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# THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

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### AMID TIGHTER VISA NORMS, INDIAN STUDENT COUNT IN U.S. FALLS 6.2%

Over 3.52 lakh Indians are studying in the US as of February 2026, down from 3.78 lakh last year, the government told Parliament on Thursday

### INDIANS IMPACTED BY TRUMP'S VISA POLICY: MoS

The Trump administration expanded screening and vetting for all visa applicants on June 18, 2025. The Minister of State for External Affairs Kirti Vardhan Singh said this tougher filtering, including increased scrutiny and compliance requirements, had an impact on the number of US student visas issued to Indian nationals

### 'GOVT RAISING STUDENT CONCERNS WITH U.S.'

- "The new US guidance mentions that every visa adjudication is a national security decision and calls on all applicants to credibly establish their eligibility for the visa sought," Singh said
- The government has been regularly raising all issues being confronted by Indian students with the US authorities, he said

## 8.92 lakh

ASIAN STUDENTS IN THE UNITED STATES AS OF MARCH

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THIRISSUR • KALABURGI



## At UK-led talks, India for unimpeded transit

60+ nations join Hormuz meet on safe passage options

DAY 34 | WAR WATCH

JAYANTH JACOB @ New Delhi

INDIA on Thursday called for immediate de-escalation in West Asia, warning of risks to global energy flows and maritime security, while highlighting that it is the only country to have lost mariners in recent attacks on merchant shipping in the Gulf.

Representing India at a high-level virtual meeting convened by UK Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said the crisis could only be resolved through diplomacy and dialogue.

The meeting, attended by representatives from over 60 countries including France, Germany, Italy, Canada and the UAE, focused on the deteriorating security situation in key international waterways, particularly the Strait of Hormuz.

In his remarks, the Foreign Secretary talked about "the importance of the principles of freedom of navigation and unimpeded transit through international waterways," an official readout said.

Misri stressed that "the way out of the crisis consisted of de-escalation and a return to the path of diplomacy and dialogue among all concerned parties," signalling India's preference for a political solution over military escalation.

The meeting took place amid heightened tensions after US President Donald Trump suggested that ensuring the security of Hormuz should be the responsibility of nations that rely on it. The US did not participate in the meeting.

The strait remains a critical artery for the global economy,

### Customs duty off

Full customs duty exemption granted on critical petrochemical products for three months till June 30. Will help industries like plastics, packaging, textiles, pharma, chemicals, automotive components etc. Revenue loss pegged at ₹1,800 crore

### Don gives no timeline

US President Donald Trump claims Israel and US were close to completing their key objectives in the war against Iran, adding the conflict would soon be over, but doesn't provide an exact timeline

### Iran's pushback

Iran threatened "crushing" attacks on the US and Israel, firing missiles at Tel Aviv and US bases after Trump vowed to bomb the Islamic Republic "back to the Stone Ages"



Video grab of a strike on an IIRGC missile base in Iran's Baharestan, Isfahan | x

handling nearly 20% of the world's oil and LNG shipments and its ongoing blockade sent oil prices soaring above \$100 per barrel. Two Indian seafarers had lost their lives since the beginning of the war.

Cooper accused Iran of disrupting global trade. "We have seen Iran hijack an international shipping route to hold the global economy hostage," she said, warning of ripple effects across energy, fertiliser and fuel supply chains worldwide.

European countries, initially reluctant to commit naval forces, are now exploring a coordinated approach amid rising energy costs. Officials said the meeting marked the first step toward forming a coalition to restore safe passage. Initial plans include clearing mines from the waterway and ensuring protection for commercial vessels, with further consultations involving military planners expected in the coming weeks.

## SC stinker as mob gheraoes judges in WB

SUCHITRA KALYAN MOHANTY @ New Delhi

THE Supreme Court on Thursday came down heavily on the West Bengal government for its inaction over the gherao of judicial officers in Malda district during the special intensive revision (SIR) drive, ordering an independent probe by the CBI or NIA.

"We direct the ECI to entrust the enquiry / investigation to either the CBI or NIA. The compliance report shall be submitted to this court. The agency shall be obligated to submit a preliminary enquiry report directly to this court," said a bench headed by Chief Justice Surya Kant during an urgent hearing on Thursday morning.

The court took suo motu cognisance after it received a letter from the Chief Justice of Calcutta High Court detailing how the judicial officers, including three women, were held captive for nine hours without food or water by protesters who claimed their names were deleted from the voter list.

The incident occurred during the SIR exercise in the Kaliachowk area of Malda district.

The bench said the incident exposes the 'complete failure of the state administration'.

"We have never seen such a polarised state. Unfortunately, in your state, each one of you speaks political language. That is the most unfortunate thing. We have never seen such a polarised state," the CJI told West Bengal's Advocate General.

The bench also asked the election commission to deploy adequate central forces for the safety of judicial officers in the poll-bound state.



NASA's over the moon! Amul For launch and dinner

### Didi blames it on EC

Mamata Banerjee distanced herself from the incident saying "EC failed to protect the judicial officers." "My powers have been taken away; Bengal defamed," she said

This incident is a brazen attempt not only to browbeat judicial officers but challenge authority of this court Supreme Court

### EC hands over case to NIA; probe team to reach today

Kolkata: Hours after the SC order, the Election Commission of India handed over the probe into the gherao of the seven judicial officers in West Bengal's Malda district to the NIA. A top official of the poll body said the NIA team would reach West Bengal on Friday. The gherao happened when the officers were engaged in adjudicating cases of voters whose names had been marked "under adjudication" in the draft electoral rolls. The protesters initially sought a meeting but then resorted to a prolonged gherao

### MOONSHOT

The NASA Artemis II SLS (Space Launch System) rocket with the Orion spacecraft launches at the Kennedy Space Center in the wee hours of Thursday, in Cape Canaveral, Florida | AP | P13

WITH THIS ISSUE  
CHENNAI'S BEST WEEKEND GUIDE  
INDULGE  
40 PAGES, INCLUDING 24 OF INDULGE (TABLOID)

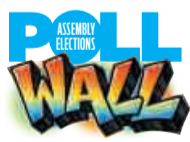
## Congress struggles to fill 5 of 28 seats allotted in TN

PRABHAKAR TAMILARASU @ Chennai

THE Congress is facing difficulty in finalising its candidate list for the Assembly poll as the party's screening committee has run into trouble in identifying suitable candidates for five of the 28 constituencies allotted to it by the DMK as part of the Secular Progressive Alliance (SPA). Sources said the party was unable to identify winnable candidates for Ooty, Mayiladuthurai, Attur (SC), Sankarankovil, and Amba-

samudram seats.

A senior Congress leader told *TNIE* that members of the TN unit involved in the constituency identification process had to accept 14 seats from the DMK that were not part of the party's original wish list sub-



mitted to the Dravidian major.

"Of the 28 seats allotted, we got 16 where we have sitting MLAs. Of the 16 seats, Ooty and Mayiladuthurai were not part of our wish list, and we did not intend to renominate the candidates," the senior leader said. P9

IT'S FIGHT FOR INDIA'S SOUL, SAYS RAJA IPS  
EPS CAN'T TALK ABOUT WOMEN SAFETY: CM | P4

## AFTER VIJAY'S PLAINT Rathore new DGP as ECI shakes up bureaucracy

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Chennai

AS per the orders of the Election Commission of India (ECI), Tamil Nadu government on Thursday transferred the state's DGP (Head of Police Force), three more senior IPS officers, including Tambaram police commissioner, and collectors of two districts.

Dr Sandeep Rai Rathore, DGP, Training, took charge as DGP (HoPF), replacing DGP (HoPF in-charge) G Venkataraman, on Thursday evening. ECI had directed all the officers to take charge in their new roles latest by 11 am on Friday and added that those transferred should not be involved in any election-related work.

ECI's direction came two days after actor and TVK president Vijay sent a representation to the commission through the chief electoral officer of Tamil Nadu, demanding the transfer of DGP (HoPF), ADGP (Law and Order), and commissioner of Greater Chennai Police. P9

## Tharoor moves from sidelines to spotlight

K S SREEJITH @ TPuram

TILL a few weeks ago, he was ignored and isolated by his own party in Kerala. But now, as the poll heat in Kerala has breached tolerance levels, the same Congress leaders are vying with each other to get his date.

Congress MP Shashi Tharoor now has no time to rest, as United Democratic Front (UDF) candidates carry him from one campaign site to the next, hoping his charismatic persona and suave communication

skills will draw voters.

In the run-up to the assembly elections — Kerala goes to polls on April 9 — Tharoor has emerged the most sought after star campaigner of the Congress, after Rahul Gandhi.

Sources say every UDF candidate wants Tharoor to campaign, banking on his popular appeal among urban voters and the wider electorate.

The dramatic change in the attitude of region-

al leaders is hard to miss. In a recent road show Tharoor shared stage with Leader of Opposition V D Satheesan, who was once his staunch adversary, drawing significant public attention.

"The requests for his participation often exceed what can be accommodated. Leaders who once asked him to quit the Congress are now requesting his presence," a senior leader told this newspaper.

### 56 seats to be covered

Tharoor is expected to cover 56 constituencies. In the first leg, from March 21 to April 1, he visited 37 constituencies. From April 2 to 6, he will participate in road shows with candidates



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# Guv bound by cabinet's advice on release of convicts, rules HC bench

Three-judge bench pronounces verdict on reference made to it due to conflicting judgments

R SIVAKUMAR @Chennai

IN a significant judgment, affirming the authority of the state government in deciding on remission and premature release of convict prisoners, the Madras High Court has held that the governor cannot take a view contrary to the decision of the government because he is bound by the advice of the council of ministers under Article 161 of the Constitution.

A full bench, comprising justices A D Jagadish Chandira, G K Ilanthiraiyan and Sunder Mohan, pronounced the verdict on Thursday while answering a reference made to it on the issue following different views taken by the benches.

One division bench had held that the advice of the cabinet binds the governor under Article 161 of the Constitution, while the other bench held that the governor can act on his own discretion.

The issues under the refer-

ence were whether the governor is bound by the advice of the council of ministers in matters relating to remission and premature release? And if he is so bound, under what circumstances, does the governor have the discretion to take a view different from the one by the council of ministers.

"This court answers both issues under reference cumulatively by holding that while exercising powers under Article 161 of the Constitution, in matters relating to remission and premature release of convict prisoners, the governor is bound by the advice of the council of ministers regardless of whether he likes that advice or not," the bench said in the order.

It further held, "Under no circumstance the governor can exercise discretion to take a different view from the one taken by the council of ministers."

Citing various orders of the Supreme Court, the bench not-



judgment that the governor can exercise his discretion going by the Constitution bench judgment in MP Special Police Establishment case, the full bench noted that this judgment was related to according sanction, under Section 197 of CrPC, to prosecute public servants and not on matters under Article 161 of the Constitution.

Citing the pronouncements in the case relating to assent, withholding or reservation of bills by the governor and the President, the bench explained that the question of whether the governor can act in his discretion and against the advice of the cabinet, in exercise of his powers under Article 161 of the Constitution, is no longer res integra (an entirely new or untouched matter).

State Public Prosecutor (PP) Hasan Mohamed Jinnah, assisted by Additional PP E Raj Tilak and Government Advocate S Santhosh, represented the state.

ed that in Maru Ram case, it was categorically held that the governor was the formal head and sole repository of the executive power but is incapable of acting except on and according to the advice of his council of ministers, regardless of whether he likes it or not. Referring to the differing

# Ponmudi, kin acquitted in red sand mining case

KRITHIKA SRINIVASAN @Villupuram

FORMER DMK minister K Ponmudi was acquitted in the red sand quarry case by the principal sessions court in Villupuram on Thursday.

Principal district judge A Manimozhi acquitted all the accused in the case, dating back to 2012, on grounds of weak evidence submitted by the district administration, mainly due to mismatch in the inspection drawing report. Among the 57 witnesses, 33 including officials from the district administration, Tamil Nadu Minerals Limited, and survey department turned hostile in the 13-year long case.

33 witnesses out of 57 turned hostile

Among the 57 witnesses, 33 including officials from the district administration, Tamil Nadu Minerals Limited, and survey department turned hostile in the 13-year long case.

not just my image, but also DMK's. Although I had the chance to withdraw the case after the government changed, my lawyers insisted on fighting the false case and coming out clean. This is a victory for DMK's legacy," Ponmudi said.

branch police filed the case in 2012, alleging that the state government incurred a loss of ₹28.4 crore, owing to the excessive extraction of red soil from a quarry located in Poothurai village, near Vanur in Villupuram district. Eight people were booked - Ponmudi, his son Gautham Si-



Class 10 students, who reside in hostels, make their journey back home after the board examinations ended, in Tirunelveli on Thursday | V KARTHICK ALAGU

## HOME BOUND

# HC asks judge to expedite trial in rape-murder of teen

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Madurai

AFTER the additional advocate general, representing the state, informed that the CB-CID had filed the final report in the case involving the sexual assault and murder of a 17-year-old girl in Vilathikulam in Thoothukudi, the Madurai Bench of Ma-

dras High Court on Thursday directed the trial court concerned to expedite trial in the case, with further directions to the state to pay additional interim compensation of ₹10 lakh to the victim's family.

A bench of justices N Sathish Kumar and M Jothiraman gave the directions on a petition

filed by an advocate K Mareeshwari of Thoothukudi, seeking a series of directions for a CBI investigation, compensation to the victim's family and a court-monitored probe, among others.

Hearing both sides, the judge added that the trial court will decide on the overall compen-

sation of the victim at the time of disposal of the trial and also instructed the state to nominate a special public prosecutor who has expertise in conducting trials in such cases, within a week. They also directed the investigation officer to file the supplementary chargesheet within 15 days.

# FCRA amendment bill an attack on Christian NGOs, churches: Stalin

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Chennai

CHIEF Minister M K Stalin on Thursday strongly condemned the proposed amendment Bill to the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) by the BJP-led union government and alleged that it was a direct attack on Christian NGOs, churches and other minority institutions.

