patel 16, Mirant Italia 11, Yogesh Mer 10); Tamil Nadu 103 (Baladhaneshwar Poiyamozhi 25, Pranav Prince 16, Arvind Kumar 12) bt Services 61 (T.S. Santosh 16, Hemant Sheoran 15).
Group B: Uttar Pradesh 80 (Harsh Dagar 30, Kushal Singh 20, Rishant Kumar 13, Prince Tyagi 11) bt Delhi 77 (Ravi Bhardwaj 19, Issac Thomas 15, M. Sivasakthivel 14, Jeethandar Singh 12, Ayush Sharma 11).



Vital cog: Arshjot played a big part in tilting it Punjab's way. R. RAGU

Anand bounces back with two wins

TATA STEEL CHESS

C. Shyam Sundar
KOLKATA

The ageless Viswanathan Anand continues to amaze. The five-time World champion shrugged off a reverse in the fourth round against Arjun Erigaisi to post two wins and share the lead in the rapid section of the Tata Steel Chess India with young compatriot Nihal Sarin.

Anand bounced back brilliantly to beat Hans Niemann and Russia's Volodar Murzin to take his tally to 4.5 points after six rounds.

Nihal has quietly worked his way to the top, scoring three wins from an equal number of games on Thursday to be in the joint lead.

There was a bit of confusion in R. Praggnanandhaa's match against Wesley So in the sixth round as he stopped the clock with a second to spare as he didn't have enough time to queen.



Anand... another good day.
DEBASISH BHADURI

After some discussion, the decision to award half-a-point to both was taken.

The results:

Open: Rapid: Men: Fourth round: Aravindh Chithambaram lost to Wei Yi; Viswanathan Anand lost to Arjun Erigaisi; Nihal Sarin bt Hans Niemann; R. Praggnanandhaa bt Volodar Murzin; Wesley So drew with Vidit Gujrathi; **Fifth round:** Niemann lost to Anand; Aravindh lost to So; Vidit drew with Praggnanandhaa; Arjun bt Wei; Murzin lost to Nihal; **Sixth round:** Vidit lost to Nihal; Wei lost to Niemann; Anand bt Murzin; So drew with Praggnanandhaa; Aravindh drew with Arjun.
Women: Fourth round: Aleksandra Goryachkina lost to Katernya Lagno; D. Harika drew with R. Vaishali; Stavroula Tsolkidou bt Vantika Agrawal; Rakshitta Ravi bt Nana Dzagnidze; Carissa Yip drew with Divya Deshmukh; **Fifth round:** Divya lost to Goryachkina; Dzagnidze bt Yip; Vantika bt Rakshitta; Vaishali drew with Tsolkidou; Lagno drew with Harika.
Sixth round: Harika drew with Goryachkina; Tsolkidou lost to Lagno; Rakshitta lost to Vaishali; Yip lost to Vantika; Divya drew with Dzagnidze.

EMOTIONAL GOODBYE

'Glad that we got over the line and I'll cherish it for the rest of my life'



AFP

It was very tough, I was trying to act cool, but the whole Test match I found it really hard to control my emotions. I found it hard to concentrate. I'm glad that we got over the line and it's something I'll cherish for the rest of my life. I can just relax now — Usman Khawaja after playing his final Test.

STAYING CONFIDENT

Smriti plays down Perry's absence, places faith in her young side



FILE PHOTO: K. MURALI KUMAR

I don't have her (Ellyse Perry) when I play for India. We knew pre-auction she wouldn't be available. Better to know before the auction. Last season, our injury issues happened after the auction, which was hard to handle. We have an amazing team that's gelling well. Excited to see how they go — RCB skipper Smriti Mandhana.

IMPROVED

I've worked on my power-hitting, says Smriti ahead of WPL



FILE PHOTO: K. MURALI KUMAR

Smriti Mandhana on batting improvements she wants to make in 2026: I keep trying to play the lap shot. Hope I get better. Reverse sweep is still a work in progress. There is a conscious effort to hit sixes. I've worked on my power-hitting. Hopefully, that clicks. Fancy shots are still far away, but if I can muscle those sixes, I'll be happy.

FREE SPIRIT

I want to contribute as much as possible, reckons Harmanpreet



FILE PHOTO: EMMANUAL YOGINI

Aside from responsibilities as the captain, Mumbai Indians skipper Harmanpreet Kaur is hoping to free herself with the bat in WPL 2026. "This is the only platform where I don't put a lot of pressure on myself. I can execute well here. It's an important tournament and I want to contribute to my team's cause as much as possible".

Australia does the job, wraps up series 4-1

Green and Carey take the host home after lunch on day five at the SCG; England ends up with 342 in its second innings as Bethell makes 154



Sweet success: Australia won the big moments to emerge victor in a hard-fought series. AFP

THE ASHES

Agence France-Presse
SYDNEY

Australia won the final Ashes Test against England by five wickets on Thursday to seal a dominant 4-1 victory after a gruelling series, sending the retiring Usman Khawaja out on a high.

The nervy host saw wickets tumble as it chased the 160-run target. However, Cameron Green (22 n.o.) and Alex Carey (16 n.o.) took Australia home after lunch on day five at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

Australia lost openers Travis Head (29) and Jake Weatherald (34), along with captain Steve Smith (12) and Khawaja, who made six in his final knock before retirement.

Marnus Labuschagne, dropped on 20, compiled 37 before needlessly running himself out as Australia slipped to 121 for five.

But victory was never seriously in doubt after England was dismissed for 342 on the back of Jacob Bethell's stylish 154.

Weatherald survived a review for caught behind on 16 despite the controversial Snicko technology, which has been unreliable all series, appearing to indicate a faint edge.

An angry Brydon Carse had to be pulled away from complaining to the on-field umpire by Stokes.

England finally got its reward when Head swiped Tongue to Carse at midwicket and Weatherald top-edged the same bowler to Matthew Potts.

Smith was bamboozled by a turning ball from spinner Will Jacks and Khawaja played on before Green and Carey joined hands to get the job done.

SCOREBOARD

England — 1st innings: 384.
Australia — 1st innings: 567.
England — 2nd innings: Zak Crawley lbw b Starc 1, Ben Duckett b Neser 42, Jacob Bethell c Carey b Starc 154, Joe Root lbw b Boland 6, Harry Brook lbw b Webster 42, Will Jacks c Green b Webster 0, Jamie Smith run out 26, Ben Stokes c Smith b Webster 1, Brydon Carse c Smith b Boland 16, Matthew Potts (not out) 18, Josh Tongue c Labuschagne b Starc 6; Extras (b-9, lb-11, nb-2, w-3, pen-5): 30; Total (in 88.2 overs): 342.
Fall of wickets: 1-4, 2-85, 3-117, 4-219, 5-219, 6-264, 7-267, 8-297, 9-328.
Australia bowling: Starc 18.2-2-72-3, Boland 25-6-46-2, Neser 16-0-55-1, Green 6-0-40-0, Webster 16-1-64-3, Head 4-0-25-0, Labuschagne 3-0-15-0.
Australia — 2nd innings (Target 160): Travis Head c Carse b Tongue 29, Jake Weatherald c Potts b Tongue 34, Marnus Labuschagne run out 37, Steve Smith b Jacks 12, Usman Khawaja b Tongue 6, Alex Carey (not out) 16, Cameron Green (not out) 22; Extras (b-3, lb-1, w-1): 5; Total (for five wkts. in 31.2 overs): 161.
Fall of wickets: 1-62, 2-71, 3-92, 4-119, 5-121.
England bowling: Carse 8-0-51-0, Tongue 11-0-42-3, Bethell 3-0-16-0, Jacks 6.2-1-42-1, Root 3-1-6-0.
Australia won by five wickets to clinch the five-match series 4-1.
Player-of-the-Match: Head.
Player-of-the-Series: Starc.

Chance for domestic players to steal the spotlight

WPL-4

Lavanya L
NAVI MUMBAI

Budding hegemonies are always fun to watch, but the only thing better is a capable spoilsport. While two-time Women's Premier League champion Mumbai Indians is hoping to grab its third title in four years, the fight is far from straightforward.

MI, in its retentions and auction acquisitions, brought together nearly its entire title-winning squad. The big change is in the coaching set-up, with Lisa Keightley and Kristen Beams bolstering the outfit.

All-rounders Nat Sciver-Brunt and Hayley Matthews, alongside Amelia Kerr and Shabnim Ismail, are still MI's sharpest arrows.

One would hope some of the domestic bowlers and big-hitting youngsters like G. Kamalini hog the headlines instead.

The toughest challenger looks to be UP Warriorz. Led by Australian behemoth Meg Lanning, it has an arsenal of big hitters and a versatile bowling attack. In Lanning, Phoebe Litchfield, Kiran Navgire, and Deandra Dottin, there's a healthy mix of firepower and stability.

Delhi Capitals, too, has a steady core in proven match-winners like Jemimah Rodrigues, Marizanne Kapp, Laura Wolvaardt and Shafali Verma. Acquisitions like Chinelle Henry and Lizelle Lee are the perfect garnish to this six-hitting dish. That said, losing Shikha Pandey, Jess Jonassen and Annabel Sutherland will make life hard for the three-time runner-up.

Royal Challengers Bengaluru finds itself in the same boat. Losing Ellyse Perry is a dent in all three departments. The biggest concern for the 2024 champion is the fitness of key bowlers Pooja Vastrakar and Shreyanka Patil, who understandably will also want to balance caution with opportunity in a T20 World Cup year.

Gujarat Giants sports a relatively inexperienced side, packed with power hitters and smart wicket-takers.

Skipper Ashleigh Gardner and Beth Mooney are the pillars of the team. Sophie Devine's all-round brilliance is a great addition, as is Renuka Singh's efficacy in the PowerPlay. But cohesion is key. Individuals have always shown up for the Giants, but a successful campaign requires the team to fire.

An overarching theme for all teams is a persisting dependence on overseas stock, which is antithetical to the purpose of the league.

However, domestic additions across the board - like Giants' Anushka Sharma, DC's Deeya Yadav, RCB's Gautami Naik, and MI's Triveni Vasistha, for example - will want to use their chances to make a statement.

