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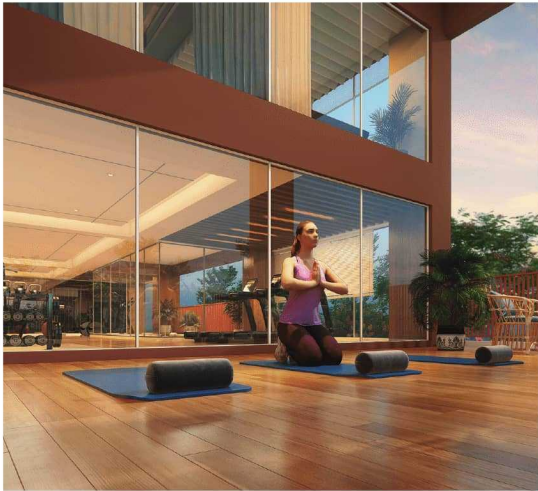
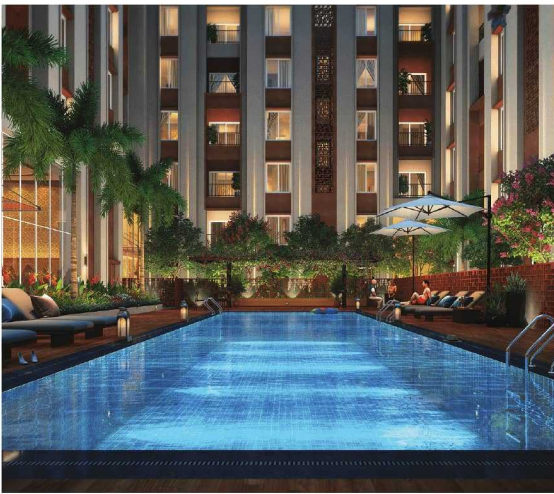


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A trade confrontation between the US and Canada escalates sharply, triggering 50% Trump tariffs on billions of dollars in Canadian goods and a promise of dollar-for-dollar retaliation from Ottawa. P 13

FLOPPED IT

by THE TIMES OF INDIA

A 60-SECOND DAILY WORD CHALLENGE. Crack the word, build your streak, share your score. Top scorers get featured in TOI



India head coach Gautam Gambhir has called for more three-Test series, saying, 'I have always believed there should be a possibility for a team that loses the first Test to come back and win the series'. P 16

3 engineers die in factory turbine blast in J'khand

Three engineers were charred to death and another employee suffered critical burns after a fire triggered by a turbine explosion engulfed the control room of a captive power plant at a private sponge iron factory in a village in Jharkhand's Ramgarh district on Friday night. P 7

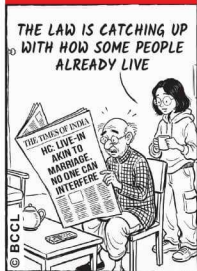
Meerut torture: Cops face action

Hours after SSP Avinash Pandey was attached to state HQ in Lucknow over allegations that cops tortured a farmer leader and his dalit associate, eight more Meerut cops were recalled to police lines late Friday night. ADG (Meerut zone) Bhanu Bhaskar has also ordered a high-level inquiry. P 7

'Centre-state targeting Left'

PM state secretary P Shanmugam alleged a possible Centre-state conspiracy to target Left parties, citing a govt directive against students participating in protests organised by them. P 6

YOU SAID IT



Jaishankar on B'desh: Ties must serve mutual interest

'Govt Can't Ignore Public Opinion On Pak'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: For any relationship to work, it has to meet the test of mutual interest, external affairs minister S Jaishankar said Saturday on the current state of ties between India and Bangladesh, particularly in the context of uncertainty over PM Tarique Rahman's visit. "It has to work for them, it has to work for us. I'm not expecting neighbours to only do what is in my interest... when you get that common landing ground, relationships work smoothly," Jaishankar said.

ET WORLD LEADERS FORUM | P 16

Don't let your supply chain really be just in time anymore; **don't assume that your lowest cost will be the determinant**...you have to build in that margin of safety

ON BANGLADESH

For any relationship to work, it has to meet the test of mutual interest

ON CHINA

At the end of the day, peace and tranquillity in the border areas is a prerequisite for good relations

—S JAISHANKAR



set several riders for the visit, among them expediting extradition of Sheikh Hasina, the ousted premier's virtual prisoner on Aug 5 acted as a fresh friction point.

At Economic Times World Leaders Forum, discussing neighbours, Jaishankar reaffirmed India's position on Pakistan that dialogue and terrorism cannot coexist, and said the govt cannot be impervious to public opinion in the country.

Ahead of PM Modi's upcoming meetings with Chinese President Xi Jinping on the margins of the SCO and Brics summits next month, Jaishankar also said both New Delhi and Beijing have an interest in maintaining stability in the relationship and India needs to do business with the entire world, including China.

► **Border situation, P 16**

Shah: New panel on Gorkhaland will draft political solution afresh

Roshan Gupta | TNN

Siliguri: Union home minister Amit Shah on Saturday chaired a tripartite meeting with West Bengal CM Suwendu Adhikari, Centre-appointed interlocutor and former deputy

NSA Pankaj Kumar Singh and political parties of the region and decided that Singh would steer the move for a permanent political solution for the Darjeeling Hills within the framework of the Constitution.

Adhikari reiterated that Bengal's govt would not accept any proposal on the state's division but was ready to work towards any other permanent solution.

► **Statehood demands, P 16**

BCI chairman faces calls to quit, co-chair demands inquiry

Amitanand.Choudhary @timesgroup.com

New Delhi: After facing brickbats from law students and also from Supreme Court for acting beyond jurisdiction in barring law graduates from Hyderabad's NALSAR University of Law from being registered as advocates, for which he later apologised, Bar Council of India chairperson Manan Kumar Mishra is now facing a revolt from within the council itself. Senior advocate and co-chairperson of BCI, Y R Sadasiva Reddy, has sought his resignation, alleging financial irregularities during his tenure. Mishra, a BJP MP, however, termed the allegations a political stunt and vendetta.

In a six-page letter addressed to BCI chairperson, Reddy raised the allegation

You have held that office continuously since 2012... When elections to the office fall due, the arrangements are so managed that the outcome is a foregone conclusion...

—Co-chair Y R Sadasiva Reddy

He (Reddy) has been a BCI member for the last about eight and a half years... [but] has never opened his mouth

—BCI chief Manan Mishra

of financial irregularities and diversion of funds against him and sought an independent audit of BCI accounts and of a trust named the "BCI Trust PEARL - First" established during Mishra's tenure.

► **Conferred by Parl, P 16**

Foreign ship sinks near Paradip, crew in lifeboats

Bhubaneswar/Kendrapada: A Panama-flagged cargo vessel carrying 72,200 MT of iron ore fines and manned by 24 foreign crew members sank around 200 nautical miles off the Odisha coast on Saturday, triggering a large-scale search and rescue operation by the Indian Coast Guard and Navy, report Ashok Pradhan & Ashis Senapati. The authorities believe there are survivors as they have picked up beacons emitted from the area from lifejackets equipped with AIS (automatic identification system) transmitters.

Officials said a combination of satellite tracking and location data helped pinpoint where the vessel sank. Satellite inputs were first used to identify the area from where the last distress signal was received.

► **'Rough sea conditions', P 9**

CM Revanth had plans to meet Vance, Mamdani

Telangana chief minister Revanth Reddy planned to hold "political meetings" during his proposed trip to US, according to sources in Union govt. The ministry of external affairs had on Friday withheld permission for Reddy to travel to US, while approving his visit to the UK. The sources said Revanth had plans to meet US vice-president J D Vance and New York mayor Zohran Mamdani, as well as one of US President Donald Trump's sons. P 9

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Endoscopic cam used to copy BSc paper in sealed packet

Raipur: A tiny endoscopic camera was allegedly slipped through a pinhole in a sealed question-paper envelope to film a BSc agriculture entomology paper without opening the packet, exposing a startling loophole in exam security at Indira Gandhi Krishi Vishwavidyalaya (IGKV) in Raipur, Chhattisgarh police said Saturday.

The paper leak surfaced on Aug 20, shortly before the exam, reports Rashmi Drolia.

The test was cancelled and rescheduled for the first week of Sept. About 1,200

PROF ALSO HELD



► Six people have been held, including a professor at a private college in Durg

► Raipur police are searching for two more suspects and are probing whether the group was part of a wider network

students from 27 agricultural colleges were to take it.

► **Out on WhatsApp, P 16**

DMK sets age caps, term limits after loss

Following its setback in the 2026 assembly election, DMK on Saturday set a 70-year age cap and three-term limit for district secretaries. Several former ministers, including E V Velu, Anitha S Radhakrishnan, S Muthusamy, S Regupathy and R Gandhi could lose their posts. The decision was taken at a meeting chaired by former chief minister M K Stalin. Under the new arrangement, there will be one organisational district for every two constituencies, based on revenue districts. The number of district units will be increased from the existing 77 to 110. P 6

5-hour-old baby dies in NICU fire in MP

Amarjeet.Singhi @timesofindia.com

Bhopal: A newborn died and two babies suffered burn injuries after a fire broke out on Saturday in the neonatal intensive care unit of state-run Chhindwara district hospital in Madhya Pradesh.

2 INFANTS SUFFER BURNS

Police said the preliminary inquiry pointed to a short circuit in a warmer bed as the likely trigger. The infant who perished was born barely five hours before the blaze. The fire broke out between 2am and 3am in the unit where 33 newborns were admitted. Another 30 infants were housed in a neighbouring ward. Three infants were in the same cradle at the NICU where the fire broke out, sources said. The three were referred to Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Medical College and Hospital in Jabalpur, over 200km away. One died on the way.

Chhindwara civil surgeon Dr Kanchan Dubey told TOI the deceased infant was born around 10pm on Friday.

► **Bed caught fire, P 16**

Meghalaya travel blockade off after apology

The Assam-Meghalaya travel blockade ended on Saturday after Meghalaya "sincerely regretted" and promised an SIT probe into the Aug 19 violence in Shillong during a Khasi Students' Union motorcycle rally when Assam-registered vehicles were targeted and damaged.

Meghalaya also announced compensation for damaged vehicles, free treatment for those injured and safe passage for stranded travellers. The assurances followed the first ministerial-level meeting between the neighbouring states since the violence. P 8



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Torso in suitcase: Victim is Tamil woman, police hunt on for Odia couple



ON THE RUN: CCTV footage of the suspects released by police

A.Selvaraj@timesofindia.com

Chennai: More than 15 days after a torso was found stuffed inside an abandoned suitcase aboard the Tamil Nadu Express when it arrived at Agra Cantonment railway station, police have identified the deceased as Haidul Nisha. She hails from Paramakudi in Tamil Nadu.

While the suspects — a couple from Odisha — have been identified, neither the motive nor the manner of the murder has been ascertained.

Police have released CCTV footage of the suspects — Manik Uddin Laskar and Bhagmati Majik of Odisha. Police traced the suitcase to a rented house on Mosque Street, Guduvanchery. After police found the house locked, they questioned neighbours, who said that two women and a man from Odisha had been staying there.

Special teams formed to

trace the suspects tracked their mobile phone signals and found that they had fled to Odisha. Three teams have been sent to Odisha to nab the couple.

The train had left Chennai Central for New Delhi on Aug 5 and reached Agra on Aug 6. Passengers alerted railway officials after noticing a foul smell from a red suitcase in the general compartment. Agra railway police opened the suitcase and found the headless, dismembered body of a woman.

With the assistance of the Tamil Nadu police, Agra railway police examined more than 350 CCTV recordings from Chennai Central and Guduvanchery.

The footage showed a man and a woman carrying the suitcase to Chennai Central and boarding the train. They later got down, travelled to Guduvanchery and left the station in an autorickshaw.

State's GATE, JAM training sees huge surge in interest this year

5,014 UG, PG Students Apply For Training

Ragu.Raman@timesofindia.com

Chennai: Following the success of Tamil Nadu's residential training programme for basic science students to crack entrance tests for prestigious institutions such as IITs, NITs and IISERs, there has been a huge surge of interest this year. As many as 5,014 UG and PG students from govt arts and science colleges applied for the training this year compared to 500 students last year.

As many as nine students out of 165 students who attended the training joined IITs, NITs and other institutions last year. The two-week-long residential programme will give exposure to undergraduate and postgraduate students

EXPOSURE FOR ALL

- ▶ 180 UG, PG students studying physics, chemistry and maths will be selected for training
- ▶ They will get exposure to various entrance tests including IIT JAM, JEST, GATE and NET
- ▶ Students will be trained in basic concepts and problem-solving skills
- ▶ They will also get exposure to research fellowships offered by prestigious institutions such as IISc and IISERs

studying physics, chemistry and maths to entrance tests such as IIT JAM (Joint Admission Test for Masters), JEST (Joint Entrance Screening Test), GATE (Graduate Aptitude Test in Engineering) and National Eligibility Test (NET).

"The training programme launched to improve students' conceptual understanding in physics, chemistry and maths. It is aimed to strengthen students' analytical and



problem-solving skills and prepare them for national level competitive exams," an official from higher education department said.

Experienced faculty members will train students to solve problems in physics, chemistry and maths subjects and answer higher-order thinking-based questions asked in the previous entrance tests. TN State Council for Higher Education (TANSCH), which is organising the training programme, will conduct a screening test to select students in the first week of Sept. About 180 students will be selected for the residential training programme.

"Students also will get an orientation about the scholarships, research fellowships offered by prestigious institutions such as Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR) at this training," the official added.

The training is likely to be conducted in two phases — first phase in Oct and second phase in Dec. S Govindhan, who attended the residential training last year, has joined MSc chemistry at IIT Madras. He said the training programme gave him exposure to entrance tests and opportunities in the prestigious research institutions.

Higher education minister P Viswanathan gave a cash reward to students who joined premier institutions in July.

FESTIVE LOOK FOR MADRAS DAY

C Suresh Kumar



DONNED IN PRIDE: Ripon Building illuminated with brown and yellow lights as part of the Madras Day 2026 celebrations, on Saturday

India must become AI creator, not consumer: Delhi CM Rekha Gupta

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Chennai: India must become a creator of artificial intelligence rather than just a consumer, Delhi chief minister Rekha Gupta said at Vellore Institute of Technology (VIT) on Saturday.

Delivering the 41st convocation address in Vellore, she said the Union govt was investing substantially in the fields of semiconductor, computing infrastructure, defence and robotics through the India AI Mission. "The aim is to move beyond consuming AI technology to producing it. This shift will be one of the greatest contributions graduates can make to their state and country," she added.

The Delhi chief minister further said many of society's problems could be solved if the govt and graduates worked in tandem. She urged the graduating students to take up roles that could help their cities. She also conferred degree cer-



MAPPING FUTURE: Delhi CM Rekha Gupta presenting degrees to students at 41st convocation of VIT Vellore

tificates on the graduating students. Her son, Nikunj Gupta, was among the graduands.

VIT chancellor G Viswanathan said India's Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education was around 30%, which the Union govt's national education policy aims to raise to 50%. He further said India has over 50 lakh engineering seats, but lags in medical education. "About 22 lakh students appear for the NEET each year, competing for only

around 1.3 lakh medical seats nationwide — leaving barely 2,000 to 3,000 seats vacant after allotment. Nearly one lakh Indian students go abroad annually to study medicine."

He also referred to friction between governors and state govt over the appointment of vice-chancellors, and added that vice-chancellor posts in at least 17 state universities in Tamil Nadu and more than 13 in Kerala currently were vacant.

Power line snaps in rain, 12 goats electrocuted

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Chennai: At least 12 goats were electrocuted after they came into contact with a live power line that snapped and fell across a road in Sengundram village near Maraimalai Nagar in Chengalpattu district during heavy rain.

IN CHENGALPET

Heavy rain, accompanied by thunder and lightning, was reported in Guduvanchery, Potheri, Kattankulathur, Maraimalai Nagar and Singaperumal Koil. The goats had been taken out for grazing and were returning to their owners when the incident occurred. Police said a power line snapped during the rain and fell across the road.

The goats stepped on the live wire and were electrocuted. All 12 goats died on the spot. Maraimalai Nagar police registered a case.

Common reproductive disorder linked to higher heart risk in women, finds study

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Chennai: Women with endometriosis — a painful condition in which tissue resembling the lining of the uterus grows outside it, often on the ovaries, fallopian tubes or other pelvic tissues — may face a higher risk of cardiovascular disease, according to a study published in Clinical Cardiology.

Endometriosis can cause severe period and pelvic pain, heavy bleeding and difficulty becoming pregnant. The condition affects an estimated 5% to 10% of women of reproductive age and can trigger prolonged inflammation — the body's prolonged immune response to injury or irritation.

In a paper on cardiovascular disease risk in women with endometriosis, experts from US, UK and Chennai's Sri Ramachandra Institute of Higher Education and Sugam Hospitals pooled find-

HOW ENDOMETRIOSIS MAY AFFECT THE HEART

A chronic inflammatory condition: In endometriosis, tissue similar to the uterine lining grows outside the uterus. The condition can trigger ongoing inflammation in the body

HIGHER RISK SEEN IN STUDIES Compared with women without endometriosis, women with the condition had:

OUTCOME & HIGHER RELATIVE RISK (in %)	
Overall cardiovascular disease	21
Major cardiovascular events	23
Ischaemic heart disease	57
Coronary artery disease	36
Angina or heart attack combined	62

ings from earlier studies that compared women with and without endometriosis.

They found that women with endometriosis had a 21% higher risk of cardiovascular disease, conditions affecting the heart and blood vessels, and a 23% higher risk of major adverse cardiovascular events, a medical term used to group serious outco-

CHANGES IN BLOOD VESSELS

The study says persistent inflammation and oxidative stress — cell damage linked to unstable molecules — may impair the lining of blood vessels, called the endothelium

Plaque build up can: Damage the vessel lining, lead to an unhealthy blood fat profile, may promote the formation of fatty plaque in arteries

mes such as heart attack, stroke or death from cardiovascular causes, wrote the study's first and corresponding author Manesh Mylavarapu from University of Chicago Pritzker School of Medicine, Chicago.

Some of the strongest associations involved the heart's blood supply. Women with endometriosis had a

57% higher relative risk of ischemic heart disease, in which narrowed or blocked arteries reduce blood flow and oxygen to the heart muscle. They had a 36% higher risk of coronary artery disease, in which fatty deposits build up in the arteries supplying the heart. The combined risk of angina, chest pain caused by inadequate blood flow to the heart, and heart attack was 62% higher.

The authors cautioned that the findings do not prove that endometriosis causes heart disease, as the studies were observational. Smoking, diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, obesity, treatment history and the severity of endometriosis may also affect cardiovascular risk.

They called for earlier cardiovascular screening, rigorous management of risk factors and closer coordination between gynaecologists and cardiologists.

ASI to restore 230-year-old exchange building, revamp colonial museum inside Fort St George

Ragu.Raman@timesofindia.com

Chennai: Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) will soon restore the 230-year-old colonial-era exchange building, which at present houses the Fort Museum inside Fort St George. It plans to upgrade the Fort Museum, which exhibits more than 3,500 artefacts from the colonial period to enhance the visitors' experience.

The three-storey building (ground + two floors), constructed between 1790 and 1795, is considered one of the strongest buildings in Fort St George. The ground floor, with its vaulted roof, was designed to withstand the cannon fire from the sea. "We will take up the structural conservation of the exchange building. We are also planning to revamp the Fort Museum. This work will be carried out in a phased manner over the next two years without affecting the visitors," said Sushanta Kumar Kar, superintending archaeologist, Chennai Circle, ASI.

The museum will showcase the artefacts in a modern way and the lighting al-



PAST LIVES: The 230-year-old Exchange Building, which at present houses the Fort Museum inside the Fort St George (above), and the long room which was used for public meetings, lottery draws and official entertainments organised by the Governor, and now houses the portrait gallery

so will be upgraded.

"The museum houses the only surviving flag of India, which was hoisted in 1947. Further, the register of St Mary's Church, which recorded the marriage of Robert Clive, is also at display," he added.

The Indian national flag was 12 feet long and 8 feet wi-



de, and it was hoisted on Aug 15, 1947, at 5.30am at Fort St George. It also houses many galleries, including an arms gallery displaying swords, rifles, pistols, mortars, cannon shots, breastplates and shell fragments.

At its peak, the Exchange

Building was the hub of trading activities, teeming with merchants, dealers, ship captains, and others concerned in trade. The building had a warehouse, auction room and a library on the ground floor. The most notable room of the building was the long room located on the first floor. This room now houses the portrait gallery. In colonial times, it saw public meetings, lottery draws and official entertainments organised by the Governor. In 1861, the building became the officers' mess for the British Regiment quartered in the Fort.

"We have unearthed an underground chamber at the ground floor of the building. We were told that it could have been used to store ice when it served as officers' mess. Another highlight of the exchange building is that it has a very high ceiling," said T Sathiyamurthy, former superintending archaeologist, Archaeological Survey of India.

The building also housed Madras Bank and the first lighthouse of Madras in 1796. The lamp was located at a height of 90 feet above sea level.

FePSA: Expedite overhaul of private nursery, primary schools

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Chennai: Private nursery and primary schools that have applied to upgrade up to Class VIII must be immediately granted "middle school" status so students admitted under the Right to Education (RTE) Act do not lose their benefits, the Federation of Private School Associations (FePSA) has demanded.

In a representation to the school education minister, FePSA, which represents more than 60 schools, said students admitted to LKG or Class I under the RTE Act were unable to continue studying without tuition fees up to Class VIII.

"Nursery and primary schools offer classes only up to Class V, forcing students to transfer for Class VI. They cannot then avail themselves of RTE admission in another school, as such admissions are available only from LKG or Class I. Schools with the required infrastructure should be upgraded to middle schools without delay," said M Arumugam, president, FePSA.

People pay ₹10 for bucket of water to use loo at Kasimedu

Swedha.Radhakrishnan @timesofindia.com

Chennai: For the past five years at the bustling Kasimedu fishing harbour, fishermen and visitors pay ₹10 for a bucket of water before using the poorly maintained, dilapidated loo. The lack of basic amenities is a concern at the market, which draws more than 10,000 visitors on weekends.

With the harbour falling under the Chennai Port Authority, users say they have little clarity on where to lodge complaints about sanitation and water supply.

The toilet block, which is more than a decade old, has two toilets, but only one is currently kept open for fishermen and customers. The facility lacks basic maintenance and an adequate water supply, adding to the difficulties faced by users.

Fishermen said the problem becomes particularly acute during weekends and holidays when the market is crowded. "The motor supplying water to the toilet has remained unrepaired for years, forcing us to buy water by the bucket for cleaning and other essential purposes. We are



IN DIRE STRAITS: A dilapidated washroom at Kasimedu harbour

charged ₹10 for a bucket and have no choice but to pay as we depend on the water," said K Swarnam, a fish vendor.

Vendors and visitors said the authorities should either repair the existing infrastructure or provide a new toilet block with uninterrupted water supply and proper maintenance.

Customers too said the condition of the toilet was unacceptable given the number of people visiting the market. "We don't mind paying ₹5 to use the toilet if it is properly maintained. The authorities should ensure that it is clean, hygienic and has water. Thousands of people come here,

particularly on weekends, and they deserve a basic facility," said J Subba Lakshmi, a resident of Manali and regular customer at the market.

"We need a proper grievance mechanism where complaints regarding sanitation, water supply and maintenance can be registered and followed up. We are clueless about whom to approach to address this long-standing issue since it is maintained by port authorities," said K Mukesh Kumar, a fisherman at Kasimedu fishing harbour.

Despite multiple attempts to reach, the fisheries department was unavailable for comment.

Tasmac to directly pay power bills for outlets to curb MRP violation

Venkadesan.S @timesofindia.com

Chennai: In yet another major step to curb MRP violations at liquor outlets, Tamil Nadu State Marketing Corporation (Tasmac) will pay electricity bills for all its retail shops from Sept 1 through the Electronic National Automated Clearing House (e-Nach) digital payment service provided by National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI).

Though shop supervisors and salesmen can claim reimbursement for the electricity bills they pay, shop personnel said the money is rarely reimbursed and use it as an excuse to collect ₹10 above the MRP of liquor bottles from buyers.

Of the 4,015 functional liquor shops across the state, 3,655 shops have an independent electricity service with a dedicated meter. "Tamil Nadu Power Distribution



Corporation Limited has integrated all the meter details. From Sept, the electricity bill raised for any of these 3,655 shops will be auto-debited from Tasmac's account. The remaining shops will eventually be added to the system," said Tasmac sources.

Customers point out that Tasmac has introduced the option of reserving liquor through online payment to curb MRP violation, but Tasmac personnel continue to discourage buyers from using the website to buy liquor and keep online purchases below 1%.

Brace for more rain this week

This May Offset
Lack Of Rain To
Some Extent

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Chennai: The city and its three neighbouring districts continue to face rainfall deficit. But weathermen said there is a chance of some recovery, as a weather system over north India could create favourable conditions for rain over Chennai and north coastal Tamil Nadu for the next few days. On Sunday, the city and suburbs may receive light to moderate rain.

V R Durai, director, Area Cyclone Warning Centre, IMD, said a low-pressure area over Jharkhand may move towards north Odisha on Sunday, creating favourable conditions for wind convergence leading to convective rainfall over north coastal Tamil Nadu. It may strengthen a feeble trough along and off the Tamil Nadu coast, enhancing convective rainfall.

"We expected this condition last week, but the system moved in the northwest direction. On Sunday, it might

SHADES OF GRAY

Top five rain-deficit districts since June 1



move eastwards. Historically, we have seen rainfall over north coastal Tamil Nadu when there is a system over Jharkhand and Odisha. We can expect rainfall till Tuesday," he said.

After Tuesday, the system is likely to merge with the monsoon trough extending from Gangetic West Bengal to Pakistan, Durai said. This could revive monsoon rainfall over central India and reduce rain over north Tamil Nadu, though some light spells may continue over Chennai.

"On Sunday, the city and

suburbs may receive light to moderate rainfall with thunderstorms and lightning during the evening/night hours. Temperatures may touch 36°C-37°C during the day and drop to 26°C-27°C at night," an IMD bulletin said.

Till Aug 25, moderate rain is possible at isolated places over Chennai, Tiruvallur, Kancheepuram and Chengalpatt, along with other northern, coastal and central districts. Thunderstorms, lightning and gusty wind of 40-50kmph are also possible at one or two places.

Since June 1, Chennai has received 244.9mm, 8% below normal; Tiruvallur 195.6mm (28% below normal); Kancheepuram 172mm (37% below normal); and Chengalpatt 76mm (68% below normal).

On Saturday evening, there were light rain spells over some parts of the city. Till 7.30pm, rain gauges in NIOT, Pallikarai logged 7.9mm, West Tambaram 7mm, and an automatic weather station in Meenambakkam 4.5mm.

"There is a good possibility for rain till Wednesday," said blogger Pradeep John.

GCC launches drive to help households segregate waste

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Chennai: Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) on Saturday launched a 40-day door-to-door campaign across five south Chennai zones to encourage households to segregate waste at the source, with field workers using stickers on houses to track compliance. The civic body said it will enforce penalties under the Solid Waste Management Rules, 2026 for violations from next month.

The campaign, "Kuppai Pirippom - Naalai Kaapom", was rolled out across Valasaravakkam, Alandur, Adyar, Perungudi, and Sholinganallur zones. GCC has identified 10,000 households in each zone for the drive.

GCC officials, MLAs and councillors visited the families to spread awareness. Each household received a dry-waste collection bag and an awareness kit explaining what constitutes dry waste, how it should be segregated at source and how it should be handed over.

The aim is to provide households with a practical solution for collecting dry waste separately while making

segregation more visible, officials said. "This campaign is about spreading awareness and monitoring. When workers go to collect the garbage, they will check if segregation is done and mark it on a sticker pasted outside homes," an official said.

"From next month, fines will be collected," she said, adding that the drive will be spread to other regions.

GCC collects around 6,150 tonnes of garbage every day. How much of this is segregated at the household level determines how much can be composted or recycled rather than being dumped at Kodungaiyur and Perungudi dumpyards.

The campaign will involve repeated visits by GCC and Urbaser Sumeet field teams over the 40 days. The teams will reinforce segregation practices, address implementation difficulties and monitor household participation. At the end of the campaign, GCC plans to assess performance and changes in source-segregation practices. Poornima K, resident of Adyar, said, "All houses must use separate bins for wet and dry waste. Sometimes, even when we separate the waste, conservancy workers mix it up. That shouldn't happen anymore."



'KUPPAI PIRIPPOM' DRIVE: Families receive dry-waste collection bag

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THE TIMES OF INDIA

15th August to 21st August - WINNERS FROM CHENNAI

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Malathi Siva | Avadi

Gopinath | Chengalpatt

Rahamanoharan | Padi

Jayaraman Rajagopalan | Velachery

Prakriti K | Chennai

Sridharan Krishnamurthy Iyer | Chitlapakkam

Mustafa Hussain Bhai Kutub | Old Washermenpet

Venkatesan Jayaraman | Avadi

Hia Syed | Kelambakkam

Napa Chandrasekhar | Villivakkam

Lightning strike kills fish vendor, son

Chennai: A 45-year-old fish vendor and his 10-year-old son died after they were struck by lightning while returning home on a bicycle near Siruvanchur lake bund in Padappai, Kancheepuram district, on Friday evening.

Shankar of Siruvanchur near Padappai went to a govt school at Oragadam Junction to collect his son Chandran, a Class V student. He and Chandran were travelling along the Wallajabad-Vandalar Road when heavy rain, accompanied by thunder and lightning, lashed the area.

When they reached the Siruvanchur lake bund, lightning struck them. Both died on the spot. Padappai police reached the scene and recovered the bodies. They were sent to Chengalpatt district govt hospital for postmortem. TNN

CRIME & PUNISHMENT

Two nabbed for cheating tenants, house owners of ₹2cr

A man and a woman were arrested for cheating 34 house owners and tenants of ₹2.1 crore through a property firm. The suspects rented houses from owners and subleased them to customers online before shutting down the firm and absconding. Police identified as Helen Rose, 59, and Premkumar, 50.

Man arrested for chain-snatching

A 33-year-old food delivery agent was arrested on Saturday for snatching a woman's gold chain at her grocery shop in MGR Nagar on July 2. The accused, Sathyanarayanan of MGR Nagar, approached Pappa, 58, at her grocery shop in Nesapakkam, under the pretext of buying soft drinks. When Pappa turned to show him the bottles, he snatched her gold chain and fled.

Priest arrested for stealing temple jewellery

A 38-year-old temple priest was arrested for stealing gold chains and silver articles from the Sri Ponniyamman Temple in Alandur. Police recovered three gold chains weighing 10g and silver articles weighing 460g. Ranganathan of Arumbakkam had been serving at the temple for about 10 years. On Friday, a temple trustee found that a silver crown, a silver sieve and three gold chains were missing from the sanctum sanctorum. He lodged a complaint with St Thomas Mount police.

Man buried alive in Thiruvottiur while digging sewage pit

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Chennai: A 37-year-old contract worker was buried alive when one side of a 10ft-deep pit caved in during sewage work at Gramam Street in Thiruvottiur early Saturday.

The deceased, Bhoominathan of Tiruvannamalai district, was among four workers digging a sewage tank meant for four houses in the locality.

Around 4am, Bhoominathan was inside the pit, removing soil with a shovel when the earth from one side collapsed on him. The other workers alerted police and fire and rescue services. Fire personnel and local



10FT-DEEP PIT CAVES IN

residents took about two and a half hours to clear the soil and recover Bhoominathan's body. Police said he had died before the rescue team could reach him. The body was sent to Government Stanley Hospital for postmortem. Thiruvottiur police registered a case and questioned the other workers. Further investigation is underway.

Corpn clears encroachments choking Valluvar Kottam path

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Chennai: Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) carried out an eviction drive on Valluvar Kottam High Road and surrounding areas on Saturday, removing nearly 30 encroachments choking footpaths. This follows a TOI report on Aug 19 highlighting the issue.

GCC zonal officer (zone 9) Senthilkumaran said, "10 vegetable shops, two fruit stalls, seven bunks, 15 carts, and several crates were removed with police assistance." He said action will be taken to prevent their return.

The drive was held in wards 110 and 113, covering Valluvar Kottam High Road, Kodambakkam High Road, Lake Area First Main Road, Mahalingapuram near Loyola College and Tank Bund Road.



CLEAN WALKWAY: GCC officials and police remove stalls

The action comes days after TOI reported that encroachments narrowed footpaths in Valluvar Kottam, forcing pedestrians to use carriage-way amid traffic.

Similarly, following another TOI report on foul-smelling water and disruption of Metrowater supply in parts of Perambur and Anna Nagar, officials rectified the issue. They visited the affected location on Saturday morning and resolved a water pollution complaint on Patel Road, Perambur.