The CM, in a post on 'X', said after attempts to take over Waqf properties, the centre is now trying to choke foreign funding for minority institutions. "Despite stepping back for now due to opposition protests and upcoming elections in Kerala, where Christians live in large numbers, there are clear plans to push FCRA through a special session of Parliament," the CM said.

Meanwhile, DMK deputy general secretary Kanimozhi, in a post on 'X', said, "The Constitution guarantees equal rights to all religions. We, the members of the Secular Progressive Alliance, will not allow any attempt to undermine that right. The centre must immediately withdraw this amendment." TVK general secretary N Anand, in a statement, said the Bill aims to weaken minority-

## Plea seeks ECI to bar Dalit Christians from contesting in SC seats

Chennai: Hindu Makkal Katchi leader Arjun Sampath has moved the Madras High Court seeking directions to the Election Commission of India to ensure only the Scheduled Caste persons who have not converted to Christianity to contest in reserved constituencies for SCs. He said that 90% of the candidates announced by political parties for the 44 SC reserved constituencies do not profess Hinduism, Sikhism or Buddhism, and have converted to Christianity. He prayed for the court to issue directions to the State CEO to advise the returning officers in the state to strictly scrutinise the nomination papers of candidates in SC reserved constituencies. ENS

run educational and medical institutions that serve lakhs of people. Amid pressing issues such as economic distress caused by Gulf tension, which has disrupted petroleum supplies and driven up prices of essential commodities, the centre is prioritising this Bill, he said.

# State's power to appoint V-Cs not violation of UGC norms: TN to HC

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Chennai

THE state government taking over the powers of appointing vice-chancellors will not be in conflict or repugnant with the UGC Regulations, 2018, as the V-C of a university is an officer of the university discharging administrative duties, Tamil Nadu government has told the Madras High Court.

The submission was made in a counter-affidavit filed by the higher education department before the first bench of Chief Justice Sushrut Arvind Dhar-madhikari and Justice G Arul Murugan when the petitions filed by advocate K Venkatachalapathy of Tirunelveli challenging the universities amendment acts came up for hearing on Thursday.

A division bench of the court, during summer vacation last year, had granted interim injunction against the operation of the acts which shifted the powers of appointing V-Cs from the governor to the state government. On appeal, the Supreme Court stayed set aside the order and directed the high court to assign the matter to another bench.

The counter-affidavit, filed through senior counsel P Wilson, stated that the petitioner proceeded on an erroneous presumption that a V-C is a teaching staff to apply the UGC Regulations, 2018.

# Sathankulam case: CBI, victims' kin want death for all nine cops

JEGADEESWARI PANDIAN @Madurai

THE 1st Additional District and Sessions Judge of Madurai, G Muthukumar, concluded the hearing on the sentencing of nine policemen convicted in the Sathankulam custodial death case on Thursday and will be pronouncing the sentence on April 6.

The nine convicts - namely, then inspector S Sridhar, then sub inspectors P Ragu Ganesh and K Balakrishnan, then head constables S Murugan and A Samidurai and constables M Muthuraja, S Veil Muthu, S Chelladurai and X Thomas Francis - were found guilty of brutally torturing two traders - P Jeyaraj and his son Beniks - at Sathankulam police station in June 2020, resulting in their death.

According to the prosecution, Jeyaraj was arrested by the police on false charges that he kept his shop open beyond Covid-19 curfew hours. When Beniks went to the station requesting his father's release, a quarrel ensued, following which the above policemen had



The court will pronounce the sentence on Monday (April 6) | EXPRESS

brutally tortured the duo. The CBI special public prosecutor, on Thursday, argued that the case had shocked society and falls within the rarest of rare category, warranting the death penalty or at least life imprisonment till death.

The counsels representing the convicts opposed the same, with one of them claiming that when Jeyaraj was arrested on June 19, 2020, the inquiry proceeded normally, just as any other case, until Beniks came to the station and created a problem. Only due to sudden provocation, the policemen had beaten the duo, and there was no premeditation in it, they added.

Stating that the case would

not fall within the rarest of rare case category, they requested the court to impose lighter punishment, focusing on the reformation of the convicts.

However, the victim's counsel pointed out that if the deceased had died due to a gunshot or knife wound, it could be claimed as an act committed by the convicts out of mere anger in the spur of the moment. But here the weapon used was a police lathi, and the convicts ought to have drained out their anger after 10 to 15 beatings. However, they proceeded to beat the accused throughout the night, fully aware of the consequences of their actions, which indicates that they are beyond reformation, the counsel contended, and supported CBI's argument for the death penalty. Jeyaraj's wife, Selvarani, who was moved to tears, also narrated her plight and sought maximum punishment for the convicts.

Recording their submissions, the judge closed the hearing on sentencing and posted the matter on Monday for pronouncing the sentence.

## Horoscopes By Holiday

### HOLIDAY MATHS

03<sup>rd</sup> April: Good Time The trine of Mercury and Jupiter symbolizes meaning carried by words, stories and understanding that travels far beyond the moment. In astrology, Mercury rules messages and interpretation while Jupiter expands wisdom and faith. Their harmony suggests conversations deepen, teachings resonate and insight spreads generously, like a message released into the wide world and warmly received.

### ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)

You'll get the job done, but that's not what they notice. People see the respect you pay with your approach, the thought behind your moves, and they'll appreciate your style. You'll leave an impression beyond the finished work.

### TAURUS (Apr. 20 - May 20)

Financial potential gleams today, and it will respond to attention. Clean out your wallet, inbox or desktop. Order invites attention, and attention notices opportunity. Learn the names of the people who handle money around you - bookkeepers, managers, gatekeepers. Relationships move resources.

### GEMINI (May 21 - June 21)

Sometimes you're called to a task; other times it's about the money or external validation, and there's nothing wrong with that. But since you're always happier when you love the actual work, you'll use that as you guide for picking your next project.

### CANCER (June 22 - July 22)

There's lots of help that doesn't help anyone but the "hero" offering it. Look for motive. Don't accept people's solutions until after you know the backstory. It's a day to ask more questions and leave lots of space for the answers.

### LEO (July 23 - Aug. 22)

You can't tell from the storefront what's on sale. You have to go in and investigate. Today the metaphor applies across the board, so skip the window-shopping and let your curiosity embolden you to enter.

### VIRGO (Aug. 23 - Sept. 22)

You accept that winning often involves loss. You're willing to tolerate a little disappointment, look past it, stay hopeful. A little rain must fall, and you continue through it. Success is a matter of movement.

### LIBRA (Sept. 23 - Oct. 23)

What's trivial? Everything matters to someone. A drop of water is a universe to the microbe. Perspective changes scale. Today, what seems small from afar will contain a whole world of consequence, effort and meaning to those living inside it.

### SCORPIO (Oct. 24 - Nov. 21)

Healthy friendship goes both ways. Notice who initiates, remembers details, follows up and shows up without prompting. If you're always planning, carrying or brightening the room, that's labor. The right friends contribute energy, not just consume it.

### SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 - Dec. 21)

There are reasons you don't push for what you really want. It's not a lack of confidence on your part but a sense that the other person is not ready to give it. It doesn't mean you should give up or turn back; it just calls for a bit of strategy.

### CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 - Jan. 19)

Your cosmic gift is a sense of belonging that fortifies you. It's good to be understood. And when someone seems to do this fully, actively and with so much love... you feel more like yourself in their presence.

### AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 - Feb. 18)

The classic philosophical position ethoed in Stoicism, Buddhism and many leadership traditions: to oneself is a deeper form of strength than controlling others. Today you will embody the most durable form of power - self-command.

### PISCES (Feb. 19 - Mar 20)

Appearances deceive. The obvious interpretation is often wrong. Wisdom comes from looking deeper, and today you're uniquely equipped for it, with a kind of inner sonar that can reach far beneath the surface and return with truth.

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Fill in the grid with digits in such a manner that every row, every column and every 3x3 box accommodates the digits 1 to 9, without repeating any.

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

**CROSSWORD**

**ACROSS**

- Not hard to find ten line errors (7)
- Non-U field event records (5)
- He is held by a form of respect and revulsion (3,6)
- A gold-plated propeller blade (3)
- How fire can become widespread (4)
- Took a quiet walk in the street and tumbled (8)
- Wrongs a source of Shakespearean comedy (6)
- Say positively that it's a source of tension (6)
- A new look for cars here (8)
- Like one always starting in the East (4)
- Are out for a time (3)
- What a cash register does is to stop fiddling (4,5)
- Tour arranged round Denmark's first royal house (5)
- Jacket twice as big as one sort of shirt (7)

**DOWN**

- Afterwards? Dead right! (5)
- Born of woman (3)
- Aristocrat in a real mess (4)
- Break for food in an attempt to reach agreement (6)
- Gets into bad shape (8)
- Takes responsibility for roughshod rules (9)
- Big steps tried out on board (7)
- Strong line taken at a trade exhibition? (4,5)
- A rest for anyone who's still alive (8)
- Dedicated a Sterne novel (7)
- Climbed - then peeled off (6)
- A number with much to distribute (5)
- Included employment rising a son of Isaac (4)
- Billing omits Mr Crosby - sick (3)

**JUMBLE** UNSCRAMBLE THESE JUMBLES, ONE LETTER TO EACH SQUARE, TO FORM FOUR ORDINARY WORDS.

BY DAVID L. HOYT AND JEFF KNUREK

CASOH  
 SIHWK  
 SEDETL  
 SEDTOD

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Yesterdays' Jumbles: GEESE STOMP COFFEE SPIRAL  
 Answer: It sold for \$140 million, but to some, Pollock's 'No. 5, 1948' looked like a - 'MESS'-TERPIECE

# All 204 suburban services restored

Relief for commuters after Beach-Chengalpattu trains were affected for nearly 45 days

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
@ Chennai

FOLLOWING widespread public outcry over the cancellation of 44 train services and persistent delays on the Chennai Beach-Chengalpattu section, Southern Railway on Thursday announced that all 204 suburban trains will be put into operations on the stretch from Friday.

According to an official order, the 44 services that had been cancelled since February 20 to facilitate maintenance work on platforms 10 and 11 at Egmore station as part of a redevelopment plan will be restored from April 3. The order, issued by the Chennai division's operational department, also stated that the schedule followed since February 20 would continue to apply on weekends and festival holidays.

"All the train services, including stoppages and opera-



Crowd at Egmore Railway Station on Thursday | MARTIN LOUIS

tional patterns, are reverted to the pre-block arrangements on the Chennai Beach - Tambaram - Chengalpattu - Arakkonam section, restoring seamless and efficient connectivity," said an official note issued by Chennai railway division on Thursday.

Although the maintenance was originally scheduled to run

from February 20 to April 5, the railways completed the work well ahead of the planned block period and decided to restore regular services earlier than expected.

During the maintenance at Egmore station, suburban services were shifted from the slow line platforms 10 and 11 to the fast line platforms 5 and 6. As a

result, trains arriving from Park station that normally used platform 10 were diverted to platform 5. From there, they had to cross six tracks between Chennai Egmore and Chetpet to rejoin the slow line at Chetpet. Similarly, trains running from Tambaram towards Chennai Beach faced the same operational changes. Express trains were also routed through the fast lines, adding to the disruptions and delays.

During the block period, the total number of services on the section was reduced from 204 to 160. Meanwhile, the MRTS extension from Velachery to St Thomas Mount was inaugurated on March 14. This extension not only provided a link between the southwestern suburbs and central city areas but also offered an alternative route to Chennai Beach, Central, and Fort stations for passengers affected by the cancellation of 44 local trains.



Deputy CM Udhayanidhi Stalin leading a roadshow in his constituency | EXPRESS

## Chennai is DMK's fort, 'Team TN' will defeat Delhi in polls: Udhaya

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
@ Chennai

DEPUTY Chief Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin on Thursday filed his nomination papers for the Chepauk-Thiruvallikkeni constituency, and expressed confidence of being re-elected from the seat with a record margin for the second consecutive term.

The 48-year-old DMK youth wing secretary arrived at the venue after a massive roadshow that saw thousands of cadres and supporters line the streets. "For the last three days, I have been campaigning in different parts of the state. We have a very bright chance of winning the election. I could see more women voters extending their support to DMK," he told the reporters. Addressing the voters of the constituency, he said, "In all these five years, I have been with the people of my constituency. Let it be Covid-19 or rain, I have been with them all 365 days. I could see the reception for my work," he said.

"Chennai is DMK's fort. The CM has done a lot for Chennai,

including schemes for development of North Chennai and building of storm water drains and new flyovers. When it comes to Chennai's infrastructure, it has always been DMK that has delivered," he said.

"Delhi (BJP) is trying to take control of our state through AIADMK. That's why we are continuously saying that the election is between Delhi and Tamil Nadu. We are sure that team TN will win," Udhayanidhi told reporter. Meanwhile, on the second day of filing of nominations, as many as 59 candidates, including 24 independents, filed their papers across 16 constituencies in Chennai.

Former AIADMK minister D Jayakumar filed his nomination in Royapuram, PMK's M Thilagabama in Perambur, and AMMK's candidate and former minister G Senthamizhan file his papers in Saidapet. T Porkodi, wife of slain state BSP president K Armstrong, filed nomination at Thiru Vi Ka Nagar on behalf of AIADMK. Ten NTK and five TVK candidates also filed their papers in various constituencies.

## EXPRESS READ 38-yr-old ends life after dispute over alcohol

Chennai: A 38-year-old carpenter was found dead at his residence in Medavakkam on Wednesday, hours after an argument with his wife over his alcohol consumption. Police identified the deceased as Murugan, a native of Kovilambakkam. According to sources, Murugan had returned home in an inebriated state on Tuesday night, which led to a heated exchange with his wife, who reprimanded him over his drinking habit. Following the argument, Murugan went into a room and locked the door. When he did not come out for a long time, his wife, with the help of neighbours, forced the door open and found him unresponsive, sources said. Medavakkam police have registered a case. (Assistance for those having suicidal thoughts is available on TN's health helpline 104 and Sneha's suicide prevention helpline 044-24640050). ENS

## Plea to postpone IPL: HC refuses urgent hearing

CHENNAI: The first bench of the Madras High Court presided by Chief Justice Sushrut Arvind Dharmadhikari on Thursday refused urgent hearing of a PIL petition seeking to postpone two IPL matches, that are scheduled for April 4 and April 11 at Chepauk. The bench said there was no compulsion to watch the match and the petitioner can remain at home. The petition was filed by Prabhakaran, a resident of Triplicane. He had expressed apprehensions that political parties may send their supporters to the stadium and may attempt to do campaigning by displaying party flags or symbols. ENS

## Blaze engulfs godown near Anna Salai

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
@ Chennai

A major fire broke out at a godown behind the LIC building on Thiru Vi Ka Road near Anna Salai on Thursday afternoon. The blaze, which began around 12 pm, was brought under control after a struggle lasting more than two hours. No injuries were reported.