Statistical snapshot

As the fourth chapter of the WPL begins on Friday with the match between MI and RCB, a look at some significant numbers:



0 No player has scored a century so far

1 UPW and RCB have been involved in the only tie (2025 edition). The former won in the Super Over

3 Three players (Issy Wong, Deepti Sharma, Grace Harris) have performed hat-tricks

6 The bowlers with five-fors (Tara Norris, Kim Garth, Marizanne Kapp, Asha Sobhana, Ellyse Perry, Amelia Kerr)

6/15 Perry has the best bowling figures (RCB vs MI, 2024)

41 Hayley Matthews' tally of wickets, the highest in the league

64 Gujarat Giants' total (vs. MI), the lowest

225/5 UPW has made the highest score (vs RCB, 2025)

523 Nat Sciver-Brunt holds the record for most runs in a season (2025)

1027 The Englishwoman, who tops the batting chart, is the only player to cross the 1000-run mark

■ Georgia Voll (99 n.o.) and Sophie Devine (99) jointly hold the record for the highest individual score

Compiled by Anirudh Velamuri

Smriti recalls WC win as RCB takes on MI

Lavanya L
NAVI MUMBAI

Harmanpreet Kaur and Smriti Mandhana are diametrically opposite public personalities. Smriti can find the humour in every situation, while the aggressive batter that Harmanpreet is on the field gives way to an astute defender in front of a microphone.

The Indian captain and deputy, the only two victorious skippers in the Women's Premier League, will headline the opening clash of the 2026 chapter between Royal Challengers Bengaluru and defending champion Mumbai Indians at the D.Y. Patil Stadium here on Friday.

Their endearing camaraderie aside, Smriti promptly said, "It's not a bad thing to win matches against your friends. I hope she does well, but we win."

"The only conversation around the World Cup I had was with the groundsman. I asked him if this is the semifinal wicket or the final wicket," Smriti quipped before adding,

"Whenever we enter the ground, we remember where the last catch was taken and what happened after that. Even if we return after 20 years, it will all be clear for us. Maybe tomorrow, if she (Harmanpreet) is standing at covers, I'll tell my team not to hit there.

"We are not satisfied with just one World Cup. Not just us, other players are also strategising with this mindset. That shows the impact the WPL has had. They are playing with and against overseas players, and the gap that existed before isn't [there] any more."

Today's match

RCB vs MUMBAI INDIANS

Navi Mumbai, 7.30 p.m.

HEAD-TO-HEAD

Played: 7
RCB 3 | MI 4

LIVE ON STAR SPORTS 1 & JIOHOTSTAR



Taking a breather: RCB's Shreyanka and Radha relax ahead of the opening match. PTI

India-born Adithya to represent the Kiwis

Amol Karhadkar
VADODARA

Born in Vellore, raised in Auckland, tipped as a future torchbearer of New Zealand's spin attack, trained at the Chennai Super Kings Academy and sporting a Tamil tattoo inspired by a Rajinikanth classic – Adithya Ashok is a study in contrasts. Little wonder then that the leg-spinner is relishing his first tour of India with the Black Caps senior side.

"I am very excited to potentially represent my country and also represent the people who have helped me along my journey," Adithya said on Thursday after New Zealand's first training session ahead of Sunday's ODI series opener against India at the Baroda Cricket Association Stadium.

"I am very excited to play in India. You always hear from players about the atmosphere and the love for the game, so I'm really looking forward to it."



Adithya Ashok. X@BLACKCAPS

Having already earned three limited-overs caps, Adithya is being groomed as a long-term successor to Ish Sodhi. Yet, off the field, it is the tattoo on his right arm that often draws attention – the Tamil phrase *En vazhi thani vazhi*' (My way is a unique way), a famous dialogue from the Rajinikanth film *Padayappa*.

Pipers undone by Royals

HIL - WOMEN

Santadeep Dey
RANCHI

SG Pipers seems to have momentarily lost the plot just ahead of the big final against Shrachi Bengal Tigers of the Women's Hockey India League 2025-26. On Thursday, it was humbled by the already-eliminated Ranchi Royals 5-2 in this edition's highest-scoring encounter at the Marang Gomke Jaipal Singh Stadium here.

Royals' Neha Goyal may have earlier lamented the lack of a leading dragflicker, but on Thursday, it took Lucina von der Heyde merely two minutes to step up to the plate. The Argentine did have help from the opponent's rusher, Sunelita Toppo, who erroneously nicked the ball to leave the goalkeeper blind-sided.

Madhuri Kindo would have felt betrayed by her defenders when, eight minutes later, Navneet Kaur made a marauding entry into the circle.



On the prowl: Royals's van der heyde, centre, scored two goals against Pipers. R.V. MOORTHY

She not only managed to find Shileima Chanu Khaidem on the left but also managed to tap the ball in after Sharmila Devi relayed it back to the Pipers' skipper.

The Pipers survived a scare in the second quarter when Hannah Cotter hurled the kitchen sink at the target. It required a diving effort from Bansari Solanki to glove the ball to safety.

The relief was short-lived as the Pipers' defensive line was caught napping once again.

The result: SG Pipers 2 (Navneet 10 & 58) lost to Ranchi Royals 5 (von der Heyde 2-pc & 47-pc, Sangita 14, Cotter 55 & 60).

Lancers make it two in a row

HIL - MEN

K. Keerthivasan
CHENNAI

Vedanta Kalinga Lancers has emerged as one of the most dynamic sides in the Hockey India League. Most importantly, the team has risen to the occasion when pushed into a corner.

All these qualities were on display in its 2-1 win over defending champion Shrachi Bengal Tigers at the SDAT-Mayor Radhakrishnan Stadium here on Thursday, as Lancers completed its Chennai leg with a perfect record of two wins from two matches.

Tigers, on the other hand, have plenty to introspect after ending the first leg with two losses and just one win.

Lancers took the field without co-captain Sanjay, who is recovering after suffering a hairline fracture to the toe.



Precious strikes: Lancers found the goals through Hendrickx, centre, and Boby Singh in the final quarter. R. RAGU

All three goals came in the last eight minutes of the final quarter. Alexander Hendrickx opened the scoring for Lancers with a neat and powerful drag-flick past the outstretched James Carr.

Within minutes, Tigers found the equaliser when centre-back Tommy Willems' long ball found Sukhjeet Singh on the left of the goalline. The forward squared it across the face of goal, where Affan Yousuf reacted quickly to push it home.

Lancers struck decisively with three minutes to go. Hendrickx's drag-flick was parried by Carr, but Boby Singh Dhami pounced on the rebound to seal the win.

The result: Vedanta Kalinga Lancers 2 (Hendrickx 52-pc, Boby Singh 57-pc) bt Shrachi Bengal Tigers 1 (Affan 56).

INBRIEF



Rathour appointed Sri Lanka batting coach for T20 WC

Former India batting coach Vikram Rathour was on Thursday appointed Sri Lanka's batting coach for the T20 World Cup, beginning on February 7. Rathour will assume charge on January 18 and will remain with the team until March 10.

Sindhu crushes Miyazaki, secures quarterfinal spot

P.V. Sindhu defeatedJapan's Tomoka Miyazaki 21-8, 21-13 to book her spot in the women's quarterfinals but India's challenge ended in the men's singles at the Malaysia Open Super 1000 badminton in Kuala Lumpur on Thursday.

The results (pre-quarterfinals): Men: Lee Cheuk Yiu (HKg) 22-20, 21-15; Shi Yu Qi (Chn) bt Ayush Shetty 21-18, 18-21, 21-12; **Doubles:** Satwiksairaj Rankireddy & Chirag Shetty bt Junaidi Arif & Roy King Yap (Mas) 21-18, 21-12; **Women:** P.V. Sindhu bt Tomoka Miyazaki (Jpn) 21-8, 21-13.

Bergs upsets Mensik as Belgium enters semifinals

Zizou Bergs stunned World No. 18 Jakub Mensik and Elise Mertens outplayed Barbora Krejcikova as Belgium beat the Czech Republic 2-0 in the United Cup quarterfinals in Sydney on Thursday to set up a last-four clash with Switzerland. "I'm very happy for myself and for the team," Bergs said.

The results: Belgium bt Czech Republic 2-0 (Zizou Bergs bt Jakub Mensik 6-2, 7-6(4); Barbora Krejcikova lost to Elise Mertens 7-5, 1-6, 5-7).

Barca routs Athletic to reach Spanish Super Cup final

Raphinha netted twice as Barcelona strolled into the Spanish Super Cup final with a dominant 5-0 semifinal win over Athletic Bilbao on Wednesday in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

The result: Barcelona 5 (Torres 22, Lopez 30, Bardghji 34, Raphinha 38, 52) bt Athletic Bilbao 0.

LIVE TELECAST

Badminton: Malaysia Open: Star Sports 3 & JioHotstar, 6.30 a.m.
HIL: Sony Sports Ten 1 & LIV, 5 & 7.30 p.m.
Sri Lanka vs Pakistan: 2nd T20I, Sony Sports Ten 5 & LIV, 7 p.m.
WPL: Star Sports 1 & JioHotstar, 7.30 p.m.
Bundesliga: Sony Sports Ten 2 & LIV, 1 a.m. (Saturday)
LaLiga: FanCode, 1.30 a.m. (Saturday)

Saurashtra wallops Gujarat to clinch quarterfinal berth

Vishvaraj notches up his second hundred of the tournament; Haryana's dreams crumble after a batting collapse against Delhi, a result which puts the latter on top of Group D

HAZARE TROPHY

Ashwin Achal
BENGALURU

Saurashtra outclassed Gujarat by 145 runs here in the last Elite Group 'D' outing to clinch a quarterfinal berth in the Vijay Hazare Trophy.

The victory pushed Saurashtra (20 points) to second spot, behind topper Delhi (24 points).

Delhi took pole position in style, whipping Haryana by nine wickets at the BCCI CoE (3) ground.

It was a meek surrender from Haryana (18 points), which needed a win to progress to the knockout rounds at the expense of Saurashtra.

At the batting-friendly Alur (3) ground, Saurashtra made full use after being asked to bat first.

Vishvaraj Jadeja (112, 103b, 9x4, 5x6) recorded his second century of the tournament, and put on a fine 150-run opening stand with Harvik Desai (82, 80b, 13x4, 1x6).

Number three Prerak Mankad boosted the scoring rate with a 49-ball 86.

All-rounder Ravindra Jadeja (52 n.o), playing his second match of the tournament, put on 95 runs for the fourth wicket alongside Chirag Jani (43, 27b, 3x4, 2x6). Saurashtra racked up 383 for four in its quota of overs.



On song: Saurashtra's Vishvaraj unleashed nine boundaries and five sixes on a batting friendly pitch against Gujarat. FILE PHOTO: VIJAY SONEJI

Gujarat started the chase well, but lost wickets in an effort to up the ante.

Opener Urvil Patel chipped pacer Jani to mid-wicket, followed by Aarya Desai pulling a short ball from Ravindra to deep square-leg.

The middle-order combination of Jaymeet Patel (30) and K. Patel (42) sought to steady the ship, but when both were dismissed in quick succession, Gujarat gave up the ghost.