Metrowater officials said they first identified the source of pollution. "The water main was flushed, and the supply was checked after repair work. Water supply was restored, and subsequent quality testing found the water to be normal," they said. Similar action was also taken in Anna Nagar.

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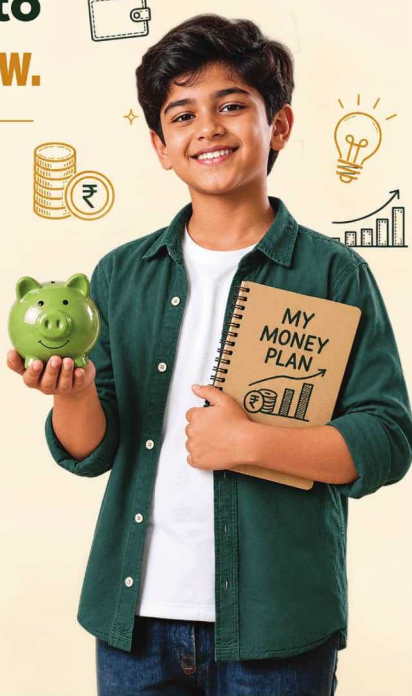
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மாண்புமிகு முதல் அமைச்சர் அவர்களின் கனிவான கவனத்திற்கு நாங்கள் செய்து முடித்த ஒப்பந்த பணிகளுக்கு சென்னை மாநகராட்சியிடம் இருந்து 6 மாதங்களுக்கு மேல் நிதி வராததால் முன் எப்போதும் இல்லாத நிதி சிக்கலை சந்தித்து வருகிறோம். கடந்த ஜனவரி மாதத்தில் இருந்து பில் தொகை வழங்கப்படாமல் இன்றைய தேதியில் ஒப்பந்ததாரர்களுக்கு பல கோடி ரூபாய் அளவுக்கு பணம் வழங்கப்படாமல் கடந்த 6 மாதங்களாக நிறுவையில் உள்ளது.

கிட்டத்தட்ட ஒரு வருடத்துக்கு மேலாக பல இடங்களில் கடன் வாங்கி பணிகள் செய்துள்ளோம். பணம் வழங்காத நிலையில் கடனுக்கான வட்டி மற்றும் தவணை தொகையை ஒப்பந்ததாரர்களால் தொடர்ந்து செலுத்த முடியாமல் வாழ்வாதாரத்தை தொலைத்து ரொம்ப அபாயகரமான கடத்தில் மிகுந்த நெருக்கடியான நிலையில் இருக்கிறோம்.

உங்களின் நேரடி தலையீடு மற்றும் உதவி இல்லாமல் மாநகராட்சியால் எங்களின் கடனை அடைக்க முடியாது. எனவே நாங்கள் தயவு கூர்ந்து தலையீட்டு அரசின் வாயிலாக மாநகராட்சிக்கு சிறப்பு நிதி கொடுத்து மாநகராட்சியின் கௌரவத்தையும் எங்களின் வாழ்க்கையையும் காப்பாற்றும்படி வேண்டி கேட்டுக் கொள்கிறோம்.

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(Left to Right) Residents preparing for a pookalam; Anishma at an embroidery workshop



ONAM CHENNAI STYLE

Non-Malayalis are embracing Onam through food, fashion, games and a Mahabali in a Porsche

Muskaan.Ahmed@timesofindia.com

On Saturday, King Mahabali arrived in Chennai not just with the familiar olakkuda (traditional palm-leaf umbrella) and the rhythmic beats of the chenda melam, but in a convoy of supercars, including Audis, BMWs and Porsches. This unconventional entrance was part of 'Onamela', organised by Club Anva in collaboration with FOMO Klub, featuring a fusion of chenda melam and DJ music, flash mobs, traditional games, a 24-dish sadhya, topped with the legendary 'king' of Onam's arrival.

Founder of Club Anva, Nimalan Prabha, a Tamilian, says he spent the past four years celebrating Onam with his Malayali friends in college. After graduation, however, his friends got busy, and many returned to Kerala for



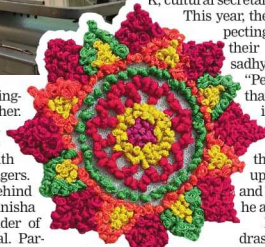
EMBRACING CULTURE: King Mahabali enters in style at Onam celebration

the festival. "I was missing celebrating with them. That's when I decided to organise Onamela," he says. Gated community fests and embroidery workshops. Strangers' meets and market treats. Non-Malayalis in Chennai are increasingly putting their own spin on Onam, turning the community celebration into a festival across language, region and religion.

Kaatri Kadhaigal, an event organiser, for instance, is hosting its first Onam-themed strangers' meet on Aug 23 at Backyard. "We have always been fascinated with Onam.

It has a way of bringing people together. We figured it's a great way for people to celebrate with friends and strangers. That's the idea behind this event," says Anisha Maria A, co-founder of Kaatri Kadhaigal. Participants can meet new people, play games and listen to music, with one condition: they must turn up in mundu or kasavu saree.

Seeing colleges and workplaces celebrate Onam with increasing enthusiasm, Anishma Alexen, founder of embroidery startup Persis Threads, organised a pookalam embroidery workshop last year. "Onam has become the next big festival in Chennai. In colleges, everyone is excited to wear the kasavu saree



and mundu veshti. Everyone also loves pookalam, so I decided to combine the two and organise a workshop using simple, beginner-friendly flower motifs," she says. What stood out, she adds, was that most of those who attended the workshop were non-Malayalis. "It has become a form of cultural diffusion," says Anishma who is planning a second edition.

Onam is also playing out at a larger scale in residential complexes. At Casagrand Amethyst in Sholinganallur, residents have been celebrating Onam for the past four years with group dances, and pookalam competitions, stalls and games.

Mounika Tula, originally from Telangana, and now a resident of Casagrand Amethyst, says, "When we put out a volunteer request, you would think Malayalis would be the first to take initiative, but it's actually the non-Malayalis. People from all religions participate too; this festival really brings everyone together," she says. At Jains Insell in Padur, organisers are trying to retain the essence of Kerala by conducting traditional games such as vadamvali (tug of war), sundarikku pottu

Kerala Tourism Development Corporation (KTDC) is organising a Payasam Mela till Aug 26 at Raindrops, Thousand Lights, including pineapple payasam, palada, and ada pradhanam

thodal (an Indian version of pin the tail of the donkey), and a payasam cooking competition. "People from Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Odisha participate in the festivities every year. It has gone beyond region," says Harish K, cultural secretary.

This year, the apartments are expecting a huge footfall for their Onam fair that the sadhya or feast is in slots.

"People are so excited that we are bringing in local businesses from Kerala to set up stalls to sell all things Onam such as upperi, banana chips and Kerala souvenirs," he adds.

Meanwhile, the Madras Kerala Samajam is organising an Onam Market with more than 25 stalls at the association's premises. "The market has savouries, snacks, vegetables, and handlooms, all sold at nominal rates," says Kumbalanga Unnikrishnan, secretary of Madras Kerala Samajam. The market is open to all from 9am till Aug 25. Unnikrishnan says over the years he has noticed a fascination with Kerala culture. "People who come to these stalls are non-Malayalis who are curious about Kerala's food and culture and eager to try new things. They come and buy things in bulk every year during Onam."

MEET ISRO'S MODEL MAN

For four decades, Ravindranatha Guptha has handcrafted miniature satellites for India's premier space institutions

Jacob.Thomas@timesofindia.com

For most Indians, a life well lived is summed up as excelling in studies and pursuing a corporate career, but for Ravindranatha Guptha, it is chasing his unwavering passion for model making. For four decades, he has been a pioneer in making museum-quality miniature models for scientific institutions including Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), Bharath Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL) and the Department of Atomic Energy.

"I set up Indian Model Makers from my Triplicane home in 1981 and approached ISRO," says the 80-year-old. P D Majumdar, group director of the Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SHAR) in Sriharikota, responded. But Guptha was given just two days, and his cardboard model disappointed the director.

"I stood my ground and explained that without a more realistic timeline this was the best I could do," says Guptha.

His gamble paid off. ISRO gave him four months to convert a 2D schematic of a centrifuge into a viable working model. The organisation provided him with detailed diagrams and photos. He measured a single component and used it as a reference to scale down the model. Guptha handcrafted the acrylic model, improvising with household objects. "A plastic rattle and a kumkumam-bbox lid made perfect semi-domes," he says.

Impressed by the finished model, the director ordered four more. Guptha says it laid the foundation for India's first space museum at SHAR in 1981.

Guptha went on to create more than 50 models, including Rohini (RS-1), the first satellite designed by President A P J Abdul Kalam. "I had the pleasure of interacting with Abdul Kalam when he was heading the Defence Research and Development Organisation. One of my models of the AstroSat satellite was presented to him as a memento by Tata Institute of Fundamental Research."

Guptha's models were showcased in India and abroad. With each expo, his clientele list grew. As the orders started rolling in, Guptha set up a factory in 1987, employing 10 people. In 2003, he signed a 10-year MoU with ISRO to sell models as souvenirs to the public on their campus in Bengaluru.

KITS AND CASTS

> Guptha's interest in model making was nurtured by his father who used to buy 'Hobbies Weekly' for him, a magazine from the UK dedicated to woodworking and other crafts. His brother Shantha Narasimha Guptha, an aeromodeller, supplied him with imported kits.

> Guptha says his toughest commission came from BHEL: a miniature fluidised bed combustion boiler in pure silver for President R Venkataraman. Chosen over a silversmith, Guptha designed the mould and worked with jeweller Nathalia Sampathu Chetty to cast it. Mounted on rosewood, the model featured a solar-powered LED display.



"The greatest reward for me was seeing the leading scientists fawn over the models that I created. One even remarked that it looked like his satellite's baby," he says.

Guptha also got the opportunity to work with Boeing Satellite Development Centre on a miniature of its ICO F1 satellite. Even after all these years, Guptha's tryst with the cosmos has not ended. He now sells telescopes and science kits from his home and organises science fairs and expos to get the next generation interested in science and model building.

"It's unfortunate that most Indians go about their lives without ever discovering the joy of a recreational hobby. I try to do my part to ignite that passion in others."

TVK govt has failed to fully waive agri loans, says former AIADMK minister

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Trichy: Former AIADMK minister R Kamaraj on Saturday accused the Tamil Nadu govt of failing to fully waive agricultural loans and alleged that Congress lacked the will to protect the state's water rights in the Mokedatu issue.

Kamaraj was speaking to reporters during an AIADMK protest near the MGR statue at Marakkadai in Trichy where more than 500 people, including party functionaries and cadres, participated in the protest against the govt handling of agricultural loan waivers.

On Mokedatu, R Kamaraj questioned why the govt had not convened an all-party meeting

"Before the election, the ruling party made several promises, including a complete loan waiver for small and marginal farmers and a waiver for those owning more than five acres. But after coming to power, the conditions were changed. This is a deceptive announcement," Kamaraj said.

He demanded that the govt fully implement its election promise and waive agricultural loans. "Farmers' associations are staging protests. Their demands must be met immediately," he said.

On Mokedatu, Kamaraj questioned why the govt had not convened an all-party meeting. "Congress party is in power in Karnataka, and its members are ministers in Tamil Nadu. They could speak to their party leadership to find a solution, but they lack the will to do so," he said.

Kamaraj also criticised the behaviour of the legislators in the assembly. "During the AIADMK Amma regime, the assembly was like a temple. Entering it brought a sense of peace. However, the current situation is chaotic, with everyone speaking out of turn," he said.

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"Congress party is in power in Karnataka, and its members are ministers in Tamil Nadu. They could speak to their party leadership to find a solution, but they lack the will to do so," he said.

Anbumani calls for release of Tirupugazh report on flooding

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Chennai: PMK president Anbumani Ramadoss on Saturday questioned the TVK govt's reluctance to release the Tirupugazh committee report on measures to prevent flooding in Chennai.

Anbumani said there was no reason to keep under wraps a report prepared with public funds. "TVK govt should have said that DMK was wrong in not releasing the report and that it would be released immediately," he said.

Tirupugazh committee, headed by former NDMA additional secretary K Tirupugazh, was constituted in Nov 2021 following the devastating Chennai floods. It submitted an interim report in May 2022 and its final report on March 14, 2023, after 17 months of field studies and data analysis. The report contained 161 recommendations, Anbumani said, adding that DMK govt had claimed that 101 of them had been implemented without making details public. With the northeast monsoon about two months away, Anbumani urged chief minister C Joseph Vijay to release the report immediately and implement its recommendations to prevent Chennai from facing another major flood.

Revenue and disaster management minister K A Sengottaiyan recently told the Assembly that state govt had constituted a seven-member expert panel headed by commissioner of revenue administration N Muruganandam to recommend flood-prevention measures.

4 people held for murder of youth over relationship

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Chennai: Four people have been arrested so far in connection with the murder of a 22-year-old person over a relationship issue at Thiyaru near Kelambakkam.

The deceased, Praveen Kumar of Chinnamma Nagar, Thiyaru, had been in a relationship with a woman from the same locality for three years. Her family opposed the relationship.

On Aug 16, a group of men attacked Praveen with machetes near his house. He was admitted to a private hospital in Kelambakkam and later shifted to Rajiv Gandhi Govt General Hospital, where he died on Aug 20.

Police ruled out an honour killing angle in the murder and said they have arrested S Ezhumalai, 43, his son E Gowtham, 18, and M Nandhees, 18, and R Manikandan, 32. E Gowtham was arrested on Friday. All four were remanded in judicial custody.

Two killed in bike collision near Tiruttani

Chennai: Two youths were killed and two others injured after two motorcycles collided on Chennai-Tirupati National Highway near Tiruttani in the early hours of Saturday.

The deceased were identified as Tharun, 21, of Tiruttani and Sanjeevi Raman, 31, of Chromepet. Tharun was riding with his friend Kumar, 24, of Medinipuram, towards Tiruttani from Tiruvallur when their bike collided head-on with another bike of Sanjeevi Raman coming in the opposite direction towards Chennai from Tiruttani.

The accident occurred at Lakshmapuram village near Tiruttani.

The impact threw both bikers off their motorcycles. Tharun and Sanjeevi Raman died at the spot. Surya, 24, and Naveen Kumar, who were travelling on another motorcycle, suffered injuries. They were taken to Govt Hospital in Tiruttani in a 108 ambulance. TNN

Police foil illegal auto, bike race; 3 arrested

A.Selvaraj@timesofindia.com

Chennai: Three men were arrested after police foiled an auto-rickshaw and motorcycle race on the Maduravoyal-Tambaram 200 Feet Road near the Porur toll gate in the early hours of Saturday. The arrested were identified as Murugan, 38, who was driving the auto-rickshaw, and Arunpatsa, 26, and Karthik, 26, who were travelling on the motorcycle.

Acting on information that an auto-rickshaw race had been organised at midnight, a police team led by inspector Chandramouli conducted surveillance near the Porur toll gate. Police found more than eight auto-rickshaws and two-wheelers assembled near the upper portion of Porur Lake for the race.

When police reached the spot, the participants attempted to flee in their vehicles. The traffic police chased them and seized an auto-rickshaw and a motorcycle.

The three men and the seized vehicles were handed over to Avadi Traffic Investigation Police. A case was registered against them and the accused were produced before the Poonamallee court.

2 TN teachers to get national award; CM congratulates them

Ahamed.Ali@timesofindia.com

Madurai: Two teachers from Madurai and Tenkasi districts—J Amutha of PM Shri Kendriya Vidyalaya, Thiruparankundram, and Thangaraj of panchayat union primary school at Puliampatti—have been selected for National Teacher Award to be conferred by President Droupadi Murmu, congratulating both in an X post. CM C Joseph Vijay also extended Teachers' Day greetings to them.

Amutha, at present serving as principal of the KV, has more than 22 years of teaching experience. She had aspired to join defence services and was an NCC cadet during her student days.

"I am a workaholic by nature. Whenever an opportunity comes, I make most of it by learning and growing through experience," Amutha told TOI. She said teaching has always been a passion and that she approached the profession with a strong sense of service. She has been actively involved in NCC and Bharat Scouts and Guides in the school. Under her leadership, the school adopted panchayat union schools to share learning practices and educational opportunities available at KVs. The school also extended support to an old-age home through service initiatives.



AWARDEES: (Left) J Amutha, and Thangaraj

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He dedicated the award to his parents, wife, family, headmasters, and students. AMMK leader T T V Dhinakaran said the recognition was further honour to TN's educational excellence and the entire teaching community."

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Tambaram choked by lack of parking norms

Visitors Park On Busy Stretches, Outside Homes

Christopher.M@timesofindia.com

Chennai: Tambaram has expanded rapidly in recent years, driven by real estate growth and IT-related development. But parking infrastructure has not kept pace. From East Tambaram to Selayur and West Tambaram, visitors park along busy stretches and outside residential areas, while commercial establishments have turned public spaces into informal parking lots.



EATING INTO CARRIAGEWAY: Public space is taken up by informal parking

king lots. This lack of parking policy—despite having around 580 roads, including nearly 200 major stretches—leaves cars lining up on streets around Tambaram's commercial hubs, eating into road space meant for traffic and pavements meant

for pedestrians. During visits to East Tambaram, Selayur and West Tambaram, TOI found at least 20 cars parked on the pavements. Along GST Road near Tambaram bus terminus, an extended bus bay is used as a paid parking lot by a private hospital.

While major corridors such as GST Road, Velachery-Tambaram Road, Medavakkam Tank Road and Perumbakkam High Road are maintained by highways department, officials said roadside parking and encroachments within city limits is the local body's responsibility.

Tambaram corporation commissioner S Balachander said the civic body faced constraints in identifying dedicated land. "We have been organising encroachment clearance drives and are trying to create awareness and regulate parking in areas where public gathering is high. The corporation has proposed a ₹12 crore smart road

project for new pavements, underground cabling and relay roads," he said.

Urban planner S Naveen said Tambaram should adopt a parking framework rather than treating it as an isolated problem. "Tambaram should map high-demand areas, fix parking fees, monitor residential streets and penalise encroachments. Revenue should be reinvested in multi-level parking, footpaths and transport connectivity," he said. M Gandhi, president, Pallavaram Residents Welfare Association, said roadside encroachments by eateries have made the situation worse, and that traffic police rarely take action.

DK sues publisher, seeks damages for misquoting Periyar

Sureshkumar.K@timesofindia.com

Chennai: Periyar Self-Respect Propaganda Institution has moved Madras high court seeking ₹1 crore in damages against authors of a book on delimitation, alleging that they have wrongly attributed certain statements to Periyar in the publication.

Admitting the plea on Friday, Justice Govindarajan Thilakavadi directed the authors Gautam R Desiraju, Deekhit Bhattacharya, and publisher BluOne Ink Pvt Ltd, Noida to respond to the suit by Sept 9.

According to K Veeramani, president of Dravidar Kazhagam and secretary of the institution, the book titled 'Delimitation and State Reorganisation for Better Democracy in Bharat' contains false claims that Periyar had advocated the elimination of Brahmins.

Veeramani said the authors have claimed to have reproduced a passage from an

English book titled 'Collected Works of Periyar' published in 1981, while factually no such statement was there in the compilation. "It is an intentional, willful, malicious statement made by the authors, which is not only defamatory, but also attracts criminal prosecution," he said.

At no point in his life did Periyar advocate violence or hatred against any community. The manufactured quotation reflects a deliberate attempt by the authors to promote propaganda aligned with contemporary political narratives, falsely attributing them to 'Collected Works of Periyar', he said.

He added that actions of the authors are nothing but propaganda material advanced to satisfy the unconstitutional programs of BJP govt. Therefore, he wanted the court to direct the authors and publisher to remove the alleged defamatory content from the book and ban the publication.

BANANA FARMERS WARNED OF FIRE RISK



IN LIGHT OF AUG 11 FIRE IN TRICHY: The horticulture department has issued an advisory to banana farmers in Trichy—where the plants are cultivated on around 12,000 acres—cautioning them against the heightened risk of fire spread during the ongoing drought and intense heat. Officials urged cultivators to avoid burning agricultural waste and to follow precautionary measures to protect their crops. The warning follows an incident near Kumaravayal village on Aug 11 when a fire destroyed about 2,000 banana trees and 2,000 casuals in sticks used for support. Two firemen were needed to extinguish the blaze, leaving farmers with losses of several lakhs of rupees. Instead of burning, the department recommended composting crop residues, and said that losses from such man-made fires are not eligible for compensation under the disaster management fund.

'Below Madurai' lies original TN: MKU ex-prof

Ahamed.Ali@timesofindia.com

Madurai: 'Below Madurai' is the original Tamil Nadu, and Western Ghats is the cradle of earlier settlers and civilization, said Dr R M Pitchappan, advisor to ancient DNA project, and former head, School of Biological Sciences, Madurai Kamaraj University (MKU), in Madurai on Saturday.

At a seminar commemorating the 25 years since he identified the ancient M130 Y-chromosome genetic lineage, he said the Kothayar dam region, home to lion-tailed macaques and palyar tribes, retains ancient genetic signatures that appear to have originated around Kanyakumari. These gra-



25 YEARS SINCE DISCOVERY: Dr R M Pitchappan (right) who discovered the M130 Y-chromosome and Dr Virumandi (left) who has the chromosome

dually spread northward across Tamil Nadu, radiating signatures from upwards of Cape Comorin (Kanyakumari). Ancient genes were denser there and spreading when it

came upwards. The seminar was titled 'Tamil Nadu Genetic Studies: Anthropological and Archaeological Perspectives'.

Pitchappan said the Central Asian gene pool migration was present only in the northern belt, and if at all it came over down, it was through brahminical spread. We can see the ancient Tamil signatures down south, he said.

"Most scientists working on the genome study in India don't know population genetics; they don't know caste names. Without knowing these, it's akin to comparing an elephant to a tiger, and that's what they are doing," he added. He said Andamanese were no mo-

re Indians, as it has been a long time since they left India on the basis of genetic identification.

"We studied 250 people from three groups—piramalai kallar, yadavas, and sou-rashtrians—and found the M130 gene by accident. We just kept walking and stumbled upon it, and it turned out to be a gold mine rather than a rock," said Pitchappan.

Dr Virumandi, a 'carrier' of M130, Jayakumar, former professor at Tanjavar Tamil University, Rajamanickam, a former associate professor, and Selva Perumal, former head of anthropology department at Pondicherry University, were present at the event.

Tasmac fraud case: Senthilbalaji appears for probe

Chennai: Former minister V Senthilbalaji appeared before DVAC in Aalandur on Saturday for questioning in connection with a case involving alleged irregularities in Tasmac. Investigators questioned him on the alleged irregularities, documents collected during the searches and his links with the other accused.

The DVAC FIR names Senthilbalaji, three of his associates, former Tasmac managing director S Vishakan, and former senior regional managers Rama Durai and Panne-rselvam. On July 29, DVAC teams conducted searches at 41 locations. TNN

'There should not be any distinction between north and south Indians'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Trichy: Former President Ram Nath Kovind, who is on a two-day trip to Tamil Nadu, visited Trichy on Saturday and paid his respects to Perumipudugu Mutharaiyar (Swarnamaram) at the memorial hall near Central bus stand.

After paying homage, Kovind told reporters, "I take great pride in having paid my respects to the statue of Perumipudugu Swarnamaram. He was a great emperor who provided excellent governance in this region centuries ago. Our country has had many such great emperors, and no king should be associated with caste, religion or language. They are all guiding lights for us."

Kovind said the progress enjoyed by the current generations is a result of the paths laid by such historical figures. He also recalled his association with Vice-President C P Rad-



2 DAYS IN TAMIL NADU: Former President Ram Nath Kovind pays respects to Mutharaiyar in Trichy

hakrishnan and said he has several friends in Tamil Nadu. "There should not be any distinction as North or South Indians. As far as I am concerned, we are all Indians," he said.

Salem women launch eco-friendly sanitary napkin startup

Senthil.Kumar@timesofindia.com

Salem: A group of women at Thathampani in Salem district has launched a startup manufacturing eco-friendly sanitary napkins, offering a natural alternative to conventional plastic-based products.



HIGHER ABSORPTION LEVELS

The startup is spearheaded by Saranya Gopinath who turned her personal struggle with skin irritation and rashes caused by commercial pads into an entrepreneurial mission. "After experimenting with hand-stitched cotton prototypes at home and receiving encouraging feedback, I formalised the idea into a business venture," Saranya says.

The production process relies on natural raw materials, including cassava flour, malai vembu (Melia dubia) and medicinal herbs, all free from synthetic components. Business growth partner S Tharageshwari says using cassava and malai vembu results in a much higher level of absorption, keeping the surface dry for longer. "By avoiding the moisture buildup seen in plastic products, we control the environment where bacteria typically grow, eliminating itching and rashes," she says.

Beyond production, the women are determined to break the stigma surrounding menstruation by fostering open dialogue in the community. They emphasise that menstruation must be recognised as a normal biological process, not a taboo subject.

The startup has also raised a demand to the central and state govts to remove the 18% GST levied on raw materials such as processed cassava and malai vembu, pointing out that while sanitary napkins are GST-exempt, the tax on inputs inflates production costs. "If the GST is waived off, the cost of the napkins could be reduced gradually," Saranya says. She has urged the state to extend subsidised loans under govt schemes, saying the support will enable many women to start similar initiatives.

Applications invited for cracker units

Madurai: In a release, Madurai police have invited applications from traders seeking temporary licences to operate firecracker shops for Diwali this year. Eligible applicants must submit the form by Sept 20 afternoon, with an NOC from fire and rescue services, a shop blueprint indicating two exit doors, a 50m radius site plan, the corporation's D&O trade receipt, property tax receipts, a notarised rental agreement on ₹100 stamp paper if leased, a sworn affidavit, ID proof, site photos, and a non-refundable application fee of ₹1,000. TNN

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DMK caps age of district secretaries at 70, limits tenure to three terms

Move Aimed At Bringing In More Youths

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Chennai: In a major organisational overhaul following its setback in the 2026 assembly polls, DMK on Saturday capped the maximum age of district secretaries at 70 and limited their tenure to three terms. The move is expected to see several former ministers, including E V Velu, Anitha R Radhakrishnan, S Muthusamy S Regupathy and R Gandhi, lose their party posts.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the party's executive committee at its headquarters on Saturday. The meeting was chaired by former chief minister and DMK president M K Stalin. Under the new arrangement, there will be one organisational district for every two assembly constituencies, based on revenue districts. The number of dis-



'HISTORIC STEP': DMK president M K Stalin addresses the party's executive committee meeting at party headquarters on Saturday

trict units will be increased from the existing 77 to 110.

District executive committee meetings will be held to finalise the union, town, area and ward-level structures within a fortnight. "Party leadership was very aggressive in reducing the age limit. The age criteria were fixed following complaints received from cadres and the public, both online and offline," a senior DMK leader said.

Branch secretaries will be limited to two terms and must be aged 45 or below. Town pan-

chayat, town and area secretaries will have an age cap of 60 and a two-term limit, while ward secretaries must be 50 or younger and can serve a maximum of two terms. Union secretaries will also be capped at 60 and limited to two terms, with one union unit for every 30,000 voters.

The age and tenure restrictions are part of the DMK's effort to induct younger leaders and overhaul its organisation. The party had formed a 38-member team to collect feedback from cadres and dis-

Stalin urges DMK to win back youth, women; promises strong comeback

Chennai: DMK president M K Stalin on Saturday urged party members to regain the confidence of youths and women and continue working for the public even while in opposition. "We are specialists in making a comeback. We will make a strong comeback," Stalin said, while addressing the party's executive committee meeting in Chennai.

He criticised party functionaries for failing to nurture cadres and emerging leaders, warning that the party would not grow in districts unless young functionaries were encouraged and guided. "If you stop others from growing to your level, you will be left alone," Stalin said.

He added that a district could not be strengthened by relying solely on one district secretary, just as an assembly constituency could not be won merely because its MLA was strong. "Seniors welcoming and guiding young people who join the ranks is the sign of a strong organisation," he said.

DMK must openly acknowledge its mistakes instead of attributing the setback to external factors, Stalin said, adding that the party would soon launch a fresh membership drive, followed by intra-party elections at all levels. Some of the proposed changes would be "stringent" and "bitter" for some functionaries, but they are necessary, he said. **TNN**

trict-level functionaries. It later constituted a 10-member committee headed by former minister Thangam Thennarasu to recommend structural changes based on the feedback. "This is a historic step and will ensure that the party

remains strong for the next 50 years. Discussions are under way on representation for women and members of backward communities, and this can be expected soon," former MLA N Ezhilam told reporters.

Senthilbalaji accuses ministers of evading questions in assembly

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Chennai: Former DMK minister V Senthilbalaji on Saturday accused the TVK govt of turning the assembly into a platform for political confrontation, alleging that ministers were evading questions from the opposition and resorting to provocative remarks instead of providing answers. He also demanded the govt to file a number of cases against the opposition, saying it was prepared to face them legally.

Referring to his exchange with electricity minister R Nirmalkumar over missing hard disks during the demand for grants for the department, Senthilbalaji said, "I asked how 38 hard disks were recovered when only 18 were reported missing and



'PEOPLE ARE WATCHING'

where the remaining 20 came from. The minister did not answer. Instead, they resorted to diversionary tactics and provocative remarks. People are watching, and they will give them a fitting reply at an appropriate time."

Senthilbalaji also questioned the govt's criticism of the previous DMK govt, ci-

ting figures from the recently released white paper on the power sector. The document, he said, recorded the replacement of 99,000 transformers and a reduction in the electricity department's annual debt from ₹14,500 crore in 2020-21 to ₹933 crore in 2025-26. "The electricity minister has listed the achievements of the DMK govt in the white paper. But in the assembly, he is trying to create an impression that nothing happened during the DMK rule," he said.

Meanwhile, Nirmalkumar told reporters in Madurai that legislators were being given ample time to raise issues in the assembly. Assembly sessions are now held until 7pm, instead of ending at 2pm as they did earlier, he said.

4 schoolboys hand over cash bag to cops, honoured

Madurai: Four schoolboys from Nelpettai found a bag containing ₹3,710 in cash on the road and promptly handed it over to the police. Police commissioner S Rajendran awarded them certificates on Saturday.

R Mohamed Thoufik, a Class VII student, M Mohammed Ashraf, S Mohammed Aajith, and M Mohammed Aslam of Class IX, went to buy jerseys from Simmakal on Friday night, when they found the bag near Old Sokkanadhar Temple. They handed over the bag to a nearby flower vendor who suggested they keep the money. When they refused, he tried to intimidate them. But they took the money to a nearby traffic police officer, Pandiyan, who appreciated them and bought them jerseys.

Thilagar Thidal police are trying to trace the owner of the money. **TNN**

Law minister: Tahsildar issued circular without collector's knowledge

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Madurai: Responding to questions on recent govt circulars, including one seeking details of CPI and CPM members in Dindigul district, minister for energy resources and law R Nirmalkumar said the Tahsildar issued it without the collector's knowledge.

"The tahsildar issued the circular out of personal animosity. He is due to retire in six months. Action was taken against him immediately and further measures have also been recommended," he told reporters after a review meeting with officials in Madurai on Saturday. "The govt has no such intention. A few individ-

Sanatana Dharma eradication meet: FIR on students who held stir quashed

Madurai: Madras high court has quashed the FIR registered against students who protested against the conduct of the Sanatana Dharma eradication conference in Madurai district in 2023.

The court was hearing a petition filed by M Senthovelan seeking to quash the FIR registered against him by Talukaliam police.

The petitioner, along with seven others belonging to a students' association, are said to have blocked the road and caused public inconvenience. The petitioner's counsel however submitted that the petitioner, being a student of law, had peacefully protested in front of the conference hall. Govt advocate submitted that though the chargesheet was ready, it has not been filed before the court so far.

Justice R Vijayakumar observed that there is no allegation of damage to public property. In such circumstances, continuation of criminal proceedings would be an abuse of process of law. The other accused also stand on the same footing as the petitioner, the judge observed and quashed the FIR. **TNN**

Choose between Left and officials, CPM tells Vijay

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Chennai: CPM state secretary P Shanmugam on Saturday alleged a possible Centre-state conspiracy to target Left parties, citing a govt directive against students participating in protests organised by them and the Gujilamparai tahsildar's move to collect details of Left functionaries in Dindigul district.

Addressing a protest in Chennai, Shanmugam referred to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent remarks about "dimagi (intellectual) naxals" and questioned whether the state and Union govt were acting in concert against the Left. "This creates suspicion whether the circulars are part of a Centre-state conspiracy," he said.

Shanmugam asked chief minister C Joseph Vijay to decide whether he wanted officials to run the govt or continue in office with the support of the Left parties. He demanded the removal of chief secretary M Sai Kumar and questioned the extension of the officer's tenure after his appointment by the Election Commission.

Terminating the tahsildar's action illegal, Shanmugam said transferring the official to Chennai could not be considered sufficient action.