According to Fire and Rescue Service (TNFRS) department, the fire broke out inside an automobile spare parts godown on the terrace of a two-floor commercial complex. A portion of the terrace had been used as a godown, sources said. Officials suspect that sparks from welding work nearby could have triggered the fire. Workers



Thick black smoke from the godown that caught fire on Thursday | EXPRESS

initially attempted to douse the flames, but the fire spread rapidly. Thick black smoke en-

gulfed the area, making it difficult for the workers to spot the source of the fire, so they ran out of the building. Shops on the two floors below were also evacuated. The TNFRS was alerted, and eight fire tenders were pressed into service. Two water tankers were also deployed to aid the operation.

Firefighters managed to extinguish the blaze after an effort lasting more than two hours. "A preliminary inquiry revealed that welding work was underway in the godown, and we suspect this triggered the fire. Further inquiry is on to ascertain the exact sequence of events. Nobody was injured, and property loss is yet to be assessed," official sources told TNIE.

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I hail from a village, where people need only five things: Clean drinking water, roads, uninterrupted electricity, drainage and sanitation. If politicians or candidates can assure these, they will have rural support. So I suggest candidates focus on these



Law and order has hit a new low under the DMK regime, worse than the AIADMK rule. Drug abuse has increased across TN under this government. Unemployment has increased and in Krishnagiri district, theft incidents are on the rise



The DMK MPs have failed to stop NEET, one of their key promises. When the AIADMK had 37 MPs, they boycotted Lok Sabha and we implemented the SC judgment in Cauvery issue

Edappadi K Palaniswami, AIADMK general secretary

VIJAY FILES NOMINATION



TVK leader Vijay garlanding and paying respects to the statue of former AIADMK supremo MGR at Marakkadai, Tiruchy, on Thursday | M K ASHOK KUMAR

# DMK alliance is a 'half-saffron' front, charges TVK chief

VIVANESH PARTHIBAN @ Tiruchy

TAMILNAGU Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) president Vijay on Thursday launched his campaign shortly after filing his nomination from Tiruchy East, alleging that there was "no difference" between the DMK and the BJP and claiming that the two parties were in an "indirect alliance".

Addressing a gathering near Marakkadai junction on West Boulevard Road, a constituency where minority votes are considered significant, Vijay accused both parties of misleading voters. "There is no difference between the DMK and the BJP. An indirect alliance exists," he said, adding that minority communities were being deceived through the DMK's association with the Congress. He further alleged that "a few Congress leaders" had been influenced by money.

ing his film Jana Nayagan, Vijay alleged that attempts were being made to restrict its reach due to fears over its potential electoral influence. He claimed that there was a "collusive conspiracy" involving both state and central forces.

Raising civic concerns, Vijay pointed to an ongoing LPG shortage, stating that it had disrupted daily life and affected small businesses.

Taking a swipe at Chief Minister M K Stalin, Vijay alleged that the government was downplaying the crisis. "For a gas cylinder crisis affecting people in the state, the CM does not go to Delhi to raise the issue. But when there is a raid involving a minister in Tamil Nadu, he goes to Delhi," Vijay remarked.

Earlier in the day, Vijay filed his nomination at the Zone 2 Corporation office at around 12.25 pm before the returning officer. He began his campaign address at approximately 12.39 pm and concluded it by 12.54 pm, keeping the speech brief.

The campaign witnessed a relatively subdued turnout compared to his public meeting at the same venue in September 2025. While supporters gathered at the venue, the overall crowd was visibly smaller. The afternoon heat, hovering around 36°C, added to the strain, with a few attendees allegedly experiencing discomfort due to overcrowding and limited access to water. Organisers later distributed water and glucose packets.

Elaborating on his claims, Vijay said that while the DMK functioned with the support of certain Congress leaders, the BJP-led alliance, which he described as a "half-saffron" front, was also indirectly aligned with the ruling party. Urging voters to remain cautious, he said, "Do not trust the DMK or the BJP. If you vote for either, remember they are the same," while reiterating that the electoral contest in Tamil Nadu would be a direct fight between the DMK and the TVK.

Breaking his silence on the controversy surround-

# Cop's leg fractured as Aadhav's car hits him

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Tiruchy

A police constable, who was deployed for security during the election campaign of TVK leader Vijay in Marakkadai in Tiruchy, sustained a fracture in his right leg after a car, belonging to a senior TVK leader, ran over his leg. The injured constable has been identified as S Sathishkumar (28) from Karur, who serves in the 1st Battalion of TSP in Tiruchy.



Constable S Sathishkumar being taken to hospital | M K ASHOK KUMAR

Arjuna was not inside the car at the time of the incident, the police said.

Following the incident, the Traffic North Investigation Wing registered a case against the car driver M Aravind (32) of Ariyapuram in Chennai under sections 281 and 125(a) of BNS. Further investigations are on. Following the incident, Aadhav Arjuna visited the injured constable. Former AIADMK Minister Vellamandi N Natarajan, Tiruchy East AIADMK candidate K Rajasekaran, and others also visited the injured constable.

Earlier on Thursday, a couple fell off a vehicle near Melapur during Vijay's arrival. Seeing this, Vijay immediately stepped down and helped them. During his campaign at Marakkadai, an 18-year-old girl from Ariyapuram, who had come to see Vijay, fainted due to the scorching sun.

According to police, Sathishkumar was on duty during Vijay's campaign at the MGR statue in the Marakkadai area in Tiruchy city, where Vijay addressed supporters and conducted his election campaign after filing his nomination to contest from the Tiruchy East constituency. Around 1 pm, when Vijay left the spot after his campaign, the crowd moved the barricades to get a better view of him and stepped out. During this time, they allegedly pushed Sathishkumar, who was standing near the MGR statue. At the same time, Aadhav Arjuna's car driver failed to stop and hit the constable. Sathishkumar sustained a fracture in his right leg. Upon noticing, police and TVK cadre rescued him and admitted him to Tiruchy MGMH. Aadhav

CHENNAI • FRIDAY 03-04-2026

# THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

# Stalin laces into EPS over Pollachi case, says women safer under DMK

Chargesheets filed within 60 days in 86% cases, AIADMK trying to hoodwink people, says CM

P SRINIVASAN @ Erode

CHIEF Minister and DMK president MK Stalin on Thursday countered recurring opposition charges on law and order in the state by claiming women were not safe during the previous AIADMK regime of Edappadi K Palaniswami.

Stalin cited the Pollachi sex scandal and a few other sensational cases to buttress his point while speaking at a public meeting at Thindal to introduce the candidates from the Assembly seats in Erode district.

"The DMK government has taken various measures to prevent crimes against women. Laws have been tightened to the point of imposing death penalty for sexual assault on girls. Under the DMK regime, chargesheets have been filed within 60 days in more than 86% of cases. Tamil Nadu is the only state in India where law and order is good, and women are safe. That's why more women arrive to work here," Stalin said.



Chief Minister M K Stalin during the public meeting at Thindal, introducing the party's candidates from the Assembly seat in Erode on Thursday | S SENAGAPANDIYAN

"The DMK government is, in reality, a true friend to women, but the AIADMK is trying to conceal this fact through false allegations. AIADMK general secretary Palaniswami is spreading lies and rumours out of jealousy towards the DMK."

"He has no right to speak about women's safety. The Pollachi incident is proof. Didn't the tears of the victimised women shake his conscience? He staged many dra-

mas over that case. He delayed filing a case. They allowed the criminals to escape. The families of the victims were subjected to threats during the AIADMK regime. The DMK government secured life imprisonment for the culprits," the CM asserted.

The DMK chief also recalled a DGP sexually harassing a female superintendent of police during the AIADMK regime.

He also dubbed the NDA a 'treacherous alliance'.

## 'EPS has copied DMK's election manifesto'

Later speaking at a meeting in Coimbatore, Stalin said Palaniswami has copied the DMK's election manifesto and changed it under their name.

"Palaniswami has copied Magalir Urimai Thogai Scheme and free travel scheme for women in buses. We have successfully implemented many schemes that we had not even promised, which is why I stand before you today with pride and confidence. After ruling for 10 years, the AIADMK has no list of achievements or schemes to show. This problem is even bigger for his 'owner', the corporate leader and PM Narendra Modi than for Palaniswami himself. Modi mostly lives abroad and remembers TN only when elections approach," he added.

"I am asked why the DMK is opposing the BJP so strongly. The reason is simple: the BJP insults Tamil, Tamils and Tamil Nadu," he stated.

(With inputs from M Saravanan @ Coimbatore)

## Stalin spreading lies; BJP list will be out today: Nainar

Chennai: BJP state president Nainar Nagenthran on Thursday criticised CM M K Stalin for claiming that PM Narendra Modi would change the name of Tamil Nadu. He said it was unbecoming of a CM to spread such baseless



rumours to mask his fear of defeat. Regarding the party's candidate list, he said it would be announced on Friday after discussions with Union Minister Piyush Goyal, who is expected to arrive in Chennai. He added that PM Modi will meet party functionaries at a private hotel in the city on April 4 and confirmed that there would be no campaign. According to Nagenthran, PM will arrive in Chennai on April 3 and leave for Puducherry. ENS

# 1,361 candidates filed poll nominations till Thursday

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Chennai

AS many as 1,361 candidates have filed their nominations for the Assembly election till Thursday. Among them is S Roshini of Naam Tamilar Katchi, the lone transgender candidate in the fray so far. On the first day of filing, a total of 573 nominations were submitted.

Though four days remain before the deadline, only two working days — April 4 and April 6 — are available for submitting nominations, as April 3 and 5 are public holidays. Deputy Chief Minister Udhay-

anidhi Stalin (Chepauk-Thiruvallikeni), TVK president Vijay (Tiruchy East), AIADMK leader D Jayakumar (Royapuram), PMK's M Thilagabama (Perambur) and Porkodi (Thiru Vi Ka Nagar) were among those who filed nominations on Thursday.

Porkodi, the wife of slain BSP state president K Armstrong, is contesting on the AIADMK's 'Two Leaves' symbol under the banner of the Tamil Maanila Bahujan Samaj Katchi. AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami is yet to file the papers and is expected to do so on April 6.

# Ramadoss releases list of 18 candidates

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Chennai

PMK's founder S Ramadoss, on Thursday, released the party's third and fourth list of candidates for the upcoming Tamil Nadu Assembly election, naming candidates for 18 Assembly constituencies. After he inked a poll pact with late AIADMK supremo Jayalalithaa's former aide V K Sasikala, who recently launched her own political outfit — the All India Puratchi Thalavaivar Makkal

Munnetra Kazhagam — Ramadoss has so far named candidates for 32 Assembly seats.

According to the announcement, V S Venkatesh will contest from Anaikattu, P N J Ajayraj from Arcot, Ma Vetrivel from Arakonam and Vedha Mukundan from Keezhvelur. M Vijayan has been fielded from Sholingur, Karuppan Manickam from Thittakudi and V Kalaimani from Arani. R Janakiraman will contest from Kilpenathur, while C Sureshkumar has

been given ticket for Omalur. Sarala Raju, PMK's women's wing state secretary, will contest from Uthiramerur.

Meanwhile, Ramadoss also announced the removal of five party functionaries, including Chengalpattu central district secretary K Janarthanan, Kallakurichi West district secretary S V N Babu, Kallakurichi East district secretary P K Jegan, Vellore district organising secretary A M Krishnan, and Puducherry state organiser Ko Ganapathi.



Chepauk-Thiruvallikeni constituency candidate and Deputy CM Udhayanidhi Stalin filed his nomination on Thursday | ASHWIN PRASATH

## EXPRESS READ

### Vijay's Tiruchy rally near exam centre troubles Class 10 students

Tiruchy: Noise raised by TVK supporters before and during actor Vijay's campaign caused disturbance to Class 10 students who were writing their boards as the meeting venue was located barely 100m from the school where the exam was held. The Social Science examination was held at government Syed Murthuzha Higher Secondary School on Old Madurai Road from 10 am to 1.15 pm, which coincided with Vijay's campaign timing. Around 175 students appeared for the exam. A senior education department official said, "We anticipated disturbance and ensured students wrote the exam in farthest place in the school. However, noise was unavoidable." The disturbance was particularly severe towards the end of the examination around 1 pm, when Vijay started speaking. Officials said the examination was completed on schedule. ENS

# DMK has been Congress' slave for years: EPS

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Krishnagiri/Dharmapuri

WHILE the DMK's alliance parties are not happy with the seat-sharing arrangements for the Assembly election, the AIADMK formed an alliance and seat-sharing happened swiftly, said AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami, in Krishnagiri on Thursday.

Campaigning for the party's candidates in Krishnagiri district, Palaniswami said, "Stalin is stating that the AIADMK is BJP's slave when in reality, the DMK has been the Congress' slave for many years. While the DMK is proclaiming it has a grand alliance, the fact is AIADMK has more political parties with higher vote bank in the NDA."

"Recently, VCK leader Thol Thirumavalavan fumed that due to the delay in seat sharing talks, they were unable to field good candidate. All political



AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami along with K P Anbalagan during his campaign tour in Dharmapuri on Thursday | EXPRESS

leaders in the DMK alliance are crying and are unhappy. An audio message was widely circulated on social media wherein former DMK minister A Raja was allegedly fuming that he was not supported by the DMK when he was arrested for the alleged 2G spectrum scam, but Kanimozhi Karunanidhi was

protected."

"If DMK comes to power, Stalin will treat the people of Tamil Nadu as prisoners," Palaniswami added.

