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India looks to sustain the momentum

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NEARBY



500 million MT target fixed for horticulture hubs

VIJAYAWADA
Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu has asked the officials to roll out plans to transform Rayalaseema and Prakasam regions into horticulture hubs, with a production target of 500 million MT. » **Page 4**

23 fishermen released from Bangladesh jail

VISAKHAPATNAM
Bangladesh has freed 23 Indian fishermen, including nine from A.P., from jail. They were detained in October 2025 after they accidentally strayed into the foreign waters. » **Page 4**

OPPORTUNITIES » PAGE 3

Mother of all deals': India and EU finalise FTA

European wines, luxury cars to become cheaper as negotiations, launched in 2007, conclude

Modi calls it historic pact, while Ursula says it will reduce strategic dependence amid global turmoil

Officials say document will undergo legal scrubbing before it can be ratified by European Parliament

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

After almost two decades of negotiation, India and the European Union (EU) finalised a free trade agreement (FTA) on Tuesday billed as the “mother of all deals”, that will see the EU drop tariffs on 99.5% of Indian exports to the 27-nation bloc. India has given tariff concessions on 97.5% of imports from the EU, with European wines and luxury cars set to become less expensive here as a result. Beyond the economics, both sides stressed the geopolitical significance of a deal between two economies that together account for a third of global trade in the shadow of uncertainty sparked by the U.S. tariff regime. Prime Minister Narendra Modi declared that the partnership would “strengthen stability” at a time of

Landmark agreement

After almost two decades of talks, the European Union and India sealed a landmark trade pact, driven by U.S. tariff pressures. The deal aims at doubling exports to India



HOW DOES IT BENEFIT EU?

- Tariffs removed or cut on 90% of EU goods
- Wine duties cut from 150% to 20-30%; Spirits cut to 40%
- Car tariffs drop from 110% to 10% (250,000 vehicle quota)
- Tariffs eliminated on Airbus aircraft, and processed food
- 0% tax on most machinery, and pharmaceutical products

HOW DOES IT BENEFIT INDIA?

- Duty-free exports for items such as textiles, leather, gems, and spices
- A duty-free quota of 1.6 million tonnes for steel
- Easier for skilled Indian workers to work in the 27-country bloc
- Dialogue on carbon border tax; India set to be treated like other EU partners
- Phased-out tariffs on arms and ammunition, among other goods

WHAT THE DEAL DOESN'T INCLUDE?

- No concessions on items such as chicken and rice
- No agreement on government procurement on energy and raw materials
- A “sustainable development” chapter (rejected by India)
- Agreement on Geographical Indications

Source: AFP

Diplomatic outreach: Prime Minister Narendra Modi with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and Council President António Costa, on Tuesday in New Delhi. ANI

global turmoil, while European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said it would reduce strategic dependency at a time when global trade is increasingly fractious.

“We have delivered the mother of all deals,” she said. “Two giants who choose partnership, in a true win-win fashion. A

strong message that cooperation is the best answer to global challenges.”

‘Largest-ever FTA’

Noting that this is India’s largest-ever FTA, Mr. Modi said: “This historic agreement will facilitate access to the European market for our farmers and small industries, create new op-

portunities in manufacturing, and strengthen cooperation in our services sectors.”

Both sides, however, made sure to exclude their respective sensitive sectors. India’s strategic agricultural and dairy sectors remain protected, while the EU will maintain its current tariffs on beef, su-

gar, rice, chicken meat, milk powder, honey, bananas, soft wheat, garlic, and ethanol.

India-EU FTA talks were first launched in 2007. Following several hiccups and pauses, they were resumed in 2022 with both sides agreeing to exclude issues on which agreement had been elusive.

According to Commerce Ministry officials, the language in the document will first be cleaned up over the next 10 to 15 days, following which it will undergo “legal scrubbing”. It will then have to be translated and sent to all 27 EU member states, before it can be ratified by the European Parliament.

“We do hope that we should be able to celebrate the entry into force of this agreement within calendar 2026 itself,” said Union Minister Piyush Goyal.

According to the Commerce Ministry, India has gained tariff reductions across 97% of tariff lines, covering 99.5% of trade value. Of this, 90.7% of India’s exports will see duties eliminated entirely on the first day of the deal’s implementation, including labour-intensive sectors such as textiles, apparel, leather, footwear, tea, coffee, spices, sports goods, toys, gems and jewellery, and certain marine products, amongst others.

Another 2.9% of India’s exports will see duty elimination over three to five years.

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RELATED REPORTS ON

» PAGES 9 & 11

Integrated laboratories in 13 Area Hospitals to be ready by April

The Hindu Bureau
VIJAYAWADA

Thirteen Integrated Public Health Laboratories being set up at Area Hospitals across Andhra Pradesh will help improve healthcare services in rural areas, Minister for Health, Medical Education and Family Welfare Satya Kumar Yadav has said, adding that the facilities are likely to start functioning from March or April.

In a statement on Tuesday, Mr. Yadav said 134 tests relating to communicable and non-communicable diseases can be performed at these laboratories. The labs are being set up under the

Pradhan Mantri Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission (PM-ABHIM) at a cost of ₹16.25 crore.

These laboratories will be equipped with Class 2 Biological Safety Cabinets (BSCs), an automated 5-part cell counter, an automated hormone analyser, a semi-automated biochemistry analyser, an electrolyte analyser, and a microtome.

These advanced machines will also be used in collecting samples required for national programmes, such as HIV diagnosis, hepatitis, and tuberculosis.

CONTINUED ON

» PAGE 4

Draped in white



Winter wonderland: Snow-covered vehicles on the outskirts of Srinagar on Tuesday. The Kashmir Valley received fresh snowfall which led to closure of the Srinagar-Jammu National Highway and disrupted flight operations. IMRAN NISSAR (RELATED REPORT ON PAGE 10)

Place in electoral roll is a ‘qualified right’, poll body says in SC

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

Even registered voters are required to “continuously fulfill” the essential condition of Indian citizenship, as laid out in Article 326 of the Constitution, to retain their place in the electoral roll, the Election Commission of India told the Supreme Court on Tuesday, during a hearing on the ongoing special intensive revision (SIR) exercise.

Article 326 provides for adult suffrage, and requires that a person should be 18 years old, an Indian citizen, and not disqualified by law to be entitled to register as a voter.

“These are essential conditions. The fulfilment of these conditions is a continuous requirement. You cannot say once my name is entered, whether I lose eligibility or not, I am entitled to stay on in the electoral roll,” senior advocate Maninder Singh, for the EC, submitted before a Bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant.

The Bench was hearing a batch of petitions challenging the constitutionality of the SIR exercise conducted in Bihar. “The SIR is a verification exercise,” Mr. Singh argued.

Senior advocate Dama Seshadhiri Naidu, also appearing for the EC, said the SIR was not a determination of citizenship. “An exercise to verify citizenship is different from a process determining citizenship,” he said.

He illustrated how young lawyers have their qualifications verified before becoming a member of the Bar bodies.

Mr. Naidu argued there was “not even one com-



The fulfillment of these conditions [laid out in Article 326] is a continuous requirement. You cannot say once my name is entered, whether I lose eligibility or not, I am entitled to stay on in the electoral roll

MANINDER SINGH
EC counsel



plaint of lapse in Bihar”. He sought to focus on the “collateral advantage” of the SIR, explaining how voter turnout rose in 2025 after the door-to-door survey conducted for the exercise.

“It had aroused the interest of the common man. It drafted enthusiastic voters and weeded out the dead, duplicates in the electoral roll,” he submitted.

‘No added parameters’

Advocate Eklavya Dwivedi, for the EC, wrapped up the EC’s response to the petitions challenging the SIR, arguing that a place in the electoral roll was a “qualified right”.

“Without proof of qualification, no person can enter the electoral roll,” he submitted.

Mr. Dwivedi said the EC had not added any further limitations to the conditions prescribed in the Constitution under Article 326, and in Sections 16 (disqualifications for registration in an electoral roll) and 19 (conditions of registration) of the Representation of the People Act, 1950.

No discrimination under new UGC equity rules: Pradhan

Abhinav Lakshman
NEW DELHI

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Tuesday sought to allay concerns over the new 2026 University Grants Commission regulations on promoting equity in higher education institutions, amid protests and allegations that the rules discriminate against “general category” students.

Speaking to presspersons in Rajasthan, Mr. Pradhan said the regulations had been notified under the supervision of the Supreme Court. He said “there will be no discrimination” and that “no one will have the right to misuse anything in the name of discrimination”.

His remarks came against the backdrop of

protests against the UGC regulations in cities such as Lucknow, Indore, and New Delhi, with more demonstrations planned in the coming days, and multiple petitions filed in the Supreme Court challenging the framework.

The new regulations, notified on January 13, define “caste-based discrimination” as discrimination on the basis of caste or tribe against those belonging to the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes, and the Other Backward Classes. The final version drops a provision proposed in an earlier draft to penalise false complaints.

Critics of the rules have argued that by not recognising students from the “general category” as potential victims of caste-based discrimination, the



Voicing dissent: Students staging a protest against the new UGC regulations near Lucknow University on Tuesday. PTI

definition itself is discriminatory. They also flagged the absence of a mechanism to act against complaints believed to be false.

Mr. Pradhan said, “I want to assure everyone that no one will be subject to harassment and there will be no discrimination. No one will have the right

to misuse anything in the name of discrimination.”

He added that whether it was the UGC, the Centre or any State governments, it will be their responsibility to ensure fair implementation.

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Students stage stir against rules in U.P.

Mayank Kumar
LUCKNOW

The University Grants Commission (UGC)’s new regulations triggered protests in Uttar Pradesh on Tuesday, with a section of students demonstrating at Lucknow University against the rules, alleging they would affect their studies and future.

The protesting students staged a sit-in at the university’s main gate and raised slogans against the UGC, claiming the University Grants Commission (Promotion of Equity in Higher Education Institutions)

Regulations, 2026 could lead to caste conflict and disrupt social harmony on campuses. “We demand that the UGC reconsider the framework and initiate a wider, inclusive dialogue before enforcing the new rules. These rules disturb the social balance,” said Anmol Singh, an LLB student, told presspersons.

The issue has sparked dissent within the BJP, with a few local leaders expressing anger over the regulations and resigning from party posts.

CONTINUED ON

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INBRIEF

Headmasters of 20 govt. schools felicitated in city

Headmasters of 20 government schools in the State, who were nominated for the national-level Swachh Evam Harit Vidyalaya Rating, were felicitated here on Tuesday. Speaking after presenting appreciation certificates to the headmasters, Samagra Shiksha State Project Director B. Srinivasa Rao said that the schools that demonstrate outstanding performance in promoting cleanliness and environmental conservation, including provisions of safe drinking water, clean toilets, handwashing with soap, waste management, and plantation activities are selected for the national-level. He said at the national-level, 200 such schools would be selected from across the country and each school would be awarded a cash prize of ₹1 lakh by the Centre. Headmasters of the selected schools would also be given the opportunity to participate in a knowledge exposure visit.

Text & Context and Science

Weekday features on *The Hindu* epaper (epaper.thehindu.com) carry explainers, special articles and quizzes. In the latest issue (January 28, Wednesday), the following articles are available:

■ What's happening in Syria's Kurdish regions? newsth.live/kurdsyriaexp

■ To make sense of cosmic rays, CERN team tracks a fragile nucleus newsth.live/fragilenucleus

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.

Minister launches 'Drugs pai Dandayatra' in NTR district

Five women police officers, as part of a special drive launched by the NTR police, will pedal 500 km on cycle over 35 days with the aim of creating public awareness on the ill effects of ganja and drugs

The Hindu Bureau
VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Home Vangalapudi Anitha on Tuesday flagged off a cycle rally titled "Drugs pai Dandayatra" (march against drugs), organised by the NTR Commissionerate police at Indira Gandhi Municipal Corporation (IGMC) Stadium here.

With the objective of creating public awareness about the ill effects of ganja and other drugs, five women police officers, as part of a special drive launched by the NTR police, started a cycle rally to highlight the consequences of drug peddling and consumption, the police said.

Ms. Anitha said that the government is taking all measures to stop drugs and ganja consumption and praised the NTR police and



Five women police officers leading the 510-km cycle yatra, as part of 'Drugs pai Dandayatra'. K.V.S. GIRI

Collector for taking measures to create a drug-free society.

The EAGLE and police officials were taking measures to prevent cultivation, smuggling, and con-

sumption of drugs in Andhra Pradesh, the Home Minister said, appreciating the five women police.

Minister for Health Y. Satya Kumar, who also attended the programme,

said that use of drugs and ganja was spoiling many lives in the State.

The 500-km rally will be organised for 35 days touching many villages in NTR Commissionerate.

Petrol pump worker 'ends life'

The Hindu Bureau
ELURU

A petrol pump employee allegedly ended his life in a shed near Lingaiah Cheruvu Gattu in Eluru Town on Monday.

The deceased was identified as B. Venkateswara Rao alias Anjibabu (55),

who had been working at the bunk operated by a private society.

The victim's wife, Nagalakshmi, alleged that her husband resorted to the extreme step due to the harassment by the society management.

Nagalakshmi staged a protest with the body at

her residence demanding justice.

Police registered a case and took up investigation.

The body was handed over to the family members after post mortem, the police said on Tuesday.

(Persons having suicidal thoughts may 'Dial 100' for assistance)

Health varsity official gets 1-year RI

The Hindu Bureau
VIJAYAWADA

The Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) Court in Vijayawada on Tuesday awarded one year rigorous imprisonment (RI) to Dr. NTR University of Health Sciences (NTRUHS) Superintendent for accepting

₹2,000 bribe from a PG Nursing student for issuing mark list.

The accused, Marupadiga Sridevi, was arrested in June 2014 and is currently working as Superintendent in the PG Examination section of NTRUHS, the ACB officials said in a release.

Meanwhile, Srikakulam ACB Range officers nabbed Srikakulam Sub-Treasury Officer (STO) Nalla Ravi Prasad and senior accountant Ambakandi Srinivasa Rao, while they were allegedly accepting ₹15,000 bribe, for processing the salary arrears bill of a Grama Sachivalayam employee.

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OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH

SRI N VISWANATHAN (78) retired DRDL, Secunderabad reached Lotus feet of Lord on 27/01/2026. Last rites held on same day in Chennai. Ph: 9849012017

DEATH ANNIVERSARIES

Death Anniversary



Retired Dean Stanley Medical College
A kind, gentle and caring soul.
Reunited with his beloved wife Saroja.
May they both Rest in Peace.

HOMAGE



Dr. V. SANKAR (75 yrs)
Alumni of IIT, Kharagpur,
Passed away on 9th December 2025
Cremated on 12-12-2025.
He lived a life of selfless service, was a revered leader and a social worker. His legacy lives on through the lives he touched.
He was an integral part of Bharat Vikas Parishad / BVPIST / All India Radio Electronics Association / Senior Citizens Forum.
May the departed soul attain Sadgati
Phone: 98400 99170

DEATH



Dr. V. Uma
MSc (IIT Madras)
PhD (Chemical Lab, CLRI)
HOD Chemistry Dept. & Vice Principal, Arignar Anna Govt. Arts College, Cheyyar
Expired on 21.01.26 at 7.16 am at her residence at Medavakkam, leaving behind her husband G. Ramasubramaniam and rest of the family.
Uma lived a life of purpose - touching countless hearts as a selfless teacher and sharing her soul through Ragasurabhi, her gift to the Carnatic music world.
The light that guided us on earth has now become a Pole Star in the skies. Though her absence leaves a deep void, her love and legacy will continue to guide us forever.
Ram & Family
+91 89399 84380

IN MEMORY OF YOUR LOVED ONES

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ఇ- ప్రొక్యూర్మెంట్ టెండర్ల ప్రకటన

మారీపాడు(గ్రా), అప్పంపేట(మం), పల్నాడు జిల్లా శ్రీ సత్యమ్మత్తల్లీ దేవస్థానము పునఃనిర్మాణము కొరకు టెండర్ల ప్రకటన చేయడమైనది. మిగిలిన వివరముల కొరకు <https://tender.apeprocurement.gov.in> లో చూడవచ్చు.

సంప్ర- కార్యనిర్వహణాధికారి శ్రీ సత్యమ్మత్తల్లీ దేవస్థానము మారీపాడు(గ్రా), అప్పంపేట (మం), పల్నాడు జిల్లా

Bank of Baroda

Guntur Main Branch

Rajiv Gandhi Bhavan, Near Hindu College, Guntur, Andhra Pradesh - 522004.

NOTICE PRIOR TO SALE

Issued under the Provisions of Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 of the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act-2002 (SARFAESI Act-2002).

To, Borrower: M/S Dhana Lakshmi Syndicate, Proprietor: Mr. Mukta Vijaya Kumar Factory Address: Sri Sai Sri Srinivasa Ginning Mills Pvt. Ltd., D. No. 19-9-176/P, Plot no. 255, Revenue Ward No. 22, NH-5, Bonthapadu Road, Guntur-522003.

2. Mr. Mukta Vijaya Kumar S/o Mukta Satyanarayana, D.No. 7-17-220, 2nd Lane, Singar, Guntur-522003, and Guarantors: 1) Mrs. Mukta Padmavathi W/o Mr. Mukta Satyanarayana, D.No. 1-113, Ananthavarappadu, Vatticherukuru Mandal, Guntur District-522017. 2) Mr. Mukta Satyanarayana, S/o Mr. Sambiah, D.No. 1-113, Ananthavarappadu, Vatticherukuru Mandal, Guntur District-522017.

Dear Sir/Madam, Sub: Notice under Rule 8(6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 of the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (SARFAESI Act, 2002).

As you all are aware that, the Authorized Officer of Bank of Baroda, Guntur Main Branch, in exercise of the powers conferred U/sec 13(2) of the said Act read with Rule 3 has issued Demand Notice on 05.04.2021 calling upon the borrower to repay an amount in terms of the said notice within 60 days from the date of the said notice.

And whereas the Borrower having failed to repay the amount and hence, the authorized officer, Bank of Baroda, in exercise of the powers conferred u/ Sec13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 4 and/or Rule 8 of the rules has taken over the possession of the secured assets (herein after referred as the said property/ies) more fully described in Possession notice dated: 03.09.2021 and also published the Possession Notice on respective dates in Vernacular Language and also in English Newspapers, in compliance of Rule 8(1) & Rule 8(2) of the rules as contemplated under the SARFAESI Act.

Pursuant to taking over possession of the immovable secured assets of the Borrower/Guarantor the undersigned in exercise of the powers conferred u/ Sec 13(4)(a) of the SARFAESI Act-2002 propose to realise the bank dues by sale of the said properties. Hence, in terms of the provisions of the subject Act and Rules made thereunder, I serve this 30 days Notice Prior to sale under Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 to discharge the entire liability.

You are all hereby given a last and final opportunity to discharge the entire liability amount in full as stated hereunder plus subsequent interest, costs and expenses within 30 days from the date of this notice, and reclaim the assets which have been possessed by the Bank, failing which the assets will be sold on "As is Where is" "As is what is" and "Whatever there is basis" by adopting any of the following methods mentioned in Rule 8(5) of the rules:-

- (a) By obtaining quotations from the persons dealing with similar secured assets or otherwise interested in buying assets; or
- (b) By inviting tenders from the public; or
- (c) By holding public auction including through e-auction mode; or
- (d) By private treaty.

DESCRIPTION OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTY

All that the part and parcel of the property situated at Guntur District, Koritapadu Sub-district, Guntur Municipal Corporation Area, Gorantla Village, D. No. 159, extent of Ac.19-93 cents of Ac.1.00 cents an extent of 499.3/9 Sq. Yds. Land of Vacant residential site out of an extent of 849.3/9 Sq.yds. Standing in the name of 1. Mrs. Mukta Padmavathi W/o Mukta Satyanarayana 2. Mr. Mukta Vijaya Kumar S/o Mukta Satyanarayana is being bounded by: East: 30 feet wide Road - 107.00 ft. West: Site Sold by Tiyyagura Seshi Reddy to others - 42.00 ft. South: Property of Others -107.00 ft. North: Property of Kanneganti Parvathi - 42.00 ft. Within these boundaries an extent of 499.3/9 Sq. yds. Out of 849.3/9 Sq. Yds. vacant residential site only.

Facility details	Date of Demand Notice	Date of Possession Notice	Date of Publication of Possession Notice
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Cash Credit (05170500029662) Amount to be paid as on 22.12.2025: Rs. 74,91,197.20 (Rupees Seventy Four Lakh Ninety One Thousand One Hundred Ninety Seven and Twenty Paise Only) as on Dt: 31.03.2021 + unapplied interest from Dt: 01.04.2021 + other charges if any, till realization.

FITL 1 (05170600041104) Rs. 3,68,920/- (Rupees Three Lakh Sixty Eight Thousand Nine Hundred Twenty Only) as on Dt: 31.03.2021 + Other Charges if any, till realization.

This is without prejudice to any other rights available to the Bank under the subject Act/or any other law in force.
Date: 27.01.2026
Place: Guntur

Chief Manager & Authorized Officer,
Bank of Baroda

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Tender No.	Description	Due date
2025050	Redundant Equipments from Mechanical Baggasse Pulp Plant	09.02.2026
2025051	Effluent Filter Cake	13.02.2026
2025052	Waste Paper (Kraft Cuttings, Board, Boxes & Pasted Paper)	13.02.2026

Corrigendum if any will be issued in NIC Portal only. Detailed Terms & conditions are available in tender document at our website : <https://tntenders.gov.in/nicgep/app>

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GOVERNMENT OF PUDUCHERRY PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

No.5166/PW/EE/ID/JE(P)-33/2025-2026 Puducherry, the 27.01.2026

PRESS NOTICE FOR e-Tender The Executive Engineer, Irrigation Division, PWD, Puducherry invites on behalf of the President of India, Online Percentage Rate Bids from the eligible contractors/firms for the following Work(s):

1. Tender No.225/PW/IRRN/2025-2026 Name of Work: Coastal protection measures for immediate control of sea erosion. Sub Work4:Balance work for Coastal protection measures for immediate control of sea erosion at Ganapathy Chettikulam Puducherry. Estimate Cost: Rs.5,50,25,863/- (inclusive of GST). Earnest Money: Rs.11,00,517/- Period of Completion: Six (6) Months (Including Monsoon period).
2. Tender No.226/PW/IRRN/2025-2026 Name of Work: Coastal protection measures for immediate control of sea erosion. Sub Work2:Balance work for Coastal protection measures for immediate control of sea erosion at Pillaichavady(North) Puducherry. Estimate Cost: Rs.5,40,13,092/- (inclusive of GST). Earnest Money: Rs.10,80,262/- Period of Completion: Six (6) Months (Including Monsoon period).