Haryana entered the field as the second-placed side, but a batting collapse ruined the day.

The Delhi fast bowling trio of Ishant Sharma, Prince Yadav and Navdeep Saini ran through the unit with three wickets apiece, as Haryana was bundled out for 105.

Delhi crossed the finish line in 13.3 overs, sealing an impressive sixth win in seven matches.

VIJAY HAZARE TROPHY - THURSDAY'S SCORES

Elite: Group A (Ahmedabad): Tamil Nadu 294/8 in 50 overs (N. Jagadeesan 139, Eden Apple Tom 6/46) bt Kerala 217 in 40.2 overs (Rohan Kunnummal 73, Sachin Rathi 4/32, Mohamed Ali 4/36).
Karnataka 207 in 47.4 overs (Mayank Agarwal 49, Shivang Kumar 5/45) lost to Madhya Pradesh 208/3 in 23.2 overs (Yash Dubey 40, Venkatesh Iyer 65 n.o.).
Tripura 320 in 50 overs (Sridam Paul 150, Rajat Dey 102, Sushant Mishra 6/52) bt Jharkhand 123 in 31.1 overs (Manishi 40, Abhijit Sarkar 4/40).
Rajasthan 269/8 in 50 overs (Ramnivas Golada 64, Karan Lamba 108) bt Pondicherry 137 in 26.5 overs (Nitin Pranav 56).
Final placings: Karnataka 7-6-1-24 (0.544); Madhya Pradesh 7-5-2-20 (0.834); Kerala 7-4-3-16 (0.554); Jharkhand 7-4-3-16 (-0.042); Tamil Nadu 7-3-4-12 (0.509); Tripura 7-3-4-12 (0.125); Rajasthan 7-2-5-8 (-0.717); Pondicherry 7-1-6-4 (-1.849). *(Read as Team, Played, Won, Lost, Points, Net Run Rate).*
Group B (Rajkot): Hyderabad 268/9 in 50 overs (Aman Rao 60, Rahul Singh Gahlaut 56, K. Nitesh Reddy 54 n.o.) lost to Jammu & Kashmir 272/7 in 47.5 overs (Auqib Nabi 114 n.o., Vanshaj Sharma 69 n.o.).
Bengal 269 in 45.1 overs (Sudip Gharami 91, Shahbaz Ahmed 43) lost to Uttar Pradesh 272/5 in 42.2 overs (Aryan Juyal 56, Dhruv Jurel 123).
Vidarbha 308/7 in 50 overs (Atharva Taide 80, Dhruv Shorey 40, R. Samarth 94 n.o., Yash Kadam 41) bt Assam 148 in 35 overs (Sumit Ghadigaonkar 80 n.o., Parth Rekhade 4/45).
Baroda 391 in 49.1 overs (Priyanshu Moliya 113, Vishnu Solanki 54, Hardik Pandya 75, Jitesh Sharma 73) bt Chandigarh 242 in 40 overs (Shivam Bhambri 100, Taranpreet Singh 44).
Final placings: Uttar Pradesh 7-7-0-28 (1.737); Vidarbha 7-5-2-20 (1.264); Baroda 7-5-2-20 (0.712); Bengal 7-4-3-16 (0.366); Jammu & Kashmir 7-3-4-12 (-0.426); Hyderabad 7-2-5-8 (0.026); Assam 7-1-6-4 (-1.380); Chandigarh 7-1-6-4 (-2.219).
Group C: Punjab 216 in 45.1 overs (Anmolpreet Singh 57, Ramandeep Singh 72) bt Mumbai 215 in 26.2 overs (Sarfaraz Khan 62, Shreyas Iyer 45, Gurnoor Brar 4/57, Mayank Markande 4/31).
Sikkim 160/6 in 38 overs (Gurinder Singh 65 n.o.) lost to Himachal Pradesh 163/1 in 26.1 overs (Kushal Pal 79 n.o., Innesh Mahajan 73).
Maharashtra 249/7 in 50 overs (Ruturaj Gaikwad 134 n.o., Vicky Ostwal 53) bt Goa 244/9 in 50 overs (Kashyap Bake 42, Snehal Kauthankar 40, Lalit Yadav 57 n.o., Prashant Solanki 4/56).
Chhattisgarh 265 in 50 overs (Amandeep Khare 62) bt Uttarakhand 258/8 in 50 overs (Kunal Chandela 67, Aanjaneya Suryavanshi 62, J. Suchith 52, Dev Aditya Singh 4/33).
Final placings: Punjab 7-6-1-24 (1.377); Mumbai 7-5-2-20 (0.964); Maharashtra 7-4-3-16 (1.195); Chhattisgarh 7-4-3-16 (0.112); Himachal Pradesh 7-3-4-12 (0.239); Goa 7-3-4-12 (-0.127); Uttarakhand 7-3-4-12 (-0.699); Sikkim 7-0-7-0 (-3.390).
Group D (Bengaluru): Haryana 105 in 25.4 overs lost to Delhi 107/1 in 13.3 overs (Nitish Rana 57 n.o.).
Odisha 251 in 49.5 overs (Biplab Samantray 43, Sambit Baral 50, Ranjan Lenka 56) lost to Railways 254/5 in 45.2 overs (Yuvraj Singh 118 n.o., Zubair Ali Khan 65 n.o.).
Services 165 in 45 overs lost to Andhra 168/5 in 38.1 overs (Maheep Kumar 68 n.o.).
Saurashtra 383/4 in 50 overs (Harvik Desai 82, Vishvaraj Jadeja 112, Ravindra Jadeja 52 n.o., Chirag Jani 43) bt Gujarat 238 in 40 overs (Kshitij Patel 42).
Final placings: Delhi 7-6-1-24 (1.809); Saurashtra 7-5-2-20 (0.857); Haryana 7-4-2-18 (-0.324); Railways 7-4-3-16 (-0.191); Gujarat 7-3-4-12 (0.382); Odisha 7-3-4-12 (-0.109); Andhra 7-2-4-10 (-0.258); Services 7-0-7-0 (-2.177).
The quarterfinal line-up: Jan. 12: Karnataka vs. Mumbai; Uttar Pradesh vs. Saurashtra; **Jan. 13:** Punjab vs. Madhya Pradesh; Delhi vs. Vidarbha.

Tilak to miss at least two T20Is against NZ

Anish Pathiyil
RAJKOT

Batter Tilak Varma is set to miss at least the opening two matches of India's T20I series against New Zealand, beginning on January 21, due to a groin injury.

The Hindu understands that the Hyderabad left-hander underwent a minor procedure after complaining of pain in the groin region.

The 23-year-old player was treated at a private hospital in Rajkot, where he was participating in Vijay Hazare Trophy group phase.



Tilak. FILE PHOTO: R.V. MOORTHY

"Tilak complained of some pain in the groin and was taken to the hospital for scans.

"The necessary treatment has been provided, but the recovery period could force him to miss two matches of the upcoming T20I series," a team source confirmed.

Tilak was part of the team for the two Group B encounters against Chandigarh and Bengal, scoring his sixth List-A hundred in the first game.

However, Hyderabad had already been out of the quarterfinal race by then.

New Zealand is touring India for a white-ball series ahead of the T20 World Cup, set to kickstart on February 7 in India and Sri Lanka.

Tilak, who was India's hero in the Asia Cup 2025 final triumph over arch-rival Pakistan, is set to miss the matches in Nagpur and Raipur.

His participation in the remaining three games will be decided based on his recovery progress.

City and Villa slip up again in title race

Agence France-Presse
LONDON

Manchester City and Aston Villa missed the chance to make significant inroads into Arsenal's Premier League lead on Wednesday with draws against Brighton and Crystal Palace respectively.

Important results: Premier League: Brentford 3 (Thiago 30, 65, Yarmolyuk 73) bt Sunderland 0; Burnley 2 (Heaven 13-og, Anthony 66) drew with Manchester United 2 (Sesko 50, 60); Crystal Palace 0 drew with Aston Villa 0; Fulham 2 (Jimenez 55, Wilson 81) bt Chelsea 1 (Delap 72); Manchester City 1 (Haaland 41-pen) drew with Brighton 1 (Mitoma 60).

Newcastle 4 (Barnes 36, 90+12, Joelinton 54, Guimaraes 90+1-pen) bt Leeds 3 (Aaronson 32, 79, Calvert-Lewin 45+5-pen).

Serie A: Napoli 2 (McTominay 54, Di Lorenzo 82) drew with Verona 2 (Frese 17, Orban 27-pen).

Parma 0 lost to Inter Milan 2 (Dimarco 44, Thuram 90+8).

Indian challenge ends in singles as Dhamne, Dhakshineswar lose

BENGALURU OPEN

N. Sudarshan
BENGALURU

India's singles hopes at the Dafa News Bengaluru Open ATP Challenger 125 were extinguished on Thursday as Manas Dhamne and Dhakshineswar Suresh lost their respective quarterfinals.

Both defeats at the S.M. Krishna Stadium here came at the hands of Frenchmen, with Dhamne beaten by Matteo Martineau 6-4, 7-6(5) and Dhakshineswar by Harold Mayot 7-6(5), 6-2.

Of the two, the teenaged Dhamne put up the better fight. He had his chances in each of the two sets, and even earned two set-points to stretch the contest into a decider. But a bit of inexperience and some impatience cost the youngster.

As early as the second game, Dhamne had two break-points, but fluffed both. The 18-year-old had another opportunity when his opponent was serving at 5-4, but sent a forehand wide.

On set-point, Martineau drew Dhamne into a long rally and it ended with the latter hitting a desperate double-fisted cross-court backhand wide.



Gutsy display: Dhamne gave a good account of himself in the quarterfinal tie against Martineau. K. MURALI KUMAR

In the second stanza, action was subdued until 4-4, but at 15-15, the level lifted. Dhamne allowed Martineau two looks at a break but erased them with an excellent forehand and a giant serve.

After holding to 5-4, Dhamne came within a point of levelling the tie twice, but Martineau got out of jail with an advancing cross-court forehand winner and a neatly executed volley.

In the ensuing tie-break, a nonchalant slapped return at 3-3 earned Dhamne a mini-break. But the local favourite again ceded the advantage by losing both points on his serve.

Martineau fired an ace to earn two match-points, and it was not long before he set-up a last-four meeting with top seed Pedro Martinez.

The Dhakshineswar-Mayot fixture was less eventful and mostly middling.

It did not help that Mayot, because of a left-wrist injury, could only slice his backhand, and the Indian had his right leg tended to by the physio in the middle of the second set.

Mayot will take on sixth seeded Kazakh Timofey Skatov next.