Speaking to reporters at Balan Ilam, CPI state secretary M Veerapandian sought an explanation from the chief secretary over his directive to prevent students from joining protests organised by Left parties. "These kinds of outdated colonial practices shouldn't be allowed. Since taking up arms during the freedom struggle, Left parties have been contributing to strengthening and nurturing the democracy. Our students are present in universities across the country. A year is not enough to complete a headcount," he said.

"Many writers, poets, activists and intellectuals subscribe to an ideology that questions oppression. We suspect that a powerful political force is behind these circulars. The chief minister should intervene instead of remaining silent and clarify his stand," Veerapandian later told TOI, demanding a probe against the chief secretary.



RIGHT TO PROTEST: CPM state secretary P Shanmugam alleged a possible Centre-state conspiracy to target Left parties

₹26.5L extorted from West Bengal garment merchant in Coimbatore

Coimbatore: Police on Friday registered an extortion case against a 10-member gang that held a West Bengal-based garment wholesaler, Y Debit Rana, 25, at a hotel and extorted ₹26.54 lakh and valuables.

Two months ago, Rana connected with Anand Kumar, who claimed to run a garment business in Tirupur. They met on July 5 in Coimbatore, where Anand's associate

Senthilkumar Periyasamy asked for a loan of ₹1 crore, which Rana turned down. Rana later returned to Coimbatore with two friends. On Aug 17, Anand, Senthilkumar and eight others arrived in two vehicles, held the trio at knifepoint and assaulted them, forcing them to transfer ₹26.54 lakh. The gang robbed them of a gold ring and two phones before abandoning them. **TNN**

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CA, Bengali Dec 95/59" Wkg in MNC, Dubai. seeks Prof. Qual, wkg girl, GENERAL, Non-veg. 932953997

B.E. Brahmin groom, 35

5'8", self employed, Bangalore based financially stable, own accommodation seeks edu pref working girl, simple marriage. 9820987846

DOCTOR

Sikh Khatri 33/ 62" Radiologist/ Gurugram/ 60 LPA/ Well Estb. Educated family seeks Sikh PG Doctor Qld. Prfsm # 8700821237

HANDSOME

healthy boy, born in Australia, 29, 5'10", Master EcoFin and working in Finance in Australia. Looking for Hindu girl - good family, healthy, prof educated, 24-28 yrs. Contact biodata, pics: dgaus701@gmail.com

DM-Doctor (34 yrs, 61, Tamil)

seeks a tall, v.fair, virtuous, PG Dr / well edu, upper caste bride (29-31 yrs) at Bangalore. Cont: 934252547 / 9072118800

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Garhwali Brahmin Girl July 90, 237 Wkg in MNC NCR 25 LPA/ Non-Veg. Seeks Educated well Settled boy W App 9911559977

KKB, Fair, Beautiful, 87

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GOVT Officer 31 yr / 5'4"

Post Graduate Bania girl. Posted in Karnataka, transferable job seeks a suitable boy, caste no bar. # 9654782597

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Sikh smart boy (Job/ Business) for a sikh postgraduate working girl Age 20, 5'3", Father well settled in Ahmedabad. Mo. 9824022325

HINDU Khatri girl 9/12/98

7-41 pm, Jalandhar, 5'-1" MS computer, Hlth Hindu, settled in USA. Contact: 9465379600

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Khatri Btful girl 32/155, MNC Ivy league from educated fmlly seeks similar match wrkg in metro. caste no bar 9899790469

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32-year-old Indian entrepreneur based in Nairobi, Kenya, running an established technology business. Having lived across Asia, Europe, America and Africa, she is globally minded, warm, ambitious and adventurous, fitness, nature, dancing and new experiences, and is a non-drinker.

Seeking a kind, fit,

emotionally mature and feminist man, aged 28-35 and 5'7", who is professionally established, earns well and is financially Independent. He should value an equal, affectionate partnership and be genuinely open to relocating to Nairobi for now, with the possibility of living across multiple locations in future. Remote workers, entrepreneurs or those with internationally flexible careers may be especially suited. Caste No Bar. Contact: gfsk1998@gmail.com

HINDU Khatri girl 9/12/98

7-41 pm, Jalandhar, 5'-1" MS computer, Hlth Hindu, settled in USA. Contact: 9465379600

BY COMMUNITY

AGARWAL

WANTED GROOM

(PUNE ONLY) FOR A PUNE BASED 1990 BORN PUNJABI AGARWAL DIVORCEE (NO ISSUE) E-MAIL marryji0209@gmail.com

NORTH INDIAN

UPPER-CASTE

match invited for Hindu Brahmin MBBS girl, Age 1995, 5'3", USMLE 1&2 cleared, US residency applicant, Father ret'd. Govt officer. 9417204632

PQM 4 Non Manglik Punjabi

Khatri Btful girl 32/155, MNC Ivy league from educated fmlly seeks similar match wrkg in metro. caste no bar 9899790469

ALLIANCE

invited from a well-educated, professionally established and compatible groom for Nov/1999 born, 52", Btful Brahmin girl, Asst Prof at IIT, from a respectable and well-cultured family. Contact: rahkshp82@gmail.com

PQM 4 Non Manglik Punjabi

Khatri Btful girl 32/155, MNC Ivy league from educated fmlly seeks similar match wrkg in metro. caste no bar 9899790469

ALLIANCE

invited by an elite Mumbai-based Khatri Punjabi business family for their daughter (33 years, 5'5", No habits, Seeking a well-qualified, well-settled professional groom from a reputable, cultured family. Email: harmonyandconnect@gmail.com

WANTED GROOM

32-year-old Indian entrepreneur based in Nairobi, Kenya, running an established technology business. Having lived across Asia, Europe, America and Africa, she is globally minded, warm, ambitious and adventurous, fitness, nature, dancing and new experiences, and is a non-drinker.

Seeking a kind, fit,

emotionally mature and feminist man, aged 28-35 and 5'7", who is professionally established, earns well and is financially Independent. He should value an equal, affectionate partnership and be genuinely open to relocating to Nairobi for now, with the possibility of living across multiple locations in future. Remote workers, entrepreneurs or those with internationally flexible careers may be especially suited. Caste No Bar. Contact: gfsk1998@gmail.com

HINDU Khatri girl 9/12/98

7-41 pm, Jalandhar, 5'-1" MS computer, Hlth Hindu, settled in USA. Contact: 9465379600

GENERAL

CASTE NO BAR

After custody torture allegation, SSP, 8 cops in Meerut face action

Sandeep.Rai
@timesofindia.com



Meerut: Eight more Meerut police personnel, including Civil Lines SHO, two sub-inspectors and five constables, were recalled to police lines late on Friday night after SSP Avinash Pandey was attached to state headquarters in Lucknow over allegations that police tortured a farmer leader and his dalit associate in custody. Meerut zone ADG Bhanu Bhaskar ordered a high-level inquiry.

Principal bathes with students, faces action in Raj

Alwar: A viral video of a govt school principal bathing in dam waters with schoolgirls and lifting some of them on his lap has prompted villagers' protests and a departmental inquiry in Alwar, reports Rajendra Prasad Sharma.

Villagers reached the school on Saturday, objecting to principal Lal Chand Meena's conduct. "He took about 200 students from Classes IX to XII," a villager alleged, adding the principal was seen bathing while wearing very few clothes.

tav that senior officers and Special Operations Group (SOG) personnel assaulted them after they visited the SSP's office on Wednesday seeking removal of their names from an FIR linked to a protest. Bhati, who was hospitalized on Saturday, released a video of his swollen eye and bruising and alleged, "SSP repeatedly kicked me in my eyes with his shoes."

Bhati alleged that after the assault at the SSP's office, SOG personnel took him and Jatav to an undisclosed location, subjected them to repeated beatings and casteist slurs, and kept them in custody for close to 12 hours.

Meerut police initially denied the allegations on X and claimed Bhati and Jatav suffered their injuries in a scooter accident after leaving the station, but deleted the post within hours.

Post accident, boy, 12, walks 2km with exposed intestine

Berhampur: A 12-year-old tribal boy's courage and presence of mind helped him overcome a life-threatening abdominal injury, leaving his small intestine protruding outside, reports Hrusikesh Mohanty.

The Class V student was cycling to school on Monday when he fell. His abdomen struck a sharp object by the roadside, causing a deep wound. Despite severe pain, he did not panic, carefully wrapped the exposed intestine with his uniform and walked about 2km alone to reach home.

Invoking Mahatma, BJP to start Vande campaign

Accuses Cong Of Communalising National Symbols

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: BJP on Saturday cited Mahatma Gandhi's "We have fallen on evil days" lament over the opposition built up against Vande Mataram to set the stage for an intense political battle with Congress and wider 'secular' class for their objections to the national song's full version by announcing a nation-wide campaign.

The campaign, approved at a meeting of the new office-bearers under party chief Nitin Nabin, will focus on the song's association with freedom struggle, opposition by Pakistan's founder M A Jinnah and other Muslim hardliners which led Congress to prune it and "communal pressure or narrow vote-bank considerations" driving the present protests against the national song.



NATION FIRST: The campaign was approved at a meet of new office-bearers on Saturday

The meeting adopted a four-page resolution, accusing Congress of "bowing before the same politics of appeasement" to which it had yielded in 1937, enabling M A Jinnah-led Muslim League to impose communal demands even upon national symbols.

BJP's decision to launch the 10-point campaign comes after Congress asserted that it will stick to its 1937 resolution that had adopted the first two stanzas of Vande Mataram, to signal its defiance of the notification res-

Oppn: BJP diverting focus from real issues

New Delhi: Hitting out at BJP over its resolution on the national song Vande Mataram, INDIA bloc on Saturday accused the party of attempting to divert attention from real problems by making an issue out of the controversy. Congress leader Harish Rawat said, "BJP is trying to make Vande Mataram an issue because the real issues are those raised by Gen Z. Gen Alpha is also raising issues of inflation and unemployment," he said.

BJP cited their full version for all official events and Parliament passing a law making any insult to the song a penal offence. BJP cited Gandhi's 1939 comments: "I associated the purest national spirit with it (Vande Mataram). It never occurred to me that it was a Hindu song or meant only for Hindus. Unfortunately, now we have fallen on evil days."

Identified some of those involved in JU violence, say police

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Kolkata: More than 24 hours after Jadavpur University vice-chancellor Chiranjib Bhattacharjee filed an FIR against "unknown persons/outsiders" for the violence and vandalism on campus, police on Saturday claimed to have identified some of those involved. However, they are yet to make any arrests in the case.

Cops said they will speak to students, teachers and security guards to establish the identities of the intruders. "Once the identities are established, we will send notices asking them to appear before the investigating officer," an officer said.

JU authorities informed cops on Friday that they had preserved the CCTV footage and were ready to assist with the probe. CCTV footage accessed by TOI shows top central and state functionaries of ABVP on campus along



PROBE INTENSIFIES: CCTV clip shows presence of outsiders at the university early on Thursday

with outsiders, though the right-wing student organisation has denied involvement in the vandalism.

The footage shows the mob faced no resistance while entering through Gate No. 4, which was open, at 12.37am on Thursday. A camera near the entrance of the PG building captured ABVP state secretary Neelkantha Bhattacharjee, wearing a blue T-shirt and carrying a stick, with the mob at 12.40am. Neelkantha denied going near the administrative block or any other building.

Three charred to death after turbine blast in Jharkhand

N K Agarwal | TNN

Ramgarh: Three engineers were charred to death and another employee suffered critical burn injuries after a fire triggered by a turbine explosion engulfed the control room of a captive power plant at a private sponge iron factory in a village in Jharkhand's Ramgarh on Friday.

It took the fire brigade hours to extinguish the blaze and retrieve the bodies of Sanjiv Kumar Keshari, 50, Vineet Kumar Mahto, 25, and Abhishek Pandey, 24.

Local police told TOI that the turbine explosion occurred reportedly due to overheating

Patratu circle officer Manoj Kumar Chaurasia told TOI that the turbine exploded because of overheating.

Ramgarh deputy commissioner Rituraj said a probe panel headed by SDO Krishna Murari Tirkey has been formed to investigate the incident. Chief factory inspector Manish Sinha said a team from the department's Hazaribag zonal office has been directed to inspect the factory and examine the accident from the safety angle.

Meanwhile, hundreds of villagers protested outside the factory gate. Barkagaon MLA Roshan Lal Choudhary, who visited the factory on Saturday morning, demanded a high-level probe into safety lapses, strict action against the factory owner and officials responsible, adequate compensation, and a govt job for one member of each bereaved family.

Will end 'tukde tukde gang' hegemony in JU: Bengal CM

Kolkata: Three days after a ruckus broke out at Jadavpur University, with ABVP supporters storming the campus and clashing with left student unions, West Bengal chief minister Suvenud Adhikari on Saturday asserted that his govt will pave the path for "nationalism" and "Sanatani culture" at the institute that has been a prominent left bastion in the state's student politics, reports Rohit Khanna.

Alleging that "jihadis and tukde tukde gangs" in JU don't even allow chanting of Vande Mataram inside the campus, Suvenud said his govt will ensure that the situation changes. "This govt has come with a promise to fulfil Syama Prasad Mookerjee's dreams. We will establish Sanatani culture," he said at a programme in Bhowanipore.

Christ Univ files complaint after ABVP gherao, alleges vandalism

Ayantika.Pal@timesofindia.com

Ghaziabad: Christ University on Saturday filed a complaint at the Nandgram police station against a group of ABVP activists, who gheraoed its Ghaziabad campus for the second day on Saturday to demand promotion for 13 law students who were held back from their fourth year because of backlogs.

The group had descended on the university on Friday afternoon. The university accused them of trespassing, vandalism and assaulting women security personnel.

The university said the group damaged gates and flowerpots, and also blocked a public road, disrupting traffic and trapping students inside the campus for about an hour. In its complaint, the university

named one person. He had in a video identified himself as ABVP member Tanish Sisodia. University officials had earlier told TOI that the 13 students at the centre of the protest had accumulated significant backlogs — some having failed in their first and second years, others carrying six to eight pending papers.

Officials said none of the protesters was a student.

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Extension of Tender Date

Please refer to GeM Tender Notice for Morna Project: GEM/2026/8/7529233 DATE: 14/05/2026, tender date has been extended and further details for above tenders can be obtained from GeM portal <https://gem.gov.in/>.

S.No.	Particulars	Morna
1	Last Date and time of Closing of on-line e-bids	11/09/2026 AT 09:00 AM
2	Date and time of opening of on-line technical e-bids	11/09/2026 AT 09:30 AM

MANAGING DIRECTOR

BENGALURU NORTH CITY CORPORATION
Office of the Executive Engineer, Byatarayanapura Division,
Zone-1 No. 2152/20, Defence colony, 9th Main, D Block,
Sahakranagara, BNCC office, Bengaluru-560092.

No:BNCC-Z1/EE/BTP/KPPP/PR/16/2026-27 Date: 20-08-2026

SHORT TERM TENDER NOTIFICATION

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

Tenders on item rate basis are invited by the undersigned on behalf of The Commissioner, BNCC for the works mentioned below from the registered contractors of Bengaluru North City Corporation, or equivalent registration with CPWD / KPWD / Railways / MES or any State Government Organizations. (Standard Tender Document KW-4)

Sl. No.	Name of the work / Category (TWO COVER TENDER)
1	Comprehensive Development and Improvements to Roads and drains Venkateshwara Nagara, Sampigehalli, Hegdenagara Eastern Side, Shirdi Sai Nagara, Prashanthi Nagara & Upgradation of Parks in Ward No-20 (Package No-04) Call-2 (Others). Approximate value of work: ₹.1000.00 Lakhs, EMD: ₹.15,00,000/- (1.00 Lakhs through e-Payment (NEFT) balance Rs.14,00,000/- through BG/FDR, should be submit before opening of Technical Bid)

Calendar of Events: (1) Tender Documents can be uploaded in KPP-Portal from 24-08-2026 (2) Pre Bid Meeting will be held on 28-08-2026 at 3:00 pm (3) Last Date for uploading the filled proposals is 05-09-2026 upto 4:00 pm (4) Date of opening of Technical Bid is 07-09-2026 after 4:00 pm (5) Date of opening of Financial Bid After approval of Technical bid

Sd/- Executive Engineer,
Byatarayanapura Division, Zone-1, BNCC

SOUTHERN RAILWAY
Ministry of Railways
(CONSTRUCTION ORGANISATION)
E-Tender Notice No. E/CNERS/TN/06/2026-27
Dated : 21/08/2026

For and on behalf of The President of India, The Dy. Chief Electrical Engineer, Construction, Southern Railway, Ennakulam Junction - 682016 invites E-tenders for the work mentioned below as per Notice Inviting Tender (NIT) in the portal www.ireps.gov.in. The tenderer / Contractors intending to apply for the tender needs to get enrolled in the portal www.ireps.gov.in and only online tenders will be accepted. The cost of the tender form and Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) should be paid through online payment gateway available on the website by the way of multiple banks net banking debit and credit card.

Description	Item 1
Tender No.	E.572/CN/ERS/WC/OT/605
Name of work : Construction of new 11kV/433V Substation, including a Switch Room and backup power supply arrangements at TVC South Station (NEMOM)	
Approx. Cash Value	Rs. 3,08,71,387/-
Bid Security	Rs. 6,17,400/-
Completion period in months	12 Months
Closing / Opening of Tender	12.00 hrs on 11.09.2026
Description	Item 2
Tender No.	E.572/CN/ERS/WC/OT/606
Name of work : Electrical arrangements for new pit line and cat walk including gantry portal lighting at Trivandrum south new coaching terminal.	
Approx. Cash Value	Rs. 3,25,99,595/-
Bid Security	Rs. 6,52,000/-
Completion period in months	12 Months
Closing / Opening of Tender	12.00 hrs on 11.09.2026

For further details visit internet site www.ireps.gov.in or contact office of Deputy Chief Electrical Engineer, Construction, Southern Railway, Ennakulam - 682016.

Deputy Chief Engineer, Construction, Ennakulam Junction
(For and on behalf of President of India)

KARNATAKA INDUSTRIAL AREAS DEVELOPMENT BOARD
(A Government of Karnataka Undertaking)
No.2, 2/1 & 2/3, Kalidasa Marg, 1st Main Road, Gandhinagar,
Bengaluru - 560009. Phone No. 080-22265383 website:www.kiadb.in

No. IADB/ENGG/ETND-EP-33/2808/2026-27 Date:21.08.2026

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

Item Rate Tender under two cover bid system is invited for the works mentioned below as per the Karnataka Transparency in Public Procurement Act 1999 and Rules 2000 through electronic procurement from eligible Contractors who have got adequate financial resources, state of the art technology, suitable construction equipments, technical man power & sufficient past experience for the following work as per the schedule given below:

Name of the work: (1) Providing alternate power source to Adinarayana Hosahalli Industrial Area, Phase-2, Doddaballapur Taluk, Bengaluru Rural District.

- Last Date and Time for Receipt of Tenders: 07.09.2026 upto 4:00 pm.

Applicants May download bidding documents from the Karnataka Public Procurement portal <https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in>

Sd/- Engineer-In-Chief
DIPRC/CI/2376/ICL/2026-27

राजीव गांधी राष्ट्रीय विमानन विश्वविद्यालय
RAJIV GANDHI NATIONAL AVIATION UNIVERSITY
A Central University Under the aegis of Ministry of Civil Aviation, Govt. of India
FURSATGANJ, AMETHI, UTTAR PRADESH -229302

SPOT ADMISSION NOTICE-2026
AGAINST VACANT SEATS

Rajiv Gandhi National Aviation University (RGNAU) invites interested and eligible candidates for admission through **SPOT COUNSELLING** against the vacant seats available in the following Undergraduate, and Postgraduate Programmes for the Academic Session 2026-27:

SL. NO.	PROGRAMMES	ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA
1	B. Tech. - Aerospace Engineering	• JEE (Mains) Ranking- 2026
2	B. Tech. Electronics & Communication Engg. (Avionics)	• JEE (Mains) Ranking- 2026
3	B. Tech. AI & Data Science- Aviation System	• JEE (Mains) Ranking- 2026
4	PG Diploma in UAV & Drone Technology	• B. Tech / BE/B. Sc/ Diploma
5	MBA- Aviation Management	• CAT/GMAT/XAT/CMAT/ CUET-PG Score 2026 OR • Exam conducted by RGNAU
6	MBA- Aviation Logistics Management	• CAT/GMAT/XAT/CMAT/ CUET-PG Score 2026 OR • Exam conducted by RGNAU
7	MBA- Aviation Finance	• CAT/GMAT/XAT/CMAT/ CUET-PG Score 2026 OR • Exam conducted by RGNAU
8	BBA- Aviation Management	• CUET-UG Score 2026 OR • Exam conducted by RGNAU
9	BMS- Aviation Services & Air Cargo	• CUET-UG Score 2026 OR • Exam conducted by RGNAU
10	B. Sc. - Aviation	• CUET-UG Score 2026 OR • Exam conducted by RGNAU

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA: The eligibility criteria, programme details, fee structure, admission procedure and other relevant information are available on the University Website: www.rgnau.ac.in under Admission Section.

PROCESS TO PARTICIPATE IN SPOT COUNSELLING: Interested candidates, fulfilling the prescribed eligibility criteria may participate in the Spot Counselling by reporting in person at: **Rajiv Gandhi National Aviation University (RGNAU)** Fursatganj, Amethi, Uttar Pradesh -229302, Uttar Pradesh

DATE FOR PARTICIPATION IN SPOT COUNSELLING: 28.08.2026

अखिल भारतीय आयुर्विज्ञान संस्थान, गोरखपुर
All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Gorakhpur
(स्वास्थ्य एवं परिवार कल्याण मंत्रालय भारत सरकार द्वारा स्थापित एक स्वायत्त निकाय)
(An autonomous organization under the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Govt. of India)
Website-<https://aiimsgorakhpur.edu.in>

NON-FACULTY APPOINTMENTS

Offline applications from eligible Indian citizens/other citizens as permissible under the applicable Act/Rules are invited to fill up following **Non-Faculty (Group A, B & C)** various posts on **DEPUTATION BASIS** at All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Gorakhpur (Uttar Pradesh):

Sl. No.	Name of Post	Group	Level as per 7 th CPC	No. of Posts
1.	Medical Superintendent	A	Level - 14 (Rs. 144200-218200) + NPA	01
2.	Registrar	A	Level - 12 (Rs. 78800-209200)	01
3.	Executive Engineer (Civil)	A	Level - 11 (Rs. 67700-208700)	01
4.	Executive Engineer (Electrical)	A	Level - 11 (Rs. 67700-208700)	01
5.	Senior Accounts Officer	A	Level - 11 (Rs. 67700-208700)	01
6.	Assistant Administrative Officer	B	Level - 07 (Rs. 44900-142400)	01
7.	Assistant Account Officer	B	Level - 07 (Rs. 44900-142400)	02
8.	Office Superintendent	B	Level - 06 (Rs. 35400-112400)	01
9.	Upper Division Clerk	C	Level - 04 (Rs. 25500 - 81100)	01
Total Posts				10

The above vacancies are provisional and subject to variation. The Executive Director, AIIMS, Gorakhpur reserves the right to change the number of the vacancies including reserved vacancies as per the Govt. of India rules/circulars. **Application form, eligibility criteria, desirable qualifications/experience, and related details**, please visit www.aiimsgorakhpur.edu.in

All the applicants are advised to check AIIMS, Gorakhpur website www.aiimsgorakhpur.edu.in on Deputation basis for any further updates.

Sd/- Executive Director
AIIMS Gorakhpur
Kunraghat, Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh 273008

CORPORATE BUZZ

Educational support for girl students

Centre Banking Unit at GIFT City, drew strong investor interest, with the order book peaking at USD 2.67 billion, nearly 3.8 times the final issue size.

The bank raised USD 400 million through the three-year tranche at a coupon of 5.114 per cent a year and USD 300 million through the five-year tranche at 5.318 per cent. The bonds will be listed on INDIA INX, NSE-IX and the Singapore Exchange.

Salary account pact signed

Central Bank of India has signed an MoU with the Tamil Nadu government for salary accounts of state government employees under its Cent Prestige Salary Scheme.

The agreement was signed by N Venkatesh, director of Treasuries and Accounts, government of Tamil Nadu and K Shashidhar, zonal head, Chennai, Central Bank of India.

Under the arrangement, eligible employees can access features including zero minimum balance requirements, accident and term insurance cover, differentiated banking facilities, concessions on retail loans, customised debit cards and an overdraft facility of up to Rs two lakh.

Strong response to bond issue

Bank of Baroda has raised USD 700 million through a dual-tranche overseas bond issuance comprising three-year and five-year senior unsecured fixed-rate notes under its USD 4 billion Medium-Term Note Programme.

The issue, undertaken through the bank's International Financial Services

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IndiGo flight grounded after tail impact during landing

Lucknow: An IndiGo plane has remained grounded at Gorakhpur airport after suffering a tail impact during its landing approach on Wednesday afternoon, reports Arvind Chauhan.

The aircraft, operating flight 6E 2381 from Delhi to Gorakhpur, was an Airbus A321-252NX. It is five years old. The plane carried out two go-arounds before making a successful landing on the third attempt around 3.43pm. In a statement, IndiGo said all passengers and crew members disembarked safely. "During a regular post-flight walk-around, scratches were observed around the APU inlet. The aircraft is undergoing maintenance and will resume operations after necessary clearances," the airline said. APU is part of the aircraft's external fuselage structure.

Woman pilot part of team that hit eT HQ in Op Sindoor

Multiple Women Officers Played Key Roles As Combat Pilots

Surendra.Singh
@timesofindia.com

New Delhi: Multiple women pilots and air crew were part of Op Sindoor that India launched in retaliation to Pahalgam terror attack, with one of them flying a Su-30MKI fighter jet being a member of the strike formation that targeted the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) headquarters in Muridke on the opening day of the operation.

A defence source told TOI, "All the (women) officers and air crew posted on fighters, transport and helicopters were deployed for the mission."

Those attached to the MiG-29, Mirage-2000, Rafale and Su-30MKI squadrons were part of Op Sindoor during



The deployment of female aviators during Op Sindoor builds on decades of incremental policy shifts within Indian armed forces

those crucial four days, and they were all an integral part of the mission."

Women officers were deployed as both combat pilots and as weapon system operators on cutting-edge platforms during the mission.

However, the source refused to reveal the exact number of women fighter pilots involved, their names or any details related to their role in Op Sindoor, as it is classified information.

A two-part docu-series — Declassified: Operation Sindoor — released recently by

an international channel also said that a woman pilot flying Sukhoi-30MKI was part of the mission, without revealing her identity. It also revealed that Indian defence forces had shortlisted 34 targets, but that number was later pruned to nine. The nine targets were struck on the first day of Op Sindoor.

The deployment of female aviators during Op Sindoor builds on decades of incremental policy shifts within Indian armed forces.

Women were first inducted into armed forces as

Short Service Commission (SSC) officers, being restricted to non-combat streams like medical, legal and educational branches.

During the 1999 Kargil war, Flight Lieutenant Gunjan Saxena and Flight Lieutenant Shridhara Rajan flew HAL Cheetah helicopters into active combat zones for casualty evacuation and reconnaissance.

The turning point came in 2015 when Modi govt allowed defence ministry to approve a pilot project to induct women into the fighter stream of IAF.

In 2016, Avani Chaturvedi, Bhawana Kanth and Mohana Singh became the first three women officers commissioned into IAF fighter squadrons.

Assam ends travel blockade as Meghalaya assures probe

Prabin.Kalita@timesofindia.com

Guwahati: A tense Assam-Meghalaya travel blockade ended Saturday after Meghalaya "sincerely regretted" and promised an SIT probe into the Aug 19 violence in Shillong during a Khasi Students' Union motorcycle rally when Assam-registered vehicles were targeted and damaged.

Meghalaya also announced compensation for damaged vehicles, free treatment for those injured and safe passage for stranded travellers.

The assurances followed the first ministerial-level meeting since the violence, in which Assam tourists and vehicles were targeted. Meghalaya deputy chief minister

The assurances followed the first ministerial-level meeting since the violence, in which Assam tourists and vehicles were targeted

S Dhar and Assam border area development minister Atul Bora led their delegations at a guest house in Guwahati.

In Shillong, Army and RAF conducted flag march Saturday to build confidence among residents after violence and vandalism during KSU's rally. Police registered FIRs for assaults on passers-by, damage to around 31 vehi-

cles — including commercial vehicles bearing Assam registration plates — and damage to statues of Swami Vivekananda and Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. The fallout had disrupted the busy inter-state corridor after Assam cab operators blocked traffic at Jorabat on the outskirts of Guwahati, the principal entry point into Assam from Meghalaya.

Five masked suspects had so far been identified, while KSU president, vice president and general secretary were arrested under Meghalaya Maintenance of Public Order Act. Fifteen FIRs have been registered. The blockade was lifted after Bora met protesting operators and conveyed the outcome of the joint meeting. (inputs from Manosh Das)

Sindoor from Pakistan finds a way across sealed border

Shishir.Arya@timesofindia.com

Nagpur: The border was shut. The brides waited. Love, however, took to the skies.

After India launched Operation Sindoor, the Wagah-Attari gates slammed shut, leaving scores of Pakistani Sindh Hindu brides stranded and planned weddings hanging by a thread.

Months later, a special relaxation by Union home ministry opened an unlikely air corridor — through Muscat, Colombo, Dhaka, Dubai and Qatar.

At least 150 brides flew into Indian cities, including Nagpur, Jodhpur, Ahmedabad, Raipur, Pune and Bhopal between April and June, accompanied by around 450 relatives. The circuitous journeys replaced the usual road crossing from Wagah, turning what should have been a simple wedding trip into a diplomatic and logistical maze.

For Inkeash Jashnani of Nagpur, the wait stretched more than a year. Living in



LOVE KNOWS NO BOUNDS: Aarti from Sindh with Inkeash Jashnani

India on a long-term visa, he had got engaged to Aarti before the border closure and planned their wedding last year. Aarti had reached within a kilometre of Wagah in May 2025 after a gruelling journey from her native Khanpur tehsil in Sindh when the Attari gate closed.

She finally flew to Nagpur via Muscat and married Inkeash in March. Visa curbs allowed only her brother to accompany her; her parents remained in Pakistan. "I wish the borders open and I meet them once," Aarti said.

Sanjay Kalani and Kajal waited nearly three years. Engaged in Ghotki district

in Sindh, they had planned to marry last year, but the border closure scuttled the plan. Kajal eventually flew from Karachi to New Delhi via Muscat before reaching Nagpur, where the couple married five months ago.

Sanjay's brother Dheeraj too found his way to a wedding after his fiancée Sanjana travelled from Mirpur in Sindh through the same route. The route also carried a groom. Rabhel Jaswani travelled from Ghotki with his parents to marry Shriya in Nagpur and has stayed back.

The marriages underline a bond that Partition could not sever. Sindh Hindus from Pakistan continue to move to India seeking citizenship, with many applications coming under Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA).

Families across the border have also continued to marry, keeping ties alive through generations. For now, the brides who made it across have done more than cross a border. They have carried sindoor through it.

4.5-gen Tejas may not be relevant in 2030s, says ex-IAF vice-chief

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Less than two months after retirement as the IAF's vice-chief, Air Marshal Nagesh Kapoor has slammed the delay in the delivery of the Tejas (LCA) fighter jet by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited to the air force, saying, "Why must it be that a machine that was promised to us so many years back with a certain set of capabilities continues to be denied to us on one pretext or the other."

In an interview with NDTV, the IAF veteran said, "Why must we be hamstrung because someone somewhere has not been able to keep their promises?" The delivery of the indigenous LCA Tejas Mk1A jets by HAL to the IAF has faced multi-year delays, primarily caused by late supplies of F404-IN20 engines by the American GE company, complex mission software validation, and stringent operational requirements set by the IAF. When asked if the advanced Tejas Mk-2 may be operationally relevant when it starts entering service in big numbers in the mid-2030s at a time when China is already raising its fleet of 5th-generation fighter jets, the former vice-chief said,



"No, operationally, definitely not." With China on its way to deploying 500 5th-generation J-20 fighters by 2030, India is still struggling to get the delivery of the first squadron of 4.5-generation Tejas Mk1A. Air Marshal Kapoor (Retd) did not totally rule out the role of Tejas Mk2 when he said, "You can have a certain number of those 5th-generation and 6th-generation fighters, but given the size of the country you won't be able to deploy them everywhere. So those gaps which continue to remain to be filled will have to be filled by this class of aircraft."

Soon, no need for physical boarding cards at immigration

Saurabh.Sinha
@timesofindia.com

New Delhi: Starting Sept 1, people flying in and out of India will no longer be required to provide a physical boarding card at immigration which is then stamped at the counter after checks.