Last time & date of submission of bid on (or) before 04.00. P.M. on 17.02.2026. date & time of Opening of Bid 11.00 A.M. on 18.02.2026.

The bid forms and other details can be obtained from the website. www.pudutenders.gov.in

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No: BCCC/JC-1/TEND/05/2025-26 Date: 27-01-2026

INVITATION FOR SHORT TERM TENDER

(Two Cover System) (Through GOK KPP Portal only)

Sl. No.	Name of the Work
1	Availing Graduates / Diploma Civil Engineers for Bengaluru Central City Corporation. Amount Put to Tender (Excluding GST) (Rs. in Lakhs): 238.06, EMD Amount (Rs. in Lakhs): 3.57

Calendar of Events: 1) Tender document can be downloaded from the GOK Karnataka Public Procurement Portal Website: <https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in> from 30-01-2026. 2) Pre Bid Meeting will be held on 06-02-2026 at 16.00 Hours in the Office of the Joint Commissioner, Zone-1, BCCC, Residency Road, Mayohall Premises, Bengaluru. 3) Tenders must be Submitted Online through Karnataka Public Procurement Portal on or before 16.00 Hours on 16-02-2026. 4) Technical Bids will be Opened on the Website: <https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in> at the Office of the Joint Commissioner, Zone-1, BCCC, Bengaluru on 18-02-2026 at 16.00 Hours. Further details can be had from the above office. Sd/- Joint Commissioner, Zone-1, BCCC.

IPE, The Hindu FIC quiz in city on Jan. 31

The Hindu Bureau
VIJAYAWADA

The Institute of Public Enterprise (IPE), Hyderabad, in association with *The Hindu* Future India Club (FIC) will conduct a college quiz for graduate students at Siddhartha Academy of Higher Education, Kanuru, in Vijayawada on January 31 (Saturday).

Participation is free and under graduate students, below the age of 28 years, can register their teams through the online link <https://forms.office.com/r/xOsee2e8pH>. An option of spot registration at the venue would be made available on the day of the event, subject to availability of seats. Students aspiring to participate should report by 9 a.m. at the venue.

Participation will be in teams, each team comprising two students from the same college. The registered participants should carry their college ID cards. The quiz will be conducted in two rounds - the preliminary round (pen

and paper) and final round (on-stage). Top six teams will compete in the final round on the stage, which will be held immediately after the preliminary round.

Prize distribution will be held on the same day at the venue. All the participants will be given participation certificates, while finalists will be given merit certificates, prizes, and trophies. Quiz master's decision will be final in all quiz related matters. For more information, students can contact V. Amar on 9866282522.



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Tender Notice No. RWF/S/P/1/016/2025-26 Dated 27.01.2026

On behalf of the President of India, the Principal Chief Materials Manager invites electronic Tenders from interested Vendors for supply of the following items on the Indian Railways E-Portal www.reps.gov.in.

Tender No.: P1252998A. Short Description: Fused silica Powder as per RWF specification (Developmental Tender). Qty: 1500 Kg. Date of Closing of Tenders: 10.02.2026.

The above Tender details can be viewed on our website www.rwf.indianrailways.gov.in.

Principal Chief Materials Manager

Pune Metropolitan Region Development Authority, Pune
New Administrative Building, Near Akurdi Railway Station, Akurdi, Pune - 411044 Email: ce2wssd@gmail.com

E-Tender Notice No. 64 for FY 2025-26
Corrigendum

PMRDA invites Bids through e-tendering for Work of "Appointment of a Contractor for Sewerage arrangement of 3 Clusters and 7 Villages in Taluka Khed under the jurisdiction of the PMRDA region."

The Tender document can be downloaded from the website: <https://mahatenders.gov.in> from 06/02/2026 at 17.00 PM Hrs. onwards. Last date for submission of the proposal is 26/02/2026 upto 17.00 PM Hrs. The changes if any can be available on <https://mahatenders.gov.in>

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(Engineering Division-2)
Pune Metropolitan Region Development Authority, Pune.

Pune Metropolitan Region Development Authority, Pune
New Administrative Building, Near Akurdi Railway Station, Akurdi, Pune - 411044 Email: ce2wssd@gmail.com

E-Tender Notice No. 65 for FY 2025-26
Corrigendum

PMRDA invites Bids through e-tendering for Work of "Appointment of a Contractor for Sewerage arrangement of 4 Clusters and 4 Villages in Taluka Shirur under the jurisdiction of the PMRDA region."

The Tender document can be downloaded from the website: <https://mahatenders.gov.in> from 06/02/2026 at 17.00 PM Hrs. onwards. Last date for submission of the proposal is 26/02/2026 upto 17.00 PM Hrs. The changes if any can be available on <https://mahatenders.gov.in>

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Pune Metropolitan Region Development Authority, Pune.

Pune Metropolitan Region Development Authority, Pune
New Administrative Building, Near Akurdi Railway Station, Akurdi, Pune - 411044 Email: ce2wssd@gmail.com

E-Tender Notice No. 66 for FY 2025-26
Corrigendum

PMRDA invites Bids through e-tendering for Work of "Appointment of a Contractor for Sewerage arrangement of 1 Cluster and 2 Villages in taluka mavaj under the jurisdiction of the PMRDA region."

The Tender document can be downloaded from the website: <https://mahatenders.gov.in> from 06/02/2026 at 17.00 PM Hrs. onwards. Last date for submission of the proposal is 26/02/2026 upto 17.00 PM Hrs. The changes if any can be available on <https://mahatenders.gov.in>

Sd/-
CHIEF ENGINEER
(Engineering Division-2)
Pune Metropolitan Region Development Authority, Pune.

KARNATAKA URBAN WATER SUPPLY AND DRAINAGE BOARD
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TENDER NOTIFICATION (Through Karnataka Public Procurement Portal only)

No: KWB/TEC/CE(B)/PAVAGADA SPL-T-AMRUT 2.0 /1644/2025-26, Dated: 22.01.2026

Name of the Work: Tender for Improvements of Water Supply System to Pavagada town with Tungabhadra dam (RWSSD Tapping Point) as source under AMRUT 2.0 including Operation & Maintenance for a period of 5 Years (including 1-year DLP) through design, build, operation and transfer (DBOT) mode"

Indent No.: KUWSDB/2025-26/WS/Work_INDENT480

For further details may be obtained through Karnataka Public Procurement Portal website: <https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in>

Sd/-
Chief Engineer (B),
DIPR/CP/5219/CCL/2025-26 KUWS & D Board, Bengaluru

Bank employees observe strike demanding five-day workweek

The Hindu Bureau
VIJAYAWADA

Bank employees and officers observed a one-day nationwide strike on Tuesday in response to a call given by the United Forum of Bank Unions (UFBU), an umbrella body of nine major banking unions representing nearly nine lakh employees and officers across the country. They demanded the immediate implementation of a five-day work week in banks, as agreed upon in the 12th Bi-partite Settlement and the 9th Joint Note signed on March 8, 2024.



Members of the United Forum of Bank Unions staging a protest demanding five-day week in Vijayawada on Tuesday. K.V.S. GIRI

The protest was presided over by N. Subba Rao, president of the Krishna District Bank Employees' Coordination Committee. Addressing the gather-

ing, vice-president Y.S. Rao criticised the Central government and the Indian Banks' Association (IBA) for failing to honour the agreed settlement.

Timings VIJAYAWADA

WEDNESDAY, JAN. 28
RISE 06:39 SET 18:02
RISE 13:19 SET 01:56
THURSDAY, JAN. 29
RISE 06:39 SET 18:02
RISE 14:19 SET 03:01
FRIDAY, JAN. 30
RISE 06:39 SET 18:03
RISE 15:25 SET 04:07

Vijayawada Weather	max	min
Machilipatnam	31	21
Guntur Town	32	18
Vijayawada City	30	20

Vijayawada City Today
30°C The weather will be dry. Morning will be pleasant with mist and haze. Day will be slight warm. Night will be pleasant and hazy.

Vijayawada City Tomorrow
31°C Morning will be slight cool with mist and haze. Day will be slight warm. Night also will be slight cool. Dry weather to prevail.

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THE HINDU
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Drive to boost student enrolment in govt. schools from Feb. 1

The Hindu Bureau
VIJAYAWADA

Members of the Andhra Pradesh United Teachers' Federation (UTF) announced a month-long campaign from February 1, to boost enrolment in government schools. The members, led by the federation's State president N. Venkateswarlu and general secretary K.S.S. Prasad, released a poster on the campaign here on Tuesday.

Speaking to the media, the leaders said that they would educate people about the several advantages of the State-run schools, including spacious classrooms, playgrounds, teachers with experience and commitment, and above all, quality education without spending a single rupee.

"All government schools

have been comprehensively developed and upgraded. The mid-day meal provided in schools is excellent. Essential items such as textbooks, shoes, and other supplies are being distributed to students. Nearly 90 per cent of the teachers working today are products of government schools, said Mr. Venkateswarlu, adding that the UTF was determined to strengthen government schools.

He said that from February 1 till the end of the month, around 1.85 lakh teachers would participate in this extensive campaign. They would continue their regular duties during school hours and then would carry out door-to-door campaigns. Teachers will visit households and request parents to enrol their children in government schools, he said.

Eluru to host State-level cocoa conclave on January 30, 31

The Hindu Bureau
ELURU

Eluru district will host a two-day State-level Cocoa Conclave-2026 on January 30 and 31, with the objective of promoting expan-

sion, development, and value addition of cocoa cultivation in Andhra Pradesh, District Horticulture Officer Saja Naik said on Tuesday. The officer said that the conclave will begin at 9 a.m. on January 30 at

Balaji Gardens Function Hall on Chintalapudi Road in Eluru and will continue till January 31.

It will feature extensive discussions on key issues related to cocoa farming, including expansion of co-

coa cultivation, quality standards, processing and value addition, stakeholder participation, expert guidance for farmers, adoption of modern cultivation practices and advanced technologies, im-

proving productivity and quality, and establishing international marketing linkages. The event will be attended by directors and heads of national-level institutions under the Horticulture Department.

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The Executive Vice President, HRD Department

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From Page One

Labs in 13 hospitals to be ready by April

More integrated laboratories in the State can help identify the diseases and their severity in a shorter time. These will be helpful during outbreaks, when coordination is required among different departments, he said.

The Minister said the construction of these laboratories is almost complete in the Area Hospitals of Seethampeta in Parvathipuram Manyam district, Guntakal in Anantapur district, Palamaner in Chittoor district, Araku in Alluri Sitarama Raju district, Narasaraopet in Palnadu district, Aganampudi in Visakhapatnam district, Banaganapalle in Nandyal district, Chirala in Bapatla district, Nandigama in NTR district, and Jangareddygudem in Eluru district.

Meanwhile, the construction of the labs is under way in the hospitals at Tuni in Kakinada district, Gudur in Nellore district, and Anaparthi in East Godavari district. In the Jangareddygudem lab, the medical staff has begun testing samples, according to the statement.

The Minister said tests in microbiology, haematology, clinical biochemistry, clinical pathology, molecular biology, among others, will be performed in these laboratories. Cardiac markers, cancer markers, iron studies, hormone and vitamin tests will be available. Tests to identify the level of contamination in water samples can also be conducted.

INBRIEF

Govt. rolls out SOP for desiltation of urban drains

With an aim of making the cities free of floods and maintaining hygiene, the Andhra Pradesh government has introduced a comprehensive Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for scientific de-siltation and safe cleaning of urban drains in all Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) in the State. S.Suresh Kumar, Principal Secretary, Municipal Administration and Urban Development (MA&UD) Department, in a statement on Tuesday, said the SOP mandates replacing sporadic, reactive drain cleaning with a planned, technology-driven and accountability-based system.

Naidu's two-day Kuppam tour to begin on January 30

Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu is scheduled to tour the Kuppam Assembly constituency for two days, beginning January 30. He will launch multiple development initiatives in Kuppam, Ramakuppam, Gudupalle, and Shantipuram mandals of the tri-State junction. District Collector Sumit Kumar chaired a preparatory meeting with the senior officials on Tuesday and reviewed the arrangements for the Chief Minister's visit. Mr. Naidu is expected to lay foundation stones and inaugurate several development projects, distribute social security pensions, and interact directly with beneficiaries, followed by a public meeting in Kuppam.

Rahul to join PCC protest against new job scheme

Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee president Y. S. Sharmila on Tuesday said senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi will visit Andhra Pradesh to take part in a State-wide protest against the proposed replacement of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act with the V. B. G. Ram G. Act. Speaking to the media in Delhi after meeting Mr. Rahul Gandhi, Ms. Sharmila said he had responded positively to her request to visit the State and participate in the Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee protest, scheduled to be launched on February 2 from Bandlapalli in Anantapur district. She noted that the village holds historical significance as the place where MGNREGA was first launched by a Congress government.

YSRCP accuses JSP MLA of sexually abusing woman

The YSRCP leaders have accused the coalition government of shielding Jana Sena Party (JSP) Railway Koduru MLA and Government Whip Arava Sridhar, saying that the latter is facing charges realting to crimes against women. The YSRCP posted videos allegedly relating to the MLA's involvement in the sexual abuse of a woman employee on the social media platform 'X' on Tuesday. The YSRCP alleged that the woman was coerced and misled with promises of marriage and later pressured to seek a divorce from her husband. It was alleged that her husband, a software professional, was threatened. Addressing a press conference at the party office at Tadepalli on Tuesday, YSRCP MLC Varudu Kalyani levelled serious allegations against the JSP MLA. She alleged that the woman was threatened that her three-year-old child would be harmed if she did not comply with the MLA's demands. She alleged that the woman became pregnant due to the alleged exploitation and was later forced to undergo an abortion.

CM sets 500 million MT horticulture output target for Seema, Prakasam

Pending irrigation projects requiring minimal funds must be undertaken on a priority, says Naidu; officials told to prepare plans to rebuild the damaged Annamayya project

The Hindu Bureau
VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu has asked the officials to fast-track the completion of pending irrigation projects and roll out integrated development plans to transform Rayalaseema and Prakasam regions into major horticulture hubs.

"The State should aim to achieve 500 million metric tonnes of horticultural produce from Rayalaseema, Prakasam and Markapuram districts in line with global market demand," he said while reviewing the integrated development proposals at his camp office on Tuesday.

Mr. Naidu instructed the officials to adopt coordinated planning using funds from the Purvodaya programme, SASCY initiatives and State government resources to ensure holistic growth.

Water Resources Minister Nimmala Ramanaidu and Finance Minister Payavula Keshav informed the Chief Minister that several irrigation projects had stalled for years.

Mr. Naidu ordered that



Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu sitting in one of the back rows along side party leaders during the parliamentary committees' workshop at NTR Bhavan in Vijayawada on Tuesday.

projects requiring minimal funds for early completion be undertaken on a priority basis. He made it clear that the Veligonda project must be completed within this year. The officials were also told to prepare plans to rebuild the damaged Annamayya project.

The officials said more than 20 irrigation projects in 10 districts had been proposed, envisaging bringing 8.87 lakh acres under irrigation and stabilising water supply to another 4.30 lakh acres.

Mr Naidu asked the officials to focus on bringing

Krishna waters to Kadapa through the Galeru-Nagari project and to plan river interlinking in the North Andhra region after the completion of the Polavaram Left Canal.

Highlighting horticulture growth, Agriculture Minister K. Atchannaidu said proposals have been prepared to develop 201 clusters in 303 mandals, expanding the area of horticulture from 8.41 lakh hectares to 14.41 lakh hectares in three years.

The Chief Minister said Rayalaseema should be developed as the world's lar-

gest horticulture cluster, adding that Dubai-based DP World has expressed interest in setting up a horticulture cluster in Andhra Pradesh. He stressed the need to strengthen rural road networks, logistics, cold chains, food processing units, warehousing, port connectivity and global market linkages, while attracting private investment alongside government funding. Senior officials from finance, irrigation, agriculture, horticulture, ports and R&B departments attended the review meeting.

Labour Codes to protect workers' interests and boost jobs: Union Minister

The Hindu Bureau
VIJAYAWADA

Union Minister of State for Labour and Employment Shobha Karandlaje on Tuesday said that the new Labour Codes are aimed at safeguarding workers' rights, expanding employment opportunities and creating a balanced, industry-friendly environment across the country.

Inaugurating a two-day Regional Conference of Labour and Employment and Industry Secretaries of States and Union Territories in the city, the Union Minister described the consolidation of 29 colonial-era labour laws into four comprehensive Labour Codes as a historic reform.

She said the codes, which came into force on November 21, would bring far-reaching changes to the lives of workers and employers by ensuring transparency, compliance and technology-driven governance.

Highlighting the key



Union Minister of State for Labour and Employment Shobha Karandlaje addressing the media in Vijayawada on Tuesday, as State Labour Minister Vasamsetti Subhash looks on. K.V.S. GIRI

provisions, Ms. Karandlaje said the new laws ensure equal pay for equal work for women, mandate payment of wages within a week of completion of work.

For the first time, social security coverage has been extended to gig, platform and unorganised sector workers.

The Union Minister said deliberations were under way to extend EPFO and ESI benefits to nearly 90% of unorganised workers.

Andhra Pradesh Labour Minister Vasamsetti Subhash said the State has expanded ESIC healthcare infrastructure, strengthened digital services and organised workplace medical camps to improve worker health and transparency.

Meanwhile, the Union Minister visited the Sri Durga Malleswara Swamyvarla Devasthanam atop Indrakeeladri in Vijayawada on Tuesday and offered special prayers to the presiding deity Kanaka Durga.

TDP MP flags tobacco crisis, Amaravati status at all-party meeting

The Hindu Bureau
VIJAYAWADA

Telugu Desam Party MP Lavu Srikrishnadevarayalu participated in an all-party meeting held in New Delhi on Tuesday and raised issues relating to Andhra Pradesh as well as national concerns.

Speaking to the media after the meeting, Mr. Srikrishnadevarayalu said he stressed the need for a discussion in Parliament on restricting access to social media for children below 16 years of age. He also drew attention to the confusion arising from the replacement of excise duty on tobacco with GST, stating that the tobacco trade had come to a standstill, causing severe distress to farmers in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. He urged that the issue be taken up in Parliament and resolved at the earliest.

The MP also sought statutory status for Andhra Pradesh's capital, Amaravati. Referring to the Purvodaya scheme, which covers States such as Odisha and West Bengal, he said

Worker is true leader of the party: Naidu

The Hindu Bureau
VIJAYAWADA

The Telugu Desam Party held a day-long Parliamentary Committees Workshop at its central office, NTR Bhavan, bringing together 1,050 members from 25 parliamentary committees. TDP national president and Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu participated in the programme and chose to sit in the last row alongside party leaders and workers.

The workshop reviewed the party's four-and-a-half-decade journey, its ideology, cadre management practices, and the central role of party workers. Discussions also focused on welfare schemes under the coalition government, development programmes, long-term vision plans, and the need for balanced regional development.

Mr. Naidu interacted with committee members and elaborated on the party's principles, achievements, and roadmap for the future. He emphasised that the worker is the true leader of the party and

urged leaders to maintain discipline, stay connected with grassroots cadres, and remain committed to public service.

TDP national general secretary and IT and Education Minister Nara Lokesh inaugurated additional training sessions for parliamentary committees, highlighting social justice, youth empowerment, and inclusive leadership. He said that 33% of positions have been reserved for women and that 83% of committee posts were allotted to newly inducted members. Praising Mr. Naidu, he described party members as his soldiers and reiterated that breaking promises or frequently changing positions goes against TDP values. On coalition dynamics, Mr. Lokesh underlined the role of parliamentary committees in resolving inter-party differences. Regional training centres will be established in Visakhapatnam, Amaravati, and Tirupati to strengthen cadre skills and improve operational efficiency. Party leaders and workers termed the workshop inspiring.

Tobacco ryots urge rollback of steep excise duty hike

The Hindu Bureau
AMARAVATI

Flue-Cured Virginia tobacco(FCV) farmers from Prakasam, Nellore, East Godavari and West Godavari districts on Tuesday met Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, seeking his urgent intervention to review and roll back the recent steep hike in excise duty on cigarettes.

The delegation, led by G. Seshagiri and B. Brahmaiah, both former vice-chairmen of the Tobacco Board, alleged that the sharp tax hike was fuelling illicit cigarette trade and smuggling, leading to a surge of untaxed and unregulated products in the market. Excessive taxation, they said, was shrinking the legal cigarette market and diverting consumption to illicit channels rather than reducing overall demand.

Mr. Naidu patiently heard the concerns and assured the delegation that the issue would be examined seriously and taken up with the Union government.

23 fishermen freed after 3 months in Bangladesh custody

V. Kamalakara Rao
VISAKHAPATNAM

For the families of 23 fishermen who were held by Bangladesh security forces, the long wait finally seems to be over, with official confirmation of their release on Tuesday (January 27). Overwhelmed with emotion, fishermen from Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal were able to hear the voices of their loved ones over the phone after being released from the Bagherhat District Jail in Bangladesh.

The group includes nine fishermen from Andhra Pradesh and 14 from West

Bengal. They had been in custody since October 2025 after their fishing boats lost navigation on October 21 and drifted inadvertently into Bangladeshi waters, where they were intercepted by the Bangladesh coastal security.

"We are safe, we are coming home," was the message that echoed across phone lines as the fishermen were moved to Mongla Port under tight security.

The release followed coordinated efforts by the authorities of both countries. The fishermen are currently staying at Mon-

gla Port, where their seized boats are being repaired and readied for the return journey. Mohammad Hafiz Al Asad, Deputy Secretary in the Bangladesh Ministry of Home Affairs, travelled from Dhaka to oversee the release process, sources said. Representing Indian interests, Chandrajiet from the Assistant High Commission of India in Khulna and Vasupalli Janakiram, president of the East Coast Mechanised Fishing Boat Owners Association, Visakhapatnam, completed the necessary documentation.