Other results (quarterfinals): Singles: Pedro Martinez (Esp) bt Cedrik-Marcel Stebe (Ger) 6-2, 6-0; Timofey Skatov (Kaz) bt Jonas Forejtek (Cze) 6-4, 6-2. **Doubles:** Arthur Reymond & Luca Sanchez (Fra) bt Adil Kalyanpur & Saketh Myneni 5-7, 6-4, [10-8]; Nicolas Barrientos (Col) & Benjamin Kittay (USA) bt Prajwal Dev & Nitin Kumar Sinha 6-7(3), 6-3, [10-8]; Sriram Balaji & Neil Oberleitner (Aut) bt Petr Bar Biryukov (Rus) & Grigoriy Lomakin (Kaz) 6-7(6), 6-4, [10-6]; Max Houkes & Niels Visker (Ned) bt Pruchya Isaro (Tha) & Niki Poonacha 7-6(2), 7-6(1).

Easy wins for Lovlina and Nikhat; Sakshi crashes out

Uthra Ganesan
GREATER NOIDA

Defending champion and former World junior and youth champion Sakshi Chaudhary suffered a shock defeat to Poonam in the only upset of the tournament so far, losing 1-4 in the 54kg quarterfinals at the Elite men's and women's national boxing championships here on Thursday.

Nikhat Zareen won 5-0 against Lanchenbee Chanu Tongbram of Manipur and Lovlina Borgohain winning by RSC in the first round itself against Mounika Bonthu of Andhra Pradesh.

Among men, Amit Panghal received a walkover into the semifinals, making it a three-way contest for SSCB in the last four.



On the attack... Nikhat, in red, dominated her opponent Lanchenbee. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Top results (quarterfinals): Men: 50kg: Vishwanath (SSCB) bt Sagar (Har) 5-0; Rishi Singh (UP) bt Honey (Del) 5-0; **55kg:** Pawan Bartwal (SSCB) bt Tyson (Aru) 5-0; Jadumani Singh (SSCB) bt Nikhil (Pun) 5-0; Amit Panghal (SSCB) w.o. Ganga (SPSB). **60kg:** Sachin (SSCB) bt Karan (UP) 5-0; Hussamuddin (SSCB) bt Anmol (RSPB) 4-1; **65kg:** Abhinash Jamwal (HP) bt Abhishek Yadav (UP) 5-0; Amit (RSPB) bt Pavan Kalyan (TS) 5-0. **70kg:** Hitesh Gulia (SSCB) bt Tejaswi (Pun) 5-0; Vivek (Raj) bt Neeraj (Nag) 5-0. **75kg:** Sumit (SSCB) bt Ishmeet (RSPB) 5-0; Deepak Singh (J&K) bt Praveen Kumar (TN) 3-2. **80kg:** Ankush (SSCB) bt Nikhil (RSPB) 4-1; Kunal (AIPSCB) bt Aryan (Del) 3-2; Malsawmtluanga (SSCB) bt Kunal (Mah) 5-0. **85kg:** Abhimanyu (RSPB) bt Mayur (Raj) 5-0; Yash (Har) bt Vishwajeet (HP) 5-0; **90kg:** Naman (RSPB) bt Naveen (Har) 5-0; Harsh (Raj) bt Arshdeep (Pun) 5-0; **90+kg:** Narender (SSCB) bt Vishal Gupta (UP) 5-0; Gaurav (SSCB) bt Sagar (RSPB) 3-2.

Women: 48kg: Minakshi Hooda (APSCB) bt Kashish Mehta (Pun) 5-0; Malika Mor (MP) bt Laxmi (AIPSCB) 5-0. **51kg:** Nikhat Zareen (TS) bt Lanchenbee Chanu Tongbram (Man) 5-0; Kusum Baghel (UP) bt Tanu (SSCB) 3-2; Nitu Ghanghas (Har) bt Deepa Kumari (APSCB) 5-0; **54kg:** Preeti Pawar (SSCB) bt Harmeet Kaur Virk (Pun) 5-0; Poonam (RSPB) bt Sakshi (SSCB) 4-1; **57kg:** Vinka (Har) bt Ankitha Raj (Kar) 5-0; Prachi (RSPB) bt Vinakshi Dhota (HP) 5-0. **60kg:** Ankushita Boro (Asm) bt Niharika Gonella (TS) 5-0; Priya (RSPB) bt Nikita Chand (Utk) 5-0; **65kg:** Neeraj Phogat (Har) bt Shashi Chopra (RSPB) 4-1; Ritu (AIPSCB) bt Priyanka (Chd) 5-0; **70kg:** Arundhati Choudhary (SSCB) bt Lashu Yadav (RSPB) 5-0; Sneh (Har) bt Astha Pahwa (UP) 3-2. **75kg:** Lovlina Borgohain (Asm) bt Mounika Bonthu (AP) RSC-I; Monika (AIPSCB) bt Jigyasa Rajput (MP) 5-0.

80kg: Pooja Rani (Har) bt Sushma (AIPSCB) 5-0; Sneha (UP) P. Anitha (TN) 5-0; **80+kg:** Ritika (Har) bt S. Mathamma (AIPSCB) 4-1; Alfiya Khan (RSPB) bt Shivani Tomar (Del) 5-0.

Toor, Tejaswin to lead Indian challenge at Asian Indoor

Sports Bureau
NEW DELHI

Despite a below-par season over the past two years, two-time Asian Indoor winner shot-putter Tajinderpal Singh Toor will headline the 17-member Indian contingent for the 12th Asian Indoor athletics championships from February 6 to 8. The team will leave for Tianjin, China, on February 3, the AFI announced here on Friday.

Among women, Nithya Gandhe and Abhinaya Rajarajan will compete in 60m while Moumita Mondal and Ancy Sojan were named for the long jump.

The squad: Men: Manikanta Hoblidhar (60m), Tejas Shirse (60m hurdles), J. Adarsh Ram (high jump), C.V. Anurag, Shahnawaz Khan (both long jump), Praveen Chithravel (triple jump), Samardeep Singh Gill, Tajinderpal Singh Toor (both shot put), Tejaswin Shankar (heptathlon). **Women:** Nithya Gandhe, Abhinaya Rajarajan (both 60m), Moumita Mondal, Pragyan Prasanti Sahu (both 60m hurdles), Pooja (high jump), Ancy Sojan, Moumita Mondal (both long jump), Yogita (shot put), KA Anamika (Pentathlon).

The Ashes aftermath — England's Test future at the crossroads

The line between carefree and careless often blurred, but not too many seemed to take notice, or be too bothered about it; it has happened far too often now for 'Bazball' to not face serious scrutiny, if not downright condemnation, any longer



GETTY IMAGES

R. Kaushik

Long before Alex Carey drove Will Jacks through the offside for the boundary that sealed a 4-1 triumph at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Thursday, the Ashes had been won and lost. For all their bluster and bravado, England once again failed to match hype and hoopla with performance, surrendering the little urn to Australia, their fiercest rivals, inside the first three matches spread over 11 days.

It's been a decade and a half since England won a Test series Down Under, and more than ten years since they last had possession of the bragging rights that the urn brings with it. While it is true that Australia too haven't won a series in England since 2001, they can at least point to having drawn the last two away series by identical 2-2 scorelines. By contrast, either side of a 3-1 victory in 2010-11, England have been soundly beaten in Australia.

What makes this latest debacle particularly dispiriting from an English perspective is the utter lack of discipline and preparedness in the away ranks. Their lead-up to inarguably the most important showdown from their standpoint was patchy and disjointed bordering on the disrespectful. One isn't suggesting that England believed all they had to win was to turn up, but by going down so meekly to an Australian attack severely depleted (between them, regular skipper Pat Cummins, pace ace Josh Hazlewood and crack off-spinner Nathan Lyon made a measly three appearances out of a possible 15), Ben Stokes' men hardly covered themselves in glory.

Gung-ho

Much was made of the arrival in the middle of 2022 of Brendon McCullum, the former New Zealand captain, as the head coach of the Test side. McCullum succeeded Chris Silverwood and interim boss Andrew Strauss at a difficult time for the English; in the preceding 12 months when Joe Root was the captain, they won just once in 17 Tests. Their five-day game was in an inexorable tailspin when the SOS went out to McCullum, then the head coach of Kolkata Knight Riders who had captained his country in 31 Tests and led them to the final of the 2015 50-over World Cup. McCullum came armed with the philosophy of gung-ho positivity which found resonance with new skipper Ben Stokes. Together, the duo tied by a common Kiwi bond - Stokes was born in Christchurch - embarked on the arduous journey of rebuilding, not through conventional methods but by embracing the outrageous, which was perfectly acceptable to the primary stakeholders of English cricket given how far down the Test ladder they had slipped.

A comprehensive series win against New Zealand in a two-match series outside the ambit of the World Test Championship was the perfect start Stokes and McCullum were targeting, and things got even better in July in Birmingham when England and India squared off for the final act of a five-match faceoff held over from 12 months previously. India went into the decider 2-1 ahead but England barred their attacking batting fangs, repeatedly stinging Jasprit Bumrah's men with an extraordinary chase of 378 in the fourth innings. Bowled out for 284 in the first innings to concede a deficit of 132, England mounted a stirring riposte with the game on the line. Alex Lees and Zak Crawley, the openers, put on 107 in a little under 22 overs, but not even when the hosts lost three for two in 16 deliveries did they fall back on the defensive.

Instead, the Yorkshire pairing of Root and Jonny Bairstow took the fight to the opposition which, for some inexplicable reason, decided that going short on a placid track was the right option. The duo added 269 for the unfinished fourth-wicket stand in 315 deliveries, helping their team to a ridiculously easy seven-wicket victory. England's rate of scoring with the series in the balance was a scarcely believable 4.93 an over. It was seen as the ultimate vindication of 'Bazball', a reference to the no-holds-barred aggressive mantra of batsmanship which was completely at odds with the hitherto staid, traditional, conservative English style.

Fans flock in

Success, driven by the unique brand of entertainment that England had come to drape themselves in, endeared Stokes and McCullum to a fanbase accustomed to coming second best for so long. Suddenly, younger crowds started to swarm Test grounds across the country; there was a sense of excitement and breathless anticipation every time England took the field and it seemed at various stages as if no target was beyond the intrepid, carefree batting group assiduously assembled by the leadership group to fit their attacking needs.

The line between carefree and careless often blurred, but not too many seemed to take notice, or be too bothered about it. Given its very nature, 'Bazball' as a methodology would sometimes attract meltdowns. That's why few appeared terribly displeased when, chasing a monumental 557 for victory in Rajkot against India in February 2024, England slip-slid to 50 for seven and eventually shot out for 122 to go down by 434 runs. It happens, you know, the English tut-tutted.