Travellers can show their e-boarding cards instead. This major change by Bureau of Immigration could pave the way for a more seamless international travel in coming times as India is working to replicate the ease of DigiYatra for domestic travel once e-passports become more common and the fast track immigration — trusted traveller programme has already been rolled out.

"The authentication of e-chip passport and its integration with the IVFRT (immigration, visa, foreigners' registration and tracking) application for utilisation across immigration posts in India is under process. (Over) 1.7 crore e-passports have been issued in India and abroad up to July 30, 2026," junior Union minister for external affairs, K V Singh, had told Parliament earlier this month.

Kids get motorboat to cross Ganga; villagers want permanent fix

Faiz.Siddiqui
@timesofindia.com

Kanpur: Every morning, around 30-40 students from hamlets under Lodhahakda gram panchayat board ordinary boats to cross the Ganga and reach their schools in Kanpur city.

On Saturday morning, however, as they stood at the banks, a police team arrived and prevented them from venturing into the swollen river. As villagers gathered and tensions rose, arrangements were made to ferry the children safely in a motorboat, with life jackets provided as a mandatory safety measure.

The Ganga at Shuklaganj stood at 112.29m on Saturday, just 0.7m below the warning mark of 113m and 1.7m shy of the danger mark at 114m.

Bathing and boating are already banned at the ghats in view of the swollen river.

Villagers worry a further rise in the water level in the coming weeks could disrupt their children's studies for the next two to three months. Panchayat head Ravi Nishad said, "Around 30-40 children from my gram panchayat



PERILOUS JOURNEY: Children in life jacket going to school in motorboat across the Ganga

cross the Ganga every day to go to school. Police stopped them on Saturday. After discussions, the children were sent wearing life jackets. But given the possibility of further rise in water levels, the administration should make permanent arrangements."

Tehsildar Vinay Kumar Dwivedi said the children were initially stopped due to the absence of safety gear. "Once the children wore life jackets, they boarded the boat and went to school," he said.

On their part, villagers said they want an assurance that no child will miss school because a river swelled.

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Two workers killed, 9 injured in pharma unit blast in T'gana

Hyderabad: Two workers were killed and nine others injured after an explosion triggered a major fire at a pharmaceutical manufacturing unit in Telangana's Yadadri Bhuvanagiri district late Friday. Police have registered a case against the company and launched a probe, reports **Madhu Rasala**.

The incident occurred at Hazelo Lab, an active pharma ingredients and bulk drug intermediates manufacturing unit at Dothigudem village.

According to local sub-inspector J Jagan, the reactor exploded at 10.27pm during the night shift when 12 workers were on duty inside the facility. The blast was followed by a fire, leaving several workers trapped and injured. The one-storeyed pharmaceutical facility is located about 50km from Hyderabad. "Firefighters battled the blaze for several hours and completed rescue and firefighting operations in early Saturday morning," Jagan said.

Nine injured workers were rescued and shifted to private hospitals for treatment. Two of them were stated to be in critical condition.

Revanth planned to meet Vance, Mamdani on US trip

Centre Rejects Approval, Calls Meetings Inappropriate

Roushan Ali & Sribala Vadiapattai | TNN

Hyderabad/New Delhi: Telangana chief minister Revanth Reddy planned to hold "political meetings" during his proposed trip to the US, according to sources in the central govt. The ministry of external affairs had on Friday withheld permission for Reddy to travel to the US, while approving his visit to the UK, where he is at present.

The sources said Revanth had plans to meet US vice-president JD Vance and New York mayor Zohran Mamdani, as well as one of US President Donald Trump's sons. With India's biggest Trump Towers coming up in Hyderabad, there has been speculation of one of the US president's sons being invited to its inauguration.

The official itinerary released by the CMO before the trip made no mention of meeting Vance or Mamdani. But official sources told **TOI** in

ITINERARY ROW

► 'The visit, it seems, was not for education or investment purposes, but to meet rabid anti-India spokespersons who are also the ideological gurus of Rahul Gandhi,' Telangana BJP chief Ramchander Rao said

► Deputy CM Bhatti Vikramarka said, 'It (denial) is political and not correct. Telangana is part of India and if it grows, India, too, grows'

New Delhi that the CM's programme, as shared with MEA, had mentioned his planned meetings with both Vance and Mamdani. The Centre felt it was inappropriate for a CM to meet these leaders as it would constitute political activity when the visit's stated objective was promotion of the state's Rising Telangana initiative.

On Friday, MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal had clarified that the ministry had

approved Revanth Reddy's UK visit but rejected the proposed US trip. said, "The programme proposed in such cases should be appropriate to the office held, and the purpose of the visit. In this particular case, that was not so in respect of the US and, therefore, clearance was denied..." he said.

Revanth is currently visiting the UK where he is meeting representatives of universities and other institutions. He is expected to return to Hyderabad on Sunday.

Telangana deputy CM Bhatti Vikramarka said the denial of permission was unfortunate and the CM was only trying to bring the most prestigious educational institutions to the state. "We have been focusing on education, which can improve the standard of living. I don't see any reasons for govt of India to deny permission. It is political and not correct. Telangana is part of the country and if the state grows, India, too, grows," he said.

'Rough sea conditions pose a challenge to rescue mission'

► From P 1

The search zone was then narrowed using the ship's GPS coordinates. Authorities have also alerted merchant vessels, sending an urgency signal to ships operating in the area seeking assistance in locating survivors.

"Indian Coast Guard personnel have started moving from both the Andaman and mainland sides. They are expected to reach the location by Sunday," ADG (coastal security) Arun Bothra told **STOL**. Authorities said rough sea conditions caused by the prevailing low-pressure system are a challenge to the rescue mission.

Sources said the vessel, MV Ocean Winner, had gone uncommunicated nearly 24 hours after departing Paradip port for China. It lost contact after travelling about 200 nautical miles from Odisha. According to officials, the vessel's crew comprises 20 Chinese nationals, three Myanmar nationals and one Bangladeshi.

Court finds blank sheets signed by suspects in file

Bagish.Jha@timesofindia.com

Gurgaon: A regular bail hearing in a cyber fraud case turned embarrassing for police after a court sifting through the investigation file found blank sheets carrying signatures of the accused.

The discovery forced police to admit a "serious procedural lapse" and promise a departmental inquiry into how signed blank papers became part of an official case record.

The court of additional district judge Gagan Geet Kaur also found that the case file had not been paginated, raising questions about how investigation records were being maintained and whether proper safeguards were being followed.

The court had the file paginated and sought an affidavit from ACP (cyber) Gaurav Phogat, asking him to explain the circumstances under which the signed blank papers came to be part of the file. The affidavit filed by Phogat on Aug 18 re-



PROCEDURAL LAPSE

vealed the extent of the lapse. Five blank pages carried the signatures of Mahender Kumar Meena, six each were signed by Pawan and Bhawani, four by Rahul Kumar, three by Vishal Maurya and five by Arvind Kumar. Another blank page bore Vishal's signature on its reverse, while two blank pages were signed by Nathani Bhavesh Bhai.

In his affidavit, Phogat admitted that the lapse was serious and said he "deeply regretted" it. He assured the court that a departmental inquiry would be conducted and that such a practice would not be repeated in the future.

Four held after row over chore leads to techie's murder by wife's brothers

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Four people, including the wife and two brothers-in-law, were arrested in connection with the murder of a software engineer at his residence in outer Delhi's Nihal Vihar.

Rekha Gupta, 30, her brothers Raju, 35 and Ved Prakash, 33, and her sister-in-law Poonam, 30, were arrested Saturday. A techie for the past eight years, the deceased, Vinay Gupta, earned an annual package of ₹50-60 lakh. He had an arranged marriage with Rekha three and a half years ago; the couple have four-month-old twins, a boy and a girl. Speaking to **TOI**, the victim's sister Kirti said an argument had broken out between the couple when the wife refused to apply medicine to one of the children.

"She left the house and returned 10 minutes later. She brought her brothers and other family members. There were at least six people, and they started assaulting my father, my mother, and my brother," she alleged. The accused thrashed Vinay and strangled him. They sat on his chest and beat him," she alleged.

NHRC seeks probe into claim Punjab CM's wife 'sought bribe in rape case'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Chandigarh: The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has issued a notice to the Punjab govt and its police chief over a complaint alleging that chief minister Bhagwant Mann's wife Gurpreet Kaur demanded ₹5 crore to "suppress a rape case", even as Gurpreet Kaur on Saturday sent a legal notice to former Punjab and Haryana high court judge Ranjit Singh for making the charges.

AAP MLA Amandeep Kaur said: "The CM's wife has sent a legal notice in the matter of allegations levelled against her by (retired judge) Ranjit Singh, brother-in-law of Congress MLA Sukhpal

Singh Khaira, seeking an apology within 24 hours, failing which legal proceedings would be initiated."

AAP spokesperson, MLA Kuldeep Singh Dhaliwal, defended Mann and his wife, saying such legal procedures are routine. The NHRC has sought a report within two weeks.

"The complainant alleged a retired judge publicly stated that a demand of ₹5 crore was made in connection with a rape case, allegedly involving the wife of Punjab CM. The complaint, filed by LRO, raises concerns such interference could compromise the victim's right to dignity..." says the commission's Aug 21 letter to the Punjab chief secretary and DGP.



Collections under RBI's dollar swap scheme exceed \$72.8bn

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: Banks have mobilised \$72.8 billion of foreign-currency inflows under RBI's special swap facility as of Aug 21, with the pace of mobilisation accelerating sharply in recent weeks. FCNR(B) deposits accounted for \$65.4 billion of the total, while overseas foreign-currency borrowings (OFCBs) contributed \$4.9 billion and external commercial borrowings (ECBs) \$2.6 billion, according to RBI data released on Saturday.

The pace of mobilisation has increased almost every week. Inflows rose from \$40.8 billion on July 31 to \$56.9 billion on Aug 13 and \$72.8 billion on Aug 21. Banks therefore added \$32.0 billion in the three weeks to Aug 21, taking cumulative inflows to nearly 1.8 times the July-end level. FCNR(B) deposits rose



BANK INFLOWS

from \$36.7 billion on July 31 to \$52.3 billion on Aug 13 and \$65.4 billion on Aug 21. The latest weekly increase of \$13.1 billion followed an increase of \$15.6 billion in the preceding week.

HSBC, SBI, ICICI Bank and HDFC Bank have emerged as the top mobilisers, with other large private-sector lenders also stepping up efforts to tap their NRI networks. Public-sector banks, barring SBI and a few others, have been slower to scale up. Bank-wise data for June 5 to July 30 showed HSBC

as the largest incremental mobiliser at \$6.1 billion, followed by SBI at \$4.1 billion and ICICI Bank at \$3.7 billion. HDFC Bank added \$1.4 billion, while Kotak Mahindra Bank and Axis Bank mobilised \$1.7 billion and \$1.6 billion respectively.

The mop up has helped forex reserves rise nearly \$10bn during the week ended August 15. According to bankers reserves will cross the all time high of \$728 billion by end August.

The sharp response has prompted RBI to bring forward the closure of the FCNR (B) mobilisation window. RBI decided that only deposits mobilised up to Aug 31 would qualify, while the corresponding swaps for FCNR(B) deposits can be undertaken with RBI until Sept 1. The ECB and OFCB components will continue until Dec 31.

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Where have all the children gone? Sikkim confronts a fertility crisis

With India's lowest fertility rate, emptying schools and an ageing population, the Himalayan state is looking beyond baby bonuses and IVF to treat falling fertility as a quality-of-life issue, not just a medical one

BABY STEPS

- Salary increment for govt employees for each additional child
- Longer parental leave; 365 days for women govt employees and 30 for men
- Vatsalya IVF scheme provides childless couples up to ₹3 lakh for two cycles of treatment
- Mero Rukh Mero Santali plants 108 saplings for every newborn
- Eligible children get ₹10,800 in an interest bearing deposit at 18 under Sikkim Shishu Samridhhi Yojana
- Aama Sashaktikaran Yojana for eligible unemployed, unmarried, widowed, divorced or separated mothers aged 18-59 that provides ₹20,000 annually



THE NEXT PUSH

- ART centre for IVF, IUI and related services slated to open in Gangtok this year
- A national study by ICMR-NIRRH with IIMR is examining the drivers of Sikkim's fertility decline
- A population-care cell to bring health, education, financial support and other population policies under one dept
- Sikkim Demographic Observatory to track district-wise TFR, age at marriage, infertility, migration and marriage trends
- Planning for an ageing Sikkim through geriatric care training and collective living spaces



NEW ROOTS: Tshering Choden and her two-year-old son check on the saplings celebrating his birth

Mohua.Das@timesofindia.com

At 13,200 feet in East Sikkim, Thegu Primary School has eight classrooms, a sprawling playing field and, at the moment, two students. But the only classroom open is pre-primary, where Lhakpa Tshering Sherpa and Gelchen Sherpa are learning their ABCs amid plastic slides and comic-book posters. Beyond the door is the strange luxury of an entire school, built up to Class V, to themselves. There are, in fact, more teachers than students. Three teachers still come for the two boys, including Dima Lamu Bhutia, who travels 15 km from Kupup every day.

It was once a busy village school. Bhutia, who has taught here since 2013, remembers keeping two registers for a single class of about 50. By 2019, Thegu and its surrounding settlements could muster only about 17 students. "People here now want a good life for themselves, so they marry late and say: 'What's the point of having many children?'" says Bhutia.

Thegu PS is among 17 primary schools proposed for closure in Sikkim this year because of low enrolment. Last year, 38 were shut. Education secretary Tashi Chophel links the falling numbers to the state's total fertility rate (TFR), currently the lowest in India. "Our TFR fell from 1.1 in 2019 to 1.0 in 2023. In these four years, enrolment also dropped by about 20,000 children, which is a huge number for Sikkim," he says. Some state- and district-level estimates now put it even lower at 0.8, closer to some of the world's lowest-fertility societies, such as Seoul (0.6). TFR is the average number of children that a woman is expected to have in her lifetime. In the 2000s, India's TFR was around 3.3 births per woman. It has fallen to 1.9.

A few kilometres downhill, there are signs of new life. Tshering Choden has brought her two-year-old son, Kunzang, to Pangthang's forest block, to check on some other two-year-olds: cherry, gurash, chandan and chap saplings. Kunzang is roughly two feet tall now. Some of the trees are too.

They are part of 'Mero Rukh Mero Santali', or 'My Tree, My Child', a govt initiative that gives parents 108 trees to celebrate the birth of a child. Once planted and geo-tagged, eligible newborns from lower-income families get Rs 10,800 in an interest-bearing fixed deposit, locked until 18.

For Choden, 45, an Anganwadi worker who has watched the number of children around her shrink, Kunzang is her third. "Most have one baby or none. Now, some of us are having a second or third," she says. The trees and deposit contribute something to that decision. "We look after those trees just as we look after a child and nurture them."

Kunzang is among 11,663 newborns registered since the scheme began in 2023. The idea fits easily in a state with strong ties to nature, says Gangtok divisional forest officer Kshitij Saxena. "And 108 carries spiritual significance, so the adoption comes naturally." The trees can become a livelihood too. "A father once told me he'd have another baby so he could plant 108 more avocado trees!"

Jigme Lepcha chose sheesham for his younger child. The education department officer's parents grew up with six siblings and he with three, yet he and his wife hadn't planned for more than one child. Then the state offered govt employees an additional increment for a second. "That definitely made us think."

Their second child is now 20 months



ROLL CALL: With two students and three teachers, Thegu PS is among 17 primary schools in Sikkim proposed for closure this year as enrolments fall

old. "The increment, about 3% of basic pay, means Rs 6,000-7,000 more a month. For a govt employee, it is a big amount," says Lepcha. Another increment comes with a third. "I'm actually thinking of having a third too." In Sikkim, where roughly one in seven works for the govt, that possibility enters many households. But even as the state tries to coax new life, Lepcha's calculations show how much more goes into the decision. "We want our children to go to private school, which is expensive. So is childcare when both parents work. These incentives help ease the choice."

WHEN CLOCKS COLLIDE

Some men and women have other plans for their twenties, and marriage and children now have to fit costs, timing, and the life they're building.

Sonam, 26, from Rinchengpong, has finished her Master's, is preparing for the state competitive exams, and isn't convinced she wants to marry at all. "I want to be independent, work... be in my own company," she says. If she does, she imagines marrying "around 34", after she has had time to "explore a bit". A child would also depend on "the man I marry".

That sentiment keeps surfacing in the state's consultations with young women. Rohini Pradhan, special secretary-cum-programme director of Sikkim IN-SPiRES (Integrated Service Provision and Innovation for Reviving Economies) under the state's planning and development department, tackling Sikkim's critically low TFR, calls it a "biological and intellectual tension". The years women are most fertile increasingly collide with those spent studying and becoming financially

secure. "Take any field, even civil services, women are doing better than men," she says. "But when you are doing well in life, some roles get compromised."

Fertility specialist Dr Bandana Pradhan, who started Sikkim's first IVF clinic in Gangtok, says delayed marriage is one of the clearest patterns among her patients. "Women are highly empowered, but biology hasn't changed," she says.

Dawa Lhamu Sherpa from Namchi is an example of that awkward time loop. She spent 12 years working in Delhi as her family's sole earner, supporting her mother, brother and his children, and eventually building the family home. "Only after that did I come back and start thinking about myself," she says.

She married at 42. After three years of

trying to conceive naturally, Dawa turned to IVF at 45. The second cycle worked and last Nov, she gave birth to twin girls. Assistance under the state's Vatsalya scheme made the treatment possible. Without it, her husband, Tek Bahadur Chhetri, says, "I would have had to take a loan, borrow, or even let go of the plan to have kids."

OTHER PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

Age, though, is only one part. Dr Pradhan sees women in their twenties with badly damaged fallopian tubes, sometimes from infections following poorly managed abortions. "Infertility doesn't suddenly appear one day," she says. "Young women may take abortion pills themselves and skip the scan or follow-up; retained tissue can cause chronic infection, with the damage surfacing years later as infertility."

Rohini says the state is seeing the problem further upstream. "Young women afraid to approach a doctor sometimes try to manage abortions themselves with MTP kits bought from pharmacies." The govt is now strengthening sexual and reproductive health education in schools. "It's all a chain of interconnected consequences," she says.

Before Dr Pradhan started Sikkim's first IVF clinic, patients routinely travelled to Guwahati or Siliguri partly for anonymity. "Infertility carried the assumption that the woman had failed and faced the possibility of divorce or husband threatening to remarry because of childlessness." She remembers one who, unable to conceive, persuaded her husband to marry again. "The second wife eventually ran away with another man, and she arrived at my clinic. IVF worked." Awareness that infertility is a couple's issue has improved now, she says. "And I've made it compulsory for both to get checked."

WHO WILL RAISE THE CHILD?

And then there is the husband. "A lot of men still have to step up," says Pamin Lepcha, 44, who sees it up close as MLA for the constituency that includes Thegu. Women considering marriage and children "want to know whether they have backup. If they feel they lack support, they refuse to put themselves in that situation."

The same concern has surfaced in the state's consultations. "Women feel their partners have failed to rise to the occasion and share responsibilities," says Rohini. So, policymakers keep returning to her question: "How can we make the choice easier for her?" It is at the heart of what she calls Sikkim's "whole-of-govt approach", which is now looking beyond medicine and baby bonuses to how people live and make choices. "We can't tackle TFR from a purely medical or clinical perspective," she says. "Women's lives have changed, and policy has to change with them."

TOI INTERVIEW

'What Sikkim is seeing today, other Indian states may also have to prepare for'

Falling school enrolments rang the first warning bell for Sikkim CM Prem Singh Tamang. He tells TOI how that led to a 'whole-of-govt' approach to fertility, spanning the happiness index, childcare, migration and the future of its small communities



Mohua.Das@timesofindia.com

Sikkim's fertility rate has been falling for over two decades. When did it become a state priority?

■ I first noticed enrolment falling, especially in pre-primary and primary schools. When we looked into it, we found our TFR was declining and began asking why people were having fewer children. We started by offering govt employees an additional increment for a second child, and two for a third. Then we looked at what else gets in the way. Parents need time to care for children, so we increased maternity and paternity leave. Some couples need fertility treatment, so IVF assistance went up from Rs 1 lakh to Rs 3 lakh, and there have been many successful cases. Now, we are planning an incentive for people to marry and have babies early because not only in Sikkim but everywhere, people wait till they are 35-40 to settle. We're working out what the conditions for the incentive should be. This is a serious matter for the govt, and we are trying our level best.

And when you think 20 years ahead, if fertility continues to decline like this, what worries you most?

■ What worries me is the workforce and the next generation. People are ageing and will retire. If fertility keeps declining, where will our manpower come from? An outsider cannot take a govt job; you need to have a Sikkim domicile. You can already see the warning signs in schools, where some have five teachers and one student, or seven teachers and three students. Our fertility rate has to increase. I don't mean enormously, but at least it should come back to an average level.

It's ironic that one of the world's most populous countries now has a state grappling with the opposite challenge, with a TFR estimated at as low as 0.8, comparable to some of the world's lowest. Has this paradox been discussed with the Union govt?

■ Yes, it's being discussed with the centre, and we are getting support. When Sikkim became the first in the country to introduce incentives to increase fertility, people criticised us, saying, "Oh, Sikkim is a state where you produce a child and then take money." But what Sikkim is seeing today is something other Indian states may also have to prepare for. Other states are beginning to face the same problem. Certain institutions are advocating larger families, and Andhra Pradesh has announced incentives for having more than one baby. It is becoming a national problem.

The govt has introduced several measures to make it easier for people to have children. But there are limits to what policy can achieve because parenthood is ultimately a personal choice. How are you addressing Sikkim's fertility challenge as a quality-of-life issue?

■ Quality of life comes down to opportunities. If people can work and build their lives here, they will stay. The govt's job is to create that environment through good education, healthcare, infrastructure and opportunities to earn. We can't feed people with our own hands, but we can make those things available. And opportunities need not mean govt jobs. If someone wants to sing or dance, you can't tell them to take up a govt job. When we came to power in 2019, Sikkim had about nine dance and music academies; today we support around 60, besides individual artists and self-help groups. Healthcare has expanded too. Kidney patients who once had to travel outside Sikkim for dialysis can now get it in every district hospital, and we are starting kidney transplants here.

If people have the facilities and opportunities to live well here, they will stay.

Beyond incentives and facilities, how do you make Sikkim a place where young people feel confident about balancing work, aspirations and raising children?

■ I often talk about the Happiness Index. We're number two in the Northeast and, I think, around fifth nationally because it's not only about earning; people also need the flexibility to pursue what they want in life. We were the first state to introduce sabbatical leave for govt employees, allowing six months to three years off at 50% basic pay to start a business, study, go abroad or pursue a personal goal. It can help people with planning and raising a family, too. After a year of maternity and childcare leave, you can take up to three years' sabbatical without affecting seniority or promotion. So that gives you almost four years. By then, the child has grown up. The idea is to give people that flexibility.

Also, Sikkim is made up of many small indigenous communities. Is there a concern that with falling TFR, these communities, their languages and cultural traditions could disappear?

■ Sikkim has many small communities, each with its own language and traditions. With



AGAINST THE CLOCK: Dawa Sherpa with her IVF-born twins, conceived at 45 with support from state's Vatsalya scheme

more people marrying across communities and children speaking a different tongue, preserving these becomes important. We are appointing language teachers in schools and publishing books in languages that didn't exist earlier. We have also established an Indigenous Language Development Board. Govt notifications, once only in English, are now issued in these languages too. We are also trying to preserve traditional dress and celebrate each community's festivals. We've made it compulsory to wear traditional dress every Thursday. This year, we started something in the Assembly too. During the budget session, every MLA wore the Lepcha dumpya on the first day, the Bhutia bakhu the next, and the Nepali daura suruwal on the third, irrespective of their own community. Our languages and traditions have to survive.

Apart from increasing births, how is Sikkim preparing for an ageing population?

■ In Sikkim, our tradition has been to keep our parents at home and look after them, and we want to preserve that. We have enhanced old-age pensions and are expanding healthcare at the gram panchayat level. In 2023, we introduced the Rs 1 lakh Shrawan Kumar Award to encourage families to care for elderly parents, and last year brought senior citizens under the women and child development department so their needs are addressed more closely.

Why gig economy is going grey

A growing workforce in their late 50s and 60s has turned to jobs like cab driving and delivering groceries because they cannot afford to retire

Himanshi.Dhawan@timesofindia.com

In March, as Abdul Afsar drove his cab through Hyderabad, he felt an uneasiness in his chest. Sweating and panicking, he dropped the passenger off, then pulled over and called friends and the app helpline. "I found out later that it was a heart attack. My friends rushed me to hospital, and I got treated in time. But the only question customer care asked me was if the passenger had been dropped off safely," he says. The line went dead when he assured them he had.

Afsar took three months off before returning to driving. At 59, when many enter retired life, he starts his day at 4 am and logs 15 hours of work. "I have no choice. My monthly expenses go up to nearly Rs 45,000, and I am the only earning member," he says.

Afsar's plight has become increasingly common, say labour rights activists. Across India's cities, a growing number of workers in their late fifties and sixties with little social security or savings are strapping on delivery bags and logging on ride-hailing apps, not as a side hustle but as their only source of income. Labour experts say policy has largely failed to account for this ageing gig workforce.

Shaikh Salauddin, national general secretary of the Indian Federation of App-Based Transport Workers (IFAT), says: "We are seeing an increasing number of workers in the 55-60 age group and even beyond, in gig and platform work. This is not a sign of a healthy employment system, but economic insecurity and the absence of adequate social protection."

AGED OUT

Fifty-six-year-old Madhavi Bhatia (name changed), an app-based beautician in Mumbai, is separated from her husband and pays for her children's education. "I had borrowed Rs 5 lakh from a private lender for my daughter's marriage. Till I can repay that, I have to stay on the app," she says. She lives with her sister's family to keep costs low. "My sister also helps me with school fees. But how can I expect more from her?"

People as old as 54-55 find themselves jobless, and are forced to compete with young people for incentives and targets

Nirmal Gorana, GIG WORKERS' UNION

Afsar was a warehouse logistics in-charge at a cement company when he was fired at 45. "Everywhere I applied, I was told I was too old," he says.

Nirmal Gorana, national coordinator of the Gig and Platform Service Workers Union, says demonetisation and the Covid pandemic pushed many older workers out of existing jobs. "After the pandemic, many workers had to face attrition from the formal sector. People as old as 54-55 suddenly found themselves jobless. They have now been forced to take up jobs like gig work, competing with young people for incentives and targets," he adds.

Ajay Maity, 53, was sacked from his job as a messenger with a public sector oil company in 2020 after nearly 20 years. "I was 47 years old then. My son was still studying, and I had put all my savings into constructing a home in Midnapore, West Bengal. Everything changed overnight," he says.

From earning Rs 28,000 a month in an office job, he now puts in 15-hour days,



ON THE CLOCK: Afsar and Maity (left), laid off from their formal jobs, now rely on app-based work in their 50s to make ends meet

weaving his bike between delivery points across south Delhi. "I tried to look for office work, even started my own business, but nothing worked out. Now I work as a delivery agent for a 10-minute delivery app."

The narrow lane leading to the warehouse is crowded with e-bikes whizzing in and out. The air smells of detergent and stale vegetables. Amid the scruffiness, Maity takes pains to maintain a

neat appearance in his company-embazoned T-shirt.

He stays active on the app till he completes his target of Rs 1,800 a day. "Whether I finish at 10 pm or midnight is irrelevant," he adds. He has since shifted his family to Midnapore to cut costs. But when his wife needed surgery a couple of months ago, he had to borrow Rs 2 lakh from a former colleague.

PAST THE SAFETY NET

Last year, the govt introduced social security provisions for gig workers, who

'Europe won't get back its 'normal' climate — a swift transition from fossil fuels will prevent worse conditions'

Stefan Rahmstorf is Professor of Physics of the Oceans & Head of Earth System Analysis at the Potsdam Institute. Speaking with **Srijana Mitra Das** at *Times Evoke*, he discusses Europe's summer of heat and fire — and how this reflects global warming at work:

Why is Europe having record-breaking heatwaves and wildfires this summer?

■ This is a consequence of global warming caused by fossil fuel emissions. The whole world is warming — any weather that we see today is a combination of long-term climate change, caused by our fossil fuel addition, and random variations of weather on top of that.

When these things go in the same direction, you get extreme events, like the severe heatwaves we have seen in Europe this summer along with wildfires. The latter are actually a result of the excessive heat because heat dries out soil and plants quicker — the drier it gets, the more easily things burn and the fires therefore grow bigger and out of control.

It's become quite famous how you yourself went on holiday recently and witnessed a wildfire close by — could you describe that?

■ Yes, we were near Bordeaux at the Atlantic coast. One day, looking back towards the land from being out at sea surfing, we saw a column of smoke rising. I immediately thought, 'The forest is burning there', and indeed, that was the case. This was one of the biggest wildfires France has ever experienced. It continued for two days without affecting us directly. We just saw a big column of smoke rising in the distance, actually going out over the Atlantic — but then, the wind changed and that smoke was suddenly coming over the coastal town where we were. It covered up the sun. The landscape then showed this deep-red sun, shining through that big smoke cloud, turning the whole coast,



WHERE TO? Rahmstorf's July, 2026 images capture Earth's hottest month on record



A DAY ON THE BEACH IN THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY: On holiday in Lacanau, France, Stefan Rahmstorf took phone pictures of how one of the largest wildfires ever seen in the country was raining down on its coastal terrain, turning the summer into scenes from 'science fiction'

the beach, etc., an eerie orange colour, like a science fiction movie. The soot also started to rain down from the sky into the water and onto the beach. We left that day.

SUMMER HELLIDAYS...

It must have been a surreal experience as this also ties into your own work — could you tell us about that?

■ My research focuses on the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC). This is a system of ocean currents going all the way along the Atlantic from the Southern Ocean around Antarctica, through the South Atlantic, across the equator, through the Gulf of Mexico into the northernmost Atlantic, south of Iceland, partly even into the Norwegian Sea north of Iceland. There, the water sinks down. Its northward flow is near surface in the top 1,000 metres but then, it sinks to the depths of 2,000 to 3,000 metres — at that depth, the water then returns to the south, basically along the American continental margin.

So, it's relatively warm water flowing north but colder water returning to the south — it works like a central heating system for Europe and the North Atlantic.

Europe is now heating faster than any other continent — why?

■ Europe is warming faster than other land areas in mid-latitudes. This has to do

with dynamical changes, namely in wind patterns and ocean circulation. In terms of the atmosphere, this is related to changes in the jet stream and in terms of ocean circulation, many studies show the slowing of the AMOC — which is causing a 'cold blob' or a region of cooling in the North Atlantic. That tends to promote low-pressure systems lingering over that cold water. Now, if there's a cold, low-pressure system there, and the air turns counter-clockwise in the northern hemisphere around low pressure, that means Europe is getting winds from a southwesterly direction — and because it has this southerly component, that is hot air.

This leads to the strong increase in the number of heatwaves we've seen now in Europe. AMOC itself is like a heating system which delivers heat to the Northern Atlantic, where it is released to the atmosphere and is responsible then, with the westerly winds, for the mild climate of Europe. When this circulation slows down, that leads to a cooling in the Northern Atlantic, to the south of Greenland and Iceland and the west of Britain. This has long been predicted by climate models as a response to global warming and you can see it clearly in satellite sea surface temperature and air temperature data.

IPCC reports have shown this is an area where the world has cooled since 1900 — while the rest of the globe has warmed. That indicates the slowing of the AMOC.

Several of Europe's rivers are drying up — why and what are the likely impacts of that?

■ This is a consequence of the drying and general drought behind these wildfires. Such drying is caused either by less rainfall or more evaporation, losing water from the land surface.

In Europe, it's dominated by the latter. While in the Mediterranean, there is also a reduction in rainfall, in more mid-latitude Europe, like Germany, it is predominantly the increase in evaporation, which drives the loss of soil water and groundwater and



SOOT ON SAND: As Rahmstorf recorded, the Gironde fire saw thousands evacuated

the drying of land, which is behind such low river levels.

As for the rivers that come out of the Alps, they also have a strong component of snow melt in the summer. In the winter, there is a lot of snowfall — then, in the summer, that snow melts and feeds into the rivers. But if, with global warming, there is less snowfall in the winter, you don't get as much snow melt in the summer, which also contributes to these rivers having less water now.

We therefore see impacts like shipping in the Danube and Rhine rivers being restricted, causing economic losses in Germany and other places. This has also caused a number of nuclear power plants to be shut down because of a lack of cooling water.

TE readers sometimes say they feel helpless when they see extreme climate events. Do you have a message for them?

■ Yes, I'd say, of course you feel helpless because it is a huge global problem. I think it helps to be well-informed and talk with other people about it because then, you don't feel you're alone with this massive concern. Large majorities of people around the world, 70% to 80%, are in favour of more climate protection — so, you are not alone if you're worried about climate change. We also have technological solutions to stop global warming, namely, getting away from fossil fuels and transitioning to renewable energies. This energy transition is in full swing worldwide. The contribution of renewable energies to electricity supply has already overtaken coal and is growing exponentially. The faster we can get out of fossil fuels, the sooner we can stop global warming from becoming worse.