Officials said that despite the sensitive bilateral

situation, special care was taken to ensure the welfare of the Indian fishermen during their nearly three-month detention.

The fishermen are scheduled to be formally handed over to India at the International Maritime Boundary Line on January 29, with the Coast Guards of both countries facilitating the process.

Speaking to *The Hindu* over the phone from Khulna on Tuesday evening, Mr. Janakiram said the nine fishermen from Andhra Pradesh were expected to reach Visakhapatnam on January 31 or February 1.



Freedom at last: Indian fishermen at Mongla Port in Bangladesh during final formalities prior to their handover at sea.

INBRIEF



Zoom past toll plazas on NH between Mysuru, Bengaluru

In a move towards congestion-free highways, the National Highways Authority of India is exploring implementation of a Multi-Lane Free Flow tolling pilot project on the 117-km-long Bengaluru-Mysuru Access-Controlled Highway (NH-275) soon. The MLFF system replaces traditional toll booths with overhead gantries equipped with satellite-based GPS technology, high-performance RFID FASTag readers and Automated Number Plate Recognition cameras.

Deepak death case: court denies bail to accused

The Kunnamangalam Judicial First Class Magistrate's Court in Kozhikode, Kerala on Tuesday dismissed the bail plea of Shimjitha Musthafa, who has been charged with abetment of the suicide of salesman U. Deepak, whom she had accused of sexual misconduct on a moving bus, earlier this month. Magistrate M. Athira agreed with the prosecution that releasing the accused could lead to evidence tampering and influence over witnesses. (Suicide Prevention Helpline: Disha - 1056, 0471-2552056)

Telangana municipal elections on February 11

Elections to seven Municipal Corporations and 116 Municipalities in Telangana will be held in a single phase on February 11, the State Election Commission (SEC) announced on Tuesday. According to the SEC, notification for the polls will be issued on Wednesday and filing of nominations will commence immediately. The last date for filing nominations is January 30 and their scrutiny will be taken up the next day.

Karnataka constitutes Gig Workers' Welfare Board

Both the workers and aggregator platforms must register with the Board; aggregators will have 45 days to complete registration, submit details of the workers engaged through their platforms

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The State government on Tuesday issued a notification constituting the Karnataka Platform-Based Gig Workers Welfare Development Board under the 2025 Act to implement welfare measures for gig workers. The Labour Minister will be the ex-officio president, with senior officials from the Labour Department, the Department of Information Technology and the Commercial Taxes Department as ex-officio members and the Board's Chief Executive Officer as Member Secretary.

The Board includes four representatives each from



The constitution of the Board follows the government's decision to implement welfare measures for gig workers. K. MURALI KUMAR

gig worker unions and aggregator platforms, with companies such as Zomato, Uber, Amazon, and Porter represented. Labour unions such as the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) and app-based transport and delivery worker unions are included. Both

gig workers and aggregator platforms will now be required to register with the Board.

Aggregators will have 45 days to complete their registration and furnish details of all gig workers engaged through their platforms. Each registered

gig worker will be issued a unique identification number, which will be used by the Board to disburse social security benefits. The welfare fund will comprise the welfare fee collected from aggregators, contributions made by gig workers, and grants provided by the State and Union governments.

The State has decided to levy a welfare fee of 1% to 1.5%, with a cap, on aggregator platforms, with the rate varying across sectors and business models. Labour Minister Santosh Lad had said the levy was kept low initially to ensure a steady welfare fund for gig workers without placing an immediate financial burden on platforms.

8th century Telugu inscription discovered in A.P.

The Hindu Bureau
AMARAVATI

A Telugu inscription dating back to the 8th century CE has been discovered at Pitikayagulla village in Bestavaripeta mandal of Prakasam district, Andhra Pradesh, shedding light on the evolution of the Telugu language and early published works in the region.

The inscription was engraved on a stone slab erected in front of the historic Pitikesvara temple.



The inscription was engraved on a stone slab erected in front of the Pitikesvara temple.

Written in Telugu language and characters of the 8th century CE, the record is

considered significant for both epigraphical and historical studies.

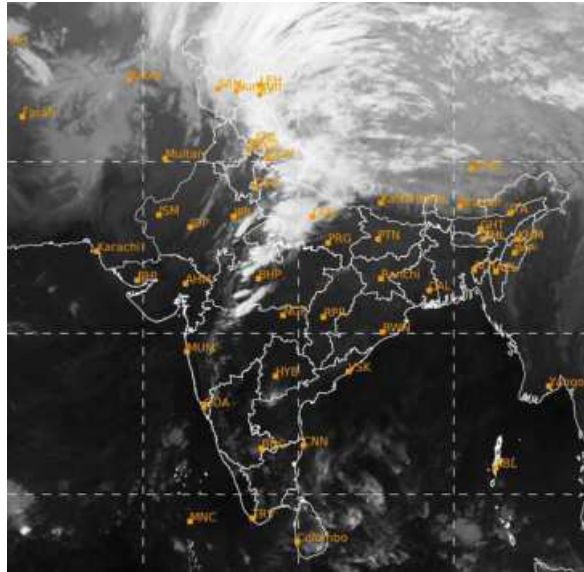
The four-line inscription reads: "Svastisri Nandelu Vari, Chensinnavanthu Prani, Milli Achari," and "Padasina Nava Katta". Epigraphists interpret the inscription as recording the construction of a new embankment (nava katta). The work is attributed to Pranimilli Achari, identified as a sculptor or craftsman, indicating the active role of artisans in public infrastructure during that

period. The reference is believed to date to a time when the Renadu region was under royal administration.

K. Muniratnam Reddy, Director (Epigraphy), Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), said the inscription represents a new epigraphical exploration. He noted that such early Telugu records are crucial for understanding the transition of Telugu from Prakrit influences to an independent literary and administrative language.

WEATHERWATCH

Rainfall, temperature & air quality in select metros yesterday



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 17.45 HRS)

Forecast for Wednesday: Cold wave conditions likely at isolated places over Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Chandigarh and Delhi. Thunderstorm with lightning/gusty winds likely at isolated places over Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala		28.7	11.7	Kozhikode	.....	32.2	26.2
Ahmedabad		28.6	17.2	Kurnool	.....	32.5	20.0
Aizawl		28.5	8.5	Lucknow	.....	24.5	11.2
Allahabad		27.0	12.6	Madurai	.....	33.0	21.5
Bengaluru		29.4	16.6	Mangaluru	.....	33.1	24.0
Bhopal		28.0	14.0	Mumbai	.....	27.8	22.6
Bhubaneswar		31.7	14.6	Mysuru	.....	30.4	17.4
Chandigarh		15.5	10.1	New Delhi	.....	16.9	8.0
Chennai		30.1	22.1	Patna	.....	23.9	13.7
Coimbatore		30.4	19.8	Port Blair	.....	30.6	23.2
Dehradun		22.6	10.5	Puducherry	.....	28.2	22.6
Gangtok		17.0	7.6	Pune	.....	32.5	20.1
Goa		32.6	22.8	Raipur	.....	31.0	15.9
Guwahati		27.5	13.0	Ranchi	.....	25.9	11.0
Hubballi		29.0	19.0	Shillong	.....	19.8	7.6
Hyderabad		30.2	19.0	Shimla	.....	11.0	7.4
Imphal		25.4	7.5	Srinagar	.....	2.2	-0.1
Jaipur		0.4	21.9	Thiruvananthapuram	.....	34.2	23.9
Kochi		32.4	25.2	Tiruchi	.....	0.1	30.4
Kohima		17.5	7.0	Vijayawada	.....	30.2	20.3
Kolkata		27.0	15.8	Visakhapatnam	.....	29.1	20.4

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing							Yesterday
CITIES	SO ₂	NO ₂	CO	PM _{2.5}	PM ₁₀	CODE	
Ahmedabad		.87	.74	38	134	151	In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 376 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Davanagere, Karnataka recorded a healthy AQI score of 26
Bengaluru		.5	..	38	71	101	
Chennai		.4	..	6	54	88	
Delhi		13	244	97	421	381	
Hyderabad		.8	36	28	101	111	
Kolkata		..	.88	51	160	141	
Lucknow		19	.41	38	208	136	
Mumbai		..	.62	.3	131	107	
Pune		..	58	31	190	147	
Visakhapatnam		.22	.86	21	185	196	

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

SO₂: 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.

NO₂: 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.

PM_{2.5} & 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

Office Chief Medical & Health Officer & Member Secretary Bharatpur
Sr. No. F/(NHM/2026/1200 Date : 15-01-2026
NIB : 01/2025-26 (NHM)
Online Bids for "Lab Regents & Consumable Item" are invited from interested bidders upto 2:00 PM dated 05.02.2026. Other particulars of the bid may be visited on the procurement portal (<http://sppo.raajasthan.nic.in> & <https://eproc.raajasthan.gov.in>) of the state.
Estimated Cost Rs. 5 Crores.
NIB NO : MHS2526A4167
UBN No. : MHS2526GLRC05972
Chief Medical & Health Officer & Member Secretary DHS Bharatpur
DIPR/C/1090/2026

NOTICE INVITING TENDER (NIT)
GMR Vishakhapatnam International Airport Ltd. (GVIAL) invites tender for Package:
1. Hiring of Agency for Security Service at Bhogapuram International Airport for a period of 10 years and further extendable up to 5 years.
2. Deployment of Private Security Agency for undertaking non-core security functions at Bhogapuram International Airport for 3 years' contract period.
For details, interested parties may download the Tender document free of charge from gmrvishakhapatnamairport.com/tender.aspx between 26.01.2026 to 03.02.2026.
VIZAPRESENT ASSOCIATES

Pune Metropolitan Region Development Authority, Pune
New Administrative Building, Near Akurdi Railway Station, Akurdi, Pune - 411044 Email: ce2wssd@gmail.com
E-Tender Notice No. 63 for FY 2025-26
Corrigendum
PMRDA invites Bids through e-tendering for Work of "Appointment of a Contractor for Sewerage arrangement of 5 Clusters and 8 Villages in Taluka Havelli under the jurisdiction of the PMRDA region."
The Tender document can be downloaded from the website: <https://mahatenders.gov.in> from 06/02/2026 at 17.00 PM Hrs. onwards. Last date for submission of the proposal is 26/02/2026 upto 17.00 PM Hrs. The changes if any can be available on <https://mahatenders.gov.in>
Sd/-
CHIEF ENGINEER
(Engineering Division-2)
Pune Metropolitan Region Development Authority, Pune.

Endowments Department, Andhra Pradesh
E-Procurement Tender Notice
Tenders are invited for the work "Providing Development works at Sri Ramalingeswara Swamy Temple, Lingala (V), Vatsavai (M), NTR District" for an Estimated Amount of **Rs.340.00 Lakhs**. Other Details can be seen from www.apecprocurement.gov.in website. Sd/- CHAIRMAN

ANDHRA PRADESH MEDICAL SERVICES & INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
Plot No.9, Survey No.49, IT Park, Mangalagiri-522503, Guntur District. Amaravathi Region, Andhra Pradesh email: ce.aphmhdc@gmail.com
Tender Notice No.9/APMSIDC/Technical/2025-26 Dated.23.01.2026
Tenders are invited through e-procurement platform for Civil works:
1) Construction of additional building blocks for additional facilities like Labs, building OP Rooms, OT Complex, Pharmacy Store etc at CHC Chenur in YSR Kadapa District (2nd Call), Value of work: **Rs. 423.79 Lakhs**
2) Construction of new administrative block & Mini Auditorium, Lifts arrangements, renovation of class rooms and compound wall at Dr. A.R. Govt. Homoeo Medical College, Rajamahendravaram in East Godavari District, Appx Value of work: **Rs. 240.00 Lakhs**
3) Upgradation of Dr. Gururaju Govt. Homoeopathic Medical College, Guduvada in Krishna District (To Complete the civil works for Digital Class Rooms and Library, Transformer and Lift arrangements), Appx Value of work: **Rs. 278.93 Lakhs**
4) Upgradation of Govt. Homoeopathic Medical College, Kadapa in Kadapa District (Construction of New Building Block for College), Appx Value of work: **Rs. 320.00 Lakhs**.
The other details can be seen at the website <https://apmsidc.ap.nic.in>.
DIPR 4768PP/CL, Dt: 27-01-2026 Sd/- MANAGING DIRECTOR

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PERSONAL CHANGE OF NAME
CHANGE OF NAME
I, **BOBBA TULASI**, W/o B Prabhakar Naidu, Door No 13-8, Pandurangavaripalle, Kotala, Chandragiri Mandal, Tirupati District, 517102, A.P., have changed my name to **BOBBA THULASAMMA**.

LEGAL NOTICE
IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT MADRAS
C.R.P.No.1594 of 2020 against I.A.No.16 of 2019 in O.S.No. 17 of 2000 (Sub Court, Vellore)
K.Sekar Vs. Amaravathi Ammal(Died) and others
... Respondents
To, Mrs.R.Amsaveni W/o Kannan Chowdapalli, Kollaimeedu Santhapet, Chittoor
Madam
Please take notice that the above matter came up before the Hon'ble High Court on 07.01.2026. The Hon'ble High Court, Chennai has permitted us to take notice upon you through paper publication to 11.02.2026. Therefore, kindly make arrangements to appear either in person or through Counsel on or before 11.02.2026 at failing which the matter will be decided in your absence on merits.
Yours Sincerely,
For Saravabhauman Associates Counsel for Petitioner.

REAL ESTATE
3BHK, EAST entry flat with amenities in a gated community at BHEL vista colony ,Geedimetla, Hyderabad for sale. 9440412464, 9500011014.
2BHK INDEPENDENT house in 196 sqyds near Mallapur ,RCI road, Hyderabad for sale. 9440412464, 85 lakhs.

PERSONAL CHANGE OF NAME
CHANGE OF NAME
I, **PENUBOLU SREE SINDHURA** (Old Name) W/o. **PENUBOLU HARINATH**, 3rd Floor, Tejaswhini Grand Apartment, 3rd Street, Tyagaraja Nagar, Vedayapalem, A.K. Nagar Post, Nellore, SPSS Nellore District, Andhra Pradesh - 524 004. Hence forth be known **PENUBOLU SINDHURA** (New Name), W/o. **PENUBOLU HARINATH**.

SITUATION VACANT GENERAL
WANTED
Now in Vijayawada our New Agency in working with Computer Operators / Tele Callers / Field Executives / Social Media Operators. Qua: Inter to Degree.
Cell: 93943 71987

CHANGE OF NAME
I, Army No: 15331918-M, Rank: ESM HAV, Name: **P. VEERESH**, resident of House No: 3/81, O.C. Colony, CHAGI Village, Musanahalli Post, Adoni Mandal, Kurnool District 518302, Andhra Pradesh, India. I submit that my daughter's name has been wrongly entered in my Army Service Records as **P. KRISHNA SAI VEERA BASAVA** instead of **P. SAI DEEKSHA**. This mistake occurred inadvertently. Therefore, I respectfully request the concerned authorities to kindly carry out the necessary correction in the relevant records. I request that this affidavit may be accepted and my daughter's correct name **P. SAI DEEKSHA** may be considered for all official purposes.

TECHNICAL
EXPERIENCED ENGINEERS & SAFETY OFFICER REQUIRED
Applications are invited from qualified & experienced professionals for work related to dismantling & removal of Plant & Machinery at ENNORE, CHENNAI.
VACANCIES: ELECTRICAL/ CIVIL/ MECHANICAL ENGINEERS BE/Diploma with 15 yrs' exp., **SAFETY OFFICER** with valid Safety Certificate Preference to be given to ex-servicemen
Interested candidates may apply by sending their resume to: ennore.novitate@gmail.com

RENTAL COMMERCIAL
RENT / LEASE
Commercial Building for Rent 10,000 Sqft in 3 Floors + Cellar Car Parking at Kothapet, TENALI and 5 Acres Land for Lease at Goli Donka Road, Ithanagar, TENALI
Contact:- 98482 16364, 82474 77974

Pune Metropolitan Region Development Authority, Pune
New Administrative Building, Near Akurdi Railway Station, Akurdi, Pune - 411044 Email: ce2wssd@gmail.com
E-Tender Notice No. 61 for FY 2025-26
Corrigendum
PMRDA invites Bids through e-tendering for Work of "Appointment of a Contractor for the Pavana river Pollution Abatement Project under the jurisdiction of the PMRDA region."
The Tender document can be downloaded from the website: <https://mahatenders.gov.in> from 06/02/2026 at 17.00 PM Hrs. onwards. Last date for submission of the proposal is 26/02/2026 upto 17.00 PM Hrs. The changes if any can be available on <https://mahatenders.gov.in>
Sd/-
CHIEF ENGINEER
(Engineering Division-2)
Pune Metropolitan Region Development Authority, Pune.

Pune Metropolitan Region Development Authority, Pune
New Administrative Building, Near Akurdi Railway Station, Akurdi, Pune - 411044 Email: ce2wssd@gmail.com
E-Tender Notice No. 60 for FY 2025-26
Corrigendum
PMRDA invites Bids through e-tendering for Work of "Appointment of a Contractor for the Indrayani river Pollution Abatement Project under the jurisdiction of the PMRDA region."
The Tender document can be downloaded from the website: <https://mahatenders.gov.in> from 06/02/2026 at 17.00 PM Hrs. onwards. Last date for submission of the proposal is 26/02/2026 upto 17.00 PM Hrs. The changes if any can be available on <https://mahatenders.gov.in>
Sd/-
CHIEF ENGINEER
(Engineering Division-2)
Pune Metropolitan Region Development Authority, Pune.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER, RURAL WORKS CIRCLE, KENDRAPARA-JAIPUR
AT-CHANDIKHOLE, PO- SUNGUDA, Dist.: JAJPUR, Email : serw_kpd@yahoo.com
Office Order No. 213 / Dtd. 22/01/2026
CANCELLATION OF TENDER
The following tender of RCK-20/25 invited vide this office letter No. 4008 dtd 27.11.2025 & RCK 21/25 invited vide this office letter No.4026 dtd. 29.1.25 is hereby **canceled** due to unavoidable circumstances.
RCK 20/25
1. Constn. of road from Pundilo to Canal Bandha Mahanga Palasudha road under MMSYTRIP in the Dist. of Kendrapara for the year 2025-26.
RCK 21/25
1. Constn. of road from L023- Kantilto to Suniti road under MMSY-DRR in the Dist. of Kendrapara for the year 2025-26.
O-2138: Chief Construction Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Kendrapara-Jajpur

BHUBANESWAR DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
AKASHI SHOVA BUILDING, SACHIVALAYA MARG, BHUBANESWAR-751001
PABX No.0674-2392801/0998/6437, FAX No.0674-2390633/085; Visit us at: <http://www.bda.gov.in/>
Invitation For Bids - Bid Identification No.50/EM/BDA/2025-26 Date: 22/01/2026
Engineer Member, BDA on behalf of Bhubaneswar Development Authority, Bhubaneswar invites percentage rate bids in Double Cover System in ONLINE MODE from eligible contractors for civil works as mentioned below:
1. Nature of works : Civil & Electrical Work (Development of road work)
2. Total No. of works : 01 (one) No.
3. Amount put to tender : Rs.3.87 Crore
4. Class of Contractor : 'A' Class
5. Period of Completion : 9 (Nine) Calendar months
6. Cost of Bid Documents : Rs.10000.00 + 18% GST= Rs.11800.00 (Online transfer by the last date & time for receipt of bids)
7. Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) : 1% of estimated cost put to tender, (Online transfer by the last date & time for receipt of bids)
8. Availability of Tender : From 30.01.2026 to 5.30 PM of 16.02.2026 <https://tendersodisha.gov.in>.
9. Date of opening of Tender : Dt:17.02.2026 at 11.30 AM
10. Place of opening of Tender : O/o-Engineer Member, BDA, Bhubaneswar.
Further details can be seen from the website: <https://tendersodisha.gov.in>. Any addendum / corrigendum / cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said website.
CAD-3099: Engineer Member, BDA, Bhubaneswar.

Government of Odisha E-Mail : serwcirclesbp@yahoo.com
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER, RURAL WORKS CIRCLE, SAMBALPUR.
E-PROCUREMENT NOTICE
BID IDENTIFICATION NO. ROAD TENDER ONLINE RWCSBP-30/2025-26
1. Name of the Work :- Road Works
2. Total No. of works :- 10 nos Road work
3. Estimated cost :- Rs.162.88 lakhs to Rs.735.21 lakhs
4. Class of contractor :- 'B', 'A' & 'Spl'
5. Other details :- As mentioned in DTCN

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of Tender On-line for bidding	
		From	To
1	2	3	4
Chief Construction Engineer, Rural Works Circle , Sambalpur.	ROAD TENDER ONLINE RWCSBP-30/2025-26	31.01.2026 11.00 A.M	18.02.2026 05.00 P.M

Further details can be seen from the website : www.tendersorissa.gov.in
Chief Construction Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Sambalpur.
O-2057:



Manufacturing woes

Capital support alone will not add to battery cell manufacturing capacity

India's quest to install 500 GW non-fossil fuel capacity by 2030 has found its primary industrial engine in the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes. Buoyed by the momentum the scheme generated in telecom manufacturing, where the government pays out a predetermined sum only if companies achieve agreed sales targets annually, ministries expect the initiative to transform India from a net importer of green technology into a global manufacturing hub. Unlike telecom, however, the PLI for high-efficiency solar photovoltaics and advanced chemistry cell battery storage face daunting implementation challenges. While downstream module assembly is robust (achieving 56% of its specific target by mid-2025), the critical upstream segments remain a bottleneck. Polysilicon and wafer manufacturing, the most technology-intensive parts of the value chain, have only reached 14% and 10% of their respective targets. This disparity highlights a persistent reliance on imported raw materials and specialised technical expertise, prompting the government to consider additional capital subsidies to de-risk these high-capex upstream projects.