## 'AIADMK's ideology is to fight for Tamils'

Campaigning later in Dharmapuri, he said, "Our key

ideology is to fight for the rights of Tamils. In 2021, we achieved an overwhelming victory in Dharmapuri, cementing the district as one of AIADMK's forts."

Speaking about the increase in crimes against women and children, he said, "As per the government's data, a total of 26,651 cases have been committed against women and children. Yet, Stalin claims that law and order is not affected. In the Anna University sexual assault case, we are yet to identify who that 'sir' is. We can list out many crimes where justice has been denied."

"The DMK MPs have failed to stop NEET, a key promise made by the DMK during the 2021 election. When the AIADMK had 37 MPs, they boycotted the Lok Sabha proceedings for 22 days, and we had fought and implemented the Supreme Court judgment of the Cauvery water issue," he added.

For us, elections are not about big promises but about survival. The Great Salt Lake wetland feeds my children and grandchildren. If the government goes ahead with this (Mamallan) reservoir project and takes away our water, how will we live?



The two Dravidian parties have ruled the state for long and they don't have anything new to offer. From bribes collected in government offices to basic infrastructure like roads, everything needs to change

Divya Bharathi (42), a resident of Maduravoyal

DMK DEPUTY GEN SECY A RAJA

CHENNAI • FRIDAY  
03-04-2026



THE NEW  
INDIAN  
EXPRESS



Chief Minister M K Stalin claims there is no relation between the state government and the LPG cylinder supply issue. But when there is a raid or a problem involving his family, he flies off to Delhi

TVK president Vijay



‘Temple-thronging Tamils voting for DMK befuddle BJP’

A MID intense campaigning for the upcoming Assembly election, DMK deputy general secretary and former telecom minister A Raja in an interview to *TNIE's Prabhakar Tamilarasu* defended the party's welfare model and why the BJP cannot crack Tamil Nadu, among others.

■ **DMK's key campaign agenda is its numerous welfare measures. Which schemes do you think have had the most impact?**

Let me give you an example in the Kalaingar Magalir Urimai Thogai (KMUT) scheme.

Take a small village — let's say my own village. There are about 1,600 women there. When you give each of them ₹1,000 every month, that money doesn't just sit with them. They spend it on vegetables, clothing and other essentials. That money largely circulates within the village—the local grocery shop, vendor and other small businesses. Through the transactions, ₹1 crore to ₹2 crore gets circulated locally. When analysts' studies pointed to a sudden boost in the rural economy, Chief Minister M K Stalin pointed it straight back to the scheme. It has created a multiplier effect in the rural economy.

**Politically Correct**

■ **But critics say these are just “freebies”...** Let me ask: today, if a household has a television, is that not transformative? It gives women and children a window to the world. How can that be merely dismissed as a freebie?

None of our schemes is populist giveaway. Every one of them is designed to uplift the economic condition, social status and awareness among the marginalised communities.

■ **The DMK has framed this election as ‘Delhi vs Tamil Nadu.’ But there is criticism that the party is overplaying this narrative...**

It is not overused. Our direct ideological opposition to the BJP is not new. For 70 years, the DMK and the AIADMK—I include them too, although they had a diluted view of Dravidian principles—have stood for Dravidian principles. But today, the AIADMK says Dravidian principles do not matter, which is a great betrayal.

The BJP (on the other hand) represents a regres-

sive ideology—the idea that nothing should change. That a worker should remain one. That caste hierarchies should be preserved.

Our ideology says the opposite: educate your children, break free, pursue any livelihood you choose. We will ensure governance, education and institutional support. Our position is that their regressive ideology must not take root here. And in that fight, the one who is succeeding is Kalaingar's son, M K Stalin. This election is not just for Tamil Nadu—it is for India. It is about protecting the soul of India's democracy.

■ **But can you really say the BJP hasn't grown at all in Tamil Nadu?**

Regressive ideas are growing worldwide, that's true. But in Tamil Nadu, the BJP has not been able to gain a foothold. The reason is Periyar's ideology is institutionalised here.

People here understand that Periyar did not say, ‘There is no God’ to attack beliefs, but to protect the oppressed from being exploited in the name of God and religion. In Tamil Nadu, a devout person will go to the temple, come out, and vote for the DMK. He will chant, ‘Long live Periyar.’ The BJP cannot understand or crack the puzzle of how Periyar's ideology coexists with temple worship in Tamil Nadu. That is the genius of the Dravidian movement.

■ **How does the DMK view the entry of a new force — Vijay's TVK?**

There are established ideological streams in Indian politics: the Congress tradition of Gandhi and Nehru; the constitutional vision of Ambedkar; the Left's focus on economic liberation; and our Dravidian ideology of Periyar and Anna. Now, there is a generation of young people — 18-year-olds, first-time voters — who may not have been directly touched by any of these ideological traditions. We are worried that we failed to engage this generation, and we want to address that gap.

■ **A common criticism is that Dravidian parties talk about social justice but don't field Dalit candidates in general constituencies.**

I acknowledge that there is a certain logic behind that criticism, even if the question itself seems unfair. But consider this: CT Dhandapani contested from Coimbatore West. Abraham contested from a general constituency in the 1970s. The question is — when you field a Dalit candidate in a general seat, what are the realistic chances of winning?

DHEEPTHI O J @Chennai

THE scorching Chennai sun is no deterrent to the bustle at Usman Road, the heart of T Nagar. The aroma of freshly ground filter coffee from Sundaram Coffee wafting through the air blends with that of malli in the vendors' pushcarts. Adding to the lively mood are the brightly-coloured Pokémon and Tom and Jerry keychains hanging from roadside shops, where college student haggle with vendors.

Beneath the newly-inaugurated J Anbazhagan flyover, named after the late father of DMK candidate Raja Anbazhagan, two-wheelers stand tightly packed against a pier, often spilling beyond the painted parking line. Suddenly, an MTC bus descending the flyover gets stuck on the road. Two autorickshaws must be moved; the bus driver honks in frustration. After a pause, one autorickshaw moves forward, and the bus inches ahead, brushing against a two-wheeler jutting out of the parking space. Though the road is about 10 metres wide on one side, haphazard parking has drastically reduced the usable space. Vehicles inch by, often grazing parked bikes which sometimes fall like dominoes.

For the residents of one of Chennai's busiest commercial hubs since the early 1950s, this daily inconvenience takes a dangerous turn during emergencies, as ambulances and fire engines struggle to navigate the congested stretch. Recalling the 2017 Chennai Silks fire, which took over 30 hours to douse and led to the collapse of a major portion of the seven-storey building, B Kannan, a resident of 50 years at Rangan Street, says several exist-

With 2017 blaze at Chennai Silks fresh in mind, fire safety is a major concern for residents in the state's primary shopping hub

TRIAL BY FIRE FOR ASPIRANTS IN CHENNAI'S DOWNTOWN



The Anbazhagan flyover overlooking T Nagar's shopping hub | MARTIN LOUIS

ing commercial establishments violate fire safety norms. Fearing a repeat of the fire, he says the ₹164.92 crore Anbazhagan flyover and ₹28.45 crore skywalk have worsened access for emergency vehicles.

“The fire from commercial buildings can quickly reach our homes. Where will we go?” asks longtime resident VS Jayaraman, from Motilal Street, voicing a key concern among the 6,000 residents of the streets abutting South Usman Road.

This mix of commercial and residential makes the T Nagar constituency unique. Many residents are concerned commercial establishments are engulfing homes they have lived in for decades while much-hyped infrastructure projects such as the skywalk, multi-level car parking,

BATTLEGROUND  
T NAGAR

and pedestrian plaza, have failed to fulfil their purpose. Residents also point to poor civic infrastructure, including British-era underground drainage that frequently clogs, as well as inadequate drinking water supply, and urge the government to either declare the area entirely commercial or address long-pending civic and infrastructure concerns.

Many residents also feel incumbent DMK MLA Karunanithi, Raja Anbazhagan's uncle, and his predecessor B Sathiyanaarayanan, of AIADMK, were inefficient with the former not

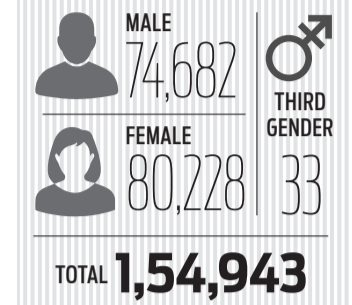
visiting many places in the constituency since 2021.

Besides T Nagar, the segment includes West Mambalam, Kodambakkam, Vadapalani, Ashok Nagar, KK Nagar, MGR Nagar, and CIT Nagar. Over the years, the constituency has alternated between the DMK and AIADMK. It saw nearly 34% deletions during the Special Intensive Revision exercise, reducing the electorate from 2,35,616 to 1,54,943.

Karunanithi was elected in 2021 by the smallest margin in the state, defeating Sathiyanaarayanan by 137 votes. Residents Suryan Basheer and Jayaraman say voting was shaped by both an anti-BJP wave as well as a Brahmin majority, which largely backs the AIADMK-BJP alliance. Muslims have notable presence in some pockets. Though BJP eyed the seat as it had polled 37% of votes in the segment when it contested alone in the 2024 Lok Sabha election, AIADMK chose to field Sathiyanaarayanan again.

Sathiyanaarayanan believes voters would back EPS' achievements while assuring that T Nagar-specific promises would be announced on April 9 during EPS's visit. Raja Anbazhagan is the grandson of ‘Pazhakkadai’ Jayaraman known for the fruit shop that runs till date near Ran-

BIRD'S EYE VIEW



PAST RESULTS

Year	Contestant	Vote
2021	J Karunanithi (DMK)	56,035
	B Sathiyanaarayanan (AIADMK)	55,898
2016	B Sathiyanaarayanan (AIADMK)	53,207
	Dr N S Kanimozhi (DMK)	50,052
2011	V P Kalairajan (AIADMK)	75,883
	A Chellakumar (INC)	43,421

ganathan Street in the constituency. His father, a three-time MLA, was elected from here in 2001. He brings with him the experience of serving as councillor of Ward 141 of Greater Chennai Corporation from 2022 and aims to bring Smart City Project 2.0 to ease traffic congestion.

NTK has fielded a Brahmin lawyer V Anusha, while TVK's general secretary N Anand is also in the fray. Anand has begun campaigning with TVK's social media handles, posting reels of him taking a walk in a park and interacting with residents. He couldn't be reached for a comment. Having begun door-to-door campaigning a month ago, Anusha says she has identified lack of drinking water and outdated drainage systems as issues to address if elected.

ASSET TRACKER

With filing of poll nominations under way, *TNIE* features details of assets declared by some of the key candidates in their affidavits submitted on Thursday



**UDHAYANIDHI STALIN**  
Deputy Chief Minister and DMK youth wing secretary  
DMK candidate, Chepauk-Thiruvallikeni

**INCOME IN 2024-25 - ₹3.02 CRORE**

Jewellery - 200 sovereigns	₹1.87 cr
Movable assets (A)	₹26.17 cr
Immovable assets (B)	₹7.72 cr
Total assets in 2026 (A+B)	₹33.8 cr
Liabilities	NA
Total assets in 2021	₹29.07 cr
Growth since 2021	₹4.73 cr



**D JAYAKUMAR**  
former AIADMK minister  
AIADMK candidate, Royapuram

**INCOME IN 2024-25 - ₹62.07L**

Jewellery - 117.5 sovereigns	₹1.12 cr
Movable assets (A)	₹4.69 cr
Immovable assets (B)	₹64L
Total assets in 2026 (A+B)	₹5.33 cr
Liabilities	₹32.34L
Total assets in 2021	₹1.79 cr
Growth since 2021	₹3.54 cr



**T PORKODI ARMSTRONG**  
Wife of late TN Bahujan Samaj Party leader K Armstrong  
AIADMK candidate, Thiru Vi Ka Nagar

**INCOME IN 2024-25 - ₹17.26L**

Jewellery - 178.25 sovereigns	₹1.71 cr
Movable assets (A)	₹2.93 cr
Immovable assets (B)	₹2 cr
Total assets in 2026 (A+B)	₹4.93 cr
Liabilities	NA
Total assets in 2021	NA
Growth since 2021	NA

(All details are inclusive of the details of the candidates and that of their immediate family members mentioned in the affidavit)

FROM *TNIE'S* ARCHIVES

‘Two leaves’ for AIADMK where it contests

The Central Election Commission has directed the Tamil Nadu Chief Electoral Officer to allot the “two leaves” symbol to All-India Anna DMK candidates in the Lok Sabha elections. Mr. S. P. Srinivasan, Chief Electoral Officer told newsmen on Friday.

The two leaves symbol will be a common symbol in constituencies where AIADMK is not contesting and any independent candidate can seek the allotment of this symbol.

A newspaper clipping from the Express edition dated February 12, 1977, featuring a report on the central election commission directing the then Tamil Nadu chief electoral officer to allot the ‘two leaves’ symbol to the AIADMK candidates contesting the Lok Sabha election | EXPRESS

In a first in TN polls, CPI, CPM left on the bench in Coimbatore

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Coimbatore

IN a departure from the norm, the communists have been left on the bench in Coimbatore for the TN elections.

The CPI and the CPM not contesting in any of the district's 10 Assembly segments for the April 23 polls has left many upset, especially when Coimbatore that houses several industries has been a stronghold of Leftist movements.

The Left parties have contested in every TN election here, as their cadre base in the district is much higher compared to other western districts, except Tiruppur.

But this time they are out of the running, thanks to seat-sharing compromises in alliance politics. And being not in fray in Coimbatore — also called the Manchester of South India — is a first for them.

This time they were expecting Singanallur for the CPM and Valparai for the CPI, but the two seats went to the Congress and the DMK, respectively, during seat allocation.

“The Left grew in Coimbatore because of the strength of the labour force and the trade unions in the textile mills. They had won the maximum Lok Sabha elections from Coimbatore and shown strong presence in Assembly elections since

1952. The Left were able to maintain a stronghold over Coimbatore, even when the Congress reigned supreme. This is the first election when the communist parties would step back,” said M Murugesan (71), a retired mill worker owing allegiance to the CPM.