It has happened far too often now for 'Bazball' to not face serious scrutiny, if not downright condemnation, any longer. Stokes and McCullum insist it's the way to go, never mind the results, but this is competitive sport and the result does matter, more than anything else. Those who originally swore by 'Bazball' are now crying foul, pointing to what they believe is massive disrespect to the Test format. Of course, they are emboldened by the fact that 'Bazball' hasn't delivered a coup in a big series to date.

Victory in 22 of the first 35 Tests in the Stokes-McCullum era seems a distant memory now. England have won only four of the next 11. In all, 46 Tests have produced 26 victories and 18 defeats. In the last three and a half years, England have failed to beat Australia and India either at home or away. Notwithstanding India's fall from grace as a Test force in their backyard, these two teams are considered the toughest opponents in the five-day game. A 1-2 loss in Pakistan in 2024-25 after sitting on a 1-0 lead is another example of the pitfalls of continuing to keep the faith in 'Bazball' with utter disregard for the conditions, the game situation and the quality of the opposition bowling.

England have sporadically spoken about being more 'humble' - whatever that means - which suggests that even they believe they can be arrogant at various times. What is eulogised as cute and daring in victory is pilloried as reckless and foolhardy when defeat comes calling regularly, as it has for England in recent times. In the last seven months alone, they have lost six of 10 Tests, continuing to stick with misfiring personnel in what is either a show of confidence or the classic example of failing to read the room.

Take Zak Crawley, for example. Touted as an aggressive opening batter who can take attacks apart, he averages 32.45 in 43 Tests in the age of 'Bazball'. Seventy-nine innings have produced just three centuries and 16 further scores of more than 50. The 27-year-old right-hander was one of six English batters to top 200 runs in the Ashes - only two made more than 275 each - but two half-centuries in 10 innings is simply not acceptable. After much dilly-dallying, England finally let go of Ollie Pope, who had been replaced as vice-captain before the start of this series by Harry Brook.

Pope's replacement at No. 3, Jacob Bethell, topped the averages for England at 51.25, courtesy a half-century and his maiden first-class ton in successive Tests as he finished with 205 runs. For all his reputation as a fiercely positive run-maker, Crawley scored at 64.08 runs per 100 balls faced; Bethell, the 22-year-old left-hander, hardly hit a shot in anger and never manufactured a stroke, yet his strike-rate was 60.47. More than anyone else, Bethell has made a compelling case for batting his own way, one of the primary requirements for any team to be successful at the highest level.

Test cricket, it needs no reiterating, calls for skills and resilience, yes, but also for common sense and prudence. There cannot be a one-size-fits-all team directive, no matter if the parts have been carefully picked to fit this philosophy. Those so inclined will point to Rishabh Pant's adventurism and his utter disdain for game situations which have occasionally been so terribly detrimental to his and the team's cause. Every team can, perhaps must, have a maverick, but imagine a team full of Rishabh Pants. That's what England sometimes resemble; Root is the steadying influence though in the last three and a half years, even he has been semi-sucked into the 'Bazball' school of thought while around him, the rest go hammer and tongs, except when the mood seizes him and Stokes goes ultra, ultra-defensive.

All of England's opponents have been at the receiving end of humbling blitzkriegs which, it must be said, ramp up the entertainment quotient. They must now be allowing themselves a quiet chuckle at how quickly the most hyped of approaches is gasping for oxygen. Australia, and to a lesser extent India overseas (in the last couple of years), have scored at an excellent rate without falling back on adventurism and brazenness.

They might not be as 'entertaining' in red-ball cricket as Stokes' band, they might not showcase the same derring-do, but perhaps Test cricket isn't just about entertainment.

It's also about putting a price on one's scalp, about attempting to play out a draw against all odds when victory is so far-fetched that it is out of the equation.

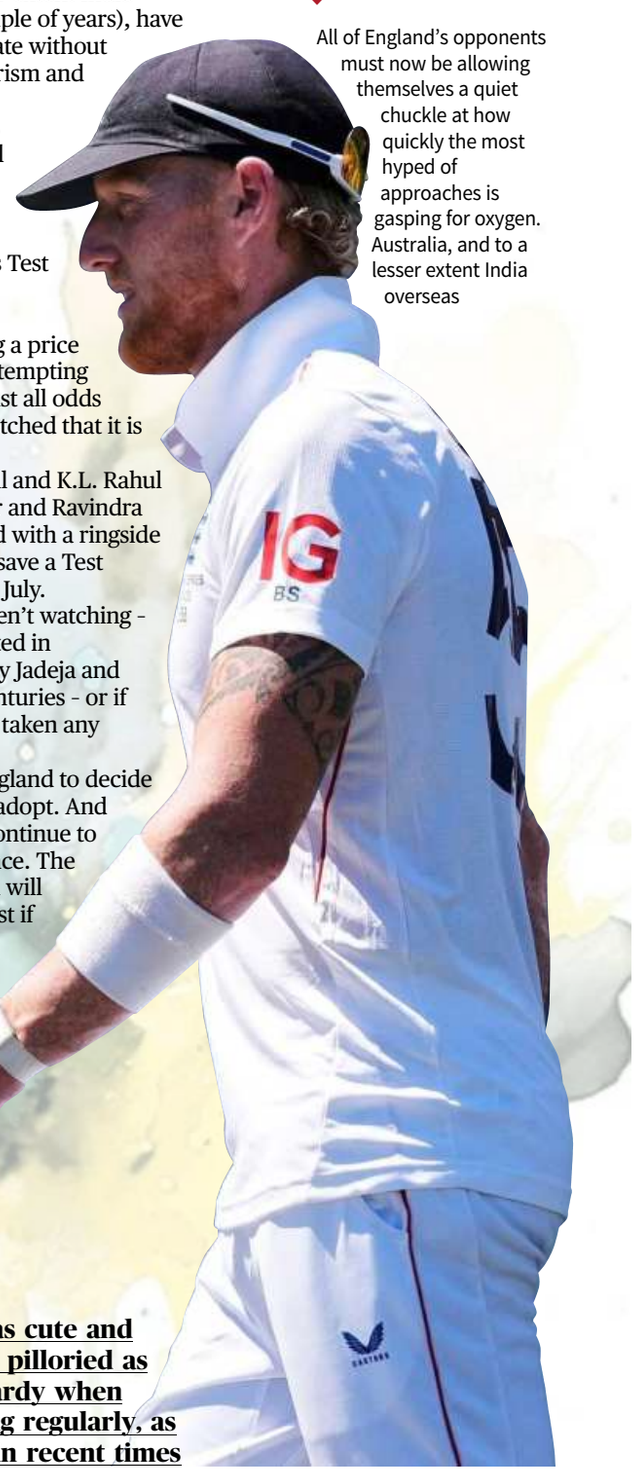
Captain Shubman Gill and K.L. Rahul and Washington Sundar and Ravindra Jadeja provided England with a ringside view of what it takes to save a Test match in Manchester in July.

Clearly, England weren't watching - they were more interested in petulantly trying to deny Jadeja and Washington merited centuries - or if they were, they haven't taken any lessons on board.

Ultimately, it's for England to decide what tack they want to adopt. And whether they want to continue to put style before substance. The rest of the cricket world will be watching with interest if they recalibrate or stick to not fixing something that's clearly broken.

THE GIST

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- Test cricket, it needs no reiterating, calls for skills and resilience, yes, but also for common sense and prudence. There cannot be a one-size-fits-all team directive, no matter if the parts have been carefully picked to fit this philosophy
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What is eulogised as cute and daring in victory is pilloried as reckless and foolhardy when defeat comes calling regularly, as it has for England in recent times

Why awareness about folic acid is the key to prevent Spina Bifida

The fact that pre-conceptional intake of folic acid can prevent more than 70% of Spina Bifida cases has been known; yet, India is one of the few countries where no meaningful efforts have been made to create awareness making it home to one of highest prevalence rates of the condition

Santosh Karmarkar
Sneha Sawant

One day, some weeks ago, a young mother of a seven-month-old baby from Jharkhand called in tears, about her child who was born with a large lump on his back and was unable to move his legs.

Local doctors did not give her any information about the problem that her newborn had, or treatment options. The infant seemed otherwise normal, and in the first six months was growing as any other child, except for paralysis of his lower limbs. He smiled, recognised his parents and was a great source of joy for the entire family. But his diagnosis and treatment had remained unknown to the parents. They were not informed that this birth defect is called Spina Bifida and is the commonest birth defect in India. Nor were they aware that this serious condition could potentially be prevented by taking a folic acid tablet periconceptionally. And most of all, they were not aware that there are several medical and surgical treatments for children born with this condition.

Understanding Spina Bifida

Spina Bifida is a birth defect of the spinal cord that causes serious childhood paralysis and occurs in more than 25,000 children in India each year, making the country home to one of the highest prevalence rates of this condition in the world. And yet, awareness about it remains poor.

The range of paralysis in Spina Bifida patients varies from mild weakness in the feet to complete paralysis from the hip downwards, resulting in many patients being wheelchair dependent right from early childhood.

Additionally, affected children may have associated problems such as excessive water in the brain (hydrocephalus), urinary and bowel incontinence (lack of control) and orthopaedic issues such as club feet, and other medical problems.

Though many children become paraplegic and incontinent, there is no intellectual impairment: they are capable of leading independent and productive lives, if they are able to access expert medical care. However, in India, medical care is not available to over 75% of children with Spina Bifida.

Spina Bifida, therefore, can be a devastating condition for those affected by it, as well as for their families.

Meaningful efforts missing

What is both tragic and unpardonable, is the fact that despite the knowledge that Spina Bifida can be largely prevented with a B complex vitamin (folic acid), awareness regarding this simple and inexpensive intervention continues to remain lacking.

Since 1991, the fact that pre-conceptional intake of folic acid by women can prevent more than 70% of Spina Bifida cases has been known, after the results of the Medical Research Council (MRC) Vitamin Study were published in *The Lancet*. Yet, 30 years later, India is one of the few countries where no meaningful efforts to create awareness about this intervention have been carried out – both at the level of States and the Centre. This gap has resulted in thousands of children in India being born with serious childhood paralysis, causing great socio-economic distress to a multitude of families.



Preventable condition: Spina Bifida is a birth defect of the spinal cord that causes serious childhood paralysis and occurs in more than 25,000 children in India each year. The range of paralysis varies from mild weakness in the feet to complete paralysis from the hip downwards. GETTY IMAGES

While it is understood that in unplanned pregnancies awareness about pre-conceptional vitamins may not be given, the lack of any effort to educate the public about this common, devastating and preventable condition cannot be termed anything less than gross public health negligence.