Similar woes stalk the scheme for battery manufacturing. The progress towards establishing 50 GWh of domestic battery cell production to fuel the electric vehicle revolution, with an outlay of ₹18,000 crore, has been sluggish. By late 2025, only about 2.8% (1.4 GWh) of the targeted capacity had been commissioned. The gap between policy ambition and ground reality in battery manufacturing stems from stringent domestic value addition requirements – mandating 25% within two years and 60% within five – and the immense technical barriers of “gigafactory” construction. To add to these are challenges such as not issuing visas to Chinese technical experts, who will be setting up several manufacturing facilities. The Indian government's expectation that mere capital support will substantially improve high-technology manufacturing is misplaced. The complex infrastructure required to make it at scale requires decades of research investment and workforce training. While mega corporates expect international technology transfers to accelerate the process, they are capital intensive and do not always translate to near-term gain. Several companies face steep fines for not delivering on their deadlines. A relook at provisions in the PLI scheme to prioritise expertise and technical know-how rather than the net worth of companies bidding for PLI contracts is necessary.

Pressure points

Trump's strategy to keep pushing Caracas can only lead to a breaking point

What is unfolding in Venezuela is naked imperialism. Having ordered the abduction of a sitting head of state and imposed a naval blockade on a sovereign nation, U.S. President Donald Trump declared that Washington would now “run” Venezuela. That he endorsed Acting President Delcy Rodríguez rather than the opposition does not diminish the criminality of these actions; it merely reveals their purpose, which was not about democracy or narcotics but about control of Venezuela's oil. The Trump administration's approach might appear contradictory: help retain the Bolivarian regime while strangling its economic sovereignty. But the logic is coherent. Washington wants Venezuela's oil without the costs of occupation or the chaos of regime change. It learned from Iraq that dismantling state structures creates insurgencies. It believes that it is better to capture the existing apparatus and redirect its functions – a form of neocolonialism that maintains the forms of statehood while exercising actual control.

This arrangement places Ms. Rodríguez in a difficult position. The Bolivarian movement was built on resisting precisely this kind of American domination over Venezuela's resources. Yet her government, battered by a decade of sanctions, must now negotiate with the very power that kidnapped her predecessor. Her statement on Sunday, “Enough already of Washington's orders over politicians in Venezuela”, reveals the strain that she is under. She has complied with American demands on oil trade and released political prisoners as a “peace gesture”. But she cannot surrender Venezuelan sovereignty entirely without losing the Chavista base that sustains her government. The more pressure Washington applies on Caracas, the more it risks the very instability it claims to want to prevent. If the U.S. wanted a productive economic relationship with Venezuela, it should not have embarked on this marauding path. The sanctions that devastated Venezuela's economy were American policy. The migration crisis that Mr. Trump cited to justify intervention was a consequence of those sanctions. Now, Washington offers to ease the pressure it created, but only if Venezuela submits to exclusive American control over its resources. This is not diplomacy; it is extortion. The world cannot remain silent. When Russia violated Ukrainian sovereignty, the international community condemned it and imposed sanctions. Mr. Trump's ‘Donroe Doctrine’ threatens not just Venezuela, but the foundations of the international order. If it remains unchallenged internationally, no nation in the Global South can be safe.

The sudden decline in the value of the rupee has somewhat shaken the people and the markets. They wonder why this is happening when the economy is doing well, characterised by a good growth rate, low inflation, and a modest current account deficit.

India's growth rate in the current year is estimated at 7.4%. Inflation has been subdued with CPI inflation ending the year 2025 at 1.33%, below the Reserve Bank of India (RBI)'s lower target band for the fourth consecutive month. The current account deficit as a percentage of GDP in the first half of 2025-26 is only 0.76 compared to 1.35 in the previous year. The fall in the value of rupee since April 2025 is about 6%.

The villain of the piece

Since the trade deficit (merchandise and services), which was \$96.58 billion in April-December 2025 compared to \$88.43 billion in the same period last year, is not that large, the main villain in the piece is capital outflows. There has been a steady outflow of capital since U.S. President Donald Trump took an adverse view on India and imposed 50% import duty on Indian exports. Initially, the U.S. imposed a 25% tariff on ‘reciprocal’ basis and then another 25% because India was importing crude oil from Russia. Now, it is threatening to impose an additional 25% tariff on countries that are doing business with Iran. This includes India, although trade with Iran is only 0.15% of the country's total trade.

Net capital inflows in April-December 2024 were \$10,615 million. In the same period in 2025, they turned negative, with a net outflow of \$3,900 million. Despite months of negotiations with the U.S., no agreement has been reached yet. There seem to have been issues that could not be resolved easily. If this stalemate continues, the rupee will continue to fall.

We have to note that in the changed context, capital outflows are caused not by strict



C. Rangarajan

Former Governor Reserve Bank of India



N.R. Bhanumurthy

Director, Madras School of Economics, Chennai

Capital outflows are hitting the rupee. These outflows will continue to take place until India and the U.S. come to an understanding

economic factors but by fears generated by the 'hostile' attitude of the U.S. In 2022, the rupee depreciated by almost 10%. That had some economic explanation, such as the Federal Reserve's sharp hikes in interest rates. But this time, there is no clear economic explanation. Thus, the situation has shifted from the economic arena to the diplomatic platform. When tariffs are getting weaponised for geopolitical reasons, diplomacy is the major route for a solution.

RBI intervention

India's exchange rate regime underwent a change in 1993 when it moved to a market-determined exchange rate regime. But the new system did not rule out the RBI's intervention in the foreign exchange market. Since 1993, all RBI Governors have made it clear that the intention is not to use intervention to peg the value of the rupee, but to reduce its volatility.

However, the word ‘volatility’ was never defined. We can deduce from the actions of the RBI that reducing volatility means not only reducing fluctuations around a prevailing level, but also ‘moderating’ the fall in the value of the rupee when it happens. Shocks from rupee fluctuations have a cost. It is only to minimise the impact of such sudden shocks that there is intervention. Even then, it is not the intention of the RBI to prevent the fall, but to let it slide smoothly to whatever level it has to fall. It may be best for the RBI to clarify that reducing volatility also includes moderating the fall in the value of the rupee. After all, intervention, especially if it is asymmetric, does affect the level of exchange rate while minimising its volatility. The present situation adds another element – non-economic pressures acting on the value of the rupee. In fact, if India and the U.S. come to an understanding, the rupee will appreciate.

Why devaluation is not the remedy

Will a fall in the value of the rupee have any

A spark to drive India's e-LCV transition

Whenever your online orders are delivered, there is a good chance that they travelled in a light commercial vehicle (LCV) – those small (sub-3.5 tonne) trucks that are the backbone of India's booming e-commerce economy. Here is a fact: while India has spent years regulating passenger car energy consumption, LCVs have operated in a regulatory blind spot. India has made significant strides in regulating fuel efficiency for passenger cars through corporate average fuel efficiency (CAFE) norms for fleet-wide CO2 emission targets. However, LCVs operate without such mandates, despite their high utilisation and substantial market presence.

Policymakers are finally addressing this regulatory gap: in late July, 2025, the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) unveiled a fuel consumption standard proposal for LCVs, which will run from 2027 through 2032.

Ahead of the release of the draft, automakers lobbied for full exemption of LCVs from CAFE regulations, citing the price sensitivity of the market and claiming that the standard would necessitate expensive technologies in internal combustion engines (ICE). Eventually, the request was set aside, signalling the government's commitment to decarbonisation.

LCVs in India accounted for 48% of commercial goods vehicles in 2024, yet electrification remained low at 2%. Bringing this sector under regulatory oversight is pivotal for India's clean transport agenda.

Where things stand

India's LCV fleet averaged 147.5 g CO2/km in 2024. Without the minimal 2% share of battery electric LCVs (e-LCVs), this figure would be 150 g CO2/km, which shows how even marginal electrification impacts emissions.

Automakers have entered the Battery Electric Vehicle (BEV) market with few models, offering sub-35 kWh battery packs with maximum ranges of 150 km. Why so cautious? Market realities are



Moorthy Nair

Researcher at the International Council on Clean Transportation

The proposed fuel efficiency norms for light commercial vehicles could become a turning point – with smart policy design, stringent standards, and strategic use of incentives

tough: high upfront costs and limited model availability constrain demand. Although battery LCVs offer lower total ownership costs than conventional LCVs, inconsistent purchase incentive policies among jurisdictions are not helping.

For example, the PM E-DRIVE incentive scheme excludes LCVs, though some State policies, such as those in Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh, provide support to overcome the initial acquisition barrier.

Fuel efficiency standards

The potential of fuel efficiency standards to drive electrification is often misunderstood. While these regulations won't guarantee widespread electrification, stringency does. When standards are lax, manufacturers find it cheaper to optimise existing ICE vehicles through modest upgrades than invest in electric vehicles. Here is proof of what happens when standards are too relaxed: BEVs make up just 3% of the passenger car fleet even after 8 years of CAFE norms.

Here is where the math gets interesting. ICCT research shows 116.5 g CO2/km is the crucial threshold at which introducing e-LCVs becomes more cost-effective for compliance than ICE-only advancements. Put simply, beyond this point, CO2 reductions cost manufacturers less if achieved through electrification than ICE upgrades. The Bureau of Energy Efficiency's proposed 115 g CO2/km standard just surpasses this benchmark, meaning entry of e-LCVs into the market is feasible but not strong enough to drive significant electrification.

There is a chicken-and-egg problem here: most conventional LCVs cost below ₹1 million, while BEV equivalents typically exceed this, making manufacturers reluctant to transition. Electrification momentum spurs innovation, scales production, and, together with falling battery prices, reduces BEV upfront cost.

To catalyse BEV penetration, regions such as China, the European Union, and the United States

beneficial effects? The import content of India's exports is rising. As a result, the stimulus to exports provided by devaluation will be moderated in the changed context. Further, given the high tariffs in the U.S. market, India's exporters are unlikely to gain significant access there. On the import side, most of India's imports are essential goods, with crude oil alone accounting for about 25% of total merchandise imports. A fall in the rupee would raise their prices, fuelling inflation.

India's inflation is not higher than the inflation in developed countries in the West. Devaluation is called for when there is wide disparity in inflation. That is when we need to focus on Real Effective Exchange Rate (weighted average of a country's currency relative to a basket of major trading partners, adjusted for inflation). It is true that some countries such as China have tried to keep the value of the currency undervalued. But this is currency manipulation, which is controversial.

The fall in the value of the rupee in the last one month has been caused by the fears engendered by the imposition of 50% tariff on Indian exports by the U.S. There is a possibility that the tariffs may even go up because of new legislation in the U.S. The full impact of the tariffs will be felt only in 2026-27.

What is hitting the rupee as of now are capital outflows. These outflows will continue to take place until India and the U.S. come to an understanding. We cannot ignore the fall in the value of the rupee. Capital outflows will get accelerated with every fall in the value of the rupee. The required earning in rupee terms will rise to attract investors in such a situation. When capital outflows happen because of the sale of stocks, they have a direct impact on the stock market. Our trade negotiators must reach an early understanding with the U.S. Meanwhile, the RBI can only smoothen the fall in the value of the rupee.

use a super credit multiplier, which counts each BEV multiple times when calculating compliance. Think of it as regulatory accounting that makes going electric look more attractive on paper: super credits make electrification a more cost-effective pathway to compliance.

The draft proposal introduces super credits for e-LCVs and assigns them a CO2 value of zero for compliance, further reinforcing BEV support (unlike the passenger car standards, which include upstream emissions).

However, the proposal also extends these credits to intermediate technologies like hybrid BEVs and applies CO2 offset factors to select ICE technologies. This approach risks fragmenting the market, essentially postponing BEV adoption. If manufacturers can comply by tweaking conventional vehicles or adding hybrids, why invest in electrification? Credits and offset factors – designed as an interim measure to be phased out as the market matures – can ease early compliance by artificially amplifying the emission reductions but dilute the regulation's effectiveness.

The Bureau of Energy Efficiency's proposal considers phasing out super credits for e-LCVs but continuing incentives for hybrids and select ICE technologies. This could prolong the dominance of ICEs.

The way forward

So, what is the bottom line? India has got the pieces; now it needs to put them together. The key to electrification lies in smart policy design. A stringent standard that makes electrification economically compelling, and a strategic use of incentives, can drive genuine transformation. These elements, together with a timely rollout of regulations, will determine whether LCVs drive the transition to clean transport.

The alternative is to repeat the challenges seen in the passenger car segment, where relaxed standards and ongoing incentives have kept electrification at just 3%.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Republic Day

Republic Day presents an excellent opportunity to showcase the nation's achievements and progress ("Editorial: March of the Republic," Jan. 27). But in the midst of these celebrations, we should not divert our focus from critical issues. India cannot be peaceful if its neighbours are not peaceful. With the world going through turbulent times, and with Manipur still on the boil, India's challenges are both internal and external and need urgent redressal.

Balasubramaniam Pavani

Secunderabad

Entry for all

The report, “Uttarakhand's Char Dham temples want ban on entry of non-Hindus” (Jan. 28), is shocking. When I, a practising Hindu, went to

the Golden Temple in Amritsar, I was not barred from entry, nor was I asked to show my religious identity. As long as people are dressed in accordance with the temple's code, follow all the rules, and do not in any way disrespect the religion or the god, they should be allowed to enter the premises of a place of worship.

Baru Rajendra Prasad

Hyderabad

Granting protection

The uproar over the UGC's rules brings back memories of the anti-reservation stir of 1990 (“Uproar intensifies against new UGC equity regulations”, Jan. 27). Caste-based discrimination is still a lived experience for students from many communities and its persistence stresses the need for protections against

it. The bogey of ‘false complaints’ cannot be cited to plead the case against the new rules. The government cannot afford to cave in to the pressure tactics by certain student bodies and social elites; it should side with the marginalised.

G. David Milton

Maruthancode, Kanniyakumari

Operating with impunity

The killing of Alex Pretti, a 37-year-old nurse in Minneapolis, barely weeks after the fatal shooting of Renee Good in the same city, has once again raised troubling questions about the conduct of U.S. federal immigration agencies (“Minneapolis locals protest inhumane U.S. agents after second killing by ICE,” Jan. 26). Even before an impartial investigation could begin, Pretti was

labelled a “domestic terrorist,” reflecting a disturbing rush to judgment. Since Donald Trump's return to power on a hard line anti-immigrant platform, agencies such as ICE and Border Patrol appear to have been granted expansive powers with little accountability. While these bodies are mandated to protect national security, the prevailing climate of impunity has resulted in a sharp rise in deaths and detentions in custody in 2025. It looks like U.S. citizens with no criminal history are increasingly becoming victims of federal overreach.

M. Jeyaram

Sholavandan, Madurai

President Trump argues that the protests in Iran to overthrow the regime is

legitimate and has warned of dire consequences in case the protesters are killed. However, when the U.S. uses violence to impose order within its own territory, it is presented as proportionate, legitimate, and necessary. It is high time the world raises its voice against this hypocrisy.

Gregory Fernandes

Mumbai

Conferring Padma awards

Padma Awards and the Bharat Ratna are often awarded posthumously, with only a few exceptions, such as Sachin Tendulkar, Lata Mangeshkar, and Dr. C.N.R. Rao (“Full list of Padma awards, 2025”). Playback singer S. Janaki famously refused to accept the Padma Bhushan in January 2013, saying it came too late in her career. Bharat Ratna award

recommendations are made directly by the Prime Minister to the President. In 2024, the Modi government declared five Bharat Ratnas, highlighting the timing's political overtones. It is time to delink these awards from election cycles and establish an independent, permanent commission tasked with recommending living legends and achievers based solely on merit.

A.V. Narayanan

Chennai



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BCCL listing redefines PSE IPO narrative

On January 19 this year, Bharat Coking Coal Limited (BCCL), India's largest producer of coking coal and a subsidiary of Coal India Limited, listed on the stock market through an Initial Public Offering (IPO). Despite challenging global market conditions, the BCCL's IPO created capital market history as the highest ever recorded in India's mainboard IPO market. The 46 crore shares that were on offer to raise an additional ₹1,070 crore received over 90 lakh applications and were oversubscribed 147 times. This successful IPO listing of an Indian Public Sector Enterprise (PSE) is not a one-off but a trend that has been consistent over the past several years. Over the past 7-8 years, close to 15 Public Sector Undertakings have been listed in the Indian stock exchanges and have not only been able to raise the required money but also create a tremendous amount of shareholder value and retailer wealth.

Shareholder value creation
Prior to BCCL, since 2017, India has seen more than 10 large core engineering, construction-, railways-, defence-, and energy-related PSEs get listed in the stock markets. They have consistently created value for both retail shareholders and the largest owner of PSE stocks – the Government of India. Among the companies analysed, the cumulative market capitalisation rose from ₹1.4 lakh crore at listing to ₹8.53 lakh crore as on December 31, 2025 – a whopping 513% increase.

The companies analysed were Cochin Shipyard, Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders, RITES Ltd., IRCON International, Rail Vikas Nigam Ltd., Indian Railway Finance Corporation, Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation, RailTel Corporation, Housing and Urban Development Corporation, Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL), and Indian



S. Mahendra Dev

Chairman, Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM)

Investors today are increasingly discerning and are willing to back PSEs when they see clarity of purpose, operational strength, and credible execution

Renewable Energy Development Agency.

While the study excluded services sector IPOs, such as banking and insurance, whose performances are driven by additional extraneous factors, the Government has also benefited tremendously from the listing of services-related PSEs.

In summary, the IPO route has not only provided Indian PSEs robust mechanisms to raise capital for productive use without depending on the Government's budget process but also provide phenomenal returns to the Government and to its retail shareholders.

PSUs funding initiatives
Earlier, Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) had to rely on budgetary provisions from their administrative ministries for capital investments and other expansions. This required extensive discussions with a large group of stakeholders and a longer cycle for realising the money. In today's age when the modern enterprise is recognised for its agility in decision-making and execution, the budget route can no longer be looked at as the only medium for raising or receiving investments.

Not surprisingly, a reverse trend has quietly begun to take shape where PSUs have started to fund critical missions. For example, in January 2025, the Ministry of Mines launched the National Critical Mineral Mission (NCMM) to secure a long-term sustainable supply of critical minerals and strengthen India's critical mineral value chain. The Cabinet approved an expenditure of ₹34,300 crore for NCMM of which only ₹1,500 crore is being sourced from the Government's budget. In a truly 'Whole of Government Approach', more than 50% of the Mission's expenditure, an amount of ₹18,000 crore, is being funded by PSUs across various administrative ministries. Quite aptly, the investments being raised by these PSEs are being plowed into

technologies and know-how that are being used to reduce coal-based carbon emissions.

The above example may now become the norm in the Government's funding of critical and strategic missions in which the PSEs are tapped in as strategic investors as seen in the NCMM.

Administrative quality
Markets are known to be remarkably brutal and unforgiving as they only reward consistent performance and shareholder value creation. One of the most striking elements of the BCCL narrative is its journey from being perceived as a loss-impacted PSU to a value-driven, strategically critical enterprise. Today, BCCL accounts for nearly 58.5% of India's domestic coking coal production, placing it at the heart of the steel and infrastructure value chain. This strategic relevance was not lost on investors. In an economy focused on infrastructure expansion, manufacturing growth, and self-reliance, BCCL represents more than a coal producer; it represents energy security and industrial continuity.

The performance of other PSEs is evidence of a broader shift in how PSE assets are being positioned and perceived. Investors today are increasingly discerning and are willing to back PSEs when they see clarity of purpose, operational strength, and credible execution. PSEs have also used the recent autonomy granted from their administrative ministries and the transparency expected from the reporting framework of market exchanges as an opportunity to bring in administrative quality, strategic planning and speed in execution. This renewed confidence is already shaping the next phase of PSE market participation as more IPOs are being planned. The old narrative that PSE IPOs are uninspiring has been put to rest, and in its place stands a powerful new reality – when the story is real, the markets listen.

A political dust storm over Singareni

Congress and BRS play mudslinging over 'irregularities' in coal mining tenders

STATE OF PLAY

B. Chandrashekhara
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Singareni Collieries Company Ltd (SCCL), the 140-year-old State Public Sector Undertaking in Telangana, has been in the news for all the wrong reasons in recent weeks. The Opposition Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) and the ruling Congress have been sparring over alleged irregularities in tenders for removal of overburden (the layer of soil, rock, and ecosystem that lies above a coal seam) in the coal mines.

The ruling party has been pushed onto the back foot by the BRS and has struggled to mount an effective rebuttal. The BRS has alleged that the tender norms were tailored to benefit senior Congress leaders and their relatives.

Buoyed by the encouraging results in the Gram Panchayat (GP) elections held in December last year, the BRS has stepped up its attack on the ruling party. The Congress claimed that candidates backed by it won about 60% of the 12,733 Sarpanch posts, which is seen by the Opposition as an underperformance by a ruling party. The BRS claimed over 40% success rate in the GP polls held on non-party basis. Ahead of the upcoming election to urban local bodies, which is fought on party symbols, the party has upped its game.

The row over the Singareni tenders erupted when senior BRS leader and former Minister T. Harish Rao alleged irregularities on January 19. The BRS's main target in the matter is not Deputy Chief Minister M. Bhatti Vikramarka, who handles the portfolio of Energy under which the SCCL op-

erates. Rather, it is Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy. The party says the Chief Minister got the 'site visit certification' system introduced in the tenders with a view to favour his brother-in-law S. Srujan Reddy's companies, with bids quoted at a value much higher than the estimates prepared by the company.

Soon after the BRS raised the allegations, Mr. Harish Rao, party working president K.T. Rama Rao, and party leader R.S. Praveen Kumar received notices from the special investigation team (SIT) in the phone-tapping case, asking them to appear before it for examination as witnesses. The Opposition party wasted no time in playing the victim card, alleging that the leaders were served notices as part of the ruling party's plans to harass them for making the "scam" public.

In a vain bid, Deputy Chief Minister Vikramarka tried to rebut the allegations, stating that the norm/condition of site visit certification was in practice in many Central PSUs, Departments and PSUs of other States, and that in SCCL too, it was introduced in 2018 when the BRS was in power. He also read out some documents which impose the site visit condition, as an attempt to turn the tables on the Opposition party. However, the BRS took it as another opportunity to corner the ruling party.

"Mr. Vikramarka read out only the portions that were convenient for him to do some mudslinging on the Opposition and did not tell people the fact that the site visit condition introduced by SCCL when the BRS was in power was only for establishing coal handling plants (CHPs) and not for the overburden removal contracts," Mr. Rao said.

The BRS claims the site visit condition for overburden removal contracts was introduced as recently as May 2025 and some of the tenders finalised till that time from December 2023, when the Congress assumed office, were as per the old procedures without the site visit condition. Those tenders were locked for values/rates lower than the SCCL's estimates, saving money for the company, it says.