So, could Europe return to what is considered its 'normal' weather?

■ The answer is no. That is a very important question because often, people think, alright, if we reduce emissions, things will get better. That is not the case — CO₂ accumulates in the atmosphere and much of it has a lifetime of thousands of years. So, we can prevent the situation from getting far worse — but we can't get back to a cooler pre-industrial climate because CO₂ has too long a lifetime for that. It takes thousands of years for nature to get rid of the increase in CO₂ in the atmosphere.

Hence, we really need to be very fast in reducing our emissions because that CO₂ just accumulates and gathers — this is why we must go to net zero.

Views expressed are personal

READERS WRITE

Dear Times Evoke,

It was wonderful to read Srijana Mitra Das' beautifully-written article 'Why The Odyssey Continues' (2nd August). I live near Bellandur. When we moved here 15 years ago, the area was lush green and we heard melodious birdsong daily. Now, it's been consumed by towering glass buildings, growing traffic and urban heat. Your article truly touched my heart and I felt compelled to write. I do hope we realise our friendship with nature is sacred — and while greed has no limits, our planet does.

— Hemanalini, Bengaluru

The aesthetically-presented article on 'The Odyssey', blending Homer's epic with Christopher Nolan's rendition, was a milestone in TE. Reading it brought true perspective and invoked urgency with pollution growing worldwide. To conjure up Cassandra, I'd also highlight wars and militarism here, which currently escape emission norms, as read in TE.

— Rohit H. Yadav, Bharuch

TE's article on 'The Odyssey' was sterling. Much of the ancient epic remains true — the nuanced observations here made readers acknowledge humanity's abuse of nature and other species. Unless we shed our arrogance, we will never be able to get home as 'home' is actually the peace within our heart and mind. This article truly embodied the spirit of Times Evoke — thought-provoking and meaningful.

— Batul Savilwala, Mumbai

'Why The Odyssey Continues' powerfully used an ancient epic to illuminate enduring human tendencies of hubris, violence and distraction. Its warning was fabulous: civilisations assume they can dominate nature without consequences — but these return!

— Ruchi Jain, Lucknow

Share your thoughts at: timesevolve@timesofindia.com
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Analogue paneer off menu for a year; preventive measure: K'taka

Bengaluru: Karnataka food safety and drugs administration has imposed a one-year ban across the state on the manufacture, processing, storage, transportation and sale of analogue paneer — a non-dairy product made using vegetable oils, starches, emulsifiers and other additives. The govt order, issued on Aug 17

under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, said such products do not meet the regulatory definition of paneer, which is a standardised food product made from milk.

The ban also applies to food businesses, which have been prohibited from using, storing, supplying or selling ana-

logue paneer in the preparation of any food product. Even as food safety officials in several parts of the country have cracked down on fake paneer, Karnataka officials said tests on several paneer samples in the state found no traces of adulteration. The prohibition, they said, is therefore a preventive measure. **TW**

Govt to take stock of H1N1 as Karnataka cases cross 4,000

Bengaluru: Karnataka govt will hold a meeting with health officials this week to take stock of the H1N1 situation, with the state's tally crossing 4,000 cases this year, including more than 2,000 reported from Bengaluru alone, reports **Pearl D' Souza**.

Health minister U T Khader said surveillance and preparedness will be among

the key issues to be discussed at the meeting, amid concern over the spread of the seasonal flu in Bengaluru.

Karnataka recorded 4,583 H1N1 cases during the whole of 2025. This year's tally has already reached 4,125, with the seasonal peak expected to taper off only in Sept. The concern intensified this week after a

city school was shut following H1N1 cases among its students. Health department data shows the Greater Bengaluru Authority area has reported 2,033 cases so far, while Bengaluru Urban district has recorded another 982. Together, the two areas account for more than half of Karnataka's cases this year.

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K.K.NAGAR

Canada to slap \$-for-\$ tariffs on US as trade feud escalates

US Import Taxes Of 50% Kick In

Prime Minister Mark Carney said Canada will apply dollar-for-dollar counter-tariffs on US imports on Sept 8, escalating the feud rocking one of the world's biggest trading relationships. "We take this step reluctantly," Carney said Saturday, "because we recognise that it will raise costs and reduce choice for Canadians," that it will hit innocent US companies and states, and prevent the two countries working together.

He said the retaliatory import taxes will be concentrated in steel, dairy, appliances, agricultural equipment, pulp and paper, and electronics, with more detail to be published in the coming days.

US import taxes of 50% kicked in Saturday on hundreds of items from Canada, totalling about \$20 billion in value, such as plywood, liquor, electrical equipment and hockey gear; after trade talks broke down Friday night. President Donald Trump's administration used a Depression-era authority for the first time to impose the tariffs.

Israel targets Syria again after US criticism

Israel carried out a fresh strike in Syria on Saturday and lambasted US envoy Tom Barrack for criticising an earlier attack on an air base in the northwest, which Israel has accused Turkey of seeking to use. US envoy for Syria Tom Barrack on Tuesday slammed Israel's attack on the disused military air base that day as an "unnecessary escalation that does not advance regional stability".

On Friday, in an interview with influencer Mario Nawfal, Barrack said the strike may have been intended to provoke a conflict with Turkey, prompting Israeli defence minister Israel Katz to hit back on Saturday, calling the remarks "full of inaccuracies".

Since the Dec 2024 overthrow of Bashar al-Assad, Israel has carried out hundreds of strikes in Syria and has sent troops into a UN-patrolled buffer zone that for decades had separated Israeli and Syrian forces in the Golan Heights. AFP



WASHINGTON GEARS UP FOR A DIFFERENT KIND OF RACE: A driver does a practice lap for NTT IndyCar Series Freedom 250 in Washington, DC, on Saturday. The Freedom 250 Grand Prix is part of a belated celebration of the America's 250th anniversary and President Donald Trump's continued efforts to transform Washington. Over 140,000 people are expected to attend the district's first-ever IndyCar series race taking place Sunday, on a 1.7-mile racetrack zipping through the nation's capital

By retaliating, Carney is taking an economic and political risk. US officials have said that if Canada strikes back, they will present Trump with options to escalate — raising the possibility of a spiralling trade war between two countries that exchanged almost \$900 billion of goods and services last year.

Carney said talks fell apart after US asks to tighten rules, including on the manufacture of trucks, on Canada's ability to make trade deals with other countries, and other aspects. He added it's not good news for the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement, which entered rolling reviews after Trump declined to renew it in July.

The US is Canada's largest export market by far, with oil, vehicles and car parts as the largest categories. But Canada is also the largest buyer of US goods and services aside from the European Union, according to data from the US commerce department.

Ontario Premier Doug Ford advised Carney this week to consider "dollar-for-dollar" retaliation if the talks failed. His letter to the PM highlighted Canada's energy and critical mineral assets as points of negotiating leverage, and he also suggested additional tariffs on products from "politically significant" states for Trump, such as Florida, Texas, Iowa and Wisconsin. BLOOMBERG

US judge strikes down Trump's 75-nation visa ban

A US federal judge has struck down a govt ban on visas to nationals from 75 countries who wish to settle in the country indefinitely, dealing a blow to President Donald Trump's immigration crackdown.

In a ruling issued on Friday in the southern district of New York, Judge Jeannette Vargas called the policy "contrary to law" and said secretary of state Marco Rubio had exceeded his "statutory authority" in issuing it. The policy, which came into force in Jan, suspended the processing of immigrant visas to nationals of 75 countries including Afghanistan, Brazil, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Nigeria, Somalia, Thailand and Yemen.

At that time, the state department had said the decision was made "to ensure that immigrants from high-risk countries do not unlawfully utilise welfare in the United States or become a public charge."

But Vargas ruled that consular officers were wrongly ordered to refuse immigrant visas solely based on an applicant's country of origin, even if they had determined the applicant was otherwise. Friday's ruling vacates any visa denial based solely on the policy. The govt can appeal the ruling. AFP

Iran condemns US plans to announce new sanctions

Cairo/Washington: Iran on Saturday denounced US plans to announce new sanctions that could put further strain on the Islamic Republic's economy and have an impact on its most important trading partners including China. After nearly six months of war since the US and Israel launched airstrikes against Iran on Feb 28, the sides are not firing at each other but also showing no sign of pursuing peace talks.

Oil shipments are at a virtual standstill in the Strait of Hormuz, with Tehran threatening to strike any unauthorised oil tankers that try to transit the vital waterway, and Iran's economy is already under immense pressure from sanctions. US treasury secretary Scott Bessent is due to hold a press conference on Monday after threatening "the toughest sanctions in history" on Iran. Bessent has also urged co-

Rosatom workers return to N-plant

Russia state-owned atomic energy company Rosatom is continuing to return employees to Iran's Bushehr nuclear power plant, Interfax reported, citing the company's Chief Executive Officer Alexey Likhachev. The number of Russian specialists back at the plant has reached 42, Likhachev said. "If all goes well, we'll increase our staff to 100 people this autumn," he said, adding that the situation at the facility is calm. Rosatom began evacuating staff from Bushehr, located on the Persian Gulf about 1,215 km south of Tehran, in the spring after the US and Israel launched military operations against Iran in late Feb. Russian employees at the plant were reduced to a skeletal staff of about 20 people, Bloomberg reported in April. AFP

operation with Washington by China, which buys more than 80% of Iran's shipped oil, according to 2025 data from analytics firm Kpler. Beijing has urged diplomacy.

Iran's foreign ministry spokesman, Esmail Baghaei, said on Saturday the imminent US announcement of new economic sanctions was an "assertion of extraterritorial sovereignty over every independent member state of

the United Nations." US President Donald Trump, who has warned of economic consequences against any country that provides "any type of lifeline to Iran," said on Friday Washington was observing "what happens" in the conflict.

"They would love to make a deal, but they're not ready to make the right deal, in my opinion," Trump said of Iran. REUTERS

SUDAN FARMS LIE BARREN AS EL NINO LEAVES NILE BANKS DRY



An abandoned boat beached on the banks of the Blue Nile and the exposed riverbed in Khartoum, Sudan. The powerful El Nino climate pattern strengthening in the Pacific Ocean, which impacts winds and rains across the world, has delayed crucial rains and led water levels in the life-giving Nile in Africa to drop precipitously. This summer, the Blue Nile basin has already seen as little as half of its usual rainfall, according to UC Santa Barbara's Climate Hazards Center, and regional forecasts predict below average rainfall for the rest of the year. Along the bone-dry riverbanks of the Nile in Sudan, farmers struggle to pull water to their crops. Across the country, farmland that could feed the world's largest hunger crisis many times over lies fallow

Slow boat to Amsterdam ships cargo using sail power

Gliding into the port of Amsterdam under full sail with a cargo of 40 tonnes of Caribbean rum, coffee and cocoa, the twin-masted Tres Hombres looks like something from the heyday of 17th-century piracy.

But this 32-metre brigantine has a much nobler mission than the pirates of old: sustainable goods transport using the energy from wind captured in its sails. "We have almost no emissions because we sail without an engine," said Sabine Fox, the 51-year-old boss of Fairtransport, the firm that operates the Tres Hombres.

Every year the ship, whose name is inspired by the three men who founded Fair-



THE WIND WILL CARRY US: The twin-masted Tres Hombres transport in 2007, sails some 7,000km across the Atlantic, bringing goods from the Caribbean to Amsterdam. "We choose products which are not produced in Europe because we didn't want to be in

competition with local markets," said Fox. "How many things do we import from China that we don't need?" she asked. By offering a selective and clearly slower supply chain, Fairtransport aims to raise awareness about emissions from shipping.

According to the UN's International Maritime Organization, shipping accounts for around 3% of global greenhouse gas emissions. The sustainably farmed products transported by the Tres Hombres are sold to high-end stores in northern Europe, while the vessel sails around every summer.

Aaron Smith, a deckhand, seems a bit disoriented by the industrial landscape of the

port of Amsterdam after more than a month sailing from the Azores to the Dutch capital. But his face lights up when he recounts his experiences aboard the Tres Hombres.

"If you go to the captain's chair, which is right above the water under the bowsprit, you can be really close to the dolphins and see them jumping all around you," said the 20-year-old. But he also recalls "the most terrifying experience I have ever had at sea" — a storm with gusts up to force nine that smashed the ship around.

Strong sea legs are a must for the international crew, made up of eight volunteers and seven professional sailors, and skippered by its

Putin says Ukraine opened 'Pandora's box' with strikes on economic targets

Total Of 13 Killed In Strikes; Missile Lands As German Minister Visits Kyiv

Russian President Vladimir Putin said in comments published on Saturday that Kyiv had opened "Pandora's box" with its strikes on Russian economic targets, saying that Russia would hit back at Ukraine's "most sensitive economic sectors". Ukraine has this summer escalated a campaign of drone strikes targeting Russian economic infrastructure, including oil refineries and online retailers' warehouses, seeking to destroy infrastructure it says is central to Russia's war effort.

"The Kyiv regime set out to damage our economy. What did it do? It opened this Pandora's box itself. Well then, expect a response targeting your most sensitive economic sectors," Putin said in comments to a Russian state television journalist.

He said that the strikes, which have jeopardised Ukraine's agricultural exports, would not cause global food shortages, because Russia



Rescuers on Saturday work at the site of a shopping centre, destroyed in Friday's Russian drone attacks on Kryvyi Rih, Zelensky's home city

would be able to replace Ukrainian exports. "We do face challenges regarding the shipment of our goods, but we will resolve these issues. Consequently, there will be no shortage on the global market," Putin said.

France on Saturday promised to deliver new interceptor missiles to Ukraine amid a surge in Russian strikes that have pushed civilian

deaths in the four-and-a-half-year war to their highest since the first months of Moscow's invasion. At least 13 people were killed in strikes overnight and through Saturday — seven in Ukraine, four in Russia and two in Russia-annexed Crimea.

Ukraine's allies in the Coalition of the Willing — an initiative led by France and Britain — will meet on Monday to

look at how to ramp up pressure on Moscow to halt its invasion. Among the deadly attacks on Saturday was a Ukrainian drone strike on a house in southern Russia, killing two children and wounding their parents, the head of the Krasnodar region said.

Russia fired a ballistic missile towards Kyiv in the middle of the day — while the German foreign minister Johann Wadepuhl was visiting for talks with his Ukrainian counterpart and Zelensky.

Ukraine's General Staff said in a Telegram post that facilities on Rosneft PJSC's Novokuybyshevsk oil refinery were struck in the Samara region, 900km from Ukraine's border. Images on social media showed a plume of black smoke billowing from the refinery.

A logistics centre in the same region was also set ablaze, Interfax reported, citing Ozon Holdings, Russia's second-largest e-commerce company. About 500 employees were evacuated. AFP, BLOOMBERG

Gunmen abduct over 60 from Nigeria mosque

Lagos: Armed men abducted over 60 worshippers from a mosque in Nigeria's north-central Niger state during Friday prayers, police said on Saturday, in the latest mass kidnapping in a region plagued by violent gangs.

Police spokesperson Wasiu Abiodun said the attackers stormed Kpenya Mosque in the Dekara district of the Borgu local govt area at about 2 pm on Friday. "The developing report indicated that no life was lost, while joint security detachment has been deployed to the area for assessment and rescue operations," Abiodun said. REUTERS

Trump says Xi to visit US in two weeks

Washington: US President Donald Trump has said Chinese President Xi Jinping will visit the United States in two weeks. Trump disclosed the expected visit while addressing a Republican campaign rally in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, on Friday. He did not provide a date, venue or agenda for his meeting with Xi. "As an example, in two weeks, President Xi of China's coming," Trump said. He mentioned Xi while discussing a proposed military-ballroom complex at the White House. IANS

Anthropic market debut could break SpaceX IPO record

The market debut of artificial intelligence startup Anthropic, a chief rival to OpenAI, could break the record set by SpaceX, US media have reported. Elon Musk's space company went public in June at a value of \$1.77 trillion and raised \$85.7 billion in its blockbuster initial public offering, the largest in history.

Anthropic, maker of the Claude AI models, "expects to match or beat the size" of SpaceX's deal, said Bloomberg. The firm's bankers told potential investors it could seek to raise "more than \$100 billion" in its IPO, which could put the company's value at \$2 trillion. The New York Times has reported that would more than double the five-year-old company's previous valuation at \$965 billion. Anthropic declined request for comment. AFP

French captain, Anne-Flore Gannat. "We have to adapt every day because we are only powered by the winds," said Gannat, 40. "We are moving under sail only. There is no engine."

The Tres Hombres manages an average speed of seven to eight knots, building in a buffer of three knots to avoid delaying the cargo. Once they reach their destination, the products are delivered to chocolate makers or coffee roasters.

To cover the costs of such an operation, Fairtransport sells its own "Tres Hombres" brand of coffee, chocolate and rum. It also transports goods for other companies or charges people to come along for the voyage. AFP

Pak minorities face relentless persecution amid violence

Hindu trader shot dead in Baloch

Peshawar: A Hindu trader has been killed by unidentified armed men in Noshki town of Pakistan's restive Balochistan province. The incident occurred on Friday. Some unidentified armed men barged into the trader's shop in Qadirabad Stop area. When he resisted, they opened fire and fled, leaving the trader dead on the spot, the Dawn newspaper reported. The victim has been identified as Rakesh Kumar. PTI

Minorities Day' in 2009 in response to a campaign led by Shahbaz Bhatti. The date commemorates Muhammad Ali Jinnah's historic address to Pakistan's Constituent Assembly on Aug 11, 1947, in

British MPs seek UN help to end bloodshed in PoK by Pak forces

London: Over 70 British Parliamentarians have written to the UN secretary-general Antonio Guterres urging intervention over the worsening situation in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), while calling for an end to the bloodshed caused by Pakistani forces and measures to protect civilian lives. The appeal comes amid

which the country's founder declared that citizens were free to practice their religion and that faith should have no bearing on equal citizenship," Bulut stated.

Last week, several members of religious minority communities and civil society activists took part in the annual Minority Rights March in three major Pakistani cities. They urged the Pakistan govt to criminalise forced conversions and amend personal laws governing inter-faith marriages to safeguard the rights of minority spouses and children.

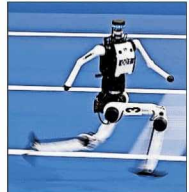
They also called for the acceptance of their 11-point charter of demands, including stronger safeguards against forced conversions and protection from the misuse of blasphemy laws. IANS

the escalating violence and abuses in the occupied territory, where hundreds have been killed and injured in a brutal crackdown by Pakistani forces. The region also remains under a strict blockade, curfew, and a total communications blackout.

In the letter addressed to the UN secretary-general, the British lawmakers welcomed

the recent attention given by the UN to the dire situation in PoK. They appealed to the UN to press Pakistani authorities to end arbitrary arrests, ensure due process and access to legal representation, and facilitate appropriate access for independent human rights observers and those able to support peaceful mediation. IANS

DAILY PLANET Two robots beat Usain Bolt's 100m world record



A Tiangong humanoid robot competes during a 100m large-sized group preliminary race, following the opening ceremony of the 2026 World Humanoid Robot Games, at the National Speed Skating Oval, in Beijing, China, on Saturday

A Chinese humanoid robot ran 100 metres in 9.39 seconds in a preliminary heat at the World Humanoid Robot Games in Beijing on Saturday, faster than the men's world record held by Jamaican sprinter great Usain Bolt. Tiangong Ultra, developed by the Beijing Humanoid Robot Innovation Center, won its heat at the opening of the games' second edition, organisers said. The robot overtook smartphone maker Honor's Lightning near the finish after falling behind early in the race. Lightning finished in 9.47 seconds, also faster than the 9.58-second record Bolt set at the 2009 World Athletics Championships. Reuters

TikTok to pay \$400m to settle child privacy case

TikTok and Chinese parent ByteDance agreed to pay \$400 million to resolve a a Biden-era lawsuit by the US justice department accusing the popular social media app of collecting data on children in violation of an online privacy law. The settlement, which requires court approval, comes several months after ByteDance closed a long-awaited deal to transfer parts of its US operations to American investors to resolve national security concerns.

Dad ditches 7-yr-old for hours to climb Mt Fuji A man left his seven-year-old son behind for hours on Japan's Mount Fuji while continuing the climb, resulting in a stern warning from authorities, local media reported. The boy was found alone on a hiking route on Thursday and taken into police custody, a local police officer in the Shizuoka region told AFP on Saturday. The child told his father he was tired at the sixth station of the mountain, which is located at an altitude of more than 2,000 metres, local SBS TV reported.

As his older brother had gone on ahead, the seven-year-old's father told him to "wait here" and carried on hiking with his other son. TV Asahi said the boy was told to wait for eight hours with only snacks and a soft drink and no money, citing staff at a mountain hut who alerted police to his presence. Officers contacted the father who was at the eighth station and handed the boy over to him when he returned.

France warns of 300,000 unsafe condoms

French anti-fraud and health agencies issued a warning on Friday against tens of thousands of potentially unsafe condoms sold on the internet and in shops and pharmacies. The agencies recalled about 260,000 condoms sold in pharmacies and shops after lab tests found two products presented risks of bursting or the presence of perforations, they said in a statement. They advised people who have used the condoms to get screened for sexually transmitted diseases and take a pregnancy test in case of a missed period.

Don't mourn leaky MGNREGA. Expand the new jobs scheme

SWAMINOMICS



Replacement of MGNREGA with a new scheme called VB-G RAM G has outraged activists. They say the govt has destroyed the historic 'right to work' created by MGNREGA. Please spare us the romantic notion that MGNREGA actually gave every villager the right to 100 days of work. That was the law, not the reality. MGNREGA guaranteed an unemployment allowance to any villager not given work within 15 days of asking. But hardly anybody got the allowance (there were just three beneficiaries in 2020-21).

A World Bank study, 'Does India's Employment Guarantee Scheme Guarantee Employment?' showed that of those applying for MGNREGA work, the proportion getting it was only 22% in Bihar, 48% in Uttar Pradesh, and 56% all India. Other studies also have dismal data.

VB-G RAM G has not abolished the legal guarantee. On paper, it has increased it from 100 to 125 days. It retains unemployment allowance if work is not provided. Activists should stop saying a legal

guarantee has disappeared. It hasn't. The real questions are whether the new scheme will actually provide work or create useful assets.

States must notify 60 days in advance during peak sowing and harvesting seasons when VB-G RAM G work will stop, so that public works do not compete with farmers for labour. Activists are outraged by this provision. But why? Employment schemes should aim to provide work in the lean season when no other work is available. VB-G RAM G provides for work in 305 out of 365 days in the year. How is this a crime?

Activists protest that in July, its first month of operation, VB-G RAM G generated 7.67 crore person-days of work against 15.33 crore under MGNREGA in July 2025. Participating households fell from 1.42 crore to 68.94 lakh.

My question is very different. Why is a scheme intended for lean-season work providing so much work in July, the peak of the sowing season? Maybe state govt were not prepared to implement the new conditions.

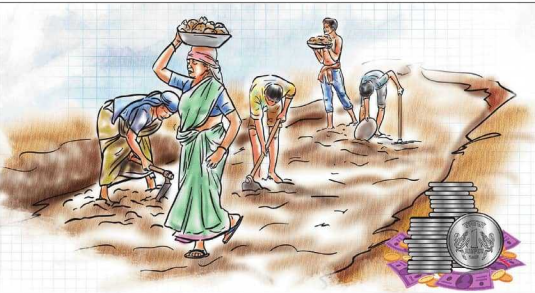
Maharashtra pioneered an employ-

Rural incomes have diversified enormously through migration and remittances. Many states now supplement this with cash transfers to women. Job schemes are no longer the sole life-saver

ment guarantee scheme in 1972. This evolved over the years into the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act of 2005. It was a good scheme at a time when living standards were far lower and more precarious. India today is very different. Over 80 crore people receive free foodgrain. NITI Aayog estimates that multidimensional poverty fell from 29.17% in 2013-14 to 11.28% in 2022-23, lifting an estimated 24.82 crore people out of multidimensional poverty.

This transformation was evident in field research conducted by Professor Neeraj Kaushal and this author on tribal families displaced by the Sardar Sarovar dam. Resettled families owned more than their former forest neighbours in mobile phones (87.8% against 58.6%), two-wheelers (61.4% against 30.7%), and TVs (46.4% against 34.4%). Even supposedly deprived forest dwellers revealed astonishingly high ownership.

Meanwhile, rural incomes have diversified enormously through migration and remittances. Professor Alakh N Sharma estimates that 65% of Bihar households



MAKE IT WORK BETTER: So far, the creation of durable assets while providing wages has not been taken seriously. VB-G RAM G tries to shift focus, but it needs to go further

have a migrant, and remittances provide half their income. Many states now supplement this with cash transfers to women — Maharashtra, Bihar, and West Bengal are recent examples. Rural employment schemes are no longer the sole lifesaver.

So far, the second objective of such schemes — to create durable assets — has never been taken seriously. To maximise employment, the earlier schemes mandated that at least 60% of total spending (and 75% in practice) must be on wages, and only the balance on materials.

A contractor said that only earthworks like land leveling and tank desilting could be done with such a high labour content. Durable assets could be built only by fiddling with the labour rolls.

On a 2024 visit to eastern UP, villagers said MNREGA money was repeatedly

sanctioned for desilting their tank. But the tank did not need annual desilting. Their solution was wonderfully Indian: the sarpanch pocketed half the money, distributed the rest equally among village households, and fiddled the accounts. Everybody seemed happy. But the aims of NREGA were skewed.

Anil Ghanwat of Maharashtra's Shetkari Sanghatana narrated similar stories in his state. Such diversion arose after panchayats were empowered through untied funds to select and implement projects, with no financial audit.

Decentralising finance to panchayats has long been advocated by economists and activists alike. But panchayats are not Gandhian islands of purity. Once, when panchayats had no funds, candidates spent hardly any money on panchayat elections. Today, when panchayats have crores at their disposal, candidates spend tens of lakhs to try and get their snouts in the trough.

VB-G RAM G tries to shift towards asset creation, but not unambiguously. It needs to go much further. If expanded infrastructure is woven into employment schemes, the result can be employment with much greater assets. After wages have been paid, something worthwhile must remain standing. ■

Honey, they've shrunk the kids, but let's not panic

BY INVITATION



JAMIE PAUL

In the 1960s and '70s, as the global population was growing by leaps and bounds, prominent institutions and leaders, from the UN to US President Richard Nixon, warned about the looming overpopulation crisis. Today, with birth rates falling around the world, thought leaders foretell the precise opposite: population collapse. Think tanks host conferences with titles like 'Empty Planet: Preparing for the Global Population Decline' and Indian states like Tamil Nadu and Andhra have rolled out cash incentives and expensive maternity leave policies to encourage people to have more children. This raises two important questions. How sure are we about a future population crash, and would population decline necessarily be a disaster for humanity? On both scores, there is reason to be skeptical.

Global population reached 1 billion in the 1800s, 2 billion by 1928, 3 billion by 1960, and 4 billion by 1974. Given this seemingly exponential growth, folks started to worry. Economist Thomas Malthus was the first to sound the alarm in 1798, warning that population growth would eventually lead to widespread famine. Over a century and a half later, biologists Paul and Anne Ehrlich's wildly influential 1968 book, 'The Population Bomb', followed by the Club of Rome's famous 'Limits to Growth' (1972), prophesied societal collapse and helped set off an overpopulation panic.

Those in power put these fears into action. China adopted the one-child policy that began in 1980 and ran for 35 years. International aid organisations not only provided considerable funding across the world for family planning but often pegged the amount of aid countries could receive to various population control benchmarks.

Robert McNamara, who ran the World Bank after serving as defense secretary for President John F Kennedy, said in 1969 that the bank would not finance developing-world healthcare "unless it was very strictly related to population control, because usually health facilities contributed to the decline of the death rate, and thereby to the population explosion." President Lyndon B Johnson, speaking to an advisor about the famines in India, argued that aid should be withheld because India had not done enough to rein in its population size, saying, "I'm not going to piss away foreign aid in nations where they refuse to deal with their own population problems."

These incentives led to predictably dark places, especially in India. As journalists Dylan Matthews and Byrd Pinkerton summed it up in 'The Time of Vaseotomy: how American foundations fueled a terrible atrocity in India': "In 1975, Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi ordered the declaration of a national emergency. She seized dictatorial powers, imprisoned her political rivals, and embarked, with the help of her son Sanjay, on a mass, compulsory sterilisation program that registers as one of the most disturbing and vast human rights violations in the country's modern history."

McNamara was apparently pleased. "At long last, India is moving to effectively address its population problem."

Things didn't pan out how the overpopulation alarmists prognosticated. In fact, today, the rising fear is that humanity is on track to dwindle away. UN now estimates that, due to falling global birth rates, human population is set to peak in 2086 at approximately 10.3 billion people before tapering off and then declining. Other estimates place this peak in the 2070s or 2060s. By 2100, the population is projected to already be in decline, falling to 10.18 billion, with the total fertility rate



THINK ABOUT IT, BABE: Women are opting to have children later in life, translating to fewer kids, but why assume that fertility medicine will make no progress?

(TFR) estimated to be around 1.6 births per female (a TFR of 2.1 being replacement level). Ninety-seven percent of countries are expected to be below replacement level.

Extrapolating further out, depending on the assumed fertility rate, population estimates that stretch into the far future range wildly, from as low as 1 billion people in 2300 to as many as 36.4 billion. Economists and business leaders warn of an end to economic growth, a "more fractious world," and "looming disaster".

But the problem with future population models is that they cannot possibly account for all of the variables that contribute to population size. Overpopulation experts of the 20th century, for example, projected the population data they had into the future while assuming mid-20th-century technology. They could not foresee the many improvements that enabled a world where the overweight outnumber the hungry by more than four to one.

Similarly, commentators today notice the global trend of women opting to have children later in life, translating to fewer kids, and they extend this trend into the future with the assumption that science will somehow stay the same. Why would we assume that fertility medicine will make no progress? Why would we discount the transformative role technology will continue to play — as it has throughout history — in replacing human labour and creating economic value?

What's more, any generation can reverse these current trends in just a handful of years. According to a 2024 study funded by Elon Musk, if the fertility rate were to continue dropping as projected but then rebound to replacement level in 2175, the population would stabilise at four billion people. Even the population collapse alarmists' own research works against them.

We must also consider the downsides of an infinitely growing population. In medicine, there is a name for unchecked growth: cancer. Man has wiped out 60% of vertebrate animals since 1970. One million species are on the brink of extinction as they vanish "at a rate not seen in 10 million years." We have polluted the environment, disrupted the climate, cut down the rainforests, destroyed ecosystems, and even littered the Earth's orbit with 170 million pieces of "space junk".

Fewer humans would unquestionably be better for the planet, and more profoundly could give us the time to develop cleaner practices before we destroy our only home. No, a shrinking population isn't the end of the world — in fact, it might just be what saves it.

In the span of two generations, experts went from fearing an Earth overrun by humans to holding symposiums about an "empty planet." Perhaps some humility is in order. We can't know what the far future holds, and no one should be losing sleep over falling birth rates. ■

Paul is founding editor, American Dreaming

We must consider the downsides of an infinitely growing population. We have polluted the planet, wiped out species, destroyed ecosystems, and even littered space with junk

New gen doesn't buy jewellery for the locker. It's about storytelling and craft

Sabyasachi Mukherjee is the first Indian designer to collaborate with The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, drawing on 5,000 years of its collection to create jewellery. With the collaboration set to debut at New York Fashion Week, 'Sabya' tells Neelam Raaj why, at a time when history is being rewritten or erased, he sees museums as repositories of memory and truth

■ Not many know that you funded your first clothing line with the money you made selling costume jewellery out of a tiffin box in Kolkata. What did you make the pieces from?

Plastic buttons, shell beads, wooden beads. Everything was recycled and upcycled. I used to sit on a pavement and when my first piece sold for \$3, I couldn't believe that somebody would pay me that kind of money for it.

■ How did the collaboration with The Met happen?

There's a saying by Rumi that what you seek is seeking you. And I'm not much of a seeker because I live in Kolkata. Then I got an offer from the Met. In my head, I thought it was spam. But, well, the collaboration happened. I want to address why this is important. We live in very strange times because for a lot of people, history is six years old. For others, history is six months old. Maybe a time will come when history is six hours old or six minutes old. As we live in a more and more digital world and have very little to verify about the physical world, it gets a little dangerous. Between propaganda, fake news, what is being obliterated and what is being rewritten, where do you go to find the truth? I go to museums because I think they have become important beacons of truth and information.