“Whenever a Left party contests election, we go for campaigning regardless of the constituency and the results. This time we miss that experience,” said Mu Manoharan, an autorickshaw driver.

Both the CPM and the CPI had contested in at least one seat in Coimbatore all these years, and they had won 11 times (the CPM eight times and the CPI, three times).

“The CPM has been allotted just five seats. If we were given one additional seat, Singanallur would have been our choice. In the next election, we will demand and get more seats, and contest in at least one seat in Coimbatore.” CPM state secretary P Shanmugam said, adding that the party won't lose ground here just because it's not contesting this time.

CPI state secretary M Veerapandian said, “If the CPI was allotted six or seven seats, one of our preferences would have been Valparai. The seat allocation will not weaken the party's structure. It is just a compromise for the elections.”

History-sheeter files nomination from prison for Alangulam seat

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Tirunelveli

LODGED in Central Prison, Puzhal, A Hari Nadar (43), a history-sheeter who has 24 criminal cases against him, filed his nomination papers through his agents for the Alangulam Assembly constituency on Thursday. He took oath before the jail superintendent in Puzhal.

He owns 11.650kg of gold ornaments.

This is the third election for Hari, who secured 37,727 votes in the Alangulam constituency in the 2021 general election and 4,243 votes in the bypoll conducted in Nanguneri constituency in 2019.

Apart from cheating, he has been booked for criminal intimidation, and damage to public property, among others. Hari has studied up to SSLC.

He has movable assets worth ₹26.76 crore and immovable assets worth ₹12 lakh.

It was history-sheeter Rocket Raja who fielded Hari and campaigned for him in 2021. As they are not on speaking terms, both have entered the fray in the same constituency in this year's Assembly election, sources said.

OFF THE KUFF

Storm in a cup

A storm, it appears, can still brew over something as small as a cup. A case in point is when Minister R Gandhi, who accompanied VCK candidate Ezhil Caroline to the Arakonam RDO to file her nomination papers on Thursday, was offered a drink—water or tea, depending on whom you ask. Critics were quick to cry foul, calling it a violation of norms. But the outrage soon lost steam, with some graciously conceding that the minister, reportedly feeling giddy, could be excused for accepting a sip of water. What was served remains unclear but what's certain is that it managed to stir more than just thirst - Nimisha S Pradeep

Chengalpattu's calm before clash

The DMK's candidate list for the Assembly election has sparked unrest across pockets of the party base, with protests breaking out from Tambaram onwards. Yet, Chengalpattu stands apart. The sitting MLA, denied a ticket again, has chosen silence over dissent, prompting speculation. Party insiders suggest the in-charge minister was wary of her return, as a third win might have bolstered her ministerial prospects and unsettled internal equations. On the ground, functionaries appear to have swiftly shifted allegiance to the new face. With both the DMK and the AIADMK gearing up, a tight contest looms - Rajalakashmi Sampath

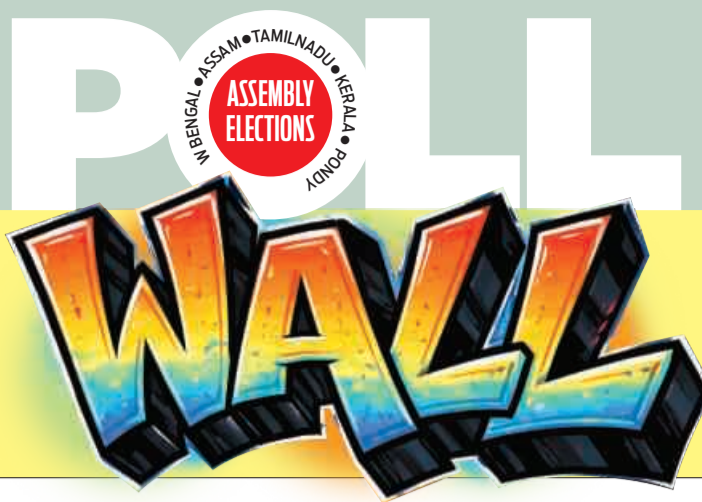
This election is not about letting Trinamool congress win. This is about teaching a rightful lesson to those who have deprived us in every step. There has been visible development in West Bengal in the last 15 years.

Abhishek Banerjee, TMC MP



Trinamool Congress is only concerned about creating ruckus in the state. When an elephant walks through the road, other dogs keep barking. How will their party run if they do not create chaos in West Bengal?

Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, Senior Congress leader



The BJP is operating unconstitutionally by rendering 50,000 Muslims homeless and Congress is unable to speak, it is important the people of Assam vote for the AIDUF

Asaduddin Owaisi, AIMIM chief

## ASSAM Cong promises ST status to tea tribes, Rahul slams Himanta



PRASANTA MAZUMDAR @Guwahati

CONGRESS leader and Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Thursday released the party's Assam manifesto, assuring five developmental guarantees and promising Scheduled Tribe (ST) status for six communities — Tai Ahom, Moran, Matak, Chutia, Koch-Rajbongshi, and Adivasi (Tea Tribes).

ST status has long been a key demand of these groups. Tea Tribes and Tai Ahoms represent a significant voter base, particularly in Upper Assam, where the ruling BJP faces a perceived challenge in the April 9 elections.

Last year, a group of ministers (GoM) recommended granting ST status to the six communities and the state government forwarded the report to the Centre. Existing ST communities opposed the move, arguing it would dilute their rights.

In its election manifesto, Rajiv Istar, released at Bokajan in Karbi Anglong, the Congress outlined five priorities to be completed within its first 100 days in power:

publishing a White Paper on Assam's financial condition; setting up an Anti-Corruption Commission and ensuring transparent land, revenue, and taxation systems; prioritising locals in jobs and government contracts; providing immediate flood relief and initiating erosion control; and fast-tracking recruitment to fill vacancies in hospitals and schools.

The party also announced five "guarantees", including delivering justice within 100 days in the case of late singer-musician Zubeen Garg. The manifesto proposes a "Zubeen Garg Fellowship" for youth in cultural fields and the establishment of a Centre of Excellence for Art and Culture.

The Congress pledged to revive the tea industry, ensure tea workers receive industrial minimum wages and benefits, and improve infrastructure in tea garden areas, including free school buses, drinking water, sanitation, roads, and electricity. It also promised that relatives of MLAs would not be awarded government contracts or schemes.

The Congress says it is committed to fully implementing the Assam Accord to ensure constitutional safeguards, protect tribal lands under the Sixth Schedule and the Forest Rights Act, and prevent encroachment.

Addressing a rally in Karbi Anglong earlier in the day, Gandhi targeted CM Himanta Biswa Sarma, leveling corruption allegations against him. He alleged that Sarma and other BJP leaders had turned Assam into a "land ATM".

Rahul Gandhi, LoP

CM Himanta and other BJP leaders had turned Assam into a land ATM, distributing land to select industrialists and using proceeds for political purposes

### Trinamool Congress

**Moloy Ghatak**  
Asansol Uttar

● Brother Abhijit Ghatak, contesting from Kulti

### Ratna Chattopadhyay

Behala Paschim

● Brother Subhashish Das contesting from Maheshtala, Children of late MLA Dulal Das

### Becharam Manna

Singur

● Wife Karabi Manna contesting from Haripal

### Sirsanya Bandopadhyay

Uttarpara ● Son of MP Kalyan Banerjee

### Sandipan Saha

Entally ● Son of MLA Swarna Kamal Saha

### Tirthankar Ghosh

Panihati

● Son of MLA Nirmal Ghosh from the same seat

### Mausam Noor

Malatipur

● Niece of late Cong leader A B A Ghani Khan Choudhury

### Congress

**Rohan Mitra**  
Ballygunge

● Son of former state Cong chief Somen Mitra

### Nepal Mahato

Bagmundi, Purulia

● Son of former MP Debendra Mahato

### CPI(M)/Left

**Saptarshi Deb**  
Rajarhat-New Town

● Son of former minister Gautam Deb

### Bharatiya Janata Party

**Dibyendu Adhikari**  
Egra

● Brother LoP Suwendu Adhikari contesting from Nandigram and Bhabanipur

### Pawan Singh

Bhatpara

● Son of former MP Arjun Singh, who is contesting from Noapara

### Subrata Thakur

Gaighata

● Brother of MP Shantanu Thakur, whose wife Soma contesting from Bagda

### Sajal Ghosh

Baranagar

● Son of former Congress leader Pradip Ghosh



## Family Connections in Bengal elections

Major parties have given tickets to kin of existing political figures. The TMC has distributed tickets to most such candidates, followed by the BJP

CONSTITUENCY ● RELATION

## Gadkari: BJP not against any religion, language

Union minister Nitin Gadkari on Thursday asserted that the BJP was not against any caste, religion or language, and that unity in diversity "is our essence". Addressing a poll rally in Assam's Palasbari constituency, he said that the relaxation on granting voting rights to people of specific religion was as per the guidance of the Constitution. "The BJP is not against any caste, region, religion or language. Unity in diversity is our essence. But the foreign nationals who come, should they be granted voting rights? What will happen to you all then?" Gadkari said.

## Strong Cong would have defeated BJP in '24: Didi

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday said the BJP would not have come to power in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections had the Congress been a strong party. Addressing an election rally in Malda, a traditional Congress stronghold, she asserted that Bengal would set the path for challenging the BJP in Delhi in the future and claimed that the saffron party would not succeed by trying to demean the state. "Had they (Congress) been strong, the BJP would not have come to power in the last general elections," Banerjee said.

## ED raid on IPAC a bid to derail campaign: TMC

The Trinamool Congress described Thursday's multi-city searches at premises linked to the executives of political consultancy firm I-PAC as the BJP's "desperate bid" to derail the TMC's election campaigns in West Bengal. The TMC, a client of the I-PAC, accused the BJP government at the Centre of pursuing vendetta politics against its "only challenger" ahead of the West Bengal elections to be held later this month. The ED conducted the raids at locations in Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Delhi.

## Enjoy delicacies during Bengal stay, mocks TMC

The TMC on Thursday sought to turn Home Minister Amit Shah's announcement that he would spend 15 days in Bengal during the campaign into a culinary jibe, advising him to use the opportunity to enjoy the state's signature dishes. In a post on X, the TMC said, "... Bengal welcomes tourists with open arms. Stay for as long as you like. And do not miss out on some of our finest delicacies. We highly recommend: Muri Ghonto, Pabda Macher Jhat, Ilish Bhapa, Chingri Malai Curry, Bhetki Paturi, Kosha Mangsho. Have a pleasant stay!"

## Independent candidate crowd-funds campaign

Money power is tightening its grip on Assam's electoral landscape, with nearly 39% of the 722 candidates in the 2026 Assembly polls declared crorepatris, according to data from the ADR. Against this backdrop, Bokakhat independent candidate Pranab Doley, who secured 27,749 votes in the 2021 polls, has positioned his campaign as a people-driven movement, relying on crowdfunding. Doley's campaign openly acknowledges financial constraints of contesting polls without institutional support.

In Bhabanipur, home minister says change will automatically come in Bengal if BJP wins the seat

# SHAH DARES DIDI ON HER FIEF

SUBHENDU MAITI @Kolkata

UNION Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday asserted that the BJP will form the government in West Bengal by winning 170 out of 294 assembly seats, ending the Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress government, while emphasising that just winning the crucial Bhabanipur seat could automatically trigger a broader political shift in the state.

Addressing an election campaign meeting at Hazra Crossing, located about one kilometre from CMMamata Banerjee's residence on Harish Chatterjee Street on Thursday afternoon, Shah intensified his criticism of the ruling party.

"I am telling the people of Bhabanipur that the change in power of the entire Bengal is in your hands. My appeal to you (people): vote for the BJP to win every assembly seat one by one, ensure victory in 170 constituencies, and thus bring about change in the state. But the most important one is Bhabanipur and the change will come automatically if we win it only," Shah said.

He urged voters to support Suwendu Adhikari, Leader of the Opposition and BJP MLA from Nandigram, who has been fielded against Mamata in what is considered the state's most high-profile constituency.

"Suwendu da had wanted to contest from the Nandigram seat only, where he had defeated Mamata Banerjee in the last assembly elections in 2021, but I told him to defeat Mamata at her home turf, Bhabanipur," Shah said during his 10-minute address starting at noon.

Shah also announced his presence in Kolkata during the election period. "I came here to participate in the filing of nomination papers programme particularly for Suwendu da and will stay in the city for 15 days during the election period. I am requesting you, with folded



Union Home Minister Amit Shah with Suwendu Adhikari as the latter files nomination from Bhabanipur constituency | PPT

hands, to vote for Suwendu so that he can win by a huge margin. Mamata will be defeated and no Trinamool Congress hooligans can prevent the change in power this time in Bengal," he added.

The home minister targeted the Mamata Banerjee government on multiple issues, including alleged hooliganism, concerns over women's safety, infiltration affecting the state's demography, unemployment, and lawlessness.

He alleged that infiltration has increased to such an extent that Bengal's existence is at stake, and accused the state government of turning West

Bengal into a lawless region where incidents of firing and bombing occur almost daily.

"A storm is raging everywhere in Bengal; a storm for Poriborton (change) and say goodbye to Mamata Banerjee," Shah said. "There is corruption everywhere. There is a syndicate raj everywhere. Time to usher in Sonar Bangla (golden Bengal) as dreamt by Kabiguru Rabindranath Tagore, Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay and others," he added.

Following the rally, Shah joined a roadshow in a truck along with BJP candidates Suwendu Adhikari, Swapan Dasgupta, Shatarupa, and Santosh

Pathak, as well as state BJP president Samik Bhattacharya. The procession headed towards the Survey Building to file nomination papers for candidates contesting from the Bhabanipur, Rashbehari, Ballygunj and Chowringhee seats.

Tensions escalated when the convoy reached near Mamata Banerjee's residence on Harish Chatterjee Street. Local Trinamool supporters gathered, raised anti-BJP slogans, waved black flags, and used loudspeakers in protest.

The situation turned violent as supporters from both parties clashed. Police intervened promptly and dispersed the crowd to restore order.