The BRS is of the view that all the overburden removal contracts given after May 2025 merit cancellation on the same grounds on which the Naini mine development and operation (MDO) contract, which too had the condition of site visit, was cancelled. The party has demanded a probe by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) or any other Central agency or a sitting judge into the Singareni contracts, saying that a probe by a State agency would be unfair since the Chief Minister's kin are the main beneficiaries.

It remains to be seen whether the government will order a probe into all overburden removal contracts since June 2014, when Telangana was formed. This would be in line with probes ordered in cases such as the sinking of a portion of the Medigadda Barrage under the Kaleshwaram project, to clear itself of the charges and instead fix the BRS by exposing any misdeeds.

Future of work: India's youth under the new Codes

The four Labour Codes aim to promote formalisation of employment and improve ease of doing business; gap in coverage of benefits is a major challenge

DATA POINT

Devika Vinod
Meenakshi Shekhar

India's Labour Codes came into force in November 2025, marking the most significant labour law reform since Independence. By consolidating 29 central laws into four Codes, the reform aims to simplify compliance, universalise minimum wages, expand social protection, and modernise workplace regulation. Policy debates often portray the Codes as a balancing act between labour flexibility and worker protection.

Prior to the consolidation, India's labour regime was fragmented across multiple Central and State laws governing wages, industrial relations, social security, and working conditions. With labour on the Concurrent List, this resulted in uneven enforcement and wide inter-State variation. Crucially, most protections applied only to the formal sector, leaving informal, contract, and casual workers, who form the bulk of the workforce, outside the scope of regulation. Against this backdrop, the government introduced four Labour Codes between 2019 and 2020.

In 2024, India's median age was under 30, compared to around 40 in China and 50 in Japan. With nearly half the population still young, understanding how these changes affect youth employment is critical.

Despite its demographic advantage, India faces a pronounced youth employment crisis. According to the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2023-24, labour force participation among those aged 15-29 stood at 46.5%, far below the 76.4% observed among those aged 30-59. Youth unemployment is 10.2%, compared to less than 1% for older adults.

Gender disparities further widen these gaps. Only 28.8% of young women participate in the labour

force, compared to 63.5% of young men. In urban areas, unemployment among young women reached 20.1%.

Across all PLFS rounds, young workers are more likely than adults to be unpaid family workers within self-employment. They are disproportionately concentrated in informal employment. In 2023-24, nearly 90% of young workers were informally employed. Even within regular salaried jobs, 60.5% of young regular workers lacked social security, compared to 50.5% among workers above 30.

Contractual insecurity is also higher among youth. In 2023-24, 66.1% of young regular workers had no written contract, versus 53.6% for older ones. Only 16.5% of young workers had long-term contracts exceeding three years, compared to 35.4% among adults.

Young workers are also overrepresented in platform-based gig work. A NITI Aayog estimate suggests that 77 lakh workers were engaged in the gig economy in 2020-21, a figure projected to rise to 2.35 crore by 2029-30.

Against this backdrop, the new Labour Codes aim to promote formalisation while improving the ease of doing business. The introduction of a statutory national floor wage could raise earnings for young workers clustered in low-paid, entry-level jobs. If firms increasingly rely on fixed-term contracts, the Codes mandate parity in wages and benefits with permanent workers.

The requirement of appointment letters for all workers and guaranteed wage payments, even during leave, strengthens baseline employment security. The Code on Social Security extends welfare schemes covering health, maternity, disability, education, and skill development to unorganised workers. Gig and platform workers are explicitly recognised in national law, with provisions for registration from age 16 and the creation of National and State Social Security Boards. Unlike the earlier Unor-

ganised Workers' Social Security Act (2008), which had limited impact, the new Code offers clearer institutional mechanisms.

Labour market transparency is also enhanced through mandatory vacancy reporting to career centres. The Industrial Relations Code further affects youth employment by reducing hiring frictions through a higher retrenchment threshold. It provides legal clarity for contract labour and fixed-term employment categories dominated by young workers while extending benefits such as leave, health cover, social security, and gratuity to fixed-term employees after just one year of service.

However, several challenges remain. Many provisions for unorganised and gig workers mirror those under the 2008 Act, including a size-based definition of enterprises with fewer than 10 workers. PLFS 2023-24 shows that 42.7% of young workers lack written contracts, and nearly one-fifth of them work in enterprises with more than 10 workers, leaving significant gaps in coverage. Discretionary language in provisions for gig workers and weak statistical definitions of digital platform employment complicate coverage, especially given widespread multiple job-holding. Despite the Second National Commission on Labour having urged the government as early as 2002 to modernise labour protections in response to technological change and evolving work arrangements, two decades later, policy follow-through and statistical innovation have been slow.

These gaps point to an urgent need for stronger labour data systems and proactive worker registration. Identifying gig and platform workers in national surveys, instead of subsuming them under broad self-employment categories, would strengthen policy design and protection.

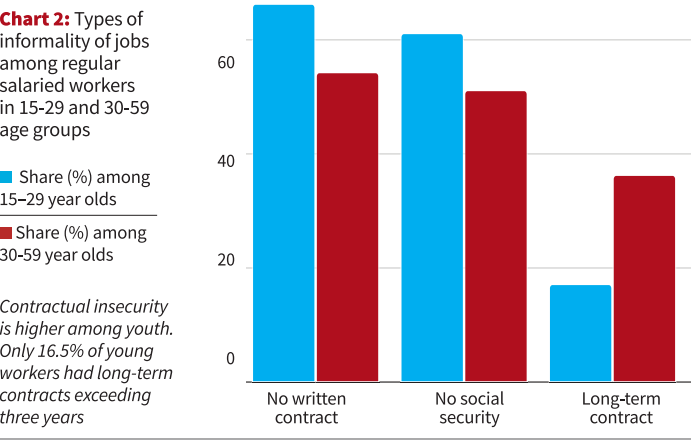
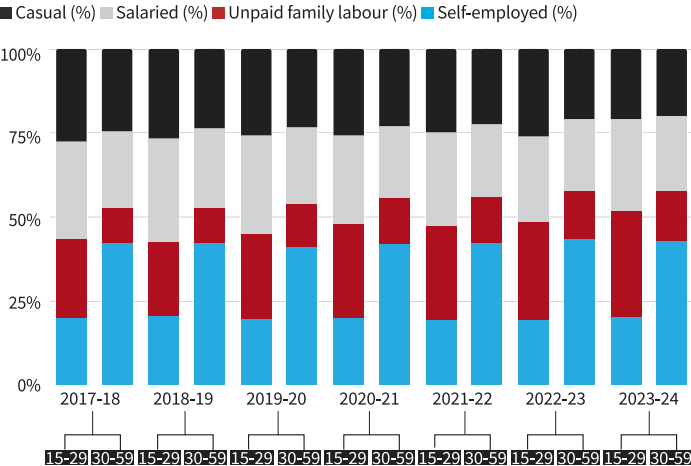
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Labour shift

Statistics used in this article are from Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS)



Chart 1: Composition of employment among 15-29 year olds and 30-59 year olds across PLFS rounds between 2017 and 2024



FROM THE ARCHIVES

The Hindu

FIFTY YEARS AGO JANUARY 28, 1976

Kalinadi Vital for South, Says Pant

Ambika Nagar (North Kanara), Jan. 27: The giant Kalinadi power project would open up possibilities for the southern States to take advantage of one another's thermal and hydel capacities for the common good of the entire region, the Union Minister of State for Energy, Mr. K. C. Pant, said here today.

It was one of the most important power projects of the country, he said while unveiling a plaque at a function at the Nagghari power house site to mark the signing of the loan agreement for the hydel project in Kuwait today.

Mr. Pant said the loan of Rs. 45 crores being provided by Kuwait represented an important step in the direction of strengthening of relations between the two countries. It was only proper, he said, that developing countries helped each other and enlarged their area of co-operation.

Mr. Pant spoke of the special interest shown by the Centre in the Kalinadi project right from the beginning and referred to the Central assistance of Rs. 25 crores given during 1972-74 and the Rs. 5 crores provided by the Life Insurance Corporation. During 1975-76, an additional Rs. 10 crores had been allocated on the understanding that the State would find Rs. 5 crores.

Mr. Devaraj Urs, Karnataka Chief Minister, said the Kalinadi project would open the door for further economic development of the State.

Describing the Kalinadi project as a complex one consisting of 10 dams, Mr. Urs said the first stage would help produce 910 mw., the second 210 mw., and the third 100 mw., making a total of 1,231 mw.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JANUARY 28, 1926

'Looking in' in London

London, Jan. 27: "Looking in," the new verbal coinage, denotes the receiving of tele-vision programme, which will begin to be broadcast from a small London station next week under the licence granted by the Postmaster-General to a new company to exploit the patent of the Glasgow inventor named John Baird for special receiving apparatus adaptable to any valve set. Demonstrations have been successfully conducted, though experiments will be necessary to give sharper definition to figures.

From Page One

‘Mother of all deals’: India-EU finalise FTA

This would include certain marine products, processed food items, and arms and ammunition. Over and above this, 6% of India’s exports will see tariff reductions including certain poultry products, preserved vegetables, bakery products, amongst others.

“Key labour-intensive sectors comprising more than ₹2.87 lakh crore [\$33 billion] of exports that are currently subjected to import duty between 4% to 26% in the EU and are crucial for employment generation, will enter zero duty from entry into force of the FTA and thus gain enhanced competitiveness in the EU market,” the Ministry said in a release.

In particular, of the sectors that India primarily exports to the EU, the following will see duties eliminated entirely: marine products (current duties of up to 26%), chemicals (12.8% currently), plastic and rubber items (6.5%), leather footwear (17%), textiles and apparel (12% each), base metals (10%), gems and jewellery (4%), furniture and allied consumer goods (10.5%), and toys and sports goods (4.7%).

On services, the EU has agreed to commitments across 144 services sub sectors, including IT/ITeS, professional services, education, and other business services.

What India has conceded

Overall, India is offering duty elimination and reductions on 92.1% of the tariff lines, which comprises 97.5% of the EU exports to India. Within this, 49.6% of the tariff lines will see an immediate duty elimination once the agreement comes into effect.

Another 39.5% of the tariff lines will be subject to a phased elimination of tariffs over five, seven, and 10 years. An additional 3% of products will see phased tariff reductions.

“Imports of EU’s high technology goods are expected to diversify India’s import sources, thereby reducing input costs for businesses, benefit consumers and will create opportunities for Indian businesses to integrate into global supply chains,” the statement added.

Notably for the EU, the following European sectors will see duty-free access to the Indian markets: machinery and electrical equipment, aircraft and spacecraft, optical, medical and surgical equipment, plastics, precious stones and metals, chemicals, motor vehicles, iron and steel, pharmaceuticals, and various agricultural products.

On services, India has agreed to open up 102 sub sectors covering EU priorities such as professional, business, telecommunications, maritime, financial, and environmental services.

It has been learnt that negotiations over a few sectors such as automobiles and wine had caused some problems, but the two sides agreed to quota based systems that were satisfactory to both sides.

‘No discrimination under new UGC rules’

“I assure you that whatever system or arrangement is made in India will be within the framework of the Constitution. No injustice, oppression, or discrimination will be committed against anyone,” he said.

On Tuesday, students protested against the regulations outside Lucknow University and in parts of Bareilly in Uttar Pradesh, in Indore in Madhya Pradesh, and outside the UGC office in New Delhi. Students from Delhi University have also called for a protest on Wednesday.

The Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad, the student wing of RSS, on Tuesday also issued a statement, saying that while the new regulations were “well-intentioned”, they required “clarity and balance”. This statement quoted ABVP national general secretary Virendra Singh Solanki as saying that “there must be social equality for all sections of society”.

Meanwhile, the National Students’ Union of India, the Congress’ student wing, backed the regulations as a “necessary step towards addressing discrimination on campuses across the country”. NSUI national president Varun Choudhary expressed support for the framework in post on X.

On Tuesday, Rajya Sabha Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Priyanka Chaturvedi doubled down on her argument that the new regulations were discriminatory against certain sections.

Students stage stir against rules in U.P.

Mrigendra Upadhyay, a BJP leader from Balrampur, said such rules would adversely impact upper caste students and portray them as culprits in case of complaints filed under the new framework.

“We need strong upper caste leaders to fight for our rights and raise our voice against discrimination in any form,” he said. A few BJP leaders holding posts in district organisational units of Lucknow also resigned in protest. Earlier, Uttar Pradesh Legislative Council member and BJP leader Devendra Pratap Singh also questioned the regulations and called for a broader discussion.

In a related development, the State Government on January 26 suspended Bareilly City Magistrate and Provincial Civil Service (PCS) officer Alankar Agnihotri after he submitted his resignation from service, questioning government policies, including the UGC guidelines.

In a first, private technical staff set to assist officials in digital Census

Registrar-General and Census Commissioner of India Mritunjay Kumar Narayan tells States and Union Territories that the target is to ‘get the digitised data from the field itself’; manpower will be hired on contract through outsourcing agencies

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

In a first, private technical staff will be engaged to assist government officials during the Census enabling the “release of Census data in the shortest possible time”, sources said.

The Population Census 2027, the first phase of which will begin on April 1 and conclude on September 30, will be the first-ever digital census in the country where the enumerators, mostly government school teachers, will capture details through mobile applications on their personal phones.

Registrar-General and Census Commissioner of India (RG&CCI) Mritunjay Kumar Narayan has written to the State governments that with the introduction of initiatives such as data collection through mobile applications and the use of the Census Management and Monitoring System (CMMS), the Houselisting Block Creator (HLBC) Web application, self-enumeration portal and so on, the Census of India 2027 will



Census officials conducting a pre-test exercise in Bulandshahr district of Uttar Pradesh in November last year. R.V. MOORTHY

be technologically intensive with a “target to get the digitised data from the field itself”.

The letter added that assistance in terms of hired technical manpower would be provided to assist Census officials.

In addition to this, multi-tasking staff (MTS) for office assistance would be provided at the State and district levels. “The manpower will be hired for a maximum period of 18 months starting from January 2026,” the RG&CCI said.

The State governments

have been asked to ensure that the hired personnel are suitably qualified to handle the digital applications and other related work.

Terms of remuneration

“The maximum monthly remuneration for Technical Assistant will be ₹25,000 per month and for MTS ₹18,000 per month. Apart from this amount, no other financial assistance with respect to the manpower will be provided by the Government of India. Further, this assistance, being provided to States/Un-

ion Territories for the work of Census 2027, is for a maximum period of 18 months. Thereafter, this assistance will automatically cease to exist and there shall be no liability of the Government of India on this account either financially or otherwise,” the letter said.

The RG&CCI said that the engagement of manpower will be “purely on short-term contractual basis” and the staff will not be entitled to any claims, rights, interests or further benefits in terms of regularisation or consideration of further appointment to any post, including any claims for any casual, ad hoc, temporary or regular service in the government.

Hiring would be done through an outsourcing agency only and not by direct appointment. “All payments be made through outsourcing agency to the hired manpower. Retired government officials may also be considered subject to meeting the suitability for the work,” the letter added.

The RG&CCI has approved four Technical As-

sistants and two MTS at the State level; two Technical Assistants and one MTS at the district level; two Technical Assistants and one MTS at Municipal Corporations (where a Principal Census Officer is appointed); and one Technical Assistant at the Charge (tehsil) level. There are more than 700 districts in the country.

Around 31 lakh enumerators, who will all be government officials, will be engaged for the Census related field work and they will be paid an honorarium of ₹25,000 each. Each enumerator has to survey 750-800 people.

The honorarium for other Census officers, including nodal officers and clerks, range from ₹30,000 to ₹75,000 each.

States are also being provided with a one-time grant for procurement of computer hardware and software. At the State level, ₹10 lakh each has been sanctioned for IT infrastructure, hiring of vehicles and contingency measures. At the tehsil and district levels, this amount ranges from ₹1 lakh to ₹5 lakh.

No incident after ex-MP flags threat to Bihar homes

Amarnath Tewary
PATNA

Amid fissures among party leaders in the Bihar Pradesh Congress Committee, former three-term MLA, two-time MP, and Union Minister Shakeel Ahmad on Monday apprehended that there could be an attack on him and his residences in Patna and Madhubani the next day.

However, no such attack was reported on Tuesday.

Earlier, on Saturday, Mr. Ahmad had called party leader Rahul Gandhi a “coward and insecure” politician who, he alleged, promotes young leaders who sing paean within the party.

The former Congress leader had resigned from the party in November 2025.

“Just now, some Congress colleagues secretly informed me that the Congress leadership has directed the Bihar Congress/Youth Congress wing to carry out attack on my residences in Patna and Madhubani on Tuesday under the pretext of burning an effigy. This is against the principles of democracy,” Mr. Ahmad said in a post on social media late at night on Monday.

Plea in SC contests UGC regulations limiting reservation to SC/ST/OBC

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

A petition has been filed in the Supreme Court, assailing the Constitutional validity of Regulation 3(c) of the University Grants Commission (Promotion of Equity in Higher Education Institutions) Regulations, 2026 as discriminatory on the ground that it extends the benefit of reservation only to Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST) and members of the Other Backward Communities (OBC) while denying the same protection to general or upper castes.

The plea filed by an advocate, Vineet Jindal, said the new UGC Regulations denied equal protection of law to a substantial section of citizens solely on the basis of caste.



The plea says the new rules deny equal protection of law to a substantial section of citizens.

The 2026 Regulations have superseded the University Grants Commission (Promotion of Equity in Higher Education Institutions) Regulations, 2012 with the stated objective of fostering equity, inclusion and a discrimination-free academic environment across higher education in-

stitutions in line with the National Education Policy, 2020.

“Regulation 3(c) defined ‘caste-based discrimination’ in a narrowly confined manner as discrimination “only on the basis of caste or tribe against the members of the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes”.

“By design and operation, this definition accords legal recognition of victimhood exclusively to certain reserved categories and categorically excludes persons belonging to general or upper castes from its protective ambit, regardless of the nature, gravity, or context of discrimination suffered by them... Such a definition institutionalises exclusion at the threshold, creates a

hierarchy of victimhood, and introduces a Constitutionally impermissible bias into a regulatory framework that purports to be neutral and inclusive,” the petition submitted.

The petition argued that the new Regulations proceed on an untenable presumption that caste-based discrimination could operate only in one direction, foreclosing, as a matter of law, the possibility that persons belonging to general or upper castes may also be subjected to caste-based hostility, abuse, intimidation, or institutional prejudice.

“This presumption ignores the evolving social realities... The definition is manifestly arbitrary and violative of Article 14 of the Constitution...,” the petition said.

CPI(M) slams India-EU FTA as ‘surrender of economic interests’

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Communist Party of India (Marxist) on Tuesday strongly opposed the India-European Union Free Trade Agreement (FTA) signed earlier in the day, calling it a “wholesale surrender” of India’s economic interests. In a statement, the Polit Bureau said the agreement would damage key domestic industries and undermine the livelihoods of workers, farmers, and small producers.

According to the CPI(M), India has agreed to eliminate or sharply reduce tariffs on more than 90% of goods imported from the EU, including major cuts on automobiles (from 110% to 40%), iron and steel (22% to 0%), pharmaceuticals (11% to 0%), wines and spirits (150% to 40%), processed foods (50% to 0%), and sheep meat (33% to

0%). Such tariff reductions, the party argued, would adversely affect the automobile, pharmaceutical, machinery, and electrical sectors, with the EU projecting its exports to India to rise by over 107% in the coming years.

The party said the benefits such as cheaper cars and wines would accrue only to affluent consumers while the broader impact of increased imports would threaten employment and destabilise domestic manufacturing.

The CPI(M) also criticised the FTA’s alignment with the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), which designates Israel’s Haifa port as a key transit point. At a time when global calls are growing to sanction Israel over its actions in Gaza, the party said, the Indian government was “deepening ties” instead.

Cerebration Corporate Quiz 2026 invites participants for 22nd edition

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

The Hindu businessline Cerebration Corporate Quiz is back with its 22nd edition, inviting corporate executives, business professionals, B-school students and other bright minds to compete for the national title.

This year, the competition will follow a hybrid format. The ongoing online prelims are being held till January 29. Participants



are required to answer 25 questions to qualify for the regional rounds. The regional finals will take place between January 31 and Fe-

bruary 21 in Chennai, Hyderabad, Kochi, Bengaluru, Delhi and Mumbai, with the top six finalists from each city competing in the national finale.

Participants stand a chance to win a grand prize of up to ₹1.5 lakh, with the winners from each regional round advancing to the national final to compete for the Cerebration title.

The quiz is presented by Title Partner JK Tyre, powered by IndianOil, in as-

sociation with BSE and Central Bank of India, and with M.O.P. Vaishnav College for Women, Chennai; Institute of Public Enterprise, Hyderabad; St. Teresa’s College, Ernakulam; Kristu Jayanti Deemed to be University, Bengaluru; and BIMTECH, Delhi as the Regional Venue Partners.

To register, visit the link thbl.news/ or scan the QR code.



Children among six missing after boat capsizes in Brahmaputra

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

Six people, including children, have been reported missing after a motorised country boat capsized in the Brahmaputra river in western Assam’s

Barpeta district on Tuesday. The district police said that the boat, sailing from Rohampur to Borgul, had 36 people aboard when tragedy struck.

This is the second motorised boat mishap in Assam in less than a year.



APPEAL

4 years old Sanjeev suffering from "B Cell - Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia", has to undergo Chemotherapy and Radiation Therapy for 3 years at **Meenakshi Mission Hospital & Research Centre, Madurai**. The total expenditure is **Rs. 8,00,000/-**. His father is working as a labourer and earns a meagre income. Please help him to undergo the treatment as his family cannot afford this huge expenditure.

Donations sent by Ch/D.D. favouring **Meenakshi Mission Hospital & Research Centre, Madurai** will be acknowledged. The donations sent through Ch/D.D/M.O/NEFT Transfer & GOOGLE PAY (Canara Bank, Nungambakkam Branch, A/c No. 60182010063310, IFSC No: CNBR0016018) favouring **WOMEN'S WELFARE SYNDICATE** is exempted under 80G IT. Your e-mail ID is requested.