Global efforts, research

Many countries across the world have conducted national awareness campaigns and initiated programmes to create awareness in order to prevent of Spina Bifida through folic acid supplementation. Additionally, 68 countries have made fortification of relevant food vehicles, with folic acid, mandatory by law. In these countries, awareness campaigns and food fortification have reduced the prevalence rates of Spina Bifida to below 1 per 1,000 births by eliminating folic acid preventable cases. In India, in contrast, **Many countries have conducted national awareness campaigns and initiated programmes to create awareness in order to prevent of Spina Bifida through folic acid supplementation**

the prevalence rate remains unacceptably high, at about 4 per 1,000, primarily because no such efforts have been undertaken.

Research is ongoing to study the fortification of food vehicles such as salt and tea that are widely and uniformly consumed – especially in countries such as India. A preliminary trial for tea fortification (results of which were published in *BMJ Nutrition, Prevention & Health)* found that tea could potentially be vehicle for fortification with folate and vitamin B12 in India, in order to help eliminate haematological and neurological complications.

The message

Spina Bifida places enormous socio-economic burdens on families, societies and the healthcare system in India. Each rupee spent on prevention in this regard can help save more than 100 rupees required for treatment and rehabilitation.

It is time for a national awareness campaign about Spina Bifida and how it can be prevented. Simultaneously, efforts must be made to explore food fortification with folic acid and vitamin B12. It is only efforts such as these that will contribute toward the primary prevention of Spina Bifida and anencephaly, averting stillbirths, and under-five deaths due to these birth defects says Vijaya Kancherla, director, Center for Spina Bifida Prevention (CSBP) at Emory University, U.S.

Until every woman in our country knows that a folic acid tablet, taken before conception and during pregnancy, can help prevent Spina Bifida and until our healthcare systems are in place to comprehensively help families with affected children, the work remains incomplete.

(Dr. Santosh Karmarkar is a paediatric surgeon based in Mumbai and founder-trustee of Spina Bifida Foundation. santoshjk@yahoo.com; Sneha Sawant is social worker and chief coordinator of Spina Bifida Foundation. sneha.ccsbf@gmail.com)



Paediatricians point to rapid urbanisation as a major contributor to changing blood pressure patterns. GETTY IMAGES

Emerging challenge of childhood hypertension

Athira Elssa Johnson

Hypertension and its associated risks among children and adolescents are emerging as a significant paediatric health issue, driven by lifestyle changes, rising obesity and urban living. A recent Lancet systematic review and meta-analysis on the global prevalence of hypertension among children and adolescents aged 19 years or younger found that prevalence has nearly doubled between 2000 and 2020, reflecting a consistent upward trend across regions. Experts warn that this rise carries long-term implications for cardiovascular, metabolic and kidney health.

Hypertension in children differs fundamentally in its underlying profile. "Unlike in adults, where most cases are primary and without an identifiable cause, children with high blood pressure often have an underlying condition," said Suresh Kumar K., cardiologist, Kauvery Hospitals, Chennai. Disorders of the kidneys, adrenal glands and blood vessels are commonly implicated, making evaluation for secondary causes a critical step when elevated readings are detected in children.

This distinction, clinicians say, underscores the need for careful clinical assessment rather than treating elevated blood pressure in children as a lifestyle issue alone.

Key drivers and risk factors

Paediatricians point to rapid urbanisation as a major contributor to changing blood pressure patterns. According to S. Satyamanasa Gayatri Vinay, senior consultant in paediatrics, SRM Global Hospitals, Chennai, increased consumption of processed foods, higher salt intake, reduced physical activity and longer screen time have become defining features of childhood in urban settings. Environmental stressors including noise, air pollution and academic pressure further compound the risk. Limited access to safe play spaces and healthy food options adds to the burden, particularly in cities.

P. Manokar, senior interventional cardiologist at Kauvery Hospital, Vadapalani, described this phenomenon as part of what experts term 'environmental hypertensionology', where neighbourhood design, green spaces, walkability and pollution levels influence blood pressure. "Being urban itself has become a non-modifiable risk factor," he said. Body weight remains the most significant modifiable risk factor. Excess fat alters hormonal balance and vascular function, increasing cardiac workload and vascular resistance.

Long-term risks include coronary heart disease, stroke, type-2 diabetes and chronic kidney disease. Prolonged untreated hypertension may also cause lasting vascular damage, often described as irreversible arterial changes.

Accurate diagnosis requires age-appropriate assessment. "Blood pressure interpretation in children must be guided by percentile charts based on age and body size," said Neville Solomon, consultant paediatric and adult congenital cardiac surgeon, Apollo Children's Hospitals, Chennai. Adolescents may be assessed using adult thresholds, but younger children and infants require specialised reference standards.

Improper measurement including the use of adult cuffs can lead to misdiagnosis, experts caution.

School health programmes are increasingly viewed as a key platform for early detection. Regular screening can help identify children at risk and initiate timely dietary, lifestyle or medical interventions.

Experts emphasise that prevention and management must begin early.

(athira.elssa@thehindu.co.in)

THE HEALTH QUIZ

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

It's the season of sneezes, coughs, sore throats, sniffles and snotty noses. Here is a quiz to test your knowledge of winter infections that affect human beings

Zubeda Hamid

QUESTION 1
Which virus is most often the culprit behind your common cold?

QUESTION 2
After a viral infection, some people contract _____, a condition in which the airways of the lungs get inflamed. A persistent cough is the usual symptom.

QUESTION 3
Paracetamol is commonly used as a fever reliever and to manage symptoms of winter infections. What is the safe dosage for adults in a 24-hour period?

QUESTION 4
Is the following statement true or false: Cold air kills viruses.

QUESTION 5
Pneumonia is a common winter infections. Which part of the lungs does it affect?

QUESTION 6
The influenza virus causes the flu, and people often contract it in winter. Influenza viruses A, B and C are the common viruses behind the flu. Is the flu contagious?

QUESTION 7
RSV is a common virus, usually mild, causing cold-like symptoms. Immunity from contracting this infection does not last, so people can get it more than once. What is the full form of RSV?

QUESTION 8
Which vitamin is more useful to help prevent winter illnesses — vitamin C or D?



Visual Question: Black pepper, commonly used a home remedy to soothe symptoms of stuffy noses and sore throats. What is the active compound in it that helps, called? GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

Answers to previous edition's quiz:
1. ___ are the intermediate hosts for the parasitic flatworm that causes schistosomiasis (bilharzia). **Ans: Freshwater snails** 2. Triatomine bugs transmit Chagas disease by biting a person and defecating near the bite. These bugs have a nickname. What is it? **Ans: Kissing bugs** 3. Sandflies carry this parasititic protozoa found in tropical and subtropical areas, which in humans can cause severe skin ulcers or infection of internal organs. Name the parasite, which gives its name to the disease it. **Ans: Leishmania** 4. _____is a group of diseases caused by a bacteria called Rickettsiaprowazekii. **Ans: epidemic typhus** 5. anopheles mosquito also causes a viral infection, a neglected disease. Name this tongue-twisting disease. **Ans: O'nyong-nyong fever**
Visual: This disease is also called 'rabbit fever'. Symptoms may include fever, skin ulcers, and enlarged lymph nodes. Identify the disease. **Ans: Tularemia**

Text&Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Number of typhoid fever cases in India in 2023

49 in lakh. Delhi, Maharashtra and Karnataka accounted for nearly 30% of the national burden. Findings published in *The Lancet Regional Health Southeast Asia* also show that six lakh of the 7.3 lakh hospitalisations across the country were attributable to fluoroquinolone-resistance, a type of antibiotic, or antimicrobial, resistance. PTI

Value of Uttar Pradesh government allocation for school events

19.8 In ₹ crore. The Uttar Pradesh government has allocated Rs 19.8 crore to organise Annual Day and Sports Day programmes. The initiative aims to promote enrolment and attendance along with the all-round development of children by linking academics with culture, sports and community participation. PTI

Quantity of high-grade heroin seized near Indo-Myanmar border

7.3 In kilograms. The Narcotics Control Bureau seized 7.3 kg of high-grade heroin during an operation near the Indo-Myanmar border in Manipur and arrested two alleged traffickers. The contraband, concealed in over 600 soap cases, was recovered from a vehicle intercepted by NCB teams. ANI

Increase in average assets of MPs between 2014 and 2024

110 in per cent. Between 2014 and 2024, 102 MPs who got re-elected to the Lok Sabha recorded an over 100% average growth in their assets, said a report released by the Association for Democratic Reforms. It said average asset growth for the MPs between the Lok Sabha elections of 2014 to 2024 is ₹17.36 crore. PTI

Total amount locked in customs duty disputes

1.52 In ₹ lakh crore. With over ₹1.52 lakh crore of customs duty locked in litigations, the government could look at the possibility of an amnesty scheme in the Budget for 2026-27, Price Waterhouse & Co said on Thursday. As of March 2024, 38,014 cases are locked in litigation. PTI

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ISRO and the next big challenge

ISRO's past accomplishments raise the bar for future missions as it prepares in parallel for more complex programmes; the next phase depends less on individual feats and more on sustained institutional performance, clearer legal structures, and the capacity to execute ambitious missions in a routine way