The biggest thing that we struggle with now is authenticity and identity. But there is no moving forward and no having an identity without knowing what your past was and where you came from. And for me, this collaboration is important because of two things. First, I think when like-minded people and institutions come together, they can collectively create massive change. This collaboration allows me to use 5,000 years of their wonderful archives to build future artefacts and heirlooms for a modern generation. Second, the exchange and storytelling renew people's interest in knowing more.

■ How difficult was it to break into India's largely family-run jewellery business?

There are barriers to entry in everything. Before we talk about jewellery, why don't we talk about fashion? Fashion was a business of the privileged. I was probably the first middle-class boy who broke into high fashion. There were a lot of barriers because the rich don't like the poor rising to their level. Initially, people would dis-

miss me as a tailor. But if you can make something that others can't replicate, people will come to you. You have to break the rules. Otherwise, people would rather go to somebody they trust, like a family jeweller.

■ What rules did you break in jewellery?

Women think men buy them jewellery out of love. But that's not entirely true. Men use women as conduits for parking undisclosed money. That is why women who come to buy jewellery ask about the resale value. It is a very strange thing to ask about something that you have not even bought. The second question is usually about the making charge. This is because men would tell women to buy jewellery which has the lowest making value and the highest resale value so that if they needed the cash on a bad day, they could always sell it. Jewellery is the highest form of art in product manufacturing, but it was reduced to a commodity. And today it's come to bite everybody because, in an era of lab-grown diamonds and emeralds, craftsmanship has almost become extinct.

I realised that the new generation did not want to store jewellery as an investment. Why would they if they can invest in stocks and get a better return? They also don't buy things just to store in a locker. I think we are the first jewellery brand in the country that is moving customers' consumption from commodity to luxury. Today, luxury in the jewellery industry is not about stones anymore. It's storytelling

about the making charge. This is because men would tell women to buy jewellery which has the lowest making value and the highest resale value so that if they needed the cash on a bad day, they could always sell it. Jewellery is the highest form of art in product manufacturing, but it was reduced to a commodity. And today it's come to bite everybody because, in an era of lab-grown diamonds and emeralds, craftsmanship has almost become extinct.



and craft. With The Met collaboration, I can do both storytelling and craft.

■ You've spoken about how your first visit to The Met moved you to tears. Given 5,000 years of art history to draw from, why begin with Byzantium? What resonated with you about a culture shaped by the exchange of objects, ideas and people across Europe, Asia and Africa?

I was obsessed with their Byzantine and Medieval department. Even before this call came, I'd probably made hundreds of visits. My first collection out of design school was inspired by the Byzantine Empire. I drew parallels between the Byzantine Empire and Calcutta. Calcutta was a trading port, and so much of Calcutta is an exchange between the East and the West. I've always liked cultures which are dynamic, which have been built not by the myopic vision of a group of people who have stayed in one geography, but by people who have come from different parts and built it collectively through exchange, through trade, through immigration. I could find a beautiful connection between Calcutta, the Byzantine Empire, and New York. As I was doing the showing in New York, it completely tied everything up.

■ The Met collab debuts at New York Fashion Week, marking your return after 18 years. What kept you away for so long?

I wasn't ready. Fashion critic Suzy Menkes told me to first become successful in my own country before aiming to be a global designer. I listen to good advice when it comes, because it comes very rarely. I came back to India and built the business. If I had gone to New York too early, New York would have shaped my vision of what Sabyasachi would have been, and I would never have found my voice.

■ European luxury has a long history of drawing from India. Now an Indian luxury house is interpreting objects from one of the West's great museums. Isn't that an interesting reversal?

We talk too much about East and West. When the West wears Indian clothes, we call it appropriation. But what are we doing? I'm wearing Western clothes. I'm an Indian. Why does the reverse conversation not happen? It's 2026. Everybody's allowed to have free exchange with each other.

■ Your new Delhi store, like your stores in Mumbai and Kolkata, feels almost like a museum — filled with books, antiques, archival craft. Will there be a Sabyasachi museum one day?

My stores are museums enough. But I don't have personal hubris. If museums would like to have my products, I would donate every single thing that I have.

■ What is the one fashion faux pas you would tell Indians not to make?

The biggest faux pas is being uncomfortable wearing something that you are. If you're comfortable in what you wear, you'll always be confident. If you're confident, you'll always attract people. So don't short-change comfort for fashion.

World in churn, and India's foreign policy needs to adapt to it

BY INVITATION



ZORAWAR DAULET SINGH

There is a growing sense that something is seriously amiss in India's foreign policy. Yet, foreign policy debate is still tiptoeing around the big questions.

There were three foundational assumptions that underlay Indian choices at the turn of this century. First, no great power in history had acquired such preponderance over its rivals as the US had by 2000. US primacy also meant there was no way to avoid hitching a ride with the US.

Second, to make the arrangement mutually attractive, a common antagonist, China, was projected to help overcome decades of dissonance and suspicion that had divided Indians and Americans. The new discourse played on Indian ego and US greed. Washington would lift Delhi in the international pecking order, while India would generate business and arms sales for America. If everything unfolded as planned, India would become a prized Western sentinel in Asia, cementing US hegemony for the 21st century.

Third, although the world economy had broadened by the early 2000s, the US was firmly at the helm in connecting the Global South to the G-7. Interdependence was a euphemism for a US-led geo-economic order that would dominate innovation, supply chains and international trade.

All three assumptions have been shattered in recent years. One, the US has not just lost its primacy, it has lost its ability to control major geo-

political events. Every roll of the dice in recent years to arrest its decline — the trade standoff with China, NATO's confrontation with Russia, the clash against Iran — has produced a blowback that has further weakened it.

Historically, the balance of power has always been ultimately revealed through major war. The present phase is no exception. The Ukraine and Iran wars have not just depleted NATO arsenals, they have exposed the doctrinal fragility of Western military power.

Two, China has raced so far ahead that the rhetoric from two decades ago of an Indian 'catch-up' and 'the 21st century rivalry' appears absurd to any sober observer. The Chinese lead is not merely in aggregate economic terms but in the underlying policy institutions, human capital and technologies.

And, most crucially of all, the commanding heights of the world economy are inexorably shifting towards the east. From manufacturing and high technologies to energy and natural resources, consumer demand, and financial capital, the greater Eurasian continent and its periphery have all the core requirements of sustaining a dynamic geo-economic order without dependence on the Atlantic West. At no point in recent centuries was such a Eurasian-centred globalisation possible.

World is becoming multipolar. And such a future demands responsible Eurasian powers to safeguard world order and stability. It is in India's vital interests to play such a role



CHANGE COURSE: India must recover its regional power identity that allows for differences as well as shared responsibilities with China

But even as world events have upended the Indian foreign policy consensus, a network of gatekeepers is stubbornly impervious to change. The defenders of the failed policy erect a straw man to frighten policymakers from a thoughtful reassessment. China, they say, must remain the *raison d'être* of Indian policy planning even as US predatory actions seek to eviscerate the last vestiges of India's strategic independence and authority in the subcontinent. Much has changed between 2005 — when the US pledged to help make India a "major power in the 21st century" — and 2026, when a US diplomat publicly warned that India would never be permitted to acquire the sinews of

a great power. Pentagon official Elbridge Colby even had the cheek to imply that US strategic interests vis-à-vis China would not be held hostage to disputes within Asia.

Must India be the only rigid actor amidst all these churnings and machinations around it? The search for a workable *modus vivendi* with China must acquire a bipartisan policy priority, not as an afterthought to merely prevent conflict in the Himalayas but as a means to diversify a dangerous dependence on the West. India needs to permanently discard the proxy role that it assumed during the unipolar moment and recover its regional power identity that allows for differences as well as shared responsibilities with China. The world is becoming multipolar. And such a future demands responsible Eurasian powers to safeguard world order and stability. It is in India's vital interests to play such a role.

India's foreign policy debate can't be stuck on an old framework, one that prides itself on managing the distance between Delhi and the great powers. There is no geopolitical room or surplus strength in any great power's tent to underwrite India's social, economic and security challenges. The Cold War is over. The post-Cold War era is over too. The transformation in world politics demands a new intellectual framework where sovereignty, regional interdependence, new geo-economic networks of trade and investment, international public goods and order-building are placed at the front and centre of India's foreign policy.

To change course, Indian leaders need to look at the day after tomorrow. ■

Daulet Singh is author of 'Powershift: India China relations in a Multipolar World'

WORD DROP

BOOMERASKING

Ever had someone ask, "How was your weekend?" only to realise, three seconds into your answer, that they were merely waiting for their turn to talk? Congratulations, you've been boomerasked. Coined by Harvard Business School researcher Alison Wood Brooks, boomerasking is the conversational equivalent of a boomerang: someone throws a question at



you, lets you answer, and promptly sends it flying back to themselves. The problem? The person on the receiving end can smell the conversational bait-and-switch. The habit can be irritating at work, where managers who chronically boomerask can often make colleagues feel they are not being heard.

Email your letters to the editor at sunday.times@timesofindia.com with 'Sunday Mailbox' in the subject line. Please mention your name and city



MLS FINES LIONEL MESSI AN UNDISCLOSED AMOUNT FOR STRIKING AN OPPONENT

TIMES SPORT

SUNDAY TIMES OF INDIA, CHENNAI | AUGUST 23, 2026

FRANCES TIAFOE BEATS MUSETTI TO REACH CINCINNATI SEMIS, TO FACE NAKASHIMA NEXT



END OF A DREAM RUN

Treesa And Gayatri Push Defending Champs Liu-Tan Before Falling Away In Semis; Settle For Bronze

Hindol.Basu@timesofindia.com

New Delhi: For one glorious game, it seemed like Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand were about to write the biggest fairytale of the BWF World Championships. In the end, they had to settle for something almost as precious — a bronze medal, earned in front of a home crowd that never stopped believing.

The unseeded Indian pair's extraordinary run came to an end on Saturday as they lost 21-18, 13-21, 8-21 to world No. 1 and defending champions Liu Sheng Shu and Tan Ning in an hour and 11 minutes at the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium.

Even though Treesa and Gayatri could not complete the heist, yet, amid the sweat and heartbreak, they walked off the court with something historic: a maiden World Championship medal, ending a 15-year drought in Indian women's doubles that dated back to Jwala Gutta and Ashwini Ponnappa's bronze in London in 2011.

It felt, at times, like the crowd wanted this more than anyone. The stands were choc-a-bloc, a wall of noise that rose and fell with every rally, and for a while, it seemed to be lifting Treesa and Gayatri to somewhere they had never been before.

They came out believing it too. Against a Chinese pair they had beaten just once in seven previous meetings, the Indians raced into a 7-2 lead, catching Liu and Tan cold. The world No. 1 duo clawed back, as champions do, reeling off 10 straight points to move ahead at the interval.

But Treesa-Gayatri kept finding answers — a cross-court winner here, a jump smash there, a crouching defensive return that had no right to come back — dragging the game level again and again until, at 20-18, two game points arrived. The Indians held their

nerve. The opening game was theirs, and the packed arena went into absolute delirium.

At this point in the Treesa-Gayatri story, one hoped the fairytale would keep going. It did not. The Chinese pair, top seeds and defending champions for a reason, simply raised their game when it mattered most.

Regrouping with clinical poise, Liu and Tan varied the pace and peppered the backline with relentless precision. A gruelling 49-shot rally in the second game highlighted the sheer physical demands of the contest, but minor errors began creeping into the Indian pair's game. The Chinese capitalized ruthlessly, taking the second game 21-13 to enforce a decider.

In the final game, the physical toll became apparent. The Indian duo showed heart, grinding out a sensational 56-shot marathon to level at 2-2, but the Chinese pair shifted into another gear. Smothering the court with suffocating attacking angles and targeted body smashes, Liu and Tan surged to an 11-5 interval cushion and never took their foot off the pedal, wrapping up the contest 21-8.

When the final point landed, disappointment gave way to pride. Treesa and Gayatri exchanged an embrace at the net, exhausted but heads held high.

For Treesa and Gayatri, the medal brought a profound emotional weight. The duo navigated the hard yards of a comeback trail, piecing their campaign back together after Treesa spent months sidelined recovering from a severe ankle injury. Rebuilding match sharpness, rediscovering their on-court chemistry and trusting their bodies had been a quiet, arduous grind.

But in front of a home crowd that sang, shouted and believed with them, they showed that the best chapters of this partnership may lie ahead.



UP AGAINST THE VERY BEST: Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand during the women's doubles semifinal on Saturday

We lost some close matches: Gopichand

Sabi.Hussain@timesofindia.com

New Delhi: India's chief national badminton coach Pullela Gopichand admitted it was "a bit unfortunate" to lose several close matches at the BWF World Championships here but said he was not unduly concerned, with the upcoming Asian Games now the priority.

India's overall campaign was highlighted by a bronze medal-winning performance from the women's doubles pair of Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand, while top players such as PV Sindhu and Lakshya Sen, along with the men's doubles duo of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy

and Chirag Shetty, were eliminated earlier in the tournament.

"Overall, it's a bit unfortunate that we lost some close matches. In women's singles, both (Sindhu and Unnati Hooda) matches were very close," Gopichand told the media here on Saturday. "Ayush's first day was good against Shi Yu Qi, but the second match was a little disappointing. Overall, it was decent. I'm not too worried. These things do happen."

On Sindhu, Gopichand felt the former champion was showing encouraging signs despite her narrow defeat. "Sindhu's was a bit too close. It was unfortunate she lost that match (against China's Wang Zhi Yi) the



GOPICHAND

way she did. Going back to her Japan Open win and her performance here, she's definitely doing very well," he said.

Lakshya Sen, however, endured a tough campaign. "I think this tournament was bad (for Lakshya). I don't specifically know what the reasons were," Gopichand said.

He was encouraged by Treesa and Gayatri's progress, particularly their tactical maturity. "Treesa kept charging at the net and started taking control. Gayatri's back court has been good. But you can't be in a hurry. You have to be quick, you have to be fast but not necessarily in a hurry," he reflected.

With the Asian Games ahead, Gopichand said India's players would return to dedicated training programmes to prepare for the challenge.

An Se roars into final, Yamaguchi awaits

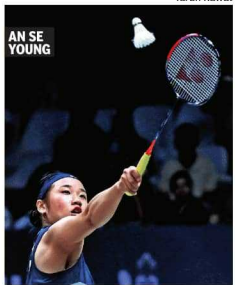
Sabi.Hussain@timesofindia.com

New Delhi: An Se Young let out a roar; pumped her fist and urged the crowd to raise the decibel levels. She cupped her right hand behind her ear, asking the packed Indira Gandhi (IG) indoor stadium to chant her name louder. Then came the flourish — she removed her bandana and tossed it into the stands before unleashing another roar. That was An Se for you — the champion, the entertainer and, above all, a woman chasing another world title.

The World No. 1 had to dig deep to get past China's Wang Zhi Yi 24-22, 21-16 in a fiercely contested semifinal on Saturday, keeping alive her bid for a second Worlds crown.

Wang refused to be overawed, repeatedly testing An Se with sharp net play and long, punishing exchanges. An Se trailed 19-20 in the opening game before holding her nerve, forcing deuce and eventually taking it 24-22. The second game was another physical examination. The South Korean led 20-16 — with four match points in hand — when cramps began to trouble her; but she managed the discomfort, stayed composed and closed out the contest.

"She was very good with her net play. I tried to play an attacking game," An Se said. "I experienced some cramps in the second game, especially during the last rallies but I managed them, kept going and



Tarun Rawat

won. I am tired now, so I want to get some rest and recover well. I really want to win the title."

Waiting in the final is defending champion Akane Yamaguchi, who swept Thailand's Pornpawee Chochuwong 21-12, 21-17. The Japanese star is chasing a fourth Worlds crown and has now reached another title showdown.

"I don't look back at the previous wins that much, but it is amazing that I am here today. I am looking forward to enjoying the final," Yamaguchi said.

In men's singles, a new world champion will be crowned on Sunday. France's Alex Lanier will face Japan's Kodai Naraoka, who overcame Taiwan's Chou Tien-chen 17-21, 21-11, 21-10.

Lanier scripts history with 'game management'

Sabi.Hussain@timesofindia.com

New Delhi: As Alex Lanier walked into the mixed zone at the Indira Gandhi (IG) indoor stadium here after having become the first Frenchman to reach the BWF World Championships men's singles final, the 21-year-old seemed blissfully unaware that he had made history.

Jovial, relaxed and sporting a mischievous grin, he greeted reporters with the air of someone who had merely finished another demanding badminton match. "I don't feel that emotional at the moment. I think I'm a little bit too tired. I'm proud of the way I managed that match," he said.

History can wait, Lanier seemed to suggest. There is, after all, a final to prepare for. "I'm not really thinking how big it is. I don't want to think about any kind of historical aspect. I just enjoy being on court and playing my best badminton," he said.

Composure has become the defining thread of Lanier's extraordinary week in New Delhi. Following Friday's breakthrough when his comeback against the reigning champion, Thailand's Kunlavut Vitidsarn, guaranteed France its first-ever men's singles medal at the Worlds, Lanier



IANIS

beat Canada's Victor Lai on Saturday. Lanier again lost the opening game but refused to panic. He turned the match around, winning 16-21, 21-13, 21-14 in 85 minutes. Asked about repeatedly falling behind, he offered the line that perfectly captures his temperament: "It's game management. It's not a comeback."

Behind the banter lies serious preparation. Lanier and his Lithuanian coach Kestutis Navickas travelled to Denmark before the Worlds to sharpen intensity after substantial physical preparation. "I'm sure that we've done the best preparation," Lanier said. "At some point you need to trust how good you are and just play."

'It's just the start for us'

Hindol.Basu@timesofindia.com

New Delhi: "Definitely with ice cream!" Gayatri Gopichand broke into a wide, disarming grin when asked how she would celebrate. Standing alongside her, partner

Treesa Jolly offered a slightly more formal plan. "We want to thank our support team by taking them out for a nice dinner to celebrate," Treesa said.

Celebrations are in order. Moments earlier, the unseeded Indian duo had capped a dream week by securing a maiden World Championships medal, a bronze.

Reflecting on the contest, the duo offered a breakdown of where the match turned. "In the first game, we played with confidence, tracking them closely even when they led," Treesa said. "However, in the second half of

the second game, a few mistakes cost us our rhythm and confidence. We started second-guessing our strokes and played defensively, which doesn't work against them in the end."

Gayatri was equally candid about the tactical shifts that allowed the Chinese to wrest back control. "In the second game, they played very patiently and we couldn't match that," Gayatri said. "Treesa played really well from the back court and if I had offered better net support, we could have pulled off the second set. In the third set, we had some chances to convert points in

our favour but we lost our rhythm."

The physical and emotional toll of a relentless tournament had also crept in. Backing up after a gruelling, high-stakes quarterfinal victory on Friday had pushed their mental endurance significantly. "Yesterday was a pretty intense match, so mentally it was pretty tough to come back and play back-to-back games. There was a lot going on," Gayatri reflected. "But today, when we were on court, we were fresh physically, especially in the first set. Sometimes, mentally, you do get a little tired."

SNAPSHOTS

Abinaya sets U20 women's 100m NR

Tamil Nadu sprinter Abinaya Rajarajan clocked a stunning 11.34s to win the women's 100m title and break the U20 national record at the World Athletics Continental Tour Silver meet at Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar, reports **Arnab Seal**.

Deepshika, Patel win titles: Deepshika Vinayagamurthy and Om Patel won the girls' and boys' singles titles respectively at the ITF J60 Chennai — Unifi ITF Junior Tennis Cup 2026 at SDAT Tennis Stadium.

Baitha, Rathika shine in Southern Slam: Rahul Baitha and Rathika Seelan emerged men's and women's champions respectively at the Southern Slam tournament at the Indian Squash Academy in Chennai.

Racers Sankaran, Gyan secure thrilling wins: Pune's Saishiva Sankaran and Chennai's S Gyan clinched thrilling wins in the Formula 1600 and Formula 2000 categories, respectively, on opening day of the MRF Indian National Racing Challenge 4W at Madras International Circuit (MIC).

ICF drub Strikers: Integral Coach Factory (ICF) cruised past Pattabiram Strikers 9-2 in the Tamil Hockey League.

Dutch masterclass floors India

Harmanpreet's Boys Left Staring At Early Exit After 1-3 Defeat

Manuja.Veerappa@timesofindia.com

For on the stands, the 'wall' of Indian cricket, Rahul Dravid, watched and cheered. On the pitch, though, the Netherlands turned the screws, exposing the cracks in India's defence and handing Harmanpreet Singh and his men a 3-1 defeat and virtually shunting them out of the semifinal race.



India's semifinal chances will now hinge on some slim mathematical chances, other results going their way as well as them beating Argentina with a healthy margin on Monday. Either way, it looks improbable.

Netherlands are through to the semifinals after this win as they have six points in this second round. India re-



IN THE THICK OF IT: Netherlands' Tjap Hoedemakers (c) fights for the ball with India's Aditya Arjun Lalage (l) and Harmanpreet Singh at the Wagener Hockey Stadium

maintained without a point. At half-time, India chief coach Craig Fulton had said: "We have to take more of our opportunities, which will decide the game."

The Dutch did give India opportunities. But India failed to capitalise, with poor first-touch execution inside the circle among their biggest failings on the day. India enjoyed more possession, circle entries and penalty corners but none of it translated into enough goals. Their dependence on Harmanpreet for penalty corners resurfaced and, against a watertight Dutch defence, India failed to execute their variations effectively.

Backed by a boisterous home crowd

at the Wagener Hockey Stadium in Amsterdam, the reigning Olympic champions delivered a masterclass in tactical hockey on Saturday. Duco Telgenkamp (41), Tjap Hoedemakers (51) and Thijs van Dam (56) scored for the Netherlands, while Harmanpreet pulled one back for India in the 52nd minute, converting one of their seven penalty corners.

The Dutch's relentless pressure finally paid off when Tijmen Revenga's reverse hit bounced loose and Telgenkamp pounced from close range to open the scoring. What stood out about the Netherlands was how quickly they transitioned from defence to attack. It took them just three passes to go from their own defensive third to India's goal as Hoedemakers doubled the lead.

Harmanpreet pulled one back, but the Netherlands capitalised on an error under pressure to restore their two-goal advantage. Van Dam chipped the ball into the goal to put the match beyond India's reach. A visibly disappointed Harmanpreet, who appeared to be struggling with a back issue, later admitted: "I think for three quarters we played well. We had to stay consistent and focused for 60 minutes, but we made mistakes, and they scored off it."

Shoaib the hero as Madurai finish top

Nellai Bow Out After 72-Run Defeat

Dorian Melwin

Chennai: An all-round performance by Shoaib Khan helped Madurai Panthers beat Nellai Royal Kings by 72 runs and clinch the top spot in the league stage of the Tamil Nadu Premier League on Saturday at MA Chidambaram Stadium on Saturday. The big loss ousted Nellai, who needed 144 to qualify for the playoffs on Net Run Rate.

TNPL Season 10

Defending 199, all the Madurai bowlers delivered, keeping it tight and picking up wickets at the right time. Shoaib, bowling his off-breaks, took two early wickets that derailed the Nellai chase and they never recovered, getting bowled out for 126.

Earlier, disciplined knocks from Shoaib and Atheeq ur

Rahman helped rescue Madurai from the brink of collapse to post a score of 198-5. Atheeq (50 off 27, 6x4s, 2x6s) provided a late flourish, scoring 19 runs off the last five balls, bringing up his half-century with a six in the final ball of the innings that took the game away from Nellai completely.

Shoaib (65 off 43, 6x4s, 3x6s), batting at No. 5, had an uphill task in front of him after pacer Emmanuel Cherian (3-40) had left Madurai teetering at 40-3. He stitched up a 60-run fourth-wicket partnership with Hari Ragavendra (35).

Brief scores: Madurai Panthers 198-5 in 20 overs (S Khan 65, A Rahman 50, E Cherian 3-40). Nellai Royal Kings 126 in 191 overs (G Ajith 56). Madurai won by 72 runs. **Qualifier 1:** Madurai vs Trichy, **Eliminator:** Kovai vs Tiruppur



A SORRY SIGHT: Manchester United's Bruno Fernandes and head coach Michael Carrick look dejected after the match

Man Utd stunned by Hull in dismal start to season

Manchester United crashed to a humiliating 0-2 loss at promoted Hull on Saturday in a dismal start to their Premier League campaign.

Michael Carrick's side were rocked by first half goals

PREMIER LEAGUE

from Semi Ajayi and Nobel Mendy at the MKM Stadium. Hull, who are back in the Premier League for the first time since 2017, were without 10 players due to injury but still put woeful United to the sword with a vibrant display.

It was a chastening opening to new season for United, who are expected to mount a title challenge after finishing third last term. There was scant evidence that United are capable of going toe to toe with champions Arsenal on a dispiriting afternoon on Humber-side. **Arsenal start title defence with a bang:** Arsenal started their title defence with a bang by sweeping aside newly-promoted Coventry City 3-0 thanks to goals from Kai Havertz, Bukayo Saka and captain Martin Odegaard in a dominant performance at the Emirates on Friday. AGENCIES

INDIA EYE CLEAN SWEEP, WTC BOOST

Gill, Jaiswal Look To Get Among The Runs As Visitors
Target First Overseas Series Win In Three Years

Gaurav.Gupta@timesofindia.com

Having found their 'sweet spot' in Tests, India will look to carry their winning momentum into the second and final game against an injury-hit Sri Lanka at the Sinhalese Sports Club in Colombo on Sunday. Devdutt Padikkal, KL Rahul, Rishabh Pant and left-arm spinner Manav Suthar were the stars of India's 165-run win in Galle, with Suthar registering match figures of 10/131.

If captain Shubman Gill and opener Yashasvi Jaiswal get going, India will fancy a 2-0 clean sweep in Colombo that would strengthen their push for a 2027 World Test Championship final slot and lift them from fifth to fourth in the standings.

India's last overseas Test series win came in West Indies in July 2023, when they prevailed 1-0. Since then, they have lost 1-3 in Australia and drawn series in South Africa (1-1) and England (2-2). At home, they have suffered 0-3

and 0-2 whitewashes against New Zealand and South Africa respectively.

The Galle victory, however, has revived their campaign. Padikkal (167 and 44), Rahul (82 and 35) and Pant (66) handled Sri Lanka's spin attack adroitly, while Suthar underlined his credentials as a serious Test prospect.

The focus will now turn to Gill and Jaiswal, both of whom struggled in Galle. Sri Lanka's premier left-arm spinner Prabath Jayasuriya dismissed Gill in both innings, while Jaiswal was run out in the first before edging Asitha Fernando to the wicketkeeper in the second.

Kuldeep or Saransh?

The key selection call is whether India persist with left-arm wrist-spinner Kuldeep Yadav, who took just one wicket for 103 runs in Galle, or hand a debut to 33-year-old off-spinning allrounder Saransh Jain. Jain could offer greater variety against Sri Lanka's left-handers.

EYE ON THE BALL: KL Rahul trains in Colombo on Saturday

'Rankings don't matter, India not struggling in Tests'

Gaurav.Gupta@timesofindia.com

India head coach Gautam Gambhir has called for more three-Test series, saying they give teams an opportunity to recover after losing the opening match. "Ideally, I would want a three-match Test series," Gambhir said. "I've always believed there should be a possibility for a team that loses the first Test to come back and win the series. You can't do that in a two-Test series, the most you can do is draw it. A short turnaround between Tests is fine. Other teams are doing that as well."

Despite India's poor Test run under his watch — they have lost 10 Tests since he took charge in July 2024 — Gambhir said he remains unfazed. Asked about his discussions with selection chief Ajit Agarkar, Gambhir said, "It's only about how we want to move forward cricket. Rankings do not matter. We are not struggling. Since the England tour, we have played reasonable Test cricket."



GAMBHIR

Left-arm, lethal!

Starc Bags 6/12, Shoriful 6/35
As 18 Wickets Fall On Day 1

Mackay: Left-arm pacemen Mitchell Starc and Shoriful Islam starred with six-wicket hauls as Bangladesh rallied from a dreadful start to pin back Australia on a roller-coaster opening day of the second Test on Saturday. Eighteen wickets fell on the bouncy Mackay pitch, with Australia limping to 165/8 at stumps but holding a 101-run lead after blasting out the tourists for 64 in the first innings.

Allrounder Cameron Green was batting on 51. Nathan Lyon was batting on 10. The recalled Shoriful took three wickets in five balls in the final hour to celebrate his first five-wicket haul in Tests after missing Darwin with a hamstring strain. He finished the day with 6/35, having helped drag Bangladesh back into the match. **REUTERS**

Brief scores: Bangladesh 64 all out (M Starc 6-12, P Cummins 3-25). Australia 165-8 (C Green 51*, S Smith 42; Shoriful Islam 6-35).

Padikkal has to keep performing to seal No. 3 spot: Pujara

Gaurav.Gupta@timesofindia.com

When Cheteshwar Pujara watches India and Sri Lanka walk out at the Sinhalese Sports Club in Colombo on Sunday, one of his first memories of the venue is likely to be his unbeaten 145 in 2015.

Pujara carried his bat through India's first innings on a surprisingly seaming track, helping them beat Sri Lanka by 117 runs and win the series 2-1.

"I've got fond memories of playing at SSC but in 2015, it was a different situation. We were playing on a surprisingly seam-

ing track in Sri Lanka, which you hardly get to see there," Pujara said in an interaction.

As a former India No. 3, Pujara was impressed by Devdutt Padikkal's performance in the first Test. But he believes Padikkal needs to sustain that form before being considered a long-term solution at No. 3.

"Devdutt was ready for this opportunity, looking at the way he has been performing in domestic cricket and the IPL. We've seen that he has worked on his game and improved his technique," Pujara said.

"I would agree that India should go ahead with Padikkal

at No. 3 for some time. But you can't leave someone like Sai Sudharsan out of India's Test squad. I'm not saying he should bat at No. 3, but he should be there in the scheme of things.

"If Padikkal performs consistently at No. 3 in New Zealand and against Australia at home, then he will cement his spot. Let's not put too much pressure on him," he said.

(Watch SL vs India 2nd Test Day 1 on Aug 23 from 10 am onwards on Sony Sports Ten 2 SD & HD and Sony LIV)



PADEKAL

A chance to catch the selectors' eye

Ashim.Sunam@timesofindia.com

Bengaluru: India's Saransh Jain, Manav Suthar, Auqib Nabi and Sarfaraz Khan, who are all in Sri Lanka for the ongoing Test series, are proof that selectors don't deny consistent domestic performers. India's domestic cricketers can draw inspiration from such journeys as they head into the Duleep Trophy, the curtain-raiser for the domestic season, at the BCCI Centre of Excellence, from Sunday onwards.

The spotlight will be on 15-year-old Vaibhav Sooryavanshi. The Bihar boy has already made his T20 debut after a stunning IPL-2026 season. There have been questions asked on whether the big-hitting batter has the patience and composure to play in the longer format. His 207 runs in eight first-class matches do not justify his skillset. At this juncture, the upcoming domestic seasons in red-ball cricket assume greater significance.

India-US ties to define global stage, trade deal coming: Gor

Says Rubio To Visit India Again This Yr

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: The India-US relationship is anchored in trust and friendship between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Donald Trump, said US ambassador Sergio Gor.

The ambassador also said that the bilateral trade agreement under discussion is "on its way" while pointing to "surging trade numbers." "The numbers don't lie. If you look at the trajectory of our relationship, just go by the numbers. And so, 15 years ago, our bilateral trade was \$20 billion. Today, it's \$240 billion. And it's continuing to grow. The two leaders set an ambitious goal of \$500 billion in the next few years," said Gor, addressing The ET World Leaders Forum.

"In fact, within a month of me getting here, at one point, we announced that we had a deal. Supreme Court struck down a big part of what the deal was based on... so right now, we're reconfiguring some of that text. "But the trade deal

is, in principle, almost everything is done. A lot of it is the legal technical language that needs to be sorted out. So, I'm optimistic we'll get done," he said. Gor said that the two countries have a natural partnership and one which will define the global stage.

"We have two of the biggest giants in business. We have two of the biggest economies. Us, working together, is a natural partnership. And you can look decade by decade and forget the daily bumps... the relationship has been doing this decade by decade and growing," said the ambassador.



Backing the Quad mechanism, Gor said US secretary of state Marco Rubio will be visiting India again this year.

The secretary will be coming here to India, but after India, we're actually going to continue, and he's going to travel to Australia, and that'll be another quad meeting," he said. Quad foreign ministers are likely to meet again in Australia later this year.

US walked into Iran trap, India can help it: Boris

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Former British Prime Minister Boris Johnson Saturday urged India, US and Britain to coordinate with one another on ending the Iran conflict and reopening the Strait of Hormuz, while calling Washington's war a "mistake" and pressing New Delhi to pressure Russia to end the Ukraine war. He also said that Putin is fated to lose the war with Ukraine.