All correspondence is done through **WWS, Regd Public Charitable Trust, Flat No. GF 1, Cordell Apartments, O.No.13, N.No. 29, Pycrofts Garden Lane, Chennai-600006. Ph: 044-42137401/31523781/ 7338978027. E-mail: womenswelfare Syndicate@gmail.com. Website: www.womenswelfare Syndicate.org.**

WWS

At summit, EU asked India to put ‘pressure’ on Russia to end war, says Kaja Kallas

Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI

Europe and India can build a partnership that is “predictable”, Kaja Kallas, the foreign policy chief of the European Union, said on Tuesday, taking aim at the U.S., Russia, and China for increasing uncertainty in the world.

Ms. Kallas said that during the EU-India Summit on Tuesday between Prime Minister Narendra Modi, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, and European Council President Antonio Costa, the EU had asked India to “put pressure” on Moscow to end the war in Ukraine.

Speaking at a think-tank event here, shortly after the India-EU free trade agreement (FTA) and Strategic and Defence Partnership were announced, Ms. Kallas said the U.S. “tariff threats”, China’s “economic coercion”, and the “existential threat” to Europe from Russia were all common challenges.

In September 2025, Ms. Kallas had said that India’s participation in the Zapad military exercises and its imports of Russian oil “stand in the way of closer ties” between New Delhi and Brussels.

Accusing Russia of refus-



Kaja Kallas

ing to agree to a ceasefire with Ukraine and of bombing civilian targets, Ms. Kallas said that Moscow wanted to “push Ukrainian people to surrender”.

“What we have asked our Indian colleagues is to put pressure on the Russians so that they would also want peace, because this war is not good for Europe or for the [Global South] and that is an area of convergence for EU and India is that we both want sustainable peace,” she said, speaking at the Ananta Centre.

On Sunday, the Kremlin spokesperson had said that ceasefire talks in Abu Dhabi between Russia and Ukraine were under way, but European leaders, particularly Ms. Kallas, would not be included in the talks.

Calling for India and the EU to cooperate on the Indo-Pacific, the EU top diplomat criticised China’s

“weaponisation of trade” and highlighted the need for open sea lanes.

“[EU and India] both face economic coercive practices coming from China and to address this alone, we are both weak. But together we are much stronger [and can] stand up to this,” Ms. Kallas said, adding that if companies were “hit” by Chinese practices, prosperity would also suffer, and the EU-India FTA would help the two countries cooperate against this, and shore up the multilateral world order.

Referring to President Donald Trump’s imposition of new duties, without naming the U.S., she said the “constant threat of tariffs” and the reversal of signed agreements “by an executive order” had created pressure on companies around the world.

She stressed that India and the EU must “build confidence” and work on trade, security, defence and foreign policy together. “[EU members] take a long time to negotiate an agreement, but when we do, we stick to them and actually implement them,” she said.

Ms. Kallas said it was time for India and the EU to cooperate on defence hardware as well.

Prime Minister lauds ‘ambitious’ trade deal with European Union

‘Historic’ FTA a boost to investment between India and the European Union, says Modi; pact brings together Indian services and skills with European capital and innovations, says EU chief; deal ‘opens a whole new world,’ says Union Home Minister

Kallol Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

India ‘concluded’ a ‘historic’ Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the European Union, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Tuesday, announcing the end of negotiations that began nearly two decades ago and were revived in 2022.

Speaking at the end of delegation-level talks with the visiting European leaders – European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and European Council President Antonio Costa – Mr. Modi said that alongside the ‘ambitious FTA’, India was also entering into a new Security and Defence Partnership and a system of mobility that would allow secure and legal movement of Indians to the EU region.

“Today, India has concluded the largest Free Trade Agreement in its history,” said Mr. Modi. The two sides began discussions on the trade deal in 2007 but suspended the negotiation in 2013, and the talks were relaunched in 2022 as India and the EU began reorienting policies in the post-COVID-19 scenario. The Prime Minister presented the deal as a



Coming together: Prime Minister Narendra Modi, EU chief Ursula von der Leyen, and European Council President Antonio Costa witness the exchange of an MoU in New Delhi on Tuesday. ANI

boost to investment between the EU and India that would support “innovation partnerships and strengthen supply chains at the global level”.

The deal would “cut up to €4 billion in annual tariffs for exporters”, Ms. von der Leyen said. “It brings together Indian skills, services and scale with Europe’s technology, capital and innovation,” she added.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah welcomed the FTA and said the deal “safeguards the related sectors” while “opening a whole new world of oppor-

tunities for textiles, apparel, leather footwear, marine products, gems, jewellery, handicrafts, engineering goods, medical instruments and appliances, plastics and automobile sectors.”

Global uncertainties

Referring to global uncertainties, Mr. Modi said the two sides discussed the conflict in Ukraine, West Asia, and the Indo-Pacific theatre, saying: “In this context, the partnership between India and the European Union will strengthen stability within the international system.”

A joint statement issued after the meeting said the two sides would “continue to support efforts towards the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine through dialogue and diplomacy, based on the principles of the UN Charter and international law, including independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity.” It also called for “unhindered humanitarian access” for the victims of Israel-Palestine conflict in the Gaza Strip and called for implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 2803 of November

17, 2025, that welcomes the ‘Board of Peace’ for Gaza. The document reiterated the call for “implementation of the two-state solution, through dialogue and diplomacy” for the Israel-Palestine conflict.

Elaborating on the India-EU Security and Defence Partnership, Mr. Modi said: “This will help us work more closely on counter-terrorism, maritime security, and cybersecurity.”

The two sides welcomed the launch of talks on a ‘Security of Information Agreement’ to facilitate the exchange of classified information. Briefing the media about the discussion, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said India has defence and security partnerships with “several individual EU member states” already, but this framework agreement on security and defence would “allow Indian defence companies to benefit from opportunities arising from the EU’s own very significant defence initiatives that are underway”. The European Commission President described the defence and security framework as “a landmark departure and a trust-based platform”.

Cong. to raise MGNREGA, SIR in Budget Session

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The replacement of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, the special intensive revision of electoral rolls, additional tariffs over the purchase of Russian crude, and other key economic and foreign policy issues will be taken up by the Congress in the first part of the Budget Session of Parliament, which begins on Wednesday.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the party’s parliamentary strategy group, held at the residence of Congress Parliamentary Party chairperson Sonia Gandhi on Tuesday.

Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge and other leaders were present. Thiruvananthapuram MP Shashi Tharoor could not attend as he was returning from Dubai, and a source said he had informed the party of his absence in advance.

Briefing presspersons, Congress leader Naseer Hussain said leaders of Opposition parties would meet at 10 a.m. in Mr. Kharge’s chamber in Parliament House on Wednesday to work out a joint strategy for the session.

“The biggest issue that has emerged is that of MGNREGA. We held a detailed discussion and will raise it during the first part of the session. Alongside, the issue of SIR would also be raised,” he added.

Opposition, TDP seeks briefing on FTAs; parties for debate on job Act

Sobhana K. Nair
NEW DELHI

Several floor leaders from the Opposition and the Telugu Desam Party (TDP), which is a key Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) ally, on Tuesday urged the Centre to keep Parliament informed about the recently concluded Foreign Trade Agreements (FTAs), and ongoing negotiations with the United States. They made the demand at an all-party meeting chaired by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh ahead of the Budget Session.

India concluded negotiations with the European Union on Tuesday, and signed FTAs with the U.K., Singapore, and the UAE recently.

The TDP’s Lok Sabha floor leader, Lavu Sri Krishna Devarayalu, told the meeting that given the shifting global economic landscape, particularly under the new tariff regime imposed by the U.S., it was essential for Parliament to be updated on the FTAs the government had negotiated. Mr. Devarayalu



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Congress leader Jairam Ramesh after the meeting in New Delhi on Tuesday. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

urged the government to bring legislation giving statutory backing to Amravati as the capital of Andhra Pradesh. Such a Bill was likely to be brought during the Budget Session, sources indicated.

Multiple topics

Opposition leaders demanded a debate on India’s foreign policy, flagging what they described as “repeated humiliation” in response to statements by U.S. President Donald Trump. They sought a “structured” debate on the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, and

the rural employment legislation – the Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-G RAM G) Act.

Several Opposition leaders, including John Brittas of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), Kodikkunil Suresh of the Congress, P. Sandosh Kumar of the Communist Party of India, Ram Gopal Yadav of the Samajwadi Party, and Sanjay Singh of the Aam Aadmi Party, asked the government to explain its response to comments made by Mr. Trump.

They questioned India’s “silence” regarding global

conflicts, including issues related to Venezuela, the Israel-Palestine conflict, and the U.S.’s purported claim over Greenland.

Orderly conduct

However, Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju ruled out debates on the SIR and the VB-G RAM G Act. “Once a law is before the nation, we have to follow it. We cannot reverse the gear,” he said. The issues could be raised during debates on the President’s Address and the Budget, he said.

The Congress’s Chief Whip in the Rajya Sabha, Jairam Ramesh, and Mr. Brittas objected to the non-circulation of government business for the session. Mr. Rijiju said the list would be shared in due course. Running the House smoothly, he said, remained the government’s priority. Mr. Rijiju appealed for orderly conduct. “My sincere appeal is that while exercising our right to speak, we must also have the duty to listen to other honourable members,” the Minister said.

EU, India to collaborate on ‘peaceful uses’ of nuclear energy under Euratom deal

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The European Union (EU) and India have committed to promoting collaboration on the peaceful uses of nuclear energy under the India-Euratom agreement, according to a statement from the Joint India-European Union Comprehensive Strategic Agenda on Tuesday. India and the EU had signed a research and development agreement on peaceful uses of nuclear energy with Euratom, Europe’s atomic energy body, in July 2020.

The statement on Tuesday highlighted collaboration on research and development activities in nuclear science and technology, advanced materials for detectors, radiation safety, nuclear security, non-power applications of atomic energy, including cooperation on radio-pharmaceuticals, and strengthening cooperation in the International



Union Minister Piyush Goyal and NSA Ajit Doval with delegates from the European Union in New Delhi on Tuesday. AP

Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER). It also spoke of “deepening cooperation” under the EU research and innovation programme, Horizon Europe, including in the fields of energy, water, agri food, health, semiconductors, biotech, advanced materials, particularly through mechanisms such as co-funding and coordinated calls. Horizon Europe is the EU’s key funding programme for research.

While specifics are unclear, one of the major sticking points involving

the EU and India was the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), which imposed additional tariffs on iron and steel producers, outside the EU, who emit more carbon emissions in the production of iron and steel than European producers.

“Through CBAM provisions, commitments have been secured, including a forward-looking, most-favoured nation assurance, extending flexibilities, if any, granted to third countries under the regulation,” India’s Press Information Bureau said in a statement.

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INBRIEF



60 stranded people, including troops, rescued in Jammu

Heavy and continuing snowfall left the Kashmir Valley cut off, with most roads and all air traffic closed on Tuesday. The snow and transport chaos had left at least 60 people, including 40 security personnel, stranded in Doda, Jammu. They were rescued by the Border Roads Organisation (BRO). “The rescue began on January 24, a day after heavy snowfall, which continued for nearly 40 hours, left approximately 38 km of road under five to six feet of snow. The route was opened by January 25 evening, enabling safe evacuation of 20 stranded civilians and 40 personnel of the 4 Rashtriya Rifles (RR),” the spokesman said.

196 contacts linked to Nipah cases found negative in W.B.

As per reports received from the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), only two confirmed cases of Nipah virus disease have been reported from West Bengal from December 2025 till date, said a release issued by the Health Ministry on Tuesday. Following confirmation of these two cases, the Central government, in coordination with the government of West Bengal, initiated comprehensive public health measures in accordance with established protocols. A total of 196 contacts linked to the confirmed cases have been identified, traced, monitored, and tested. All traced contacts have tested negative and are asymptomatic for the Nipah virus disease.

NEET PG vacancies highest in Maharashtra, Karnataka, T.N.

Based on data from the Medical Counselling Committee (MCC) for the 2025-26 academic session, Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu have the highest number of vacant seats under the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (Postgraduate) or NEET PG 2025-26 across the country. All three States have more than 2,000 vacant seats each under the private, management and NRI quotas. Subjects with the maximum number of vacant seats include microbiology, pathology, biochemistry, and pharmacology. Specialities such as general medicine, radio diagnosis, general surgery, and dermatology continue to be the most sought after.

Officials cannot seek ‘identity proof’ from seers: Uma Bharti

Uma Bharti, senior BJP leader and former Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, came out in support of Swami Avimukteshwaranand, stating that government officials could not demand “identity proof” from seers. “I believe that a positive resolution will emerge between Swami Avimukteshwaranand Ji Maharaj and the Uttar Pradesh government, but the administrative authorities demanding proof of his status as Shankaracharya is a violation by the administration of its own limits and authority; this right belongs solely to the Shankaracharyas and the council of scholars,” Ms. Bharti wrote on social media platform X.

Acquire, auction assets of acid attackers to pay victims, says SC

The CJ says that acid attacks should result in extraordinary punitive measures beyond the letters of the law; the court assures the petitioner best legal representation for her case; it asks the Centre to consider ‘legislative interventions’

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday recommended that the assets of people found guilty of carrying out acid attacks should be seized and auctioned to compensate their victims, both as a punishment and a measure of deterrence.

Chief Justice of India Surya Kant, heading a Bench, said the crime of acid attacks should result in “extraordinary punitive measures which are beyond the letters of the law”.

The top court said adopting a “reformatory approach has no place for acid attackers”. Counsel submitted that the attackers too may be hailing from the “lowest” strata of society with hardly any assets in their name.

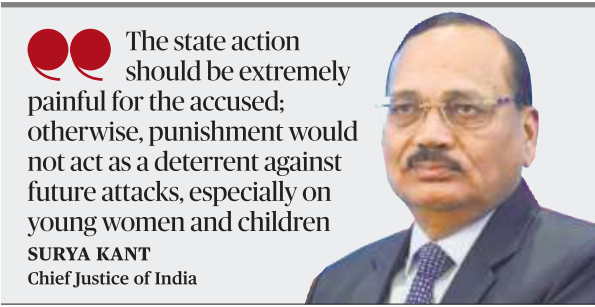
Deterrent needed
“If a person is found guilty of acid attack, why should all his assets not be acquired and auctioned in a transparent manner to compensate the victim.

The police should probe his assets, to whom they belong, etc, and submit the details along with the chargesheet in court, which should order an embargo on creating third party rights on these assets,” Chief Justice Kant observed.

Chief Justice Kant said the state action should be extremely painful for the those convicted of the crime. Otherwise, punishment would not act as a deterrent against future attacks, especially on young women and children, he said.

The court was hearing a petition filed by acid attack survivor and activist Shaheen Malik, who said the pain caused when acid consumed one’s life and identity was “unbelievably traumatic”.

“The pain is so bad, so bad, that even I cannot express it. I had 25 surgeries. The mental and physical pain is extreme. One loses a sense of identity. I have sight in at least one eye. There are many women out there who are com-



pletely blind and who have not got any help from the State,” Ms. Malik said.

She informed the court that her alleged attackers had recently been acquitted by the trial court.

16 years of ordeal
“I fought the case for 16 years. I lost. I am filing an appeal against the verdict in the High Court. Can you please tell the High Court to expedite the hearing, so that I don’t have to wait another 16 years. They attacked me when I was in my 20s, now I am 42. I lost the best years of my life fighting the case,” Ms. Malik addressed the Bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi.

Chief Justice Kant asked her to give a list of four or five lawyers she considered good, so that the top court could appoint them as her legal aid counsel in the High Court.

“We will see that you get the best legal representation,” Chief Justice Kant assured Ms. Malik.

The court asked the Centre, represented by Additional Solicitor-General Archana Pathak Dave, to consider “legislative interventions” on behalf of acid attack survivors.

“This crime should not be seen as any less than dowry death. There should be a shifting of onus onto the accused. Again, why should this crime be part of the general sentencing

policy? Why don’t you consider carving out an exception?” Chief Justice Kant asked the Centre’s law officer. The Bench directed States to furnish a list of the incidents of acid attacks reported yearly, the number of chargesheets filed, cases decided, pending appeals, brief particulars of each victim, their academic qualifications, current employment and marital status, medical treatment, and details of expenses incurred or committed by the State rehabilitation scheme for victims of acid attack, if any. It also sought details separately of victims who were forcibly made to ingest acid.

The court asked the States to provide details of any special scheme run by them for survivors.

Reports from 15 High Courts submitted in the top court showed that the highest number of pending cases of acid attacks were in Uttar Pradesh at 198, followed by 160 in West Bengal, 114 in Gujarat, 68 in Bihar, and 58 in Maharashtra.

‘BJP violated Constitutional protocol by insulting LoPs’

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Tuesday accused the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) of violating Constitutional protocol in regard to the treatment of the Leaders of the Opposition (LoPs) during Republic Day and called it a warning sign for democracy.

In a post on X, Congress general secretary (organisation) K.C. Venugopal said on Republic Day itself, the BJP “chose to destroy the ethos of a Republic and acted on the whim of their Supreme Leader”.

“...Hon’ble Mallikarjun @kharge ji and Sh. @RahulGandhi ji enjoy Cabinet rank by virtue of their posts, yet were relegated to the back rows during the Republic Day event. This has shown the PM’s political immaturity to the entire world – how he chose to violate Constitutional norms because of his petty political outlook,” he said.

Ahead of Union Budget, Congress questions credibility of official data

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

On the eve of the Budget session of Parliament, the Congress on Tuesday questioned the credibility of official economic data, alleging that inequality was widening even as welfare measures were being rolled back.

The party released its annual report “Inequality on the rise, welfare in retreat – real state of the economy, 2026”, days before the tabling of the Economic Survey and the presentation of the Union Budget.

The Congress said the exercise was aimed at placing “facts” before the public ahead of what it described as a government-driven “propaganda” push through the President’s Address, the Economic Survey and the Budget.

“It [the report] correctly identifies the key challenges to the Indian economy stemming from ‘K-shaped’



Rajeev Gowda

unequal growth, inadequate and low-quality job creation, erosion of social security nets, and the under-investment in basic public services of clean air, water, and healthcare,” Congress communications chief Jairam Ramesh said.

Releasing the report along with party colleague Amitabh Dubey, All India Congress Committee (AICC) Research Department chairman Rajeev Gowda questioned whether the Narendra Modi government’s economic numbers could be trusted. “The IMF gave India’s statistics a C grade. 0.5% infla-

tion rate is not the reality of people’s lives. Former Chief Economic Adviser Arvind Subramanian calculates that GDP figures are at least 2.5% higher than actual reality,” Mr. Gowda said.

He pointed out that in 2024, the government’s production-side GDP estimate showed growth of 9.2%, which was 47% higher than the 4.9% growth indicated by the expenditure-side GDP metric. “In the first half of 2025-26, manufacturing reportedly grew at 8.4%. But the Index of Eight Core Industries showed only 2.9% growth,” he said.

On rupee depreciation
Mr. Gowda criticised the government over the depreciation of the rupee, stating that it had emerged as Asia’s worst-performing currency in 2025. “In four of 10 months of 2025, net FDI was negative. More investors withdrew money and more Indian money

was invested abroad compared to foreign investments into India,” he said.

Highlighting employment trends, he said the share of workers in manufacturing declined from 12.1% in 2017-18 to 11.4% in 2023-24. “What happened to Make in India? Agriculture’s share rose from 44.1% to 46.1%... Job growth is concentrated in low value, informal, and gig economy,” Mr. Gowda said.

Flagging what he described as “rising inequality”, the Congress leader said the top 10% accounted for 58% of national income, while the bottom half received only 15%. He claimed that four of five Indians subsisted on less than ₹200 per day, while one-third lived on less than ₹100 a day.

“Net household financial savings are at a five-decade low of 5.2%, household debt is sharply up to 41% from 35% in 2019,” he said.

SC declines plea against ‘VIP darshan’ in temple

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday refused to hear a petition challenging the practice of ‘VIP darshan’ at the famed Shri Mahakaleshwar temple in Ujjain, observing that the court is not meant to play the role of a gatekeeper on who enters a temple and when.

“In the presence of Mahakal (the deity), nobody is a VIP,” Chief Justice of India Surya Kant addressed advocate Vishnu Shankar Jain, counsel for the petitioner, Darpan Awasthi.

Mr. Jain argued that there ought to be a uniform policy, especially about entering the *garbh graha* (*sanctum sanctorum*). “The court is not the one to decide on this. Courts cannot start to decide who should be allowed or not and when they should be allowed,” Chief Justice Kant responded.

Mr. Awasthi had challenged a Madhya Pradesh High Court order dismissing his petition against the preferential treatment given to VIPs to enter the *sanctum* to offer water to the deity, while denying access to the general public.

Death toll in Kolkata fire rises to eight; 18 still missing

The Hindu Bureau
KOLKATA

The death toll in the Anandapur warehouse fire in Kolkata rose to eight on Tuesday. Senior officials of the West Bengal Department of Fire and Emergency Services said a fire clearance certificate had not been obtained by the warehouse. About 18 people are still missing.

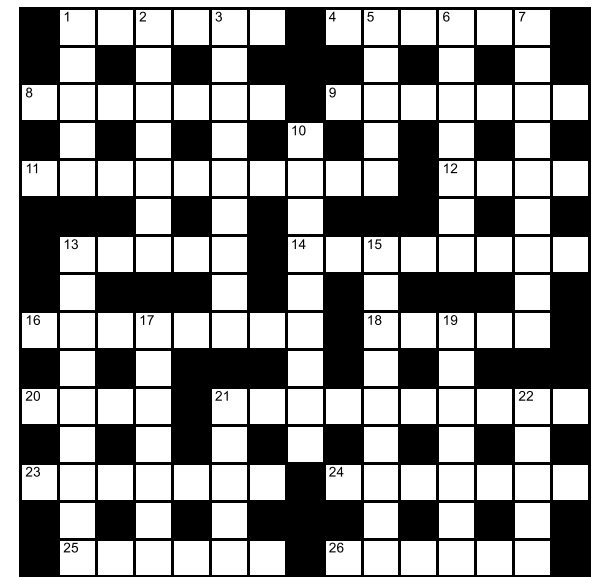
“There was no fire clearance, [of] that we are certain. Rest will be found in further investigation. We will definitely file FIRs (first information reports) because there were violations,” Ranvir Kumar, Director-General, West Bengal Department of Fire and Emergency Services, told mediapersons on Tuesday at the site of the tragedy.