Soon after filing his papers, Adhikari said the BJP would fight the election to end what he described as "15 years of misrule, corruption, terror, atrocities on women and appeasement politics" under the TMC. In a post on X, he said the BJP was making a "solemn pledge" to "free Bhabanipur and the entire state from the failed, corrupt and oppressive regime of the last 15 years".

### 'BJP CLEARED KAZIRANGA ENCROACHMENT'

In Assam, Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday alleged that the Congress had allowed encroachment in Kaziranga National Park by "infiltrators", claiming that the BJP-AGP government later cleared the land and protected the park's rhinos, boosting tourism. Addressing a rally in Kalibor in support of AGP candidate Keshab Mahanta, Shah said the BJP stood firmly against infiltrators while safeguarding the rights of Assam's indigenous Muslims. "What did the Congress do? The Congress allowed infiltrators to enter Assam," he said, targeting the opposition over its record on border management and internal security.

# NGT stops deployment of forest personnel for poll duty

JITENDRA CHOUBEY @New Delhi

A two-member bench of the National Green Tribunal (NGT) has issued a stay on the Assam government's order to deploy over 1,600 Assam Forest Protection Force (AFPP) for election duty in the state. The NGT Eastern Zone bench, which includes Justice Arun Kumar Tyagi and Expert Member Ishwar Singh, issued notices to the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), the National Biodiversity Authority, the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, and the Special Chief Secretary of Assam and stayed the order.

The tribunal's concern was that deploying forest officers could compromise forest vigilance, especially given the rising incidents of poaching, and argued this was "bad in law". This newspaper has accessed



a letter written by a group of former bureaucrats and environmentalists to the Assam government and the Chief Election Officer, opposing the deployment of these forest personnel. They argue that this decision violates a clear directive from the Supreme Court and established administrative rules set by the EC. The letter criticises a March 19, 2026, order issued by M K Yadava, Special Chief Secretary of Assam's Department of Environment, Forest and Climate Change. Gaurav Kumar Bansal, an

advocate at the NGT, stated that Section 36 of the Biological Diversity Act (BDA) of 2002 mandates the Centre to develop strategies for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, including monitoring biodiversity-rich areas. Section 36B places a similar obligation on state governments. Key ecological zones like forests, tiger reserves and protected areas, host significant biological resources that require monitoring and protection.

"By diverting crucial forest protection personnel for non-conservation purposes through this disputed order, the Assam government has failed to fulfill its duties under BDA," he said.

He referenced a Supreme Court ruling from May 15, 2024, which directed that forest staff and vehicles should not be requisitioned for poll purposes or other activities.

## ISF candidate held for attack on poll officials

SUBHENDU MAITI @Kolkata

AN Indian Secular Front (ISF) candidate contesting from Mothabari seat in Malda and 17 others were arrested on Thursday on charges of their alleged role in the gherao of seven judicial officers at the kaliachak II block development officer's office against supplementary lists. They were produced before a court and remanded to police custody for 10 days.

Moulana Shahjahan Ali, the ISF candidate, claimed that he had no involvement with the Kaliachak incident. "I was not there on the spot during the trouble. I was arrested when I was coming back after seeing a musical show in my locality. I became a victim of conspiracy," Ali told reporters when he was produced before the Malda court. The ISF is an ally of the CPM-led Left Front in the poll-bound West Bengal.

### POLITICAL SNIPPETS

FILE REPORT BY APRIL 15

# Conduct autopsy of man who killed self at police station: HC

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Madurai

THE Madurai Bench of Madras High Court on Thursday directed the Dean of Government Rajaji Hospital (GRH) to expeditiously conduct the postmortem of the body of a man who killed himself at Subramaniapuram police station in Madurai on March 26, and ensure that the report is filed before the court by April 15.

Justice B Pugalendhi gave the direction following a plea filed by N Bhuvaneshwari, wife of the deceased P Narayanan, seeking CBI, CB-CID or SIT probe into her husband's death claiming that he took the extreme step due to harassment by his brother Sivamarkandan, who is also a DMK functionary and the police personnel of the above station in connection with a civil dispute between the siblings.

The case of the petitioner was that, though her husband had suffered grievous injuries due to the physical assault by his brother and his family

members on March 10, the Subramaniapuram police had not properly registered a case. The counsel for the petitioner also emphasised the importance of finding out whether there was any grievous injury to the deceased before the occurrence and sought the videographing of the postmortem.

The judge observed that post-mortem plays a crucial role in the probe by ascertaining the time and cause of death. Videographing postmortems ensures that no irregularities are committed and also enables independent review at a later stage, if required, he added, and directed the GRH dean to nominate two doctors to conduct the autopsy and file the report at the next hearing on April 15. "The entire postmortem shall be videographed. The doctors conducting the postmortem have to find out whether there was any missing teeth and any other injuries on the deceased," he added.

(To overcome suicidal thoughts, contact TN helpline 104)



# War hits peak Gulf tourism season, travel biz sees 50% drop

C SHIVAKUMAR @Chennai

ESCALATING tensions in the Gulf following military strikes by the US and Israel on Iran have triggered a wave of cancellations from Tamil Nadu, with four operators reporting a sharp slump during what is typically a peak holiday season.

T Devaki, chairperson of the southern region of the Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI), said business has dropped by nearly 50% as safety concerns, airspace disruptions and rising fuel surcharges push up airfares. "Gulf tourism has been hit significantly. Connectivity has reduced, while fares on European carriers have increased due to limited seat availability," she said, noting that Chennai travellers prefer direct departures rather than routing via Delhi or Mumbai. Uncertainty over a wider regional fallout has led travel-



Passengers at the Chennai International Airport | ASHWIN PRASATH

ers to defer or cancel plans to the Gulf and Europe, hitting bookings across segments from leisure tourists to students and corporate groups.

"This is the holiday season, and we had strong bookings lined up. But many have now been cancelled," said Murugan Shanthakumar, director of Travel Iconz Private Ltd, estimating losses in crores. He added that disruptions have affected students travelling from Gulf countries such as Dubai and Qatar, along with family and corporate group bookings.

The slowdown has extended to Europe, where itineraries are often routed through Gulf hubs. "Last year, we did about ₹1 crore worth of Europe business. This time it is less than ₹10 lakh," he said, underscoring the scale of the decline.

Rajeev Menon, a tour operator, said disruptions to Gulf hubs have hit budget travel routes hard. "I had full bookings for Turkey, Cyprus and Dubai packages. Now, all of them are lost," he said.

With rising airfares and uncertainty, only about two in ten enquiries are converted into bookings, operators said.

Even as traditional routes falter, demand is shifting to destinations such as Sri Lanka, Thailand, Singapore, Vietnam and Malaysia. Vietnam's Phu Quoc island has seen tour package costs rise to around ₹5,000 from ₹28,000 amid a surge in demand. Shanthakumar says the downturn is significant, given the rapid growth of outbound travel among lower and middle-income groups in TN, as April is typically a key booking season.

# As Kamal decides to sit it out, MNM poll aspirants want ₹50K refunded CM's son-in-law steps in to back DMK candidate

ARAVIND RAJ @Coimbatore

THE decision by actor-politician and MP Kamal Haasan to keep his party, the Makkal Needhi Maiam (MNM), out of the upcoming Assembly polls has triggered widespread disappointment among cadres.

In the run-up to elections, the MNM had invited applications from party members aspiring to contest. Each applicant was required to pay a fee of ₹50,000, an amount that several cadres claim is higher than other parties in the state. Despite initial concerns, over 60 individuals from across the state, including over eight from Coimbatore, submitted their applications and paid the fee, hopeful of getting a ticket to contest, representing the party.

However, the party's



subsequent announcement that it would not contest the polls has left many applicants disillusioned. The situation aggravated as the application fees have not been refunded yet.

A party functionary, speaking on condition of anonymity, said, "What is the purpose of running a party if we are not going to contest elections? Many of us had worked tirelessly on the ground, believing we would get an opportunity this time."

In Coimbatore, hopes were high as MNM cadres believed the

party had a strong chance in Coimbatore South as it is part of the DMK-led alliance.

Another functionary highlighted the financial concerns surrounding the issue. "If the party had no intention of contesting, why did they invite applications and collect a large sum? Not returning our money now is unacceptable," the functionary added. One of the functionaries also revealed that a couple of cadres had submitted multiple applications along with the fee on behalf of R Thangavelu, MNM state vice president, based on his request. However, functionaries have not heard from him or any top brass of the party on the status of the amount paid.

Acknowledging the cadres' claims, Thangavelu told *TNIE*, "Regarding concerns raised by about refunds, the party's high command is in talks. A final decision on full or partial refund will be made in the next 2-3 days."

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Chennai

IN a rare public appearance, V Sabareesan, son-in-law of Chief Minister MK Stalin, attended an outreach event in support of DMK's Villivakkam candidate Karthik Mohan at SIDCO Nagar on Thursday. During his brief interaction with reporters, Sabareesan, took a dig at actor-politician Vijay and said TVK's entry into politics will have no impact on DMK's prospects.

"Victory is certain. There is no contest here. We have delivered schemes and we have confidence," he said, adding there is no formidable rival to challenge the DMK. Responding to a question on Vijay contesting from two constituencies, Sabareesan said it reflected the TVK chief's level of confidence.

Interestingly, he was accompanied by his wife Senthama-



V Sabareesan

rai, CM's daughter. Party sources said the couple attended the event due to their friendship with Karthik Mohan, son of Anna Nagar MLA MK Mohan.

Addressing party gathering earlier, Sabareesan made a personal appeal to voters to support Karthik Mohan. "I am not separate from the candidate; we are the same. Ensure his victory and all the schemes you expect for your constituency will be delivered," he said. HR&CE Minister P K Sekar Babu, the DMK's candidate for Harbour constituency, was also present at the event.

EXPRESS READ

## CPM TN secy plans campaign for SPA candidates

Chennai: CPM state secretary P Shanmugam will undertake a statewide campaign in support of candidates of the Secular Progressive Alliance. According to a party statement, Shanmugam has started his first phase of campaign on April 2 with a public meeting in Salem. He will campaign in Coimbatore on April 3, followed by a public meeting in Cuddalore on April 4. On April 5 and 6, he is scheduled to canvas in Chennai. The tour will continue with events in Palani (April 7), Gandarvakottai (April 8), and Keezhvelur (April 9). Similarly, CPI national secretary D Raja will begin his tour from Chennai on April 13. On April 15, he will visit Vellore followed by Cuddalore on April 16. The tour will end the next day. ENS

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**PUDUMMIDIPONDI BRANCH**  
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**AUCTION SALE NOTICE FOR IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES**  
Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (6) and 9 (1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the constructive possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of Tamilnad Mercantile Bank Limited, Pudummidipondi Branch will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" on 06.05.2026 for recovery of Rs.21,58,971.49 (Rupees Twenty One Lakh Fifty Eight Thousand Nine Hundred and Seventy One and Paise Forty Nine Only) as on 25.03.2026 due to the Tamilnad Mercantile Bank Limited, Pudummidipondi Branch from Borrower Mr.J.Andrews Zechariah, S/o. Mr. Jothi Abraham, and Guarantor Mr.J.Francis Abraham, S/o. Mr. Jothi Abraham. The Reserve price will be Rs.53,05,000/- (Rupees Fifty Three Lakh Five Thousand Only) and the Earnest Money Deposit will be Rs.5,30,500/- (Rupees Five Lakh Thirty Thousand Five Hundred Only).

**Description of the Property:** All that piece and parcel of land to the extent of 19,768 cents, As per measurement 8608 sq.ft in Old Survey No.337/1, New Survey No.337/1D situated at A.N.Kuppam Road, Keezhmudhalambedu Village, Kavarpattai, Gummidipondi Taluk, Thiruvallur District and a residential building constructed thereat standing in the name of Mr. J. Andrews Zechariah, S/o.Mr.Jothi Abraham, Boundaries: North by Road leading to A N Kuppam, South by: Land belonging to Mrs.Rita Christy, East by: 20 Feet Road, West by: Land belonging to Mrs.Mary Christida.

**Place of Submission of EMD and Auction:** TAMILNAD MERCANTILE BANK LTD., Pudummidipondi Branch, 11/20, Balakrishnapuram, Paleswaran Kandigal, Pudummidipondi, Thiruvallur dt - 601 201

**Date and Time of Auction Sale:** 06.05.2026 at 1.00 PM

**Upset Price:** Rs.53,05,000/- (Rupees Fifty Three Lakh Five Thousand Only)

**EMD:** Rs.5,30,500/- (Rupees Five Lakh Thirty Thousand Five Hundred Only).

For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please refer to the link provided in secured creditors website ([www.tmb.bank.in](http://www.tmb.bank.in))

**Authorized Officer:** Tamilnad Mercantile Bank Ltd (For Pudummidipondi Branch) (Cell: 99654 10888 / 99766 34444)

**Place:** Chennai  
**Date:** 26.03.2026

**BEFORE THE DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL - III AT CHENNAI**  
O.A.No.976 of 2025

The Karur Vysya Bank Ltd Asset Recovery Branch Represented by its Asst. General Manager P.S.Sundaravaran 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, No.1, Padmaravathi Road Gopalapuram, Chennai-600 086

**Versus** ... Applicant  
Mr.K.Sagayaraj, S/o.Mr.Kupparaj No.22/77, Perambalur Street Old Washermenpet, Chennai-600 021

**DEFENDANT THROUGH SUBSTITUTED SERVICE**

Whereas the above named applicant / appellant has filed the above referred application / appeal in this Tribunal, for recovery of a sum of ₹ 58,43,643.31 from the defendant(s) / respondent(s) / opponent(s).

Whereas the service of summons / notice could not be effected in the ordinary manner and whereas substituted service has been ordered by this Tribunal, and hence this notice through paper publication.

You are therefore directed to appear before this Tribunal in person or through a duly instructed Advocate and file written statement on or before 08.06.2026 at 11.30 a.m. and show cause as to why reliefs prayed for should not be granted.

Take notice that in case of default, the application / appeal shall be heard and decided in your absence, in accordance to law.