Speaking at the Economic Times World Leaders Forum, Johnson said it was "totally deranged" to believe that regime change in Iran could be achieved through air strikes. Iran must be prevented from acquiring nuclear weapons and sponsoring terrorism, but change in the country had to come from within. "We've got to find a deal with Iran," he said, adding the countries should work together to lower oil prices and get ships moving.

Johnson faulted US for not consulting Britain before the war, saying it had walked into an "obvious trap." Yet, he described America as a hegemon he would prefer over China.



na and said that allies must help it "back out" of the cul-de-sac. Trump, he added, was consultative and liked advice from friends, including Modi. Turning to Ukraine, Johnson told his Indian audience not to believe "propaganda" that Putin was in a position to win; he was "fated to lose" against Ukrainians' desire for freedom. He backed giving Ukraine Tomahawks, transferring \$140 billion of Putin's cash held in Brussels and stopping trade in sanctioned Russian oil. Only Putin, not Trump or Zelenskyy, could end the war, he said. Acknowledging India's "particular position" and historical closeness to Russia, Johnson said the conflict would not end without greater pressure on Moscow. He also called for deeper India-UK and India-US military cooperation, saying it would be "much more sensible". Johnson was effusive about India and Modi. "The Indian story today is a really wonderful story," he said, predicting an "incredible future" for India because it is a democracy and a free country. He also hailed the India-UK FTA, negotiations for which began when he was PM.

Border situation will determine China ties, says Jaishankar

► From P 1

Modi and Xi will meet on the margins of the SCO summit in Kyrgyzstan Aug 31-Sept 1.

While an official announcement is awaited, Xi will be travelling to India for the Brics summit on Sept 12-13 for his first visit to the country since 2019.

"But for us, the interaction... the purpose of it is finally to modernise our economy and to develop our capabilities, but even as we do so, obviously there will be trade, there will be other economic inter-



JAISHANKAR

actions with them," said Jaishankar. He also said India remains in touch with China about business visa delays faced by Indian nationals.

Recalling the 2020-24 difficult phase in the relationship, he reiterated India's position that the state of the border will determine the relationship.

"Having said that, I think naturally, if assuming things are stable and the needle is more cooperative, obviously, I mean we are both very big economies in many

ways, we are markets to each other. They industrialised much faster, on a much larger scale and much earlier, largely because of many of the policies we now advocate," he said. Calling Pakistan unique, he said, "there is no other country that uses terrorism so systematically and in such a sustained manner to attack and pressure another neighbour; and that has an impact on public opinion in this country".

On the US, he said India had been able to develop its own relationship with Washington despite the latter's long-standing ties with Pakistan.

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On the US, he said India had been able to develop its own relationship with Washington despite the latter's long-standing ties with Pakistan.

Demand for statehood has driven politics in Hills for decades

► From P 1

A committee led by Singh will draft a political solution afresh after consulting political parties, social organisations and stakeholders before submitting its recommendations to then Centre. The Gorkhaland statehood demand has driven Hills politics for decades, sparking major agitations in 1986-88, 2007-11 and 2017. The 104-day agitation in 2017 caused 11 deaths, major disruption and heavy economic losses, renewing calls for a settlement.

Darjeeling BJP MP Raju Bista said Shah assured that the Centre would pursue a constitutional solution and consider other community demands sympathetically.

"Union home minister promised a permanent political solution soon under the umbrella of the Constitution. He said adequate funding from the Centre will ensure all pending issues are taken care of," Bista said.

Ajikumar gets bail, Kollam court rejects Prasanth's petition

Thiruvananthapuram: Former Travancore Devaswom Board member A Ajikumar has been granted bail in the Sabarimala gold theft case, while the bail plea of former board president P S Prasanth was rejected by Kollam vigilance court.

Considering Ajikumar's health condition, the court granted him bail. But, it observed that there was prima facie evidence of Prasanth's involvement in the alleged offence.

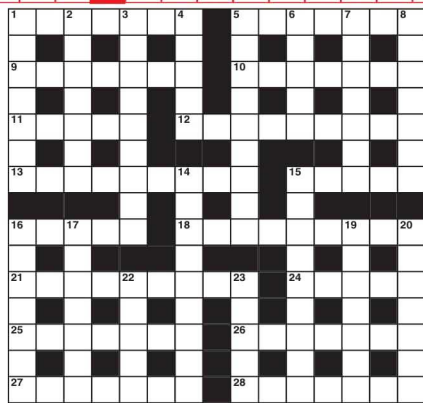
Ajikumar and Prasanth were arrested on July 23 in connection with the alleged theft of gold from the Dwarapalaka sculptures at Sabarimala temple. According to the special investigation team (SIT), TDB headed by Prasanth in 2025 had sent the gold-plated Dwarapalaka panels to Smart Creations in Chennai for re-plating. **TNN**

THE TOI CROSSWORD

CROSSWORD No. TCC#0286

The TOI Crossword contest is on a short break, but the crossword itself will continue to be featured in The Sunday Times of India, so that you can continue to relish the challenge every week. Stay tuned!

The Times of India
CROSSWORD
EVERY SUNDAY



CRYPTIC CLUES

Across

- Sole reinforcement (7)
- It's a pen of new design filled to overflowing (2,5)
- Bad debts for Number 10 first (7)
- Allow no opening for a substitute (7)
- Look round New York - it's crazy (5)
- Vegetables only half-cooked? (5,4)
- Spirit container or tumbler to be put out (3,6)
- Prepare to explode - or not to explode (5)
- Dollars in the vaults (5)
- Antiquated theme; not a new version (4-5)
- Asian city may be just a spot in the desert (9)
- Long-legged bird or hen perhaps (5)
- Cure those people without charge (7)
- Running easily for victory in the return game (7)
- Vessel avoided by poor sailors? (7)
- Could be set near China for example (7)

Down

- A dogged policeman (7)
- Kind of kite needs space for storage (7)
- Man and son you find out are unknown (9)
- Jousting records (5)
- Broke nine volts circuit (9)
- Loudly call out after a plea for silence (5)
- A capital lager is brewed here (7)
- Photographed out of doors? (7)
- Novel young American (3,6)
- Luxury shops felt put out (9)
- Where a change of fare may be indicated (3,4)
- English remark, but how French (7)
- Revolutionary means of getting power (7)
- Go on, Ann, develop a geometric figure (7)
- Stretch of water (5)
- He wrote of French opposition (5)

QUICK CLUES

Across

- Malicious gossip (7) 5 Rebuked (4,3)
- Guaranteed (7) 10 Huge slow-moving mass of ice (7) 11 A slight trace (5) 12 Far-reaching (9)
- Racketeering (9) 15 Navy (5) 16 A male duck (5)
- Explain effectively (3,6) 21 Self-service restaurant (9) 24 Ending in disaster (5) 25 Drive mad (7) 26 Lean back (7) 27 US car-manufacturing city (7) 28 Way down a mountain (7)

Down

- Frighten (7) 2 Violent attack (7) 3 A little-known competitor (4,5) 4 House occupied in hunting season (5) 5 Closely integrated (5-4) 6 Commit to memory (5) 7 Small opening (7) 8 Impassioned (7)
- Flawed (9) 15 Recognise the truth (4,5)
- Definite (7) 17 Initially (2,5) 19 Rough draft of proposal (7) 20 Conspicuous (7) 22 Dance originating in Buenos Aires (5) 23 Pungent (5)

SOLUTIONS TO LAST WEEK'S CROSSWORD



TOI Games

Enjoy a host of engaging puzzles and games every day. Play now! Scan the QR code or visit toiln/games



Every power BCI exercises is conferred by Parl: Reddy

► From P 1

Reddy also questioned the diversion of ₹150 crore of council funds to the trust controlled by the chairperson. "Bar Council of India is not the personal estate of any individual... Every rupee it holds is held in trust. Every power it exercises is a power conferred by Parliament for the benefit of the Bar, and not for the benefit of the person who happens to occupy the Chair," Reddy said.

He said that law colleges approaching BCI for approval or renewal are being pressured to make "contributions" to the said trust, with demands ranging from ₹25 lakh to ₹1 crore. Reddy, who

has been a member of BCI for the last eight-and-a-half years, told Mishra, "You have held that office continuously since 2012... This is without precedent. When elections to the office fall due, the arrangements are so managed that the outcome is a foregone conclusion. An elected office that has one occupant for fourteen years has ceased, in any real sense, to be an elected office."

"I hold no personal animosity towards you. I have served alongside you on this Council for a decade. It is precisely because I have watched this institution from within for that period that I am able to say with a clear conscience, that it will not recover while you remain

in the Chair.... The Bar of this country deserves better than what it is presently receiving from its own Council. I ask you to allow it that opportunity," the letter said. Reacting to the letter, Mishra rejected allegations levelled against him and said that it was done out of political vendetta and there was no merit in the allegations.

"He belongs to another political party and normally supports Congress people. Therefore, it's all a political vendetta and a political stunt. He has been a member of Bar Council of India for the last about eight and a half years. But throughout those eight and a half years, he has never opened his mouth," Mishra said.

Students alerted officials after parts of paper began circulating on WhatsApp

► From P 1

Six people have been arrested, including Yogesh Sonkesariya, a professor at a private college in Durg, and five students who allegedly paid ₹12,000 each for the leaked paper. DCP Smriti Rajnala said Saturday. Police are searching for two more suspects and are probing whether the group was part of a wider network.

According to the FIR, Sonkesariya allegedly took the sealed entomology paper home, pierced its envelope with a needle and another pointed tool, inserted an endoscopy camera costing about ₹2,500 and filmed the contents through the tiny opening. The camera, normally used to inspect narrow and hard-to-reach areas inside the human body, allowed him to access the paper without visibly opening

the packet. Police said Sonkesariya allegedly reconstructed the questions from the video, sold the paper and passed it to a student network that circulated images through WhatsApp about two hours before the exam.

Students and their representatives alerted officials after portions of the paper began circulating on WhatsApp. When university officials compared the paper being distributed at exam centres with the viral copy, the questions matched.

Police said a complaint was lodged at Telibandha police station and an FIR was registered. Chhattisgarh chief minister Vishnu Deo Sai ordered an impartial probe, while the university formed a five-member committee. Govt also ordered a review of question-paper security, covering printing, storage, transportation and custody at exam centres.

Warmer bed caught fire, it spread to cradle of three infants

► From P 1

The infant was admitted to the NICU after being diagnosed with a congenital heart disease. The three injured infants were born in the past five days. One had breathing difficulties and the other sepsis. Both are presently at the Jabalpur hospital. According to sources, once the warmer bed caught fire, it spread to the bedsheet of the cradle in which the three infants were being treated. The fire was brought under control with the help of extinguishers and remained confined to the affected unit.

Dubey said hospital staff acted promptly and tried their best to shift all infants out of harm's way, except the three caught in the bedsheet blaze.

Police have launched a probe. Hospital authorities said they were examining the precise cause of the short circuit and reviewing safety arrangements in the NICU.

ChennaiTimes

Eight years after they began dating, Arjun Rampal and Gabriella Demetriades quietly sealed their relationship with a civil marriage in Goa

A quiet Goa wedding for Arjun & Gabriella

After nearly eight years together, Arjun Rampal and Gabriella Demetriades registered their marriage in Goa on Friday, completing the formalities at the Sub-Registrar's office in Mapusa, North Goa, in the presence of close friends. Their marriage was registered under the state's Uniform Civil Code, according to Sub-Registrar Suraj Vernekar.

The couple, who began dating in 2018, welcomed their first son, Arik, in 2019, followed by their second son, Ariv, in 2023. A few years ago, Arjun and Gabriella, a South African national, decided to move to Goa and settle down in the quiet Socorro village near Panaji. The couple chose a very simple way to formalise their marriage. They arrived at the registrar's office around 4pm, both dressed in denims and white T-shirts, accompanied by a few friends. Nothing fancy, no frills, just a sweet, memorable moment.

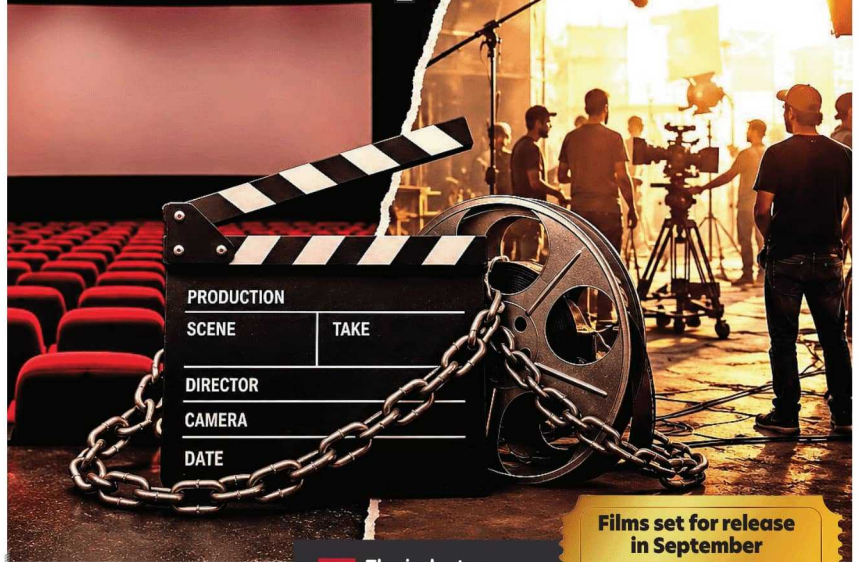
PTI



The couple attended an event in Goa before heading to the court house to register their marriage

STANDOFF OVER 8-WEEK OTT WINDOW:

Kollywood producers announce shutdown from September 1



The Tamil film industry is heading for a fresh standoff, with the Tamil Film Producers Council (TFPC) and the Tamil Film Active Producers Association (TFAPA) announcing a complete halt to new theatrical releases, filming and post-production work from September 1, 2026.

The move comes after the Tamil Nadu Film Distributors Federation and the Tamil Nadu Theatre and Multiplex Owners Association introduced a new rule requiring producers to agree to an eight-week gap between a film's theatrical and OTT release as a condition for screening it.

The producers' bodies have opposed the move, arguing that such a restriction is not in place in Andhra Pradesh,

The industry already faces a massive annual financial loss exceeding ₹700 crore. Imposing these sudden rules solely in Tamil Nadu will aggravate these losses

— The TFPC

Films set for release in September

- Sardar 2
- Mandaadi
- Demonte Colony 3
- Dorothy
- Meesaya
- Murukku 2
- Immortal

noting that the industry loses more than ₹700 crore annually, with most of the 250-odd films released each year failing to recover even half their investment. "Imposing these sudden rules solely in Tamil Nadu will aggravate these losses," they said.

For now, the producers' bodies have said the halt will continue until the two sides reach a compromise. They also plan to take the matter to the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and the minister concerned, hoping for a resolution through the state government.

METAL BAND DEMON HUNTER SUES OTT OVER K-POP DEMON HUNTERS



Metal band Demon Hunter is suing Netflix over its animated hit *KPop Demon Hunters*, alleging trademark infringement and accusing the streamer of unfair competition as the show's success eclipses the band's brand. As per a report by CNN, the lawsuit was filed Tuesday by Hyde Lane, the corporate entity for Demon Hunter, against the platform, the studios and concert promoter AEG Presents.

Agencies

Buzzstop

HONEY SINGH CLAIMS 'BIG' LABEL HARASSMENT KEPT HIM FROM RELEASING SONGS

Yo Yo Honey Singh addressed his fans recently and shared that a music label has been troubling him. Taking to his Instagram Story, Honey told fans in a video clip, "A certain label has been giving me such a hard time. These labels have really made my life miserable and hassled me so much; otherwise, I would've been delivering five songs a month. They have kept me so disturbed up to this point."

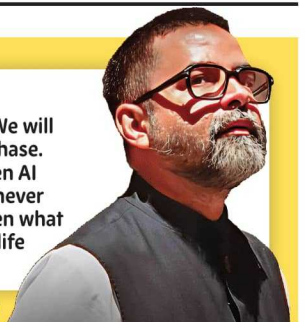
TNN



VOICES

Human relationships can never be taken over by AI. We will all want to become human again, it's a temporary phase. AI is meant to aid; it's not meant to supersede. When AI supersedes, then that's the end of the world. It will never happen. I think when you make the distinction between what is supporting and what is the main, that's when your life becomes easier

— Sabyasachi Mukherjee on AI



PRANAY OPENS UP ON SPIRIT CONTROVERSY:

'Deepika demanded 10% of the film profits and leaked details'

Deepika Padukone's exit from Sandeep Reddy Vanga's *Spirit* was among the biggest talking points surrounding the film last year. Reports suggested that differences over her demand for fixed working hours led to her exit, with the makers later replacing her with Tripti Dimri. Now, Pranay Reddy Vanga, the film's producer and director Sandeep Reddy Vanga's brother, has opened up about the actress' exit, claiming that disagreements over contractual terms led to her departure.

Speaking to Telugu news channel NTV, Pranay alleged that Deepika had demanded a 10% share of the film's profits, which he suggested was one of the key points of disagreement. "She demanded 10 percent from the film's profit. Soon after, everything went overboard. See, she can ask for anything. If we are willing to give, we can give. But the economics (budget) should also work out for us. We thought that it was not working. This is why we thought of other options," he said.

Pranay also clarified that it was Sandeep Reddy Vanga's decision to remove Deepika from the project.

"We discussed the story and character with her. Things discussed internally should not be revealed, but she leaked all of them. That is why we were disturbed!"
— Pranay Reddy Vanga



MAY 28, 2025

Sandeep Reddy Vanga lashes out at Deepika after the 'supposed leak' of his film *Spirit*'s story

'TELL THE WHOLE STORY, I DON'T CARE'



No Don Lee, Chiranjeevi or Prakash Raj in the film

Pranay also revealed that the makers had considered casting *Train to Busan* actor Don Lee, but felt he did not fit the story. He said the movie is rooted in a local Hyderabad setting and required actors who suited its world. He also clarified that Chiranjeevi and Prakash Raj are not part of the film.

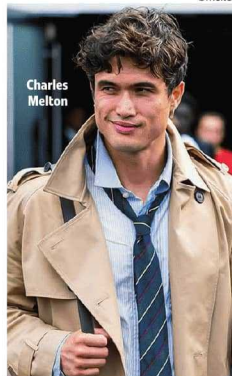
SONGS, SELFIES AND CELEBRATION

Imagine a concert, but on a speeding metro train at midnight! That is exactly how some Chennaiites celebrated Madras Day, right as Saturday rolled in, turning a regular subway car into a high-energy moving stage. The whole ride was pure magic — unplugged live music by Office Gaana echoed down the aisles as commuters jammed and sang along together, turning the Metro coolest pop-up music lounge in the city.



Pics: Praveen Tyagarajan

Charles Melton in talks to join Naruto live-action film



Charles Melton may be heading to the Hidden Leaf Village. The *Riverdale* and *May December* actor is reportedly in final negotiations to play fan-favourite ninja Kakashi Hatake in Hollywood's live-action *Naruto* film, directed by Destin Daniel Cretton. According to *Variety*, Kakashi serves as the elite mentor to Naruto and his fellow young ninjas. A search is reportedly underway for the actor to play Naruto, while the film is eyeing a production start in February 2027. Melton, a longtime anime and manga fan, is also a second-degree black belt in taekwondo.

Cocoa, coffee, contour: The espresso effect

WHY BROWN?

Softer definition: Brown mascara gives lashes definition without the high contrast of black. **Easy on the eyes:** Brown eyeliner offers a gentler alternative to stark black and works across eye colours and skin tones. **Lip service:** Cocoa and chocolate liners work brilliantly with nude, mauve and glossy lip combinations.



ESPRESSO PALETTE

Coffee brown: Soft, everyday definition. **Mocha:** Warm, polished & wearable. **Cocoa:** Deeper and richer for added contrast.

TRY THIS

Swap one black product for brown — mascara for subtle lashes, mocha liner for a softer eye, or cocoa lip liner around your favourite nude lipstick.



Coffee, mocha or cocoa: Which shade matches your makeup mood?

Culinary hub brings its signature South Indian flavours to ECR



One of the leading restaurants, Manjal, is expanding its footprint in the city with its second outlet on the ECR, says the management. "Celebrating the rich culinary heritage of Tamil Nadu, Manjal brings together authentic flavours, traditional recipes and warm hospitality to create a truly memorable dining experience," they share.



With our ECR outlet, we look forward to welcoming guests and sharing the authentic South Indian flavours that define us

- Vinoth Kumar

Commitment to community, authenticity, integrity and true hospitality, and a culinary philosophy rooted in recipes passed down through generations, prepared with care to preserve the authentic taste of South India, the management says, "We believe every guest deserves a warm welcome, attentive service, a comfortable environment and an experience filled with thoughtful details."

"With our new ECR destination, we aim to offer high-quality, delicious food at great value while creating the warmth and comfort of a home," they conclude.

Address: 19, Spring Garden, 2nd Street, Akkarai, ECR Contact: 9444684446

YOUR POV

Here's what your point of view was to our P

Aug 20: The messenger, the message and the misguided attention

A few Bollywood A-listers have been issued show-cause notices for endorsing 'elaichi'-flavoured mouth fresheners. Bollywood stars are youth icons and are hero-worshipped by millions, both young and old alike. Though most of the onus lies on the manufacturers producing such substances, stars too bear a social, moral and ethical responsibility towards society.

- Jayashree Kulkarni, Pune

I disagree. Nowadays, many youngsters fall prey to endorsements and consume harmful products (paan masala). It was the right move to put the concerned actors under the scanner. What an irony! Real-life Singham puts a show-cause notice to reel-life Singham.

- Lata Siddheshwar

The debate on surrogate advertising and celebrity endorsements exposes a

deeper problem. We often focus on the messenger while ignoring the message and the product itself. Manufacturers know their products are harmful. Governments are aware of it, yet permit their sale because they generate revenue. Celebrities endorse them for profit. In different ways, all share responsibility.

- Manicklal Chakraborty, Chennai

I was frankly disappointed with SRK's line of argument and justification for 'making money' by endorsing harmful products such as soft drinks and paan masala! Any celebrity, particularly one who enjoys a mass, blind following like SRK, is expected to have a sense of responsibility towards public good when 'making money'. He conveniently overlooks the fact that his endorsement only encourages his followers to consume such harmful products more.

- KS Ramakrishnan, Chennai

When the government allows the manufacture of these products, it should also include a clause stating that only the product and its packaging should be allowed to appear in their advertisements. No celebrities or individuals should be allowed to feature in any advertisement.

- Brian Thankappan, Mumbai

magnets. Bring me snacks

Local flavours? Nah. Chocolates? Nah. Local flavours? Absolutely! Convenience-store tourism is becoming a new travel trend and it makes perfect sense. Trying what locals eat and taking those flavours back for friends and family is a more authentic souvenir. Why just visit a place for a few days? Live like a local, even if only for a few days. That's where the real flavour of travel lies.

- Maninder Singh Johar, Faridabad

Lovely little souvenirs from abroad are sweet, but they come with terms and conditions: dusting, arranging and finding space for them. Plus, every time friends or relatives visit, we have to explain why something is not displayed or has gone missing. Instead, I would prefer edibles, especially a speciality of that country, with no headache of maintaining, preserving or dealing with clutter.

- Usha H Kumar, Delhi

Every nation possesses unique products that cannot be replicated. Tourists should discern them and adjust their budgets accordingly. Travelling itself is a great experience, and buying goods (for self-consumption or gifting) that are special to particular countries just adds depth and excitement to it.

- S Ramakrishnasayee, Chennai

Aug 22: Forget fridge

Agree? Disagree? Got a POV idea? Write to us at: pov@timesofindia.com

LEISURE

SUDOKU CHALLENGE

Level: Medium

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

HOW TO PLAY

Fill in the grid so that every horizontal row, every vertical column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9, without repeating the numbers in the same row, column or box. You can't change the digits already given in the grid. Every puzzle has one solution.

Garfield

GARFIELD



TIMES KAKURO

			34	6	15			36	8	
	11	8				12				
26							23	6		
7				35		9				
18		18		8		20			30	
			15			20		23		9
		17					24		10	
		16						3		
		3								
								11		

HOW TO PLAY

The numbers in the coloured squares refer to the sums of the digits that you must fill into the empty spaces directly below or to the right of the coloured square containing the number. For instance, in the given example, the 2 boxes below 12 must contain 2 digits that add up to 12, whereas for 20, the 3 boxes placed horizontally next to it must add up to 20. No zeroes are used here, only the digits one through nine.

Note: A digit cannot appear more than once in any particular digit combination. For instance in the example, we cannot have the combination of 8+4+8 for 20.

SPELLATHON

Today's Ratings:
02-average | 03-good |
04-outstanding

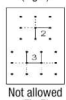


How many words of four or more letters can you make from the letters shown in today's puzzle? In making a word, a letter can be used as many times as it appears in the puzzle. Each word must contain the central letter. There should be at least one seven letter word. Plurals, foreign words and proper names are not allowed. British English Dictionary is used as reference.

LOOP THE LOOP

RULES

- Connect adjacent dots with vertical or horizontal lines, creating a single loop (Fig A).
- Crossovers or branches are not allowed (As shown by dotted lines in Fig B).
- Numbers in the puzzle indicate the number of lines that should surround it, while empty cells may be surrounded by any number of lines.
- You can't draw lines around zeroes.
- Each puzzle has just one unique solution.



		3	3	3	3				
		0				2			
						1			
	2		3	3	3				
	2	2	1			1	2		
	2		2						
	3	2					3		

of 3 can only be drawn in the remaining three spaces. Next, these lines can only be extended in one direction each. Continue, using the same logic.

Hints: Keep eliminating possibilities by marking crosses in spaces between dots where a line isn't possible, i.e., if you have already completed required lines or where a line extension may create a branch or cause a deadend (Fig B).

HOW TO BEGIN:

Example (Fig A) - Begin with the zero next to 3. Since no lines can be drawn around zero, mark crosses around it, as shown. Now there is a cross in one space around 3. So we know the three lines

SCRAMBLE

Rearrange the letters in the four word jumbles, one letter to each square/circle, to make four ordinary words

VWAE

GNAOT

AUUMNT

CEOPKK

HOW TO PLAY

Now arrange the letters in the circles to form the answer to the riddle or to fill in the missing word as indicated

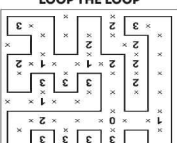
It is the ability to ... a joke, one, that proves you have a sense of humour - Max Eastman (4,...,3,4)

SOLUTIONS TO GAMES/PUZZLES

TIMES SUDOKU

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

LOOP THE LOOP



SPELLATHON

duel, dull, DULLARD.

SCRAMBLE

Answers: It is the ability to take a joke, sense of humour - Max Eastman

Legacy veg destination hosts interactive food design masterclass for food lovers

Pics: Praveen Tyagarajan



Heritage vegetarian brand Kailash Parbat, serving since 1952, recently hosted a culinary experience to showcase curated grazing tables and modern food presentation.

According to the management of the restaurant, "The event, titled 'The Art of Grazing', brought together enthusiasts for an engaging exploration of beautifully styled platters, creative design, and thoughtfully balanced flavours."

The session, the management says, allowed attendees to interact directly with the guest chef, who demonstrated practical approaches to building visual and communal food displays. "Chef Anjali shared her creative methodology, making the experience both educational and practical for our guests," they add.

Reflecting on the purpose of the gathering, the management states, "This



event represents our continued focus on organising meaningful food experiences that blend contemporary culinary innovations with community engagement."

"We see collaborations like this as a natural extension of the legacy Kailash Parbat has built over the decades, ensuring our traditional foundation evolves alongside modern dining formats," they say.

Address: 62, Third Cross Street, Gandhi Nagar, Adyar
Contact: 8056219540



Chef Anjali

EVENTS

MUSIC

Carnatic Concert: Violin by RK Shriramkumar and vocals by Amritha Murali at 10am, at Ragasudha Hall, Mylapore.

Classical Performance: Nagai S Selvamuthu at 5pm, at Sri Karan Anjaneya Raghavendra Sannidhanam, Mylapore.

Carnatic Music: Gayathri Venkataraghavan at 6.30pm, at Narada Gana Sabha - Mini Hall, TTK Road.

Vocal Event: Srirangam Venkatanagarajan at 6.15pm, at Ragasudha Hall, Mylapore.

Veena Recital: Veena Venatramani at 6.45pm, at Sri Karan Anjaneya Raghavendra Sannidhanam, Mylapore.

Devotional Music: Sri Sai Sangeethalayam Group at 6.30pm, at Sri Venugopalaswamy Temple,

Gopalapuram.

DANCE

Bharatanatyam Arangetram: Abignaya Namuduri at 10am, at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Mylapore.

Dance Drama: Dr Sheela Unnikrishnan at 7.15pm, at Museum Theatre, Egmore.

DRAMA

Endru Thaniyum: Dharini Komal at 6.30pm, at Narada Gana Sabha - Main Hall, TTK Road.

MADRAS DAY

Madras in Sanskrit Words: Dr V Preethi at 6pm, at Arkay Convention Center, Luz, Mylapore.

Navagraha Kshetras around Chennai: Dr Chitra Madhavan at 7pm, at Arkay Convention Center, Luz, Mylapore.

DISCOURSE

Divine Marriage: Erode Rajamani at 9.30am, at Balajis Maruthabijam, Nanganallur.

Dnyaneswari Pravachan: Sri Raghunath Das Maharaj at 7pm, at Maha Periyava Sadhan, West Mambalam.

Krishna Yajur Veda: Sri Krishna Ganapadigal at 2pm, at Asthika Samajam, Alwarpet.

Srimad Bhagavatham: Brahmashri Anikarai Rangaswamy Dikshithar at 6.30pm, at Sastra University, Vadapalani.

Sri Krishna Vaibhavam: Vishaka Hari at 7pm, at Ayodhya Aswamedha Maha Mandapam, West Mambalam.

Taittiriya Upanishad: Swami Ramana Swaroopananda-Thiruvannamalai at 6.30pm, at Sringeri Bharathi Vidyashram, T Nagar.

Upanyasam: PV Rajaraman at 6.30pm, at The Kalyan Nagar Association Hall, Mandaveli.

Email us at
chennaitimes@timesofindia.com



Carrier pigeons were once faster than Internet uploads

In a 2009 experiment by a South African company, a carrier pigeon equipped with a 4GB flash drive flew 50 miles in 1 hour 8 minutes. Transferring the same data over local internet connection took over two hours.

Onam Aayalilo

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Chennai's Onam sadhya story

From traditional spreads to takeaway feasts, here's where to find an Onam sadhya in Chennai

WHAT'S HOT
IF IT'S HAPPENING, IT'S HERE

PARAMBRIYM

This Onam, Parambriym is bringing the warmth, abundance and traditions of Kerala to the table with its much-awaited Onam sadhya, served on August 25 and 26. According to the management, the annual feast has been designed as a celebration of Kerala's culinary heritage, with 29 traditional dishes prepared to recreate the flavours and memories associated with the harvest festival.

At the heart of the celebration is the sadhya, an elaborate spread that brings together classic accompaniments, curries and traditional sweets. The management says the menu has been thoughtfully put together to offer a wholesome festive experience, with the variety of dishes allowing diners to explore the different flavours and textures associated with a traditional Kerala feast.

The sadhya is also intended to capture the spirit of Onam beyond



the food itself. Traditionally enjoyed around a shared table, the feast brings family and friends together over a meal that is as much about abundance and togetherness as it is about individual dishes.

"For diners looking to mark the festival in a festive setting, the dine-in option offers the opportunity to enjoy the spread at the restaurant. Meanwhile, the takeaway format allows guests to bring the festive meal to their own dining tables, whether for a family lunch or a gathering with friends," they state.

"The dine-in sadhya is priced at ₹955 plus taxes per person. For those who would rather celebrate at home, a takeaway sadhya serving two people is available at ₹1,295 plus taxes. Our takeaway pre-booking facility allows guests to reserve their boxes ahead of the festive period

and plan an Onam meal with family and friends without the last-minute rush," the management informs.

The feast is also suited to those looking to make Onam a shared occasion at home. Pre-booking is intended to make planning easier, particularly for those who want to organise their celebrations in advance.

"Whether it is a sit-down celebration or a meal shared around the dining table at home, our Onam sadhya is positioned as an invitation to savour the flavours of Kerala and the traditions surrounding the harvest festival," they conclude.