The charred bodies are yet to be identified. Family members of the deceased and missing people gathered at the site.

THE CROSSWORD+ 14702
(Set by Afterdark)

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

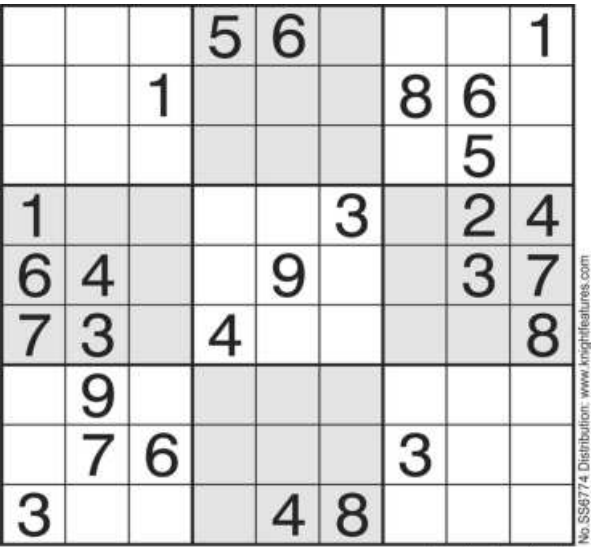
SCAN TO PLAY



- Across**
- 1 Thrissur taxicab carrying extra liability (6)
 - 4 Second coffee's early essentially (6)
 - 8 Two characters swap places in military wedding (7)
 - 9 Show bearcat's movement (7)
 - 11 From Paris; free to consult (10)
 - 12 Tree's leaves given to Kelvin (4)

- 13 Situation worries public, people beaten, rise in the end (5)
 - 14 Without monitors, last period was arranged on celestial object (8)
 - 16 Fancy composition by fine worker at East perhaps (8)
 - 18 Topless model is substantial (5)
 - 20 Grow back (4)
 - 21 Trouble on joint for dressmaker (10)
 - 23 Arranged medical units of ten (7)
 - 24 Native extremist (7)
 - 25 View map (6)
 - 26 Tease in X backed by timeline with energy (6)
- Down**
- 1 Disgrace for impostor having ecstasy (5)
 - 2 Rope used in ship's latrine is frayed (7)
 - 3 Intrusion of spies from the east, seen as trouble on understanding (9)
 - 5 Monkey goes over current fast (5)
 - 6 Art director leaves Cred, ill-treated as deserter (7)
 - 7 Soldiers' old lover's a source to question again (2-7)
 - 10 Indian king to open meat counter across a highway corner (9)
 - 13 Irregular sleep has troubled son (9)
 - 15 Sexually ambiguous person deceased in shift (9)
 - 17 After leaving electric vehicle, retriever ran to another dog (7)
 - 19 Last exercise with policeman's on street (7)
 - 21 Order cold beer after some starter (5)
 - 22 Carve up small rabbit (5)

SUDOKU



Solution to previous puzzle

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

FAITH

Muruga saves His bhaktas

A vehicle travelling towards a destination can be delayed for any number of reasons. But there is one *vahana*, which always arrives on time. That ever-punctual *vahana* is the black buffalo which serves as Yama's mount, said So. So. Meenakshisundaram in a discourse. If Yama arrives to take a person's *atma*, then the *atma* is sure to go to Yama loka. Arunagirinatha prays to Lord Muruga to save him from this fate. If Muruga takes an *atma*, He escorts it to *Siva loka*. So Arunagirinatha prays that before Yama comes at the appointed hour, Lord Muruga should come on His peacock, to take charge of Arunagirinatha's soul. Once Muruga arrives, Yama will not dare approach His bhaktas. In Kandar Anubhuti, verse 10, Arunagirinatha refers to the asura Vala, who was the enemy of Indra. Vala had a boon from Lord Siva, because of which his body parts would turn to gems when he died. A fight broke out between Vala and Indra, and Indra killed Vala. Indra had another enemy Soorapadman. When Sooran came in the form of a mango tree, Muruga threw His spear at him, and the tree was split into two. One half turned into a rooster, which became Muruga's flag. The other half turned into a peacock, which became Muruga's mount. Even in recent times, we have seen how Muruga saved a noble soul. Kripaandavariar, the great Muruga bhakta, was travelling from Mumbai to Chennai by flight. From the plane he saw the Tiruttani hill. He said, “Muruga is always with His devotees.” And those were his last words. When the time came for him to depart from this world, the Lord of Tiruttani gave darshan to him. His lifeless body returned to Chennai, while his *atma* was taken away by Muruga.

INBRIEF



Hindalco unveils \$2.3-billion aluminium smelter in Odisha

Hindalco Industries on Tuesday announced a ₹210 billion (\$2.29 billion) project to expand its aluminium smelter in Odisha, as a part of its larger capacity enhancement plan aimed at reducing reliance on imports. The company also commissioned a flat rolled products (FRP) and battery-grade aluminium foil manufacturing facility worth ₹45 billion. Aluminium products are critical raw materials for lithium-ion batteries used in EVs and clean energy storage.

Asian Paints Q3 net profit declines 5.2% to ₹1,045 crore

Asian Paints Q3 consolidated profit attributable to owners declined 5.2% to ₹1,045.6 crore as against the third quarter of the previous fiscal, when the company reported a PAT of ₹1,103.5 crore. Revenue from operations increased 3.85% to ₹8,819.72 crore as against ₹8,521.51 crore in the year-ago period. The implementation of the new labour code had incurred the company a one-time expense of ₹74.5 crore on increase in gratuity and compensation on paid leaves.

Tata Consumer Q3 net profit rises 38% to ₹385 crore

Tata Consumer Products Ltd.'s net profit attributable to owners increased 38% to ₹384.6 crore on an increase in revenue from operations in the December 2025 quarter, as against ₹279 crore in the year-ago period. Revenue from operations increased 15% to ₹5,112 crore in the reporting quarter as against ₹4,443.6 crore in the corresponding period of previous fiscal. The company reported revenue increased 13% in India business and 11% in international business.

‘FTA will anchor manufacturers into global value chain’

Global trade engagement will deepen partnership between the 2 major economies that together account for nearly 25% of the global GDP: CII

The Hindu Bureau
COIMBATORE

Business leaders and industry associations have welcomed the India-European Union Free Trade Agreement (FTA), expressing confidence that the pact would benefit Indian consumers and industries.

Chandrajit Banerjee, Director General, CII said the FTA represented a strategic breakthrough in India's global trade engagement and deepened the partnership between two major democracies and economies that together accounted for nearly 25% of the global GDP.

The proposed phased reduction of tariffs on cars and auto components after the conclusion of India-EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA) has the potential to foster technological innovation and sustainable growth within the Indian automotive sector, particularly in future mobility, said Hardeep Singh Brar, President and CEO of the BMW Group India.

Santosh Iyer, MD and CEO of Mercedes-Benz India said, “A gradual tariff reduction on vehicles and fully liberalised automotive parts are strategically important decisions in the FTA for the automotive industry.”

Balbir Singh Dhillon,



Fair trade: Zero-duty access in textiles and clothing covering all tariff lines to open up the EU's \$263.5 bn import market. AFP

Brand Director, Audi India, said the “constructive” approach to trade can support the broader automotive ecosystem.

The Union Textile Ministry said zero duty access in textiles and clothing covering all tariff lines will open up the EU's \$263.5 billion import market. Such access will expand opportunities, particularly in yarn, MMF apparel, home textiles and readymade garments.

The Texprocil and the Apparel Export Promotion Council said the India-EU FTA and those with the U.K. and EFTA open up the entire European market for Indian exporters.

Indian apparel exports can grow 20-25% year-on-year as against the current growth rate of 3.01% in the EU market.

“Services are fast growing in both economies and the gains will be in the form of better EU market

access for Indian tech. Indian Information Technology firms stand to gain from greater opportunities in Europe, including easier cross-border provision of services and potentially improved mobility for professionals,” said India's tech apex body Nasscom. Given the geopolitical challenges, the FTA diversifies markets for Indian IT exporters, it said.

For the pharmaceutical sector, Namit Joshi, chairman of Pharmexil, said the FTA delivers structural competitiveness.

Near-zero tariff access strengthens the position of Indian formulations, APIs, and value-added medicines in the EU. This is consequential for India's pharma MSMEs.

The agreement also enables stable, long-term, and predictable pharmaceutical trade, benefiting European healthcare systems and consumers, he said.

Oil and gas sector eyeing \$100 bn in investments, says PM

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

India's oil and gas sector is eyeing to scale \$100 billion in investments by the end of the current decade, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said at the inauguration of the India Energy Week in Goa on Tuesday. He said India aspires to expand the exploration acreage to 1 million sq. km. “It is with this thought that more than 170 [exploration] blocks have been awarded [in the past], he said, adding, “Andaman Nicobar basin is becoming our next hydrocarbon hope.”

Mr. Modi also said that companies investing in India's exploration space could be assured of acquiring a profit. The PM also said that the energy sector was at “the epicenter of our [the country's] aspirations”. He stated there was potential for \$500 billion worth investment opportunities in the sector. “Therefore, I call upon you to make in India, innovate in India, scale in India and invest in India,” he stated.

The India Energy Week, being held in Goa this year, is the flagship conference of the country's oil and gas sector, collaborating stakeholders from both India and outside, for agreements and consultations.

Speaking at the inaugural ceremony, Sultan Ahmed Al Jaber, Minister of Industry and Advanced Technology and Managing Director and CEO of the Abu Dhabi National Oil



Narendra Modi

Company (ADNOC), estimated that the global oil demand would remain above 100 million barrels per day till 2040. He added that demand for both liquefied natural gas (LNG) and electricity would increase by 50% each. He added that an additional component to the energy demand dynamics would emerge from air-conditioners. By 2050, the world will have 5.6 billion air conditioners, up from 1.6 billion today. “That is, 10 new units sold every second for the next 30 years,” he observed.

“Demand at this scale and pace requires investment in all forms of energy. The biggest risk is not over-supply, it is under investment,” Mr. Jaber said.

“What we are really seeing play out [today] is energy addition,” he added.

Later in the day, Mr. Puri informed that India and Canada had launched a renewed ministerial energy dialogue. An official statement from the Canadian Government said the two countries have “significant potential to emerge strong collaborators in area of energy fuels”.

MARKETS

MARKET WATCH			
	TUESDAY	% CHANGE	
Sensex	81,857	0.39	
US Dollar	91.68	0.23	
Gold	1,66,000	4.59	
Brent oil	66.71	—	

NIFTY 50		
	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Enter.....	1959.50	95.30
Adani Ports.....	1363.90	55.50
Apollo Hosp.....	6793.50	-9.50
Asian Paints.....	2622.80	-80.90
Axis Bank.....	1315.80	57.80
Bajaj Auto.....	9492.00	78.50
Bajaj Finserv.....	1917.70	-31.30
Bajaj Finance.....	914.70	-13.15
Bharat Elec.....	415.95	5.25
Bharti Airtel.....	1973.40	-11.30
Cipla.....	1313.00	-2.00
Coal India.....	422.90	-4.50
Dr Reddys Lab.....	1239.80	4.20
Hindustan Unilever.....	40.20	DE*
Eicher Motors.....	7164.50	191.50
Eternal Ltd.....	253.85	-4.85
Grasim Ind.....	2856.20	97.20
HCL Tech.....	1720.20	13.20
HDFC Bank.....	926.40	10.30
HDFC Life.....	720.05	7.95
Hindalco.....	961.85	11.55
Hind Unilever.....	2400.90	-8.60
ICICI Bank.....	1361.40	18.00
Int'l GlobeAvi.....	4769.00	64.50
Infosys.....	1682.70	11.90
ITC.....	318.65	-4.75
Jio Financial Service.....	256.05	-3.15
JSW Steel.....	1222.00	52.00
Kotak Bank.....	408.70	-14.10
L&T.....	3787.80	44.00
M&M.....	3393.50	-149.90
Maruti Suzuki.....	15245.00	-224.00
Max Healthcare.....	975.50	-15.90
NestleIndia.....	1303.30	9.50
NTPC.....	344.70	8.00
ONGC.....	247.95	2.48
PowerGrid Corp.....	254.35	6.20
Reliance Ind.....	1380.50	-5.60
SBI Life.....	2038.20	35.60
State Bank.....	1053.15	23.65
Shriram Finance.....	1001.05	-2.50
Sun Pharma.....	1638.90	7.00
DataConsumerPro.....	1187.40	33.90
Data Steel.....	192.28	-4.97
TCS.....	3158.00	-4.50
Tech Mahindra.....	1745.10	44.00
Titan.....	3997.00	-24.80
Data Motors PV.....	340.55	-3.90
Trent Ltd.....	3795.10	39.20
UltraTech Cement.....	12589.00	220.00
Wipro.....	234.80	-3.60

DE: Demerged Entity

Vedanta to sell 1.59% stake

Vedanta said on Tuesday it will sell up to a 1.59% stake in its unit Hindustan Zinc, worth about ₹45.9 billion (\$500.8 million), based on Reuters calculations.

Our hybrid technology could be the surprise of the market: Renault CEO

Lalatendu Mishra
MUMBAI

Having unveiled the new Duster SUV in three power-trains, including a hybrid, French carmaker Renault, which for two decades remained a significantly marginal player in India, but is now banking on it's hybrid technology to achieve 3% to 5% of market share in India by 2030, it's global CEO said in an interview.

“The changes in terms of growth in the Indian market in the last five years are huge. We are seeing India is better than Germany. It was a question five years ago. Now, India is almost doubling the level of the market of Germany viz. 2.8 [million] versus 4.5 [million]. Also, India has made huge progress in connec-



India calling: Fabrice Cambolive (left) and Stephane Deblaise, CEO, Renault Group India. BIJOY GHOSH

tivity in terms of perceived quality,” said Fabrice Cambolive, chief growth officer, Renault Group & CEO Renault India.

He said, Renault in India, is attempting multiple engine technologies, despite which, the firm has become competitive, even

while much has changed.

Soul in India

“Renault has a kind of soul here in India, because we, like India, are bold to be a pioneer on opening new segments like we did in the past. And with this boldness, you will see in the

number of models we will announce now, but also in the technology we are betting - hybrid, which for me, could be one of the surprises of the market in the coming years,” he said.

He said for Renault, Brazil and India are the markets where potential for growth is most important.

“India, now with the new free trade agreement (FTA), we have to analyse the numbers. The FTA is a very strategic move, which could lead us to consider India as one of our best growth potential markets outside Europe.”

“For me, this FTA is important. Firstly, the political side. Second, the capacity to share technology between Europe and India. And third, to add new potential for exports.

Embraer-Adani sign MoU on aircraft manufacturing

Jagriti Chandra
NEW DELHI

Brazilian aerospace manufacturer Embraer signed an MoU with Adani Aerospace and Defence to explore aircraft manufacturing, including a potential final assembly line, alongside an aviation ecosystem that includes MRO and pilot training.

The partnership aims at establishing the country's first final assembly line for a commercial aircraft, followed by a phased increase in indigenisation, according to a joint statement.

However, no timelines or locations for the proposed facilities have been disclosed.

“Together, we will eval-

The partnership aims at establishing the country's first final assembly line for a commercial aircraft

uate the most viable, advanced and efficient solutions in support of India's RTA (regional transport aircraft) ambitions and potential for implementation,” said Arjan Meijer, president-CEO, Embraer Commercial Aviation.

Schemes such as UDAN that connect tier-2 and tier-3 cities have made the need for an indigenous regional aviation ecosystem critical, said Jeet Adani, director, Adani Defence & Aerospace, on the MoU.

Bank staff strike for five-day work week hits operations

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

Banking operations, especially those accessed through branches, on Tuesday were impacted as public sector bank employees and officers across the country went on a one-day strike called by the United Forum of Bank Unions (UFBU) demanding the government implement five-day work week.

Besides amplifying the demand, the strike called by the umbrella body of nine bank employees and officers unions also helped put up a show of solidarity. A meeting of the UFBU is slated next month to



Bank employees shout slogans amid nationwide strike.

chalk out the next course, a constituent bank employees union leader in Hyderabad said, declaring the strike as total.

Employees of regional rural banks, besides those of public sector banks, ac-

tively participated in the protest. Branches, however, were open as the government instructed managements accordingly and told them to requisition police assistance if need be, he said, pointing out in some banks, officers above chief managers' rank were not part of the unions.

For customers, the strike meant bank branches closed for four days since January 24 – fourth Saturday, Sunday and Republic Day. On account of strike, cash deposits, withdrawals, cheque clearances and various work were hit. But, availability of alternative channels such as ATMs and INB helped.

Murali N. Krishnaswamy
HYDERABAD

Air India unveiled the interiors of its first line-fit Boeing 787-9 (VT-AWA) on Tuesday. The day also marks exactly four years since the Tata Group officially reacquired the airline from the Government of India, in 2022.

The aircraft, which was flown from Delhi to Bengaluru, will be a part of the aircraft display at Wings India 2026 here.

Speaking to the media, the airline's CEO, Campbell Wilson, said that the new aircraft is a part of the 470-aircraft order that was signed three years ago. The



Campbell Wilson

new cabin interiors will now be standard across the airline's 787 fleet. This includes the airline's legacy fleet of Boeing 787-8 aircraft which were acquired when Air India was a government enterprise.

(The writer is at Wings India 2026 at the invitation of Air India)

CG Power Q3 net rises 19% to ₹284 crore on revenue

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

CG Power and Industrial Solutions posted a 19% rise in consolidated net profit to ₹284 crore in the December quarter, mainly on the back of higher revenue.

Consolidated net profit was ₹238 crore.

Total sales rose to ₹3,175 crore during the quarter from ₹2,516 crore in the year-earlier period.

The board approved the payment of interim dividend at ₹1.30 per equity share i.e. 65% on face value of ₹2 per share for the 2025-26 financial year.

FLUID CONTROL RESEARCH INSTITUTE

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TENDER NOTICE

Ref: PUR/FCRI/CIVIL/25101/25140/2025-26 Date: 27.01.2026

Sealed competitive quotations in two bid system are invited from reputed, financially and technically capable Construction Firms/ Contractors from the approved list of CPWD, Railways, MES, State PWD, Govt. undertakings for the proposed construction projects as mentioned below :

1 | Tender No: PUR/FCRI/CIVIL/HPHFTT-ROAD/25101/2025-26			
Name of work:	Formation and Concrete of proposed Road for HPHFTT Facility		
Approximate Cost (PAC)(Rs.):	38.00 Lakhs (Including GST)		
Bid Security EMD (Rs.):	40,000/-		
Tender Fee (Rs.):	472/- including GST @18% (By NEFT / RTGS)		
Time of completion:	4 Months from issue of Work Order		
2 | Tender No: PUR/FCRI/CIVIL/VES-ROAD/25140/2025-26			
Name of work:	Construction of Road, Drainage & Retaining Wall and related land development of VES Test Facility		
Approximate Cost (PAC)(Rs.):	38.50 Lakhs (Including GST)		
Bid Security EMD (Rs.):	40,000/-		
Tender Fee (Rs.):	472/- including GST @18% (By NEFT / RTGS)		
Time of completion:	4 Months from issue of Work Order		

Last date of submission of Tender: 5.00 PM on 06.02.2026.

Date, Time & Place of issue of Tender Document: From 10.01.2026 to 06.02.2026 on any working day (Monday to Friday) from Logistics Department, FCRI. The Tender Document can be downloaded from the Website: www.fcriindia.com/tender/also. FCRI reserves the right to reject any or all the tenders without assigning any reason thereof.

Note: Corrigendum/Amendment, if any would be hosted on the Institute website Tender page only. Hence prospective applicants are advised to visit FCRI website regularly for above purpose.

Sd/- DIRECTOR



Happy that I still have the hunger to perform

The 36-year-old Belgian superstar, despite being at the fag end of his illustrious career, is keeping pace with up-and-coming talent; he says the Los Angeles Olympics is likely to be his final bow

BISWARANJAN ROUT

INTERVIEW

Tom Boon

Y.B. Sarangi
BHUBANESWAR

In Ranchi Royals colours, Belgian superstar Tom Boon emerged as the top-scorer of the Hockey India League (HIL). Even in the final phase of his illustrious career, the World and Olympic champion is leading by example.

Donning multiple roles as a forward, drag-flicker and mentor, Boon, who celebrated his 36th birthday on January 25, has set a great example for up-and-coming players across the globe. Boon, an inspirational figure in the hockey world, spoke to *The Hindu* about his magnificent career and future goals. Excerpts:

How do you see your emergence as the top-scorer of HIL and did you expect to lead the chart?

No (I did not expect it), I'm really happy about it. It's part of my job; I'm a striker, I'm taking the penalty corners, the penalty strokes. Somehow it's normal that I stand there. I'm happy that the team has grown as well, that we have taken some great steps forward. When we look back at where we came from, from the first match and the visage we have now, it's an improved team. I'm just proud and happy to be part of it.

Given the short time period for preparation before HIL, how challenging was it to gel with players of different nationalities and adapt to styles of play?

It was challenging. Everyone has their own way of playing and we had to try to make something work. I was working hand-in-hand with Harendra Singh to make something work, to try to help with my experience there. What we saw from Ranchi was that we grew and this was the most important thing. I'm happy about it, we started

on a not-so-good note but we kept believing. We worked hard to make it work and the most important of all is we were a really solid group. Manpreet Singh did a really nice job to try and connect the Indians with foreigners. The Indians looked really, really happy to be together, they're good friends with the foreigners as well. The whole mix is important. Everyone is equal, everyone wants the best for the team.

Young Indian players benefitting from HIL is well known but do you see any gains for overseas players, other than the money?

It's challenging to get out of your comfort zone. I'm going to give an easy example about me. I had never been a captain before, I was a captain this season. I got out of my comfort zone. I tried to do it as well as I could and everyone seemed to be happy, so it was a great experience. I will take the learnings from it, try to dare to speak more in a changing room when I'm back with Belgium.

Are you looking forward to the FIH Pro League in Rourkela and will the HIL exposure help everyone who participate there?

Yeah, I hope so. I hope the crowd will be there in Rourkela, it's been really nice playing in that stadium. It's one of the most beautiful stadiums that I have played in, so yeah I am happy to play India again, it has been a while.



The Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar holds a special place for you as you won the World Cup here eight years ago. How do you feel returning to the venue?

It was amazing being here. It was the first title for Belgium, it was the first time Belgium won anything in any sport and it was here. Of course, I do remember a lot being here, it has been eight years already, time flies. But I was really happy to be back in this stadium, it's going to always have a special place in my heart.

How do you keep yourself competitive despite growing challenges from younger players? Is there anything extra you do for fitness and recovery these days?

I have to, I'm 36 now. I have to take care of my body as much as I can. I try to go to the gym almost every day for recovery sessions, to keep my body in shape. I'm really happy that I can still perform at my age and the hunger I still have is something I cherish because I also know it's going to be finished soon. So I try to enjoy every moment as much as I can.

Do you do anything specific to stay in good shape?

Yeah, every morning when I wake up, I go to the gym and do some exercises for core stabilisation, when I feel I have some pain in my calf or hammy (hamstring). I'm happy with the work I've done so far.

You're part of the golden generation of Belgian players and you are seeing a transition now. How do you mentor and compete with

younger guys who may have a different mindset?

It's nice, my position has changed a little bit. I try to share my experience as much as I can. I'm never going to say that I'm right or wrong, I'm just trying to give my opinion; it's something I didn't do much in my early days. I'm trying to give some tips to certain players at certain moments. Afterwards, they do whatever they want with it. If they think it's a good tip, I'm happy. If they think they should do something else, I'm happy as well. I'm happy to give back a little bit of what I received.

What kind of target do you have for the upcoming home World Cup and Los Angeles Olympics?

I think we can dream big, that's why I love sports. Everything is possible, it would be so nice to lift the cup in front of our own crowds. Of course, it's going to be a really, really difficult journey.

There are four, five or six teams who can win it, so it's going to be difficult, but we're going to train hard, play hard and do whatever we can to try to be as good as we can.

It's (LA28) a little bit more personal (call for me), it's going to be my last tournament, that's for sure. Maybe I'm going to stop before that. At the moment, I just keep dreaming of playing other tournaments, we will see after the World Cup how it goes (for me) and see if I still have the faith to go forward till LA28.

You're a third-generation hockey player. Would you like your children to carry forward the family tradition?

Yeah. My little boy is already playing. He's four, he started playing in September. I think he loves it. At the moment, he dreams to be a goalie, so we'll see what he's going to become. But I'm the kind of father who is pretty relaxed. He's going to choose whatever he wants to do.

I'm going to try to be there for him if he needs me, but he's going to choose what he's going to do.

To make sense of cosmic rays, CERN team tracks a fragile nucleus

Why is finding out how deuterons survive particle collisions in the Large Hadron Collider important? If scientists have to predict how light nuclei form in high-energy collisions in space, like when cosmic rays strike interstellar gas, they need to know which formation mechanisms are possible and which ones nature forbids

Vasudevan Mukunth
CHENNAI

The hydrogen atom is the lightest in the universe and it consists of the simplest nucleus: a single proton. But while helium is the second-lightest element, its nucleus isn't the second simplest. That distinction belongs to the deuteron, the nucleus of the deuterium atom, which contains one proton and one neutron. (Deuterium is an isotope of hydrogen.)

However, the two particles are bound with a very low binding energy, making deuterons seem fragile relative to the energetic, messy environment created when particles collide at nearly the speed of light at the Large Hadron Collider (LHC). Yet experiments have repeatedly observed deuterons (and anti-deuterons) emerging from these collisions. How do they survive this environment?

Coalescence scenario

Physicists have come up with two broad explanations. One, called direct emission, assumes the deuterons are produced directly from a hot source, meaning their formation doesn't involve a different particle (or particles) condensing from a soup of energy, then decaying to form deuterons. The other idea, called coalescence, holds that the proton and neutron are produced first, then they stick together later if they get close enough.

The problem is a proton and a neutron can't fuse if they have too much energy, so there has to be a third particle to carry away the excess energy. That third participant can be a type of particle called pion that acts like a catalyst, i.e. it will enable the reaction without becoming part of the final deuteron.

Finding out whether this is possible matters beyond collider physics. If scientists have to predict how light nuclei and antinuclei form in high-energy collisions in space – such as when cosmic rays strike interstellar gas – they need to know which formation mechanisms are possible and which ones nature doesn't 'allow'.

Delta resonance

A new study out of the ALICE collaboration at the LHC has provided the answer. The collaboration works with the ALICE detector, one of nine detectors on the LHC. At four points on its ring, the LHC smashes together opposing beams of protons at high energy. The collisions produce a morass of particles and reactions between them. The detectors have computers and sensors that are triggered when they identify reactions of interest and which they record and analyse.

For the new study, the ALICE



Close watch: A view of the ALICE detector, one of nine detectors on the Large Hadron Collider in 2007. CERN

collaboration used a technique called femtoscopy to infer how and when particles were produced by checking whether two particles come out with very similar velocities more often than chance would predict. Its basic object was a ratio called the correlation function. The numerator was how often a given pair (a pion and a deuteron) is seen with a small relative momentum. The denominator was how often such pairs would form assuming they had no affinity for each other.

The team was looking specifically for a particle called $\Delta(1232)$ resonance. (' Δ ' is pronounced 'delta'.) The resonance is a very short-lived excited version of a proton or a neutron that quickly decays. $\Delta(1232)$ in particular decays into a pion and a proton or neutron. If a deuteron is later formed using that same proton (or neutron), then the pion and the deuteron would appear to be 'linked' in the data by having a correlated momentum.

ALICE reported just this signal in the pion-deuteron data, meaning many of the deuterons are formed after the Δ decays, rather than directly at the start.

Where a nucleus is born

If the pions were only bumping into deuterons that already existed, some of those collisions should have broken the deuteron apart (which is fragile, remember). In that case, the data should've shown a dip around the Δ region. ALICE, however, found a positive signal, meaning deuterons were forming

The study noted that scientists can use the insight on deuterons to build more realistic models of reactions induced by cosmic rays, which are energetic protons and atomic nuclei which often collide with other nuclei in outer space

after Δ particles decayed and the pions from the same decay were correlated with the new deuterons.

Norwegian University of Science and Technology physics professor Michael Kachelriess called the finding a "great achievement" to *Physics World*.

From the size of the Δ signal, the team estimated that around 62% of deuterons were produced following Δ decays. They figured if they included other short-lived resonances as well, about 80% of deuterons would be formed by coalescence.

This seems to be the answer to why deuterons can survive the LHC's high-energy collisions. Resonances usually travel a short distance before they decay, so the coalescence that forms deuterons happens slightly later and slightly away from the most violent part of the collision. Thus the deuterons are also 'born' into a less extreme environment.

Cosmic rays, dark matter

In sum, most deuterons aren't born as readymade nuclei at the instant of collision but are instead assembled

shortly afterwards from existing protons and neutrons, with help from pions nearby. This should change how theorists model the way nuclei (and anti-nuclei) are produced in high-energy particulate reactions.

In fact the ALICE team's paper, published on December 10, noted that scientists can use this insight to build more realistic models of reactions induced by cosmic rays.

Cosmic rays are very energetic protons and atomic nuclei hurtling through space and which often collide with other nuclei in outer space. When scientists are studying telescope data of these collisions or are modelling them in the lab, e.g. for astronomy research or because they're sending a probe to that part of space, they'll need to know which signals are coming from which sources.

"These findings not only explain a long-standing puzzle in nuclear physics but could have far-reaching implications for astrophysics and cosmology," the ALICE team said in a statement.

"Light nuclei and antinuclei are also produced in interactions between cosmic rays and the interstellar medium, and they may be created in processes involving the dark matter that pervades the universe. By building reliable models for the production of light nuclei and anti-nuclei, physicists can better interpret cosmic-ray data and look for possible dark-matter signals."

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THE GIST

The neutron and proton in the deuterium nucleus are bound with a very low binding energy, making deuterons seem fragile relative to the energetic, messy environment created when particles collide at nearly the speed of light at the LHC

Yet experiments have repeatedly observed deuterons (and anti-deuterons) emerging from these collisions

Most deuterons are not born as readymade nuclei at the instant of collision but are instead assembled shortly afterwards from existing protons and neutrons

BIG SHOT



First stroke: Conservationists release a juvenile Indo-Pacific leopard shark off Maiton Island, in Phuket, Thailand on December 8, 2025. The Thai government, aquariums, and NGOs came together in a project last year to release seven leopard shark pups in a bid revive their population in the wild. REUTERS

QUESTION CORNER

Leaps and bounds



Q: How did kangaroos evolve to hop?

A: For a long time, biomechanics experts believed that giant, extinct kangaroos were simply too heavy to hop. While the largest modern kangaroos weigh around 90 kg, their prehistoric relatives were much larger and weighed more than 250 kg. And scientists previously calculated that if you took the anatomy of a modern kangaroo and scaled it up to that weight, the forces generated by hopping would snap their ankle tendons and fracture their bones.

However, a January 22 study has challenged this limit: by looking at the fossils rather than relying only on mathematical scaling from modern kangaroos, researchers have found that kangaroo ancestors didn't just grow larger: they also evolved a different skeletal structure to handle the immense weight.

The study identified two major adaptations that made hopping mechanically possible for these giants. First, their weight-bearing foot bones, the fourth metatarsals, were significantly shorter and thicker than those of modern kangaroos. This compact shape made the bones more resistant to bending forces, preventing fractures upon landing. Second, their heel bones, called calcanea, were much



A kangaroo near White Cliffs, an Outback area in the state of New South Wales, Australia. AFP

wider, providing a large area for the gastrocnemius tendon to attach. This suggested the animals possessed thick tendons capable of withstanding the tensions required to lift their bodies.

There was one trade-off, however. While the adaptations allowed them to hop without injury, the giants likely sacrificed speed and energy efficiency. Unlike modern kangaroos that bounce efficiently over long distances, the extinct giants probably hopped only for short, high-power bursts, perhaps to escape predators.

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Text & Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

The decrease in India's power emissions in 11 months

38 in million tonnes. Discharges by Indian utilities declined 38 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent, or 4.1%, in the 11 months to the end of November, according to estimates based on monthly government statistics compiled by energy think-tank Ember. REUTERS

The area of Ukrainian land captured by Russia in January

500 in square kilometre. Russian forces captured 17 settlements and took control of more than 500 square kilometres of territory in Ukraine so far in January, Russia's top general, Valery Gerasimov, said on Tuesday. REUTERS

Number of Syrians displaced in the SDF civil war

1.73 in lakh. The International Organisation for Migration has registered more than 1,73,000 people displaced in the civil war between the Syrian Democratic Forces and the Syrian government. The government forces captured most of the SDF-held territory in Syria's northeast. PTI

The duty on EU wines in India under the new FTA agreement

20 In per cent. European wines are set to enter the Indian market at lower prices under the bilateral free trade agreement as India will provide import duty concessions under the pact, an official said. Under the pact, the duty on EU wines would fall from 150% to 20% (for expensive ones). PTI

Days for which Israeli Hostages Square clock was operational

844 A clock in a Tel Aviv square that became a rallying point for Israelis demanding the release of hostages taken during the October 2023 Hamas attack will be turned off on Tuesday, 844 days after it began counting their captivity. REUTERS
COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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What's happening in Syria's Kurdish regions?

How was the Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria or Rojava established? Why did the Shaara-Abdi agreement fall through?
Why does Turkiye support the Syrian government forces? What has been the U.S.'s position? What does the ceasefire agreement demand?

EXPLAINER

Stanly Johny

The story so far:

When Bashar al-Assad's regime collapsed in December 2024, many hoped it would mark the end of Syria's years-long civil strife. Ahmed al-Sharaa (formerly Abu Muhammad al-Golani), who emerged as the country's interim leader, pledged to form an inclusive administration. But the past year has been marked by a resurgence of sectarian violence against the Alawites in the west and the Druze community in the south. In the latest flare-up, fighting broke out in the country's northeast, between government forces and the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). The SDF has been pushed out of parts of eastern Syria it once controlled, and, despite a ceasefire, a tense standoff persists between Kurdish militias and government forces in the country's Kurdish areas. The renewed violence now threatens to unravel the autonomy Syria's Kurds have exercised since the 2011 civil war.

Who are the main Kurdish actors?

Syria's Kurds, who make up roughly 10% of the country's population, have long demanded autonomy for the Kurdish-populated regions in the north and east. When the Assad regime was forced to withdraw troops from the northeast in 2012, amid the civil war, Kurdish parties, councils and militias moved swiftly to fill the vacuum by establishing their own administrative structures. Several Kurdish regions (called 'cantons') came together to declare autonomy from the Syrian state, and establish the Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES), also known as Rojava.

The main party in Rojava is the left-leaning Democratic Union Party (PYD), whose ideology is rooted in the 'democratic confederalism' championed by Abdullah Ocalan, the leader of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK). Another major political actor is the Kurdistan National Council (KNC), which is aligned with the Iraqi Kurdistan Democratic Party. The main armed militia in Rojava is the People's Protection Units (YPG), which is aligned with the PYD, the ruling party. The YPG and its women's brigade YPJ gained prominence in 2014-15 as they defeated Islamic State (IS) jihadists in Syria's Kobane, a predominantly Kurdish region. After their victories against the IS in Syria's north and east, the U.S. started offering them air cover in the battles against jihadists. In 2015, with the blessings of the U.S., the Kurdish leaders formed the SDF with Arab and other minority militias, with the YPG being its core component.

Why did fighting break out?

The question of Kurdish autonomy emerged immediately after the Assad government fell. Mr. Sharaa, formerly the chief of al-Qaeda's Syria branch, wanted to establish a centralised regime in Damascus – an idea pushed back by the country's ethnic and religious minority communities. In March 2025, Mr. Sharaa and SDF commander Mazloum Abdi signed an integration agreement, laying out principles for integrating the SDF and other administrative units into the Syrian state. But the Kurds were clear on one point – they did not want to forfeit the autonomy they had built over more than a decade. In an interview with *The Hindu* in



Taut relation: Members of the Syrian Democratic Forces queue to settle their status with the Syrian government in Raqqa, Syria on January 27. REUTERS

May, Salih Muslim Muhammad, co-chairman of the Democratic Union Party (PYD) said that "nobody wants another centralised regime in Syria".

The Shaara-Abdi agreement promised to flesh out the details of integration by the end of the year, but that deadline passed without progress. Tensions mounted as Damascus proposed deploying its troops in Kurdish regions. While the Syrian government wanted to extend its control across the country which it thinks is essential for reasserting its sovereignty, Kurdish leaders argued that losing military control of the north and east would imperil their autonomy. As talks stalled in early January, Mr. Sharaa's forces moved into the Arab neighbourhoods of Aleppo, which were controlled by Kurdish forces. Fighting soon followed and government forces asserted control within days, forcing the SDF to withdraw to the northeast.

What does Damascus want?

While the Syrian state forces withdrew in 2012 and other rebel and jihadist groups were preoccupied with their battles against Damascus during the civil war, the IS exploited the vacuum to establish a solid presence in Syria's east. But the YPG, the Kurdish militia, emerged as critical foot soldiers in the war against the IS. The first major defeat the IS faced was at the hands of the YPG. In the following years, the YPG (or the SDF, the expanded version) became the key anti-IS force on the ground in Syria while the U.S. provided them air cover. They controlled the regions they liberated from the IS and established Rojava. The Assad regime tolerated Kurdish autonomy because it was preoccupied with other problems.

Now, Mr. Sharaa, who has been emboldened by the international recognition he has achieved, wants to end Kurdish autonomy. He has taken a two-pronged approach. On January 16, amid ongoing fighting between government forces and the SDF, Mr.

Sharaa issued a decree formally recognising Kurdish as a "national language" and offering citizenship to all Syrian Kurds. He also declared Newroz, the new year festival celebrated by Kurds, as a national holiday. But he said nothing about Kurdish autonomy. His plan is to give cultural concessions while taking control of the Kurdish militias militarily.

Where do Turkiye and the U.S. stand?

Turkiye sees the PYD (the political party) and the YPG (the militia) as extended arms of the PKK (the Turkiye-based Kurdish group which has been designated as a terrorist entity by Ankara and its Western allies). Mr. Sharaa and his group, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) are close allies of Turkiye. Ankara backed Mr. Sharaa's plan to integrate the Kurdish administrative and military structures into the Syrian state. When Kurds resisted the move, in December 2025, Turkiye warned against them. In the past, Turkiye had carried out military operations to push Kurdish forces away from the Syria-Turkish border and create a buffer. Now that a peace process is under way in Turkiye between the government and the PKK, Ankara believes weakening of the SDF across the border would strengthen its hand and weaken the overall Kurdish push for confederal autonomy.

The U.S. on the other side backed the SDF in the fight against the IS. The U.S. still has some 900 troops in Syria, mostly in the Kurdish northeast. But Washington has warned up to Damascus after Mr. Sharaa, a former designated terrorist who carried a \$10 million State Department bounty on his head, captured power. Mr. Sharaa visited Washington in November 2025 and met Mr. Trump after which Syria announced that it would join the U.S.-led coalition to fight the IS. Now that the U.S. has Damascus, it doesn't need the Kurds to maintain its presence in Syria. The U.S. and Turkiye also find common ground in establishing a centralised Syria, by strengthening the hands of Sharaa, so

that the influence of Iran and Russia could be gradually neutralised.

What lies ahead?

After seizing the SDF-held regions of Aleppo, Mr. Sharaa's forces turned to areas between Aleppo and the Euphrates River. These predominantly Arab-populated regions were captured by the SDF between 2015 and 2019 after it drove out the IS. SDF positions subsequently collapsed across Raqqa and Deir al-Zour, both former IS strongholds. Reports also emerged of internal cracks within the SDF, with some Arab militias breaking ranks with YPG commanders. Dozens of IS members escaped from a prison in Hassaka which was caught in the crossfire. On January 18, Mr. Abdi, the SDF commander, agreed to a ceasefire and integration deal. Mr. Sharaa insists that the military integration of the SDF be undertaken on an "individual basis" – not as units. The ceasefire agreement also asks the SDF to hand over Raqqa and Deir al-Zour provinces "administratively and militarily" to the government; to integrate all administrative institutions in al-Hassaka into government structures; to hand over all border crossings and oil and gas fields; and to expel all non-Syrian members of the PKK from Syria.

But there seems to be serious disagreements on the degree of autonomy Kurds would retain. The agreement affirms the need "to protect the special character of the Kurdish areas". The SDF seems ready to give up Raqqa and Deir al-Zour, but they don't want to give up their positions in Kobane, al-Hassaka and Qamishli. While the Sharaa regime wants to end the SDF's local monopoly on the use of force, the SDF doesn't want government troops to be deployed in Kurdish areas. A Kurdish representative based in Europe told *The Hindu* that the autonomous administration has called for a general mobilisation. "Kobane is now under siege. But Kurdish fighters are defending their positions," he said.

THE GIST

Syria's Kurds, who make up roughly 10% of the country's population, have long demanded autonomy for the Kurdish-populated regions in the north and east. In the latest flare-up, fighting broke out in the country's northeast, between government forces and the Kurdish-led Syria Democratic Forces (SDF).

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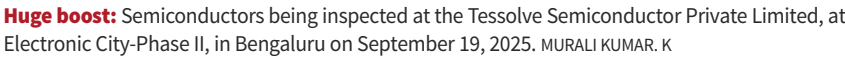
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The impact of India-EU FTA for AI and semiconductor tech

Vasudevan Mukunth

Perhaps the most significant technical detail in the document is “heterogeneous integration” because it recognises that India is years away from building cutting-edge logic fabrication facilities, for example, those that manufacture chips with nodes of 2-3 nm, and thus pivots to “advanced packaging”. Heterogenous integration involves stacking different types of chips, such as logic, memory, and sensors, into a single package. Such combinations are critical for AI.

Contemporary AI accelerators like Nvidia’s Graphics Processing Units (GPUs) bank more on how memory is packaged next to the processor instead of only the raw transistor size. By targeting this, the EU and India are trying to capture the value-added segment of the supply chain that is also less capital-intensive than a



Finally, the operational vehicles for the deal's semiconductor strategy are the so-called Blue Valleys – a regulatory

Previously, if the EU had a technical question about Indian AI policy, it would go through diplomatic channels (specifically, the External Action Service to the Ministry of External Affairs). The deal now indicates a direct line: the European AI Office, which is the EU's

Second, and on a related note, the deal also places the European Innovation Council at the helm of a new startup partnership. The Council specialises in what it calls “patient capital” for high-risk technologies such as quantum computing and novel chip architectures that traditional venture capitalists often avoid. By linking the Council with the Start-up India platform, the agreement creates a dedicated cross-border funding corridor for ‘hard’ technologies and fills a gap left by private investors, and could help ensure the deal’s design ambitions are backed by the necessary funds.

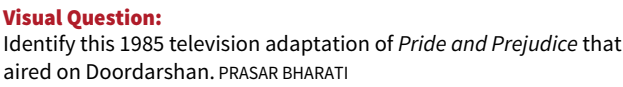


Know your English

Published in The Hindu on June 8, 1999

Marking the anniversary of Jane Austen's seminal novel, this quiz probes *Pride and Prejudice* from its thematic artistry to its publication quirks

What is the now-acclaimed opening line of the book?



Questions and Answers to previous day's daily quiz: 1.
Name the four countries across which the Kurds are found. **Ans: Syria, Turkey, Iraq, and Iran**

2. This religious minority among the Kurds was targeted by the Islamic State. **Ans: Yazidis**

3. This post-World War I treaty promised Kurdistan autonomy but was never ratified. **Ans: The Treaty of Sevres**

4. Abdullah Ocalan abandon Marxist-Leninism for this model. **Ans: Democratic Confederalism**

5. This large-scale chemical attack was carried out by the Baathist regime carry against Iraqi Kurds in the 1980s. **Ans: Halabja massacre**

6. This Kurdish group was suspected of assassinating Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme. **Ans: Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK)**

7. The decree granting Kurds national language status was issued in this year. **Ans: 2026**

8. This all-female Kurdish militia gained global attention during the fight against IS. **Ans: The YPJ**

Visual: This medieval Kurdish commander became a central figure in Islamic resistance to the Crusades. **Ans: Saladin**

Early Birds: Tamal Biswas| Suchit Narasim| Tito Shiladitya| Arun Kumar Singh| G. P. Ramachandran

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