Given under my hand and the seal of this Tribunal on this 21<sup>st</sup> day of January 2026

**M/s A.ARUIN BABU**  
Advocate  
Counsel for Applicant

**DIRECTORATE OF CHILD PROTECTION**  
Superintendent, Govt. Children Home for Girls Bengaluru (Urban)  
Women & Child Development Department, Hosur Road, Bengaluru-560 029  
No.: GGH/B(U)/News Public/2026/303 Dt: 21.03.2026

**MISSING NOTIFICATION**

Child Name: Nisha, Age: 10 Years, Father Name: Manjeet Singh, Mother Name: Kajal, Address told by girl: Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh, Date of Birth: Does Not Know, Height: 123 Cms. Identification mark: Small mark on right side on the back of the ear, a black mole on the right shoulder, General condition: Good.

You Can contact Government Girls Home, Bengaluru, Dr. M.H. Marigowda Road, Next to Kidwai Cancer Hospital, Near Nimhans Hospital, Hosur Road, Bengaluru-560 029. Contact No: Superintendent: 9480864077  
DIPR/DD-C/P/22/KSMCA/2026-27 Sd/- Superintendent

**Indian Overseas Bank**  
CHENNAI - IV MAIN ROAD, ANNA NAGAR BRANCH  
Plot No.4035, V Block, Door No.83, IVth Main Road, Anna Nagar, Chennai- 600 040 Mob: 89259 52075, Email id: iob2075@iob.in

**E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTY**  
E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (6) / 9(1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the borrower (s) and guarantor (s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged / charged to the Secured Creditor, the possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of Indian Overseas Bank, Secured Creditor, will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is" and "Whatever there is" on 06.05.2026 for recovery of ₹ 1,55,09,566.45 (Rupees One Crore Fifty Five Lakhs Nine Thousand Five Hundred Sixty Six and Forty Five Paise only) as on 30.03.2026 and further interest thereon due to the Indian Overseas Bank, Secured Creditor from the Borrower & Mortgagee: Mr.Mani M & Mrs.M.Velvizhi, Property Address: Door No.153, SF No.64/1, TS No.67, Ward-A, Block-41, Perumal Koil Street, Periyar Sekkudu Village, Madhavaram Municipality & Taluk, Thiruvallur District, Madhavaram, Chennai-600 051, Communication Address: 66 Main Road, Iveli Agaram, VS Nagar, Thiruvallur, Chennai, Tamil Nadu 602 001, Office Address: 311/9, Chellathurai Village, Pallipet Taluk, Tiruvallur-631 303

**DESCRIPTION OF THE IMMOVABLE PROPERTY**

All that Piece & Parcel of the Land & Building measuring an extent of 6755 Sq.ft together with the building along with other amenities thereon is situated at Door No.153, SF No.64/1 (As Per Patta: SF No.64/1A1, Patta No.3759), TS No.67, Ward-A, Block-41, Perumal Koil Street, Periyar Sekkudu Village, Madhavaram Municipality & Taluk, Thiruvallur District, Madhavaram, Chennai-600 051. Land being bounded on the North By: Sankaralingam's Property, South By: Kasthuri's Plot, East By: Sankaralingam's Property, West By: Land Sold by Anisha & 110' Pathway And situated within the Registration District of Thiruvallur and the Sub-Registration District of Madhavaram.

**RESERVED PRICE ₹ 2,84,05,000/- EMD ₹ 28,41,000/- Bid increase Amt ₹ 50,000/-**

Known Encumbrance if any NIL

**\*\*The above Reserve Price is exclusive of applicable TDS.**  
The bidder/purchaser shall bear the 1.00% Income Tax/TDS on the reserve price plus bid multiplier amount

**Date and Time of E-Auction: 06.05.2026 between 11.00 a.m. & 3.00 p.m**  
with auto extension of 10 minutes each till sale is completed at the platform of <https://baanknet.com>

**Inspection of property: During office hours from 04.04.2026 to 05.05.2026**  
**Submission of online application for bid with EMD: 06.04.2026 onwards**  
**Last date for submission of online application for BID with EMD: 06.05.2026 upto 02.50 p.m**

**Name of Contact Person : Mr.R.Mahesh - Mob 73974 51680**

For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please refer to the service providers link <https://baanknet.com/>  
**Contact: +91 82912 20220** or bank's website [www.iob.in](http://www.iob.in)

**Place:** Chennai  
**Date:** 30.03.2026

This may also be treated as a Notice under Rule 8(6)/9(1) of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 to the borrower/s and guarantor/s of the said loan about holding of e-auction on the above mentioned date.

**Authorized Officer:** Indian Overseas Bank

Government of India  
Department of Space  
**ISRO Propulsion Complex (IPRC)**  
Mahendragiri P.O., Tirunelveli District, Tamil Nadu-627 133, India

**CORRECTION** Dated : 02.04.2026

In continuation to the e-NIT notifications published, the sale period for the below-mentioned works is extended up to 13-04-2026.

- Horizontal extension of Safety Relief Valve-Test Facility at IPRC, Mahendragiri. (Civil, PH & Electrical works) (No.: IPRC/CMG/TD-184/M/CM/03-225-26, Dated:11-03-2026) (Estimated cost: ₹ 1.23 Lakhs)
- Construction of UPS & Battery Room for Instrumentation Control Room at ACCF, IPRC, Mahendragiri. (Civil, Electrical & AC works) (No.: IPRC/CMG/TD-e-185/M/CM/04/2025-26, Dated:11-03-2026) (Estimated cost: ₹ 8.46 Lakhs)

For eligibility criteria and other details, interested tenderers may please refer to the detailed bilingual (Hindi-English) Notice Inviting Tenders (NIT) on the website <https://www.isro.gov.in/Tenders.html> and tender free view at <https://www.tenderwizard.com/isro>

**Group Head, CMG**

**SBI State Bank Of India**  
Stressed Assets Recovery Branch - II  
No.44, 1st Floor, Eldams Road, Teynampet, Chennai - 600018. Email: sbi.70674@sbi.co.in

**Authorised Officer's Details Name: Mr. Kailash Chandra Meena, Mobile No: 8699009584**  
**City Case Officer details: Name: Shri. Ramesh - Mobile -88707 39101**

**SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES (See Provision to Rule 8 (6))**  
E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8(6) of the Security Interest(Enforcement) Rules, 2002

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described immovable properties mortgaged to the Secured Creditor, the Possession of which has been taken by the Authorized Officer of State Bank of India, the Secured Creditor, will be sold on "As is Where is", "As is what is" and "Whatever there is" basis on below mentioned date for the recovery of the dues to the State Bank of India, SARB-II, Chennai, from the borrowers as mentioned below:

**Sl.No.1: Borrower Name & Address : Borrower: Mr.Balaji Srinivasan S/o. K.Srinivasan & Co-Borrower & Mrs.Subashree Sriraman W/o. Balaji Srinivasan, Both are Residential Address) Flat No.121 Tower No 42, DLF Garden City Sholinganallur Chennai-600119. Also at: Flat No G2 Aravinds Vigneshwara Flats, Plot No. 2, Dr.Ambedkar Salai, Periyar Nagar Extn, Madipakkam Chennai-600091. Co-Borrower KYC Address: Mrs.Subashree Sriraman W/o Balaji Srinivasan, Plot No 39 Door No 28, Third Main Road, Sri Perumal Nagar, Old Pallavaram Chennai-600117. Borrower Office Address: Mr.Balaji Srinivasan S/o. K. Srinivasan, Wells Fargo International Solutions Pvt Ltd Chennai-000 Buildings 200 Feet Radial Road Thorapakkam Chennai-600097. Both are Property Address: Flat No.308B, Future Homes, Kings Ville, Karanai Main Road, Arsanakalanti Sitalpakkam Chennai-600126.**

**Outstanding Amount : Rs.41,50,727/- (Rupees Forty One Lakhs Fifty Thousand Seven Hundred and Twenty Seven Only) as on 27.03.2026 with future interest, costs, legal charges, expenses, etc.**

**DESCRIPTION OF THE IMMOVABLE PROPERTY**

**Name of the Title deed Holder: MR.BALAJI SRINIVASAN AND MRS.SUBASHREE SRIRAMAN Covered under Sale Deed Doc No. 9470/2013 SCHEDULE 'A'** All that piece and parcel of land situated at No.121, Aravankazhanni Village, Sholinganallur Taluk, Kancheepuram District,comprised in S.No 123/2A Sub Division S.No 123/2A2, measuring 0.16 acres and 123/2B, Sub Division S.No 123/2B2, measuring 0.16 acres and Patta No.1015 in all measuring 0.32 acres, Within the Sub Registration District of Selaiyur and Registration District of Chennai South. **SCHEDULE 'B'** (Property Herby Conveyed Under This Deed) 405 sq.ft, undivided share of land in the schedule 'A' Property. **SCHEDULE 'C'**: Flat no.308 in the third floor having a super built up area of 960 sq.ft which will be inclusive of the share in the common service area as per CMDA approved plan no.B/Spl.Bldg/103/2013 dt.28.03.2013, Panchayat approval no.2441/2013/2014 dt 09.04.2013

**Encumbrances known to the Bank, if any : NIL** **Status of Possession : Physical**

**RESERVE PRICE ₹ 36,62,000/- EMD ₹ 3,66,200/- BID INCREMENT AMOUNT ₹ 25,000/-**

**Date and Time of Inspection of Properties: Sl.No.1 : 13.04.2026, between 12:00 noon and 5:00 pm**

**Sl.No.2: Borrower Name & Address : Mr. Saravana Kumaran S S/o Mr.Shanmuga pandi, Residential Address: Plot No. 770, Door No.8, Ganesh Apartments, Munusamy Salai, 10th Sector,KK Nagar, Chennai - 600 078. Office Address: Jeeva Homes, 1st Floor, No.4/323, Valluvar Salai, Ramapuram, Chennai 600089. Property Address: Plot No.5, Flat No. F1, First Floor, Old No 101, New No 35 Ponniamman Koil Street, Hastinapuram Village, Tambaram Taluk, Kanchipuram Dist, Chennai 600044.**

**Outstanding Amount : Rs.94,64,375/- (Rupees Ninety Four Lakhs Sixty Four Thousand Three Hundred and Seventy Five Only) as on 27.03.2026 with future interest, costs, legal charges, expenses, etc.**

**DESCRIPTION OF THE IMMOVABLE PROPERTY**

**Name of the Title deed Holder: Mr. SARAVANA KUMARAN S. Covered under Sale Deed Doc No. 1791/2018, SCHEDULE "A"** All that piece and parcel of house site, bearing Plot No. 5, measuring an extent of 2,320 Square Feet, Palmsah Nos. 148/5 and 148/6, Comprised in Survey nos. 65/4 and 65/1, under Patta No. 88, as per Pallavaram Town Survey Field Register Copy Ward No. F, Block No. 92, Town Survey Field No. 26, Old Survey No. 65/4A1A1B, in Ponniamman Koil Street situated at No. 101 Hastinapuram Village, Tambaram Taluk, Kancheepuram District. Building Planning Permit No. 218/2016/F2, Letter No. 240/2016/F2, dated 29.4.2016, Commissioner, Pallavaram Municipality, Chennai - 600 043, given by Member Secretary, CMDA, Chennai 600 008 and Ka.Ma. No. 240/2016/F2, Ka. No. 199, dated 29.4.2016, President, Pallavaram Municipality, BOUNDING ON THE North By: 20 Feet Road, South By: Lake Cannel, East By: Plot No.10, West By: 20 feet Road, MEASURING ON THE North By: 40 feet, South By: 57' 6", West By: 59 Feet. The above property is situated within the Pallavaram Municipality Limits and within the Registration District of Chennai South and Registration Sub-district of Pallavaram. **SCHEDULE "B"**: 1920 Square Feet Undivided Share of Land in 'A' schedule mentioned property. **SCHEDULE "C"**: 375 Square Feet Undivided share of Land in 'B' scheduled mentioned property. **SCHEDULE "D"**: Flat No. "F1" on First Floor measuring 910 Square feet, including common area and Car parking as per Sketch.

**Encumbrances known to the Bank, if any : NIL** **Status of Possession : Physical**

**RESERVE PRICE ₹ 36,00,000/- EMD ₹ 3,60,000/- BID INCREMENT AMOUNT ₹ 25,000/-**

**Date and Time of Inspection of Properties: Sl.No.2 : 13.04.2026, between 12:00 noon and 5:00 pm**

**DATE & TIME OF E-AUCTION: Sl.No. 1 & 2: 17.04.2026** Time: 11:00 AM to 04:00 PM With auto time extension of 10 minutes each till sale is completed

For detailed Terms and Conditions of the sale, please refer to the link provided in the State Bank of India, the Secured Creditor's website [www.sbi.co.in](http://www.sbi.co.in) and <https://baanknet.com>

**Date : 27.03.2026** **Place : Chennai** **Authorized Officer, State Bank of India, Stressed Assets Recovery Branch - II**

**ICICI Bank** Branch Office: ICICI Bank Limited, SP-24, Ambattur Industrial Estate, Chennai- 600058

**PUBLIC NOTICE-TENDER CUM E-AUCTION FOR SALE OF SECURED ASSET**  
(See proviso to Rule 8(6))  
Notice for sale of immovable asset(s)

E-Auction Sale Notice for the sale of immovable asset(s) under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

This notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the Constructive Possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of ICICI Bank Limited will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is" and "Whatever there is" as per the brief particulars given hereunder:

Sr. No.	Name of Borrower(s)/ Co-Borrowers/ Guarantors/ Loan Account No.	Details of the Secured asset(s) with known encumbrances, if any	Amount Outstanding	Reserve Price Earnest Money Deposit	Date and Time of Property Inspection	Date & Time of E-Auction
1.	Merlin Rani Arulandam (Borrower) Sahayamurthy Arulandam (Co-Borrower) Loan Account No. LBCHED0006058348	Flat No. G2, Ground Floor, Sakthi Mookambiga Flats, Plot No. 9, Lenin Street, Santhoshapuram, Vengalvosal Village, Tambaram Taluk, Chennai-600072 Residential Flat, 2BHK Built-Up Area 765 Sq.ft., UDS 359 Sq.ft.,	Rs. 1,11,01,858.47/- As on 29, 2026	Rs. 40,00,000/-	April 27, 2026 From 11:00 AM to 12:30 PM	April 24, 2026 From 10:30 AM to 11:30 AM
2.	Merlin Rani Arulandam (Borrower) Sahayamurthy Arulandam (Co-Borrower) Loan Account No. LBCHED0006058348	Flat No. F3, First Floor, Sakthi Mookambiga Flats, Plot No. 9, Lenin Street, Santhoshapuram, Vengalvosal Village, Tambaram Taluk, Chennai-600072 Residential Flat, 2BHK Built-Up Area 785 Sq.ft., UDS 368 Sq.ft.,	Rs. 1,11,01,858.47/- As on 29, 2026	Rs. 41,30,000/-	April 27, 2026 From 11:00 AM to 12:30 PM	April 24, 2026 From 10:30 AM to 11:30 AM

The online auction will be conducted on the website (URL Link-<https://assets.matexauctions.com/>) of our auction agency M/s. Matex Technologies Private Limited. The Mortgagee's notices are given a last chance to pay the total dues with further interest by April 23, 2026 before 05:00 PM else the secured asset(s) will be sold as per schedule.