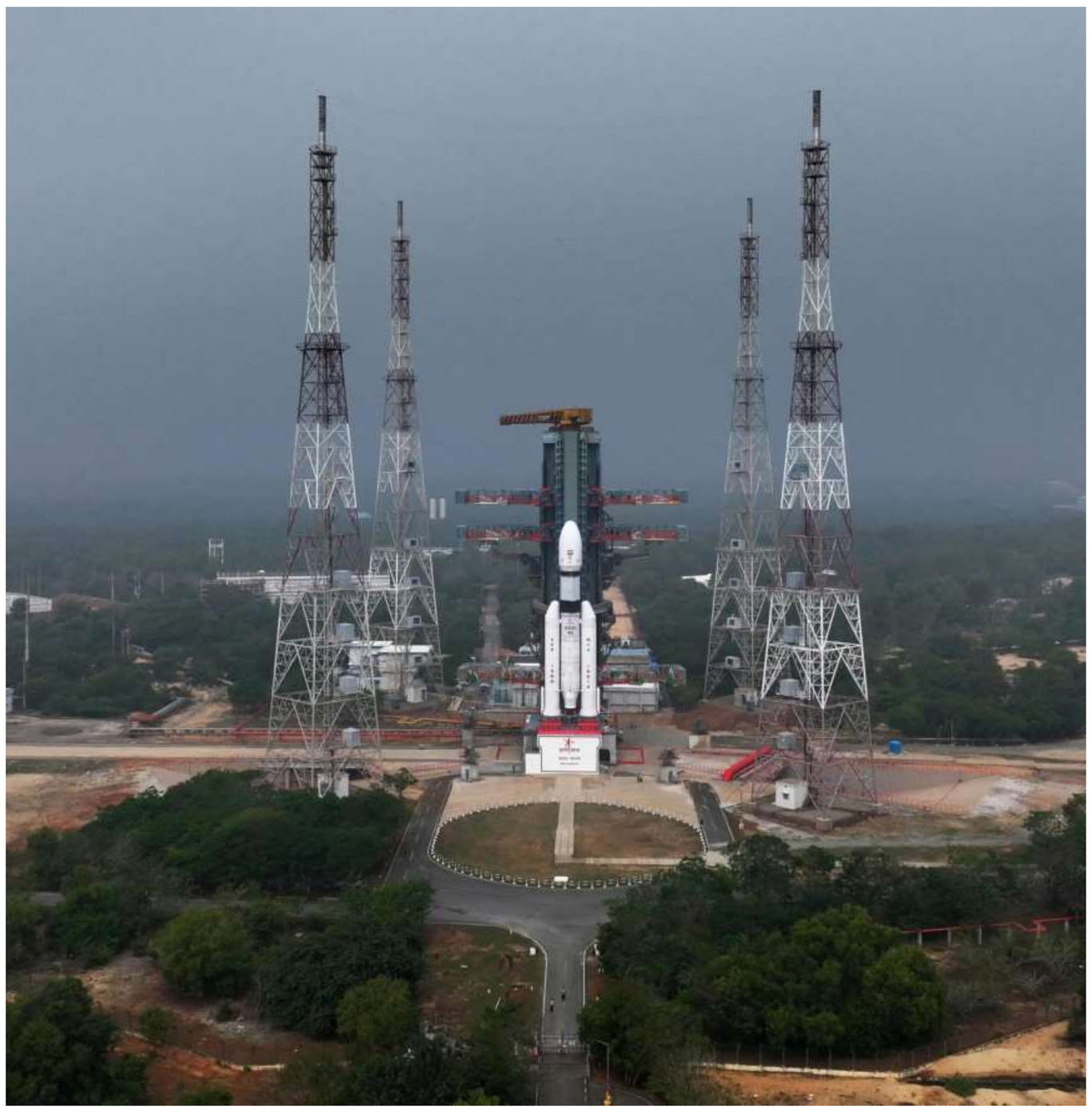
FULL CONTEXT

Vasudevan Mukunth

The record of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) over the last decade has been remarkably broad for an agency of its size and budget.

Its rockets, especially the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV), have sustained reliable access to orbit, rendering operations with multiple satellite classes almost a matter of routine today. And ISRO is attempting even more technically demanding missions. The soft landing of the Chandrayaan-3 lander on the moon on August 23, 2023, placed India in a coterie of countries with demonstrated lunar-landing capability.

The Aditya-L1 probe reached its intended halo orbit around the first sun-earth Lagrange point on January 6, 2024, adding a dedicated solar observatory mission to ISRO's portfolio. In July 2025, ISRO executed a prominent international collaboration by launching the billion-dollar NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar (NISAR) mission, an earth-observation platform for climate and hazard monitoring.



On track: The LVM-3 launch vehicle at Sriharikota ahead of its M6 mission to launch the BlueBird Block-2 satellite on December 24, 2025. ISRO

Preparing in parallel

The thing about succeeding in such a consistent way is that it also raises the bar for future accomplishments. It no longer matters that ISRO had humble beginnings or that it transported parts of its first rocket on a bullock cart. Even launching the PSLV or the GSLV flawlessly the first dozen or so times is awesome, but being able to do that also changes what comes next. And it will be good for ISRO to be able to access that new opportunity space, and without taking too long to do so. Otherwise, it will have some difficult questions to answer.

Today, on the cusp of Gaganyaan, Chandrayaan-4, and the Next-Generation Launch Vehicle (NGLV), among others, ISRO's major challenges can be distilled to three: (i) its capacity to execute more complex missions; (ii) questions about how clearly the space programme is and can be governed in a newly liberalised sector; and (iii) constraints on ISRO's competitiveness that are as industrial and financial as they're technological.

First, ISRO currently confronts a deceptively structural prioritisation problem. Specifically, as the organisation prepares in parallel for the human spaceflight mission, complex science missions, satellite replenishment, and the development of NGLV, a more powerful launch vehicle (GSLV may be 'Bahubali' but it's still only in the medium-lift category), its annual launch cadence and project timelines have become an increasingly obvious bottleneck. Experts have linked its low number of launches in 2025 – only five against the then ISRO chairman V. Somanath's projection of an also-low eight – to project delays and to the organisation shifting towards big-ticket programmes. At the same time, private launch providers still depend heavily on ISRO facilities and infrastructure, meaning the system can't yet offload work at scale. The implication is that when a mission suffers an anomaly, it has cascading effects.

To prevent this ISRO needs more integration capacity, better access to test stands, industrial supply chains for structures and avionics, and a workflow that can absorb setbacks without freezing unrelated programmes or cramping their timelines. Perhaps the first step could be an internal scheme to help scientists and engineers determine which mission's timelines are allowed to slip and for what particular reasons, together with separate resource allocations for R&D vehicles and operational vehicles and creating new capacity in the industrial base. The ultimate aim should be for ISRO to not simultaneously be the designer, the integrator, and the bottleneck for all missions.

ISRO pulled in

Second, ISRO's role in India's liberalised space and spaceflight ecosystem – since the national government's 2020 reforms – is conceptually clear only on paper. The principal issue here is that India still lacks a comprehensive national space law. The Indian Space Policy framework, the Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre (IN-SPACe) and New Space India Ltd. (NSIL), created in 2019-2020, were meant to separate functions. Research and advanced capability development would lie with ISRO, authorisation and promotion with IN-SPACe, and commercialisation with NSIL.

But for all of them to execute those functions efficiently, they need statutory authority and clearer legal allocations of obligations, especially those pertaining to authorisation, liability, insurance, and resolving disputes.

A national space law wouldn't merely help startups: it would also protect ISRO by reducing the *ad hoc* demands placed on it because it's still perceived as a fallback regulator and technical certifier for everything. If IN-SPACe is to be the authorising body, it needs to have legal authority. If NSIL is to be the commercial arm, it shouldn't be in a situation where, if a commercial mission fails, creates third-party liabilities or whatever, nobody can say in advance who is responsible for what, leaving ISRO to be pulled in by 'default' because it's the most capable state actor. And if ISRO is to focus on frontier capabilities, it needs to be insulated from routine tasks, like booking and operating test stands or coordinating spectrum allocation, that actually should be performed by an industrial and regulatory ecosystem.

Finally, like most laws, a space law – and thus the activities it supports – would also survive political and administrative changes.

Sustained performance

Third, ISRO's competitiveness increasingly resembles an ecosystem problem. The world is moving towards more frequent launches by providers, partially reusable launch vehicles, and rapid satellite manufacturing, and India needs to respond with more than by expanding its engineering ambitions. The Indian government's own framing of the NGLV, linking the space programme's future goals to its "high payload capability" and "reusability", including a reusable first stage and the ability to lift up to 30 tonnes to low-earth orbit, acknowledges that economic launches and agility are now central, rather than optional, features of enterprises that operate launch vehicles. And building such systems and operating them in turn requires more production depth, advanced manufacturing capabilities, higher qualification capacity, and much more capital.

Investment in India's space sector fell sharply in 2024, reflecting both global headwinds and the specific difficulties of financing hardware that's developed and deployed on long horizons. IN-SPACe has in response launched a technology adoption fund aimed at helping firms bridge prototypes with scalable products and at reducing import dependence, among other funding instruments.

ISRO's past accomplishments have earned it political capital and public trust but the next phase depends less on individual feats and more on sustained institutional performance. The capacity to execute will determine whether the Indian space programme will also be able to deliver ambitious missions in a routine way. And within this context, governance and law will say whether the government's efforts to liberalise the sector will reduce ISRO's burden or, counterintuitively, expand it. Similarly ISRO's ability to compete will depend on whether the programme can transition from executing a series of individually laudable missions to being an industrial system, and for this engineering, regulation, manufacturing, and finance will have to mature together.

THE GIST

- ISRO's consistent success raises the bar for future accomplishments as it prepares in parallel for human spaceflight, complex science missions, satellite replenishment, and the Next-Generation Launch Vehicle.
- In a newly liberalised space sector, the absence of a comprehensive national space law leaves ISRO pulled in by default, even as clearer legal allocations of authorisation, liability, and commercial responsibility are required to insulate it from routine tasks.
- The transition from individual feats to sustained institutional performance depends on competitiveness that is as industrial and financial as it is technological, requiring production depth, advanced manufacturing, and an ecosystem that allows missions to become routine.

IN THE LIMELIGHT

'*Avatar: Fire and Ash*': militarised spectacle, render farms, and the end of awe

A gleaming tech miracle wrapped around a hollow soul, *Fire and Ash* feels meticulously engineered and spiritually abandoned; characters like Spider and Kiri become overworked narrative tools, and the film wraps itself in environmental rhetoric while staging obliteration

Ayaan Paul Chowdhury

I dragged myself through Delhi's air, body frozen, throat stinging, visibility dropping to philosophical levels of nothingness; all to arrive at the earliest screening of *Avatar: Fire and Ash*. James Cameron greeted these Sisyphean efforts by flinging a flaming monolith of 3D garbage straight at my face. It's perverse, really, having had to wade through literal poison to sit through blockbuster poison. One would think wheezing through dense radioactive smog could prepare you for anything, but witnessing this billion-dollar landfill blaze made me slowly asphyxiate for over three hours within the confines of my theatre.



A still from *Avatar: Fire and Ash*. AP

Bloated spectacle

For three hours and change, Pandora feels meticulously engineered and spiritually abandoned. Cameron once made films that felt like dispatches from the future, but this third chapter in his endlessly self-impressed saga has lumbered back with renewed conviction, obsessed with square footage and intoxicated by its own gigantism. Bloated with money, myth, technology, and a palpable fear of irrelevance, everything is bigger, louder, and longer in *Fire and Ash*. Everything is also airless.

The grief that opens the film promises depth. Eternal marine cosplayer turned reluctant indigenous patriarch, Jake Sully (Sam Worthington), mourns his dead son from the earlier, Way of Water. Zoe Saldana's Neytiri rages with an unquenchable hatred and her entire emotional architecture is built around the same loss. Their children orbit between resentment and devotion. The premise suggests that the saga is finally ready to sit in its wounds, but the reality is a parade of plot machinery, stitched out of guilt, revenge, an almost voyeuristic appropriation of indigenous mysticism, and a mercenary belief in "family" as a substitute for meaningful ideas. Cameron gestures toward some semblance of emotional excavation, only to safely retreat to the comforts of prolonged migraine-inducing 3D battles and sporadic bouts of ritual chanting.