Address: W Floor, 3rd, 126, 1st Street, Santha Avenue, Anna Nagar
Dates: August 25 & 26
Cost: Dine-in: ₹955 + taxes per person; Takeaway: ₹1,295 + taxes for two
Contact: 99941 48222

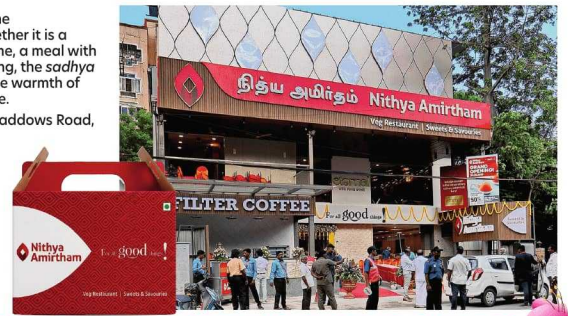


NITHYA AMIRTHAM

Onam is a festival built around togetherness – from dressing up in kasavu and making pookalam to gathering around a banana leaf for an abundant sadhya. This year, Nithya Amirtham is bringing that festive spirit to tables across Chennai with its Onam '26 sadhya on August 26, according to its management. "The feast is centred on the traditions and flavours that make Onam special, offering families and friends an occasion to come together over a meal that celebrates Kerala's culinary heritage," they say.

The management says the celebration is ultimately about the people, traditions and food that bring everyone back to the table. "Whether it is a family gathering at home, a meal with friends or a festive outing, the sadhya is intended to add to the warmth of the occasion," they state.

Address: 1st Floor, 11, Haddows Road, Nungambakkam
Dates: August 26
Cost: Dine-in: ₹850 + tax (adults), ₹450 + tax (children); Takeaway: ₹1,500 + GST for two; Online: ₹1,800 + GST for two via food delivery platforms
Contact: 87544 01444



ENTÉ KERALAM



Onam at Enté Kerala, its management says, is a celebration of the food and traditions that make the festival special. The restaurant has brought back its much-loved Onam sadhya across its three Chennai outlets, alongside a selection of payasams and takeaway options for those celebrating at home.

According to the management, the Onasadhya is prepared by a team from Kerala and features more than 30 traditional dishes served in the customary Kerala style. "The spread includes thoran, avial, inji puli, inji thayir, erissery, kaalan, olan, pachadi, kichadi and nei paruppu, along with pickles and chips. Payasam gets special attention this year, with palada payasam, ada pradhman, chakka pradhman, paruppu payasam, pazha payasam and ghee

payasam on offer. A takeaway box contains four varieties, with 500ml of each, making it an option to share at home or take along when visiting family and friends," they share.

The management says the Onam sadhya Takeaway box is suited to those who would rather enjoy the feast at home. "For those who prefer to dine in, the festive sadhya will also be available on August 27 and 28, offering an opportunity to enjoy the meal at a more relaxed pace. All the Onam offerings are available till August 30," they say.

Address: 1, Kasturi Ranga Avenue 1st Street, Poes Garden; 2nd Floor, 14/22, 3rd Avenue, Custom Colony, Besant Nagar; 40, 2nd Main Road, E Block, Anna Nagar East
Contact: 63749 99504 (Poes Garden), 72001 78594 (Besant Nagar), 63749 99506 (Anna Nagar)
www.entekeralam.menu



SASHWATHA CAFE



This Onam, Sashwatha Café is inviting diners to celebrate the spirit of Kerala with its Grand Onam sadhya, a 23-dish feast being served at its Anna Nagar and Nandanam outlets on August 25 and 26. According to the management, the spread has been curated around the abundance, warmth and culinary traditions associated with a Kerala home-style Onam celebration.

"At the heart of the feast is a carefully prepared selection of dishes that moves across flavours and

textures, from tangy and savoury to creamy, mildly spiced and sweet. Each preparation has been put together to offer a distinct expression of Kerala cuisine while creating a balanced banana-leaf feast," says the management.

Among the highlights are Pineapple kalan, where the natural sweetness of ripe pineapple meets the gentle tang and creaminess of a classic Kerala preparation, and mathangai erussery, a comforting pumpkin and coconut dish that is delicately spiced and subtly sweet.

Alongside these are an assortment of traditional vegetable preparations, curries, accompaniments and other festive favourites, each adding its own character to the spread.

The management says the sadhya is intended to be more than a meal, with emphasis on the communal nature of the feast. "A traditional sadhya is meant to be shared, and the festive spread offers families and friends an opportunity to enjoy its flavours together. For those celebrating at home, the takeaway option brings the occasion to the table," they state.

The festive menu is available at both outlets, giving diners across Chennai an opportunity to plan their celebrations. The management says the takeaway option suits families who want to enjoy the sadhya at home while retaining the spirit of a traditional festive meal.

Address: 96-97, 3rd Avenue, W Block, Anna Nagar & 134, Chamiers Road, Nandanam Extension, Nandanam
Dates: August 25 & 26
Cost: Dine-in: ₹495 per person; Takeaway: ₹759 for two
Contact: 99941 31222 (Anna Nagar), 99945 51999 (Nandanam)



GEETHAM VEG RESTAURANT

This Onam, Geetham is bringing a specially curated sadhya to the table on August 26, with dine-in, takeaway and delivery available through pre-booking. According to the management, preparations began months in advance, with the chefs and team travelling to Kerala and tasting sadhyas across the state to understand the nuances that elevate each dish.

"We wanted our sadhya to feel authentic, and deeply rooted in the flavours of Kerala. Understanding the balance of flavours and discovering traditional preparation methods has added greater depth and flavour profile to our menu. We are excited for our patrons to relish the taste of this festive feast," says Murali, Founder, Geetham.

The sadhya, they inform, features more than 30 dishes, including matta choru, mampazham madhura pachadi, ulli theeyal, kurukku kalan and moru



kachiyathu. Chakka pradhman and palada pradhman offer a traditional sweet finish. The management says the feast brings people closer, giving families and friends an opportunity to gather and celebrate over a traditional spread.

The team's Kerala visits also gave the chefs an opportunity to compare preparations from different parts of the state before finalising the festive menu. The management says this process helped the team pay closer attention to the balance and character of individual dishes while putting together the final spread for Chennai diners.

Date: August 26
Dine-in, takeaway and delivery: Pre-booking required
Contact: 7397 222 111; 73976 23777 (WhatsApp)



ADYAR ANANDA BHAVAN

This Onam, Adyar Ananda Bhavan is inviting food lovers to celebrate the spirit of Kerala with an elaborate Grand Onam sadya on August 26. Available across Chennai and Bengaluru, the festive spread brings together 27 traditional Kerala delicacies on a banana leaf, creating a meal centred on the flavours, traditions and warmth of the harvest festival.

According to the management, the sadya has been curated to offer a wholesome festive experience, with dishes spanning a range of flavours and textures. Among the highlights are *ada pradhaman*, *chakka pradhaman* and *Kottayam kaalan*, alongside *Alleppey olan*, *malabar avial* and *kosambari*.



The spread continues with *madhura curry*, *beetroot pachadi*, *carrot beans thoran*, *eruseri* and *inji pulli*, followed by *curry leaves palakai Biriyan*, *Wayanad red rice (matta)*, *paruppu*, *ghee and kadamba sambar*, *Thalippu thayir*, *chakkara varatti*, *naalu vetu chips*, *Kerala pappadam* and *velakki*. Banana complete the festive spread. The management says the collection of dishes has been brought together to reflect the variety and festive



character of traditional Kerala cuisine. The banana-leaf feast is designed for the social spirit of Onam, whether shared around a table at the restaurant or enjoyed at home with family and friends.

The sadya is priced at ₹599 plus GST for dine-in and ₹699 plus GST for takeaway. Home delivery is also available exclusively through Swiggy, offering those celebrating at home an opportunity to enjoy the festive spread without stepping out.

The management says the feast brings together traditional preparations and festive favourites in one celebratory meal, making it an opportunity to enjoy the flavours of Kerala while marking the festival with loved ones.

Address: 53, Ambattur Industrial Estate, 3rd Street, South Phase, Ambattur

Date: August 26

Cost: Dine-in: ₹599 + GST; Takeaway: ₹699 + GST

Contact: 044 42333333 / 40999999

Email: care@aabssweets.com



Eating sadya on Onam comes with its own set of etiquette



If you sit down to relish a sadya, you need to remember a few things - the tapered end of the banana leaf must point to the left as the meal's structure and serving logic depend on the direction in which it is placed. Another etiquette to remember is that the food is placed one by one from the left to the right side. However, that is not how you eat the food - you enjoy it the right to the left. Remember to fold your leaf once you are finished with the meal.

Your first sadya? Let's get cooking for a grand feast



Onam is just around the corner, and that means it's time to make room for one of Kerala's grandest food traditions. *sadya* looks like a feast built for a whole battalion, but you don't need to be a seasoned Kerala cook to pull it off. The trick is to plan the menu before you start chopping, soaking and stirring. You can keep the spread manageable without losing the spirit of a proper *sadya* by making a few dishes ahead and serving others fresh. And yes, that famous banana-leaf feast can absolutely happen in your kitchen this Onam.

Start small, then build your sadya

A traditional *sadya* can have a dizzying number of dishes, so don't try to cook everything on your first attempt. Start with five to seven staples such as *avial*, *thoran*, *olan*, *sambar*, *rasam*, *pachadi* and *payasam*. This gives you plenty of variety without turning your kitchen into a pressure cooker. Make a menu based on how many people you are feeding. For four to six people, small portions of each dish are more than enough. Remember, *sadya* is about variety, not giant servings of every item.

A little preparation goes a long way

A little prep work will save you from running around the kitchen with a ladle in one hand and a half-cut coconut in the other. Soak your dal, chop the vegetables, and grate or grind the coconut before cooking begins. Keep separate bowls ready for ingredients that go into different dishes. Look at the cooking time of each dish before you begin. Start with things that take longer, such as *sambar* and *payasam*. Quick dishes like *thoran* and *pachadi* can come together closer to mealtime.

US influencer calls steel utensils chic, Indians see nostalgia

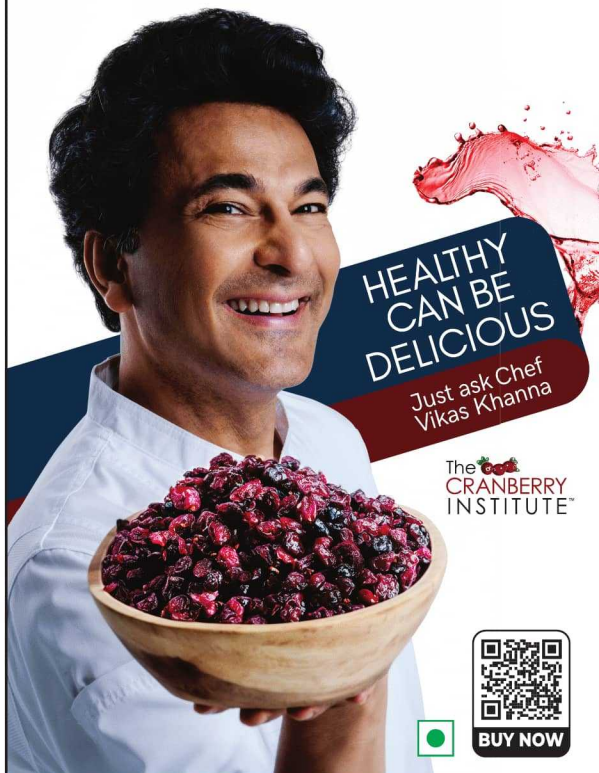
A US influencer's fascination with "chrome" home-ware has left Indians amused after she showcased the stainless-steel *thalis* and utensils as chic finds she discovered at the Swedish furnishing brand. Amanda Monsen, who said she had been obsessed with chrome for two years, went looking for chrome plates and other pieces at the furniture giant, calling them stylish and perfect for serving food. Indian social media users, however, quickly pointed out that the supposedly trendy pieces looked remarkably like the steel utensils found in homes across the country. The discov-



ery comes after a Canadian influencer sparked a similar reaction last year by turning a traditional *thali* into a jewellery box.
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Lightness becomes the new luxury



Anagha Sawant

Luxury has long prized clothes that look extraordinary without appearing difficult to wear. But across the 2026 runways, that pursuit of effortless has become particularly pronounced. Designers are stripping weight from tailoring, experimenting with barely-there textiles and finding new ways to create volume and intricate craftsmanship without physical heaviness.

The convergence is broad enough for 'Featherweight' to emerge as a defining Fall 2026 couture trend, with openwork and weightless materials balancing romance with the practical realities of dressing in the heat.

"Luxury today is all about ease. People want garments that move beautifully, feel effortless and still make a statement," says fashion designer Benu Sehgal, adding, "Weightless fabrics create that balance."

They allow craftsmanship, intricate detailing and fluid silhouettes to shine without feeling restrictive, making elegance appear natural rather than overly constructed.

Balenciaga's Fall 2026 couture collection features a feather-embroidered red satin balloon jacket paired with an oversized white top and flowing palazzo trousers

When fabric becomes technology

Weightlessness does not mean minimalism. Designers are increasingly using technical construction to create drama without corresponding heaviness.

At Balenciaga, Pierpaolo Piccioli's Neo Gazar combines gauze and organza to create sculptural volume with greater fluidity. For Fall 2026 couture, the house used moulded leather 'carapaces', developed from 3D body scans, inside cashmere garments to support architectural silhouettes with what it called 'improbable lightness'. Its Spring 2026 collection also introduced a bioengineered silk alternative developed with AMSilk, offering greater elasticity and wrinkle resistance, alongside 3D weaving techniques that integrate parts of a garment's construction into the weaving process.

Schiaparelli explored the same idea differently, using tiered tulle in its Spring/Summer 2026 haute couture collection to create expansive volume without heavier construction.

"It's less about one big breakthrough and more about smarter construction. Fabrics like silk crepes and georgettes offer movement without weight, while lighter, carefully placed embroidery adds richness without making the garment feel heavy," says Mural Khimji, founder of a luxury fashion label, adding, "There is a growing interest in using lighter embellishments, recycled materials and techniques that create richness without unnecessary bulk."

Is this the next phase of luxury?

Richa sees the movement as an evolution of quiet luxury rather than its replacement. "Quiet luxury was largely about visual restraint, fewer logos, muted palettes and understated craftsmanship. Weightless luxury extends that philosophy beyond aesthetics into the physical experience of the product," she says.

The runways suggest the phenomenon may be broader than quiet luxury. Balenciaga's enormous couture volumes, transparent Dior suits and Chanel's intricate embroidery are not necessarily visually restrained. What connects them is not quietness but technical effortlessness: clothes can remain dramatic, elaborate or highly engineered while becoming physically easier to wear.

@jacquemus



A look from Jacquemus Fall/Winter 26 featured a fitted bodice giving way to a skirt finished with cascading, asymmetrical fringes



Ease as a design philosophy

At Chanel, Matthieu Blazy has made lightness a recurring idea. His Spring 2026 haute couture debut opened with a transparent silk mousseline suit, while elaborate embroideries were engineered to remain remarkably light. Dior has taken a similar route under Jonathan Anderson, stripping structure from tailoring through pleated silks, draping and bias-cut construction, including a softened take on the house's iconic Bar silhouette.

Jonathan Anderson reworked traditional tailoring for Dior's Spring/Summer 2027 menswear collection, rendering pinstriped and checked suits in sheer, unlined chiffon for a feather-light effect

Comfort, climate and the case for weightlessness

The shift is also being shaped by how and where clothes are worn. The Spring/Summer 2027 menswear shows in Paris unfolded during extreme heat, with Saint Laurent and Dries Van Noten leaning into unlined tailoring, airy silks and semi-sheer fabrics, while Dior Men rendered pinstriped and checked suits in chiffon. The result suggests that lightness is moving beyond summer dressing to reshape even traditionally structured categories.

"I expect we'll see continued investment in ultra-light textiles, performance-luxury fabrics, regenerative fibres and innovative material engineering. As climate conditions change and consumers travel more frequently, functionality and comfort will become inseparable from luxury itself," says Richa Chopra, a luxury consumer behaviour expert.

Khimji says comfort is also influencing occasionwear choices. "Women still want beautifully crafted occasionwear, but they no longer want to feel weighed down by it," she says. "They're looking for pieces they can spend an entire day in, whether that's a destination wedding or an evening celebration, without compromising on how they feel." Sehgal agrees. "People live busier, faster lives now; they want clothes that keep up. At the same time, they also want to feel confident without compromising on ease. When a garment is light and easy to wear, it naturally moves better and looks more elegant. Therefore, comfort drives the trend."

A flowing striped look from Fendi's Fall 2026 Couture collection, adding movement and ease to couture

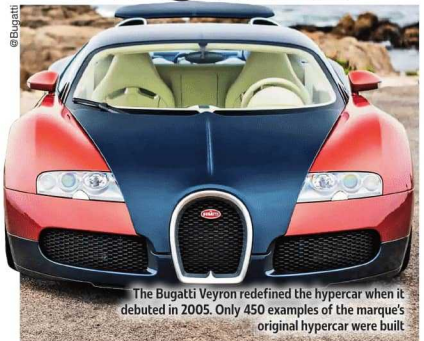
↑

A delicate sheer dress from Chanel's 2026 Haute Couture collection, capturing the lighter side of luxury

←

Dries Van Noten's SS27 menswear collection featured sheer layers and fluid silhouettes, capturing Julian Klausner's vision of softness and effortless movement

WINDOW TO THE WORLD



The Bugatti Veyron redefined the hypercar when it debuted in 2005. Only 450 examples of the marque's original hypercar were built

BUGATTI REIMAGINES ITS ORIGINAL HYPERCAR

Twenty years after it rewrote the performance-car rulebook, the Bugatti Veyron is getting a contemporary makeover. The French marque has unveiled a one-of-one Veyron through La Maison Pur Sang, its heritage restoration and certification programme, which allows owners to preserve or reimagine their cars. Based on one of only 450 Veyrons built during its 10-year production run, the bespoke model combines the original hypercar's unmistakable silhouette with details borrowed from newer Bugatti models.

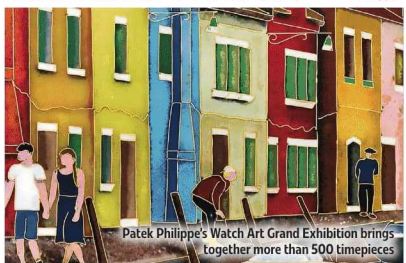
Its exterior pairs Rouge Rembrandt, developed for the Tourbillon, with Petrol Blue, associated with the Chiron. The two colours didn't exist during the Veyron era. The classic Machiavelli wheels have also been enlarged to 20 inches at the front and 21 inches at the rear, allowing the car to use Chiron-sized tyres. Three-dimensional mesh elements refresh the air intakes without altering its iconic shape.

Inside, Magnolia leather, Mocassin stitching and a '20 Years of Veyron' emblem mark the anniversary, while the centre console gets a Côte de Genève finish inspired by fine watchmaking. The result is a modernised Veyron that retains its original character. And marks Veyron's pioneering legacy in hypercars.



The cabin features bespoke Mocassin stitching, an exclusive anniversary emblem, and a watch-inspired Côte de Genève finish on the center console

MILAN GETS PATEK PHILIPPE'S LARGEST WATCH SHOWCASE



Patek Philippe's Watch Art Grand Exhibition brings together more than 500 timepieces

Patek Philippe is staging its most ambitious showcase yet this October in Milan. The seventh iteration of the Watch Art Grand Exhibition will occupy the city's newly renovated Palazzo delle Scintille, where more than 500 timepieces and objects will unfold across 15 themed rooms spanning 2,900 square metres.

The choice of Milan is deliberate. Italy's storied relationship with Patek Philippe dates back to 1839, when the Geneva watchmaker first sold a timepiece to a Roman client. For Thierry Stern, the brand's president, Italian taste represents a definitive barometer. "If a new model is successful in Italy," he notes, "it will be successful in the rest of the world."

The exhibition balances crowd-pleasing icons - the Nautilus, the Aquanaut - with the rarefied: a Super Complications room featuring the 33-complication Calibre 89 and the 20-complication Grandmaster Chime. Twenty-seven pieces from the Rare Handcrafts collection showcase métiers d'art mastery, from the cloisonné-enamelled Burano Pocket Watch to the Sicilian Oranges dome clock, rendered in 49 colours across multiple firings. Running October 2-18, admission is free.



The return of the Basque waist

Aakanksha Ahire

In recent seasons, designers have been redefining the silhouette by cinching and sculpting the waist, placing renewed emphasis on the midsection. Peplum was one of the clearest expressions of this shift. Now, the Basque waist feels like a natural evolution of the same idea. Fashion houses including Chanel, Alaïa and Jacquemus have incorporated the distinctive, elongated waistline into their recent collections, giving the historic silhouette a distinctly modern edge.

What is a Basque waist

It is a silhouette, one seen commonly in wedding gowns, that extends the waistline below its natural position, dipping towards the hips where the skirt begins. Typically defined by an elongated V or U-shaped line, it creates the visual effect of a longer, narrower torso while introducing a more sculptural proportion to the outfit. "The Basque waist has the ability to instantly change a silhouette's proportion. That is why it continues to resonate on contemporary runways, as designers can reinterpret the same historical idea through tailoring, knitwear, fluid fabrics, or exaggerated volumes," says fashion designer Rashi Kapoor.

Common style of the 19th century

The term 'Basque' was used in English to describe a common style of 19th-century bodice.

The cut appeared in varied forms, with designers experimenting with its length, shape and design. Its appeal, however, has never been confined to one era. Chanel's designs in the 1920s and 1930s featured waistlines extending towards the hips, while Christian Dior later brought a similar sensibility to the Bar jacket, creating a defined, feminine silhouette.

Its revival feels less like nostalgia and more like fashion reclaiming an iconic shape and giving it a completely new vocabulary

— Rashi Kapoor, fashion designer

Chanel's Fall/Winter 2026-27 collection: The dropped waist extended towards the hips, evoking the elongated proportions



Christian Dior offered a softer interpretation for fall 2026. Here, the waist remained clearly defined but felt less rigid, elongating the torso without appearing overly severe

CRAFT, REUSE, REPEAT

Creative reuse breathes life into old art supplies

Looking for supplies to work on that unfinished art project, only to find yourself strapped for cash? Creative reuse centres may be the answer you are looking for. "Nowadays, art is popping off, so things are more expensive," said Charlene Catalano, who was on the lookout for crochet supplies and found them all for a mere \$6 at the Brooklyn Creative Reuse. "It has the perfect amount of what I need," she said. The Brooklyn store is one of hundreds of creative reuse centres across the US and beyond which aim to keep art supplies out of landfills. They typically sell donated art materials at steep discounts — like thrift stores for crafting.



Yarn sits on shelves as shoppers debate items for sale at the Brooklyn Creative Reuse



At reuse centres, crafters can collect a few ribbons and fabric scraps instead of entire spools or bolts, or even half a bottle of glue at a fraction of a cost

What happens to supplies after they're tossed?

"Reducing waste is the first benefit. But you can also be more creative when you're in a large warehouse and looking at things that you could not source yourself," said Julian Silverman, a materials scientist at New York's Fashion Institute of Technology. In landfills, synthetic bristles on paintbrushes can take hundreds of years to degrade, while plastic handles take up to a thousand years, Silverman said. When paints break down, they can release microplastics and heavy metals like cadmium and cobalt. "Basically, our paint is plastic," said Zoie Diana, an environmental scientist at Barnard College.

The hidden cost of new art supplies

Art supplies typically come in bulk and outlast the crafts they're intended for. When thrown away, they degrade in landfills, and certain items can release harmful chemicals and microplastics into the environment. Reusing art supplies is one small step to avoid that, with some centres saving thousands of pounds of materials from reaching landfills each month. They also require water and energy to make, pack, and ship, so reusing them helps reduce the resources needed for new ones. Art is an expensive hobby, so shopping secondhand can keep costs down.



Crafters now pair their secondhand art hauls with everyday household objects

A more sustainable way to create

The principles of sustainable art include buying only what you need and donating what you don't. It also involves care while disposing of waste. For example, wiping used brushes with a rag and peeling off old paint instead of washing it down the drain. This step prevents microplastics in the paint from being pumped to wastewater treatment facilities, said

Diana, where they can sneak through into lakes and rivers. Picking up secondhand paint supplies inspired teacher Rosina Morelli to fish through her own cabinets. "What I'm most happy for is my chance to donate, not buy stuff," Morelli said, "so that I can give it to other people who will use it, instead of me just throwing it out."



If last week was a bit chaotic on the domestic front, this week shall see resolutions. Work look better this week, and you shall be in a better frame of mind now. Some good news is on the way. Renovations at home/ buying new vehicles are indicated. You will regain lost money. Your social life is set to improve, and you shall meet influential people who shall be of great benefit to you.



Manage your finances and be active in speculative efforts and activities for gaining fast money and better returns. You are warned against impulsive buying and selling this week. There may be developments regarding relationships with relatives. Strained relationships will take time to improve; friends will come home, and you will spend enjoyable moments with them. Love affairs are under very positive influences and shall flourish. Short trips are possible. You may have an impulsive temper.



The whole week is easygoing. There may be a slight worry about finances and concern regarding children/ their career; but soon there will be good developments in that regard. Some of you might be renovating your property, while others will worry about the development of certain properties. Traders will see business communications be successful, and luck will be on your side.



Planning ahead isn't just a virtue; it's a relief. Getting certain situations organised makes it easier to settle others. Gain from friends and influential people is seen; success in speculation and love affairs is indicated. A financial issue shall take some time to get resolved. You will not truly be able to get closure with the past unless you realise that a large amount of teamwork and cooperation will be required.



Your confidence grows, and leadership qualities come to the fore, making you very bold and assertive at work and in general. This is a wonderful time for not only making money but also spending money on acts of charity. The circumstances in several situations have changed, far more than you realise, and are still in transition.



Financially, many opportunities will come to you, and your cash flows shall also improve. Big changes are coming your way, both at home and at work, and you must be ready and willing to embrace whatever challenges are thrown at you. Try to detach yourself from whatever realities are pushing you to do all this work.

Disappointing as setbacks are, they're doing you a favour: First, they're slowing your pace, so you have



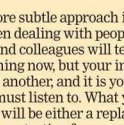
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See what the stars have in store for you — according to your moon sign.

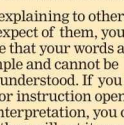


time to consider your existing situation. This, in turn, means you'll be able to delve into the new ideas or offers coming your way in depth. So much, in fact, you'll soon be making decisions.

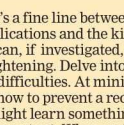
Although you're not sentimental, every once in a while something stirs deep feelings. That seems to be the case with one particular arrangement that's coming to an end. All those details and fine-tuning arrangements can wait. The past few days have been hectic and the next few days will be hectic as well, but you will enjoy every moment of it. You are at your best when on the move and interacting with people, so don't think of slowing down yet.



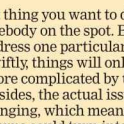
A more subtle approach is needed when dealing with people. Friends and colleagues will tell you one thing now, but your instincts will tell you another, and it is your instincts you must listen to. What you face now will be either a replay, a rewind, or starting from scratch again, but take it on. You must now patiently construct a place for yourself which will show you up.



When explaining to others what it is you expect of them, you must make sure that your words are plain and simple and cannot be misunderstood. If you leave even one minor instruction open to interpretation, you can guarantee they will get it wrong. If you know a secret of some kind, you must keep it to yourself. If you let slip even a hint of what you have discovered, the value of the information will diminish before you have a chance to use it for your own gain.



There's a fine line between everyday complications and the kind of setbacks that can, if investigated, prove enlightening. Delve into the source of any difficulties. At minimum, you'll spot how to prevent a recurrence. You might learn something more important. When making certain arrangements, you didn't mention tricky issues because they had little relevance to the matter in question. While that was the case at the time, things have changed, and those changes have put the issues in the spotlight. Discuss them frankly and openly.



The last thing you want to do is put somebody on the spot. But if you don't address one particular concern swiftly, things will only become more complicated by the day. Besides, the actual issue is itself changing, which means your concerns could turn into a helpful talking point for everybody. Destiny will line up the people you need most to teach you about your own maturity with finance or real estate.

Traditional sadhya gets a fruity twist

Gopika IS

Onam is here, and the *sadya* is getting a little adventurous. Home cooks, food vloggers and chefs are taking the familiar banana-leaf feast beyond its usual repertoire, pairing traditional Kerala techniques with ingredients that might not typically make it to the spread. Think mixed-fruit *pachadi*, apple *pulissery*, rambutan *pachadi* and blueberry *payasam*. The idea isn't to reinvent the *sadya*, but to see how far its familiar flavours can travel.

RAMBUTAN GETS A SAVOURY TURN

Last Onam, rambutan *payasam* made waves on food pages. This year, Chef Suresh Pillai has another idea for the tropical fruit: *pachadi*. "Rambutan can also be made into a *pachadi*, which can add a fresh flavour to your *sadya*. Just replace the usual banana and pineapple with rambutan," he says.

THE FRUIT BOWL LANDS ON THE BANANA LEAF

Food vlogger Hanna is taking a more familiar route, working with fruits that are easier to find locally. Her experiments include apple *pulissery* and mixed-fruit *pachadi*. "Apple is sweet and a little sour. I felt it would blend well and made apple *pachadi* last Onam and it worked. So, I proceeded to make *pulissery*. I also prepared *nellikka rasam* and dates *puli inchi* this time. Others shared those preparations, too. It's about adding variety to the *sadya*," she says.

The trick, she says, is to retain the foundation of Kerala cooking. "I add a coconut base to the dish," she spills the secret.

For her mixed-fruit *pachadi*, the combination can include banana, pineapple, apple, pomegranate and grape. But there is some technique involved. "When we add pomegranate, it should be added last so that it doesn't dissolve. We need a combination of sweet and sour. Add jaggery to it, and it will still feel like *pachadi* while allowing you to taste the fruits, too."



Apple pulissery

People prefer variety with old ingredients rather than just the older preparations. Sometimes, we may feel the combination won't match, but it will make sense once we eat it

— Shekha Hashim



How To: Give sadhya a modern makeover

Rambutan pachadi: Replace the banana or pineapple in *pachadi* with this tropical fruit. **Blueberry payasam:** Make two versions of this trendy fruit in the traditional dessert — using coconut milk and jaggery or milk and sugar. **Apple pulissery:** Add a sweet-sour touch to the coconut-based pulissery with apple. **Tender coconut payasam-pudding:** Give a textural upgrade by using tender coconut jelly instead of tender coconut pieces.

WHEN PAYASAM MEETS PUDDING

Chef Ganga Sreekanth is giving tender coconut *payasam* a textural makeover. Instead of simply adding tender coconut pieces and puree to the traditional milk-based dessert, she has turned it into a *payasam*-pudding hybrid. "Usually, we use milk and add pieces of tender coconut, along with some puree. What I did this time is make it a *payasam*-pudding mix.



Pazham nurukku

Old favourites get renewed attention

Social media is also giving some old-fashioned preparations a fresh lease of life. *Pazham nurukku*, a dish closely associated with Onam, has been making appearances across food pages, proving that nostalgia can trend too. Food vlogger Shekha Hashim believes the appetite for novelty and the love for tradition can comfortably coexist. "Experimenting with food doesn't necessarily mean moving away from our roots — traditional tastes continue to remain timeless," she says.



Blueberries meet payasam

Another fruit making an unexpected appearance is the blueberry. Chef Suresh says the fruit has found favour partly because of its reputation as a healthy choice. But in a *payasam*, it is less about health trends and more about what happens when a distinctly modern ingredient meets a traditional dessert. "You can make blueberry into a puree, add coconut milk and jaggery to make one version, and replace coconut milk with actual milk and jaggery with sugar for a different version," he says.



Tender coconut payasam

WHAT'S #TRENDING AND WHY



Meghan Markle may just swap royal life to be in the set of a Guy Ritchie film

It has been nine years since Meghan Markle last appeared as Rachel Zane in *Suits*, but the actress could be gearing up for a full-time return to the screen. According to *Deadline*, Markle has been offered a role in an upcoming UK-based project and has held early discussions about joining Guy Ritchie's Netflix series *The Gentlemen* for a potential third season. The talks, however, are still at a preliminary stage, with the project itself yet to be renewed for a third season. The series, which stars Theo James, is currently awaiting a renewal decision. The potential casting also comes at an interesting time. The news broke days after Markle and her husband, Prince Harry, announced plans to return to the UK for an extended period. The couple has been based in California for the past six years.

Forget Clark Kent, Jimmy Olsen has a murder case to crack

It's official: HBO Max has given an eight-episode, straight-to-series order to *The People v. Gorilla Grodd*, its long-gestating Jimmy Olsen Superman spinoff from DC Studios and Warner Bros Television, according to *Deadline*. The comedy stars Skyler Gisondo as Jimmy Olsen and Jimmy Tatro as Gorilla Grodd in a true-crime mockumentary. Season one centres on DC villain Gorilla Grodd, a superintelligent ape with psychic powers following an encounter with an alien spaceship.



Poonam Dhillon hospitalised with dengue amid CINTAA controversy

Days after eight members of the Cine and TV Artists' Association (CINTAA) executive committee stepped down, CINTAA president Poonam Dhillon has been hospitalised with dengue after suffering from the illness for a week, according to reports. The update comes amid an ongoing controversy, with the eight members citing a loss of confidence in the association's functioning and calling for fresh elections.



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