The prospective bidder(s) must submit the Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) Demand Draft (DD) (Refer Column E) at ICICI Bank Limited, SP-24, Ambattur Industrial Estate, Chennai-600058 on or before April 23, 2026 before 03:00 PM Thereafter, they have to submit their offer through the website mentioned above on or before April 23, 2026 before 05:00 PM. along with the scanned image of the Bank acknowledged DD towards proof of payment of EMD. In case the prospective bidder(s) is/ are unable to submit his/ her/ their offer through the website, then the signed copy of tender documents may be submitted at ICICI Bank Limited, SP-24, Ambattur Industrial Estate, Chennai-600058 on or before April 23, 2026 before 05:00 PM Earnest Money Deposit (DD) should be from a Nationalised/ Scheduled Bank in favour of "ICICI Bank Limited" payable at "Chennai". For any further clarifications in terms of inspection, Terms and Conditions of the E-Auction or submission of tenders, contact ICICI Bank Employee Phone No. 7550214251.

Please note that Marketing agencies 1. M/s. Auction Bazaar, 2. Matex Net Pvt Ltd have also been engaged for facilitating the sale of this property.

The Authorised Officer reserves the right to reject any or all the bids without furnishing any further reasons. For detailed Terms and Conditions of the sale, please visit [www.icicibank.com/n4p4s](http://www.icicibank.com/n4p4s)

**Date : April 03, 2026** **Place: Chennai** **Authorized Officer, ICICI Bank Limited**

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PSPCL Punjab State Power Corporation Limited (Regd. Office: PSEB Head Office, The Mall, Patiala-147001) Corporate Identity Number: U40109PB2010SGC033813, Website: www.pspcl.in

PARADIP PORT AUTHORITY HARBOUR WORKS DIVISION No.1, e-TENDER CALL NOTICE e-TCN No.CE/WH/ADCTS/19/25/38, dt.01.04.2026

SBI State Bank of India "Red Cross Buildings", # 32, Red Cross Road, Egmore, Chennai-8. Ph: 9445395289/9805622640, Landline No. (Office): 044-28881025

RAJASTHAN RAJYA TILHAN UTPADAK SAHKARI SANGH LTD. (Tilam Sangh) Kota Project, Rawatbhatra Road, P.O. Engineering College, Kota-324010

Karnataka Bank Ltd Your Family Bank. Across India. ASSET RECOVERY MANAGEMENT BRANCH No.324, Ground Floor Thambu Chetty Street, Chennai - 600001

SALE NOTICE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES (MEGA E AUCTION - 08.05.2026) E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002 read with proviso to rule 8(6) / rule 9(1) of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Chennai - Cathedral Road Name & address of Borrower(s) Guarantor(s) Mortgagor(s): (1)Mr. Gandhi Kumar M S/o. Mr. Munivel, No.1/68 A, Pillayar Kovil Street, Attanahangal, Chennai - 600 067, Tamil Nadu.

Name & address of Borrower(s) Guarantor(s) Mortgagor(s): (1) Mr. Kalaivasan K, S/o. Mr. Kumar, (2) Mrs. Nandini, W/o. Mr. Kalaivasan K, Both 1 & 2 also addressed at No.7/4, Palanimalai Nagar, Thattankuppam, Villivakkam, Chennai - 600 049, Both 1 & 2 also addressed at G1, Sharon Shelters I Block, 10th Street, Vallalar Kudiyruppu, Anna Nagar, Chennai-600 040.

Name & address of Borrower(s) Guarantor(s) Mortgagor(s): (1) Mrs. Rajalakshmi G W/o. Mr. Gunasekaran, No. A2F, Vikas Verdent Apartments, Agraharam Street, Ramchandranagar, Gerugambakkam, Kanchepuram - 600 122, Kanchepuram District, Tamilnadu.

Name & address of Borrower(s) Guarantor(s) Mortgagor(s): (1) Mrs. J Saraladevi, W/o. Mr. Jaishankar, No. G2, Dharsan Apartments, Kulakari Street, Balaji Nagar, Kilambakkam Urappakkam, Guduvanchery, Chennai - 603 211, Tamil Nadu.

Name & address of Borrower(s) Guarantor(s) Mortgagor(s): (1) Mr. Seraman S N, S/o. Mr. Narayanaswami, AJ 129, AJ 13, 1st Street, Near Adarsha School, 9th Main Road, Anna Nagar, Chennai - 600 040, Tamilnadu.

Name & address of Borrower(s) Guarantor(s) Mortgagor(s): (1) Mr. Seraman S N, S/o. Mr. Narayanaswami, AJ 129, AJ 13, 1st Street, Near Adarsha School, 9th Main Road, Anna Nagar, Chennai - 600 040, Tamilnadu.

Name & address of Borrower(s) Guarantor(s) Mortgagor(s): (1) Mr. Seraman S N, S/o. Mr. Narayanaswami, AJ 129, AJ 13, 1st Street, Near Adarsha School, 9th Main Road, Anna Nagar, Chennai - 600 040, Tamilnadu.

Indian Overseas Bank 3rd Floor, Annexe Building, Central Office, 763, Anna Salai, Chennai-600 002 Phone: 044-2851 9453, 044-2842 0262

Name of the Borrower: M/s Bharani Trading Co. Pvt. Ltd. represented by its Directors Mr. B.N. Srinivasa, Mr. B.L. Narappa, Mr. B.R. Nareesh Babu and Mr. B.N. Ravagendra Babu, Chammrajpet (Near T.A.P.C.M.S.), Chikkaballapur: 562 101 Karnataka and M/s Sri Vasavi Agencies represented by its partners Mr. B.N. Srinivasa and Mr. B.L. Narappa, Chammrajpet (Near T.A.P.C.M.S.), Chikkaballapur: 562 101 Karnataka and Guarantor (s) 1) Mr. B.N. Srinivasa 2) B.L. Narappa 3) B.R. Nareesh Babu 4) B.N. Ravagendra Babu 5) Narasimha Murthy 6) Munuraju and 7) K.V. Venkata Krishna.

Name of the Borrower: M/s Bharani Trading Co. Pvt. Ltd. represented by its Directors Mr. B.N. Srinivasa, Mr. B.L. Narappa, Mr. B.R. Nareesh Babu and Mr. B.N. Ravagendra Babu, Chammrajpet (Near T.A.P.C.M.S.), Chikkaballapur: 562 101 Karnataka and M/s Sri Vasavi Agencies represented by its partners Mr. B.N. Srinivasa and Mr. B.L. Narappa, Chammrajpet (Near T.A.P.C.M.S.), Chikkaballapur: 562 101 Karnataka and Guarantor (s) 1) Mr. B.N. Srinivasa 2) B.L. Narappa 3) B.R. Nareesh Babu 4) B.N. Ravagendra Babu 5) Narasimha Murthy 6) Munuraju and 7) K.V. Venkata Krishna.

Name of the Borrower: M/s Bharani Trading Co. Pvt. Ltd. represented by its Directors Mr. B.N. Srinivasa, Mr. B.L. Narappa, Mr. B.R. Nareesh Babu and Mr. B.N. Ravagendra Babu, Chammrajpet (Near T.A.P.C.M.S.), Chikkaballapur: 562 101 Karnataka and M/s Sri Vasavi Agencies represented by its partners Mr. B.N. Srinivasa and Mr. B.L. Narappa, Chammrajpet (Near T.A.P.C.M.S.), Chikkaballapur: 562 101 Karnataka and Guarantor (s) 1) Mr. B.N. Srinivasa 2) B.L. Narappa 3) B.R. Nareesh Babu 4) B.N. Ravagendra Babu 5) Narasimha Murthy 6) Munuraju and 7) K.V. Venkata Krishna.

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PSPCL Punjab State Power Corporation Limited (Regd. Office: PSEB Head Office, The Mall, Patiala-147001) Corporate Identity Number U40109PB2010SGC033813, Website: www.pspcl.in

SOUTHERN RAILWAY (Electrical (General), Construction, Egmore, Chennai) Tender Notice No: E-HQ-CN-MS-EOT21-2025-26, Dt:31.03.2026.

GUINDY INDUSTRIAL ESTATE BRANCH (4054) M/s Tanstia FNF Service Centre, No.B-22, Gundy Industrial Estate, Chennai-600032.

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Properties under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8(6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Federal Bank LCRD / COIMBATORE DIVISION. No. 21, First Floor, M L Lund Complex, Variety Hall Road, Coimbatore - 641 001.

SALE NOTICE Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002

# Rising discontent against NDA in UT: T'gana min

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Puducherry

ALLEGING widespread public dissatisfaction with the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government in Puducherry, Telangana Transport Minister Ponnambal Prabhakar Goud on Thursday said the 'double engine' administration has failed to deliver on its promises of making Puducherry BEST (Business, Education, Spirituality, Tourism).

During his visit to Puducherry to oversee arrangements for campaign programmes of Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Mallikarjun Kharge, the minister claimed that the Union Territory has not witnessed the growth as assured by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He further alleged that Modi ignored Puducherry Chief Minister N Rangasamy's public appeal for state-

hood, stating that there has been no response from the centre on the long-pending demand.

According to Goud, the INDIA bloc is gaining ground in Puducherry despite "minor" differences among its constituents. He noted that efforts are under way to resolve internal issues, pointing out that the VCK has decided to contest in only in the Outgate constituency. He also said steps are being taken to strengthen coordination between the Congress and DMK and iron out differences.

On the other hand the "growing differences" within the NDA, particularly between the BJP and AINRC are very visible. Goud alleged that the UT government is facing strong anti-incumbency amid rising unemployment, with joblessness reportedly higher than the national average, he said.



# LDF manifesto promises ₹3K welfare pension

Will build hosp better than AIIMS with money collected from public: CM

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Kozhikode

CHIEF Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Thursday unveiled the LDF election manifesto, promising to raise welfare pension to ₹ 3000, fix the support price of coconut at ₹ 35 and guarantee jobs for all students educated in the state. A curious element in the manifesto is the assertion that the state government would establish a medical institution "better than the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) by collecting funds from the public." The proposal is widely seen as a protest against the Centre's delay in sanctioning AIIMS for Kerala, which is one of the campaign themes in the assembly election.

The manifesto places strong emphasis on health, education, and infrastructure—pillars central to Kerala's social model. Acknowledging the state's ageing population, it promises focused measures to ensure a healthy, dignified life for senior citizens,



Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan releases LDF manifesto for the Assembly polls at CH Kanaran Memorial Hall, Kozhikode, with other senior leaders | VINCENT PULLICKAL

including enhanced care for the bedridden. It also proposes insurance coverage for the "missing middle"—those currently excluded from existing schemes. It promises interest-free loans for educated entrepreneurs and plans to foster innovation through college-based hackathons and incubators. It also proposes setting up a dedicated company to involve student prodigies in government projects.

The manifesto highlights women's issues, pledging 50%

employment for women and strengthened measures against domestic violence and dowry-related crimes. It also proposes crime mapping with local bodies to develop targeted community-level safety plans. The manifesto emphasises resolving man-animal conflicts, which have cost lives and become a major political issue across the state. It also underscores the development of new tourism corridors and destinations to boost Kerala's tourism sector.

# UDF PLEDGES FREE BUS TRAVEL FOR WOMEN

KOCHI: The UDF on Thursday unveiled its manifesto for the April 9 assembly elections, promising a monthly stipend of ₹1,000 for college-going girl students and a ₹25 lakh 'Oomen Chandy Health Insurance' cover for every family. The 89-page document outlines a mix of welfare measures, infrastructure projects and economic revival plans.

Leader of the Opposition V D Sathesan released the manifesto in the presence of Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy and other Congress leaders, highlighting the front's focus on social security, employment and inclusive growth. The UDF has promised to hike welfare pensions to ₹3,000 per month and pro-

vide free travel for women on KSRTC buses. It also proposed to construct 5 lakh houses over the next five years and time-bound solution for issues faced by settler farmers. As per the manifesto, the daily wage of ASHA workers will be increased to ₹700.

The manifesto assured a procurement price of ₹35 per kg for paddy and a minimum support price of ₹300 per kg for rubber. Interest-free loans of up to ₹5 lakh have been promised for small businesses, along with financial and technical support for MSMEs with turnover up to ₹100 crore. It has proposed to set up a 'Job Watch Tower' to track global employment trends and align higher education accordingly. ENS

# Cops suspended for threatening quarry owner for free m-sand

TIRUNELVELI: A special sub-inspector and a constable attached to the Thalaiyuthu police station were suspended on Wednesday for allegedly threatening a quarry operator to supply 110 tonnes of m-sand free of cost for house construction.

According to sources, the two police personnel — SSI Ramanathan and constable Balasubramanian — had approached Sundararajan, who runs a quarry and crusher unit at Palamadai under the Seevalaperi police limits, allegedly demanding free m-sand, claiming they were from the Thalaiyuthu police station. When the owner denied, saying that the quarry products had been leased to a Kerala-based firm, the two allegedly threatened him. Sources claimed that the