The franchise's grand metaphor has always been colonialism refracted through its luminous fauna and noble warrior spirituality, but *Fire and Ash* strains to deepen that. Humans and Na'vi entangle across biology, psychology, loyalty, and trauma. Power wants resources, power wants bodies, power wants belonging. There's still some genuine material here, especially in the uneasy bond between Quaritch and Jake, two military men doomed to reenact their masculinity as their destiny. Yet, Cameron seems perfectly satisfied with surface-level clarities of speechifying heroes and flattened political spectacle.

Characters speak as if locked inside a studio focus test, ripe with the contrasts of mystical platitudes and dudebro catchphrases. It's evident that the performers were labouring under digital lacquer, capable of nuance but trapped inside dramaturgy designed for blunt interpretation.

Plot machinery

Jack Champion's Spider is the film's most overworked narrative utility tool. The film continuously positions him as the emotional hinge between species – the biological son of Quaritch, the adopted son of Jake's family, and the human permanently out of place on Pandora. Instead of developing him as a psychologically coherent being, Cameron keeps repurposing him as whatever the plot needs in that moment, whether it's a hostage, bargaining chip, test subject, guilt trigger or even the occasional oxygen hazard. His literal dependence on a breathing apparatus becomes a metaphor in the most on-the-nose way possible, until the film simply decides to rewrite biology and grants him a miraculous, lore-breaking evolutionary upgrade via Eywa and mycelial plant magic.

Kiri (Sigourney Weaver), meanwhile, stands at the intersection of Cameron's heady ambitions and clumsy storytelling. As the inexplicable child of Grace Augustine's avatar body, she is supposed to embody Pandora's spiritual mystery and ecological theology. The mythology frames her as the living bridge between Eywa's consciousness and Na'vi's existence, but the writing reduces that enormity to soft-focus mysticism and conveniently-timed deus ex machinas.

Both Spider and Kiri are built to carry the trilogy's salvageable themes of hybridity and mutated identity, and both ultimately reveal how Cameron prefers shortcuts and gimmicks over any nuance.

There's also the new Mangkwan, the heretic Ash People. The film practically shivers with pleasure when they arrive, and Oona Chapman's electrifying turn as their Tsahik Varang storms the screen with an erotic sense of authority – perhaps the film's sole saving grace. Though she should be the great new engine of chaos and ideology, she's soon drafted into Cameron's preferred function as a catalyst for more setpieces.

Violent bond

The most interesting dynamic in the film is her seductively violent bond with Quaritch. There are traces of Sean Penn's oily Colonel Lockjaw from *One Battle After Another* in how briskly this emblem of military-industrial cruelty turns his genocidal obsession into a fetish for the people his ideology defines as target practice. Cameron frames him as a creature of rage discovering kink through ethnocide, and the film feels bizarrely exhilarated by the revelation. Stephen Lang chews into the role with a feral gleam.

Cameron has spent the better part of the last decade selling the world on how his saga explores the tangled braids between human violence and ecological reverence, but *Fire and Ash* is fascinated with punishment, purification, and cleansing through violence. The script keeps genuflecting to Eywa, the Great Cosmic Mum, while clearly getting its kicks choreographing annihilation.

What's especially hilarious is watching a billion-dollar "anti-imperialist epic" manufactured by the world's most ruthless entertainment empire try to moralise. *Fire and Ash* wraps itself in environmental preservation rhetoric and sings hymns to indigenous resilience, only to settle for exquisitely staged obliteration. Cameron preaches sanctimonious balance with one hand and cranks the industrialised spectacle of righteous slaughter with the other. This is cinema as an absolution ritual of sorts, and I think we are supposed to feel spiritually clean after witnessing three hours of eco-friendly carnage, ethically sourced through cutting-edge VFX.

The immaculacy of the technology admires itself so endlessly, while any meaningful pulses are pulverised under a stack of a million render farms. The relentless rhythm of the spectacle numbed me into an unskippable lull instead of enrapturing me with its excesses.

Cameron remains a virtuoso of large-scale movement, yet the splendours of ships buckling, creatures convulsing and landscapes shimmering with impossible light rarely translate into any palpable sense of awe. Action came in waves so frequent and so structurally similar that the sense of escalation dissolved completely into repetition. There is always another chase, ambush, or noble sacrifice rendered with military-grade solemnity, and the franchise's devotion to the '*Avatar* experience' has curdled into obligation.

Avatar has always sold itself as the populist four-quadrant morality play where extraction capitalism gets an easy-to-read villain and indigeneity becomes an all-purpose spiritual solvent, all pre-packaged to clap to in IMAX. The 2009 film worked with a familiar "outsider becomes native messiah" trope à la *Dune*, in a supposedly anti-imperial allegory, then spent the next decade witnessing it collapse into the very paternalism it claims to expose. The *Way of Water* tried to update the critique by widening the map and swapping jungle romanticism for ocean ethnography, yet the same ideological "difference" gets aestheticised, and the films' faith in innocence-through-nature keeps edging into a romantic primitivism that simply cannot be isolated from the white colonial lens through which it is conceived.

It's quite frankly nauseating watching a billionaire filmmaker sermonise on indigenous self-determination from within a studio apparatus lubricated by public subsidies and global capital; a system that, in the same historical breath, bankrolls military dominance and ongoing ethnic erasures while his films launder extraction and conquest into a smug, export-ready moral fantasy.

The larger-than-life theatricality of a blockbuster once promised wonder, provocation, communion, or at the very least a lingering aftertaste, but *Fire and Ash* is a resignation to the fact that a beautiful void, scaled up to planetary size, is now enough.

The spectacle is nothing more than a sedative, and Cameron's lofty ambitions had long stopped growing somewhere between the second and third billion dollars. Not even Eywa herself could resurrect my will to live after inhaling this premium Na'avi sludge. There's a more fitting alternative title here, involving fire and a crude homophonic body part best left implied.



FROM THE ARCHIVES

Know your English

S. Upendran

"You look really happy. What's the reason?"

"Sujatha paid me a compliment today. She said that the Principal likes me very much because I am his yes-man."

Being somebody's yes-man is no compliment."

"It isn't?"

"No. A yes-man is someone who says yes to everything his leader/boss says."

"In other words, he agrees with everything that the person says?"

"That's right."

"I don't think I'm that kind of person."

"I hope you're not. Politicians surround themselves with yes-men."

"Are you your boss's yes-man?"

"No."

"Can I say Tony Blair is Bill Clinton's yes-man?"

"That's a very good example. I don't know if everyone will agree with you though."

"Isn't it sad what's happening in Yugoslavia? First Clinton bombs Sudan, then Iraq and now Yugoslavia."

"And if we are not careful, he might poke his nose into our affairs as well."

"What does it mean?"

"When you poke your nose into something, you interfere in something that is no concern of yours. Of late, Bill Clinton has been poking his nose into everything."

"After all, for nearly four years, Kenneth Starr has been poking his nose into Clinton's affairs."

"That's true. By the way, poke your nose into something is an informal expression."

"And what do I call people who poke their noses into other people's business?"

"People who are over inquisitive or very curious about other people are often called nosey'. The word can be spelt n..o..s..e..y or n..o..s..y."

"My uncle becomes unbearably nosey at times."

"Nosey people are sometimes referred to as nosey parkers. I don't want Gayathri in my department. She is a real nosy parker."

"When Surendran walked into the office, people stopped talking. He has a reputation for being a nosey parker."

"Do you think I am a nosey parker?"

"Of course you are!"

"Why you....."

"...just joking. But NATO seems to be full of nosey parkers."

"I'm not so sure about that. You see right now there is no NATO. America is NATO. The remaining countries are merely yes-men. May be the name should be changed from North Atlantic Treaty Organisation to Nosey American Tin God Organisation."

"Tin God?"

"Look it up in the dictionary."

"I will. Do you think Clinton will poke his nose into China's affairs?"

"Clinton will keep his nose clean as far as China is concerned."

"Keep his nose clean?"

"When someone tells you to keep your nose clean, it means they want you to stay out of trouble."

"My coupes keeps warning her son Dinesh that if he doesn't keep his nose clean, he is going to end up in jail. Does that sound ok?"

"It certainly does. Now tell me, what else did Sujatha tell you?"

"...look who is being a nosey parker now!"

Published in The Hindu on April 6, 1999

THE DAILY QUIZ

Here is a quiz on influential figures and key events that happened on January 9

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

Sindhu Nagaraj

QUESTION 1

This American President was born on this day in 1913. His second term ended early when he had to resign from office as a result of the Watergate scandal. Who was he?

QUESTION 2

This American actor is considered one of the most prolific and well-established character actors of his generation. He won the Academy Award for Best Supporting Actor for playing an abusive jazz instructor in Whiplash. Who is he?

QUESTION 3

Mahmoud Abbas, who was born on this day, was elected President of this country in 2005. He is still serving as the President of the country. Name the country.

QUESTION 4

In 2001, Apple introduced this digital media player application that revolutionised the way music was listened to across the world. Which was this?



Visual Question:

Identify this New Zealand writer who was an important figure in the modernist movement. She died on this day in 1923. WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Questions and Answers to the previous day's daily quiz: 1. Name her groundbreaking critique of patriarchy, often regarded as foundational feminist literature, which was listed on the Vatican's 'index of forbidden books'. **Ans: The Second Sex**

2. Name her work depicting the attempts of post-Second World War intellectuals to leave their 'educated elite' status and engage in political activism, which won her the French literary prize Prix Goncourt. **Ans: The Mandarins**

3. What is the only play written by Beauvoir? **Ans: The Useless Mouths (or Who Shall Die)**

4. Name her treatise published in 1947, which deals with themes including freedom, oppression, and responsibility, expounding on the idea that 'human freedom requires the freedom of others for it to be actualised'. **Ans: The ethics of ambiguity**

5. Name her novel, which opens with the quote: "Each conscience seeks the death of the other" from another philosopher, Hegel. **Ans: She came to stay**

Visual: Name this American philosopher who claims to have based her theory of gender performance on Beauvoir's idea that one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman. **Ans: Judith Butler**

Early Birds: Dodo Jayaditya | Sadia Najam | Neil Lall | Sunil Madhavan | Mohan Lal Patel

Word of the day

Clampdown:
sudden restriction on an activity

Synonyms: curb, quash, suppress

Usage: *There was a clampdown on illegal activities.*

Pronunciation: newsth.live/clampdownrpo

International Phonetic Alphabet: /klæmpdaʊn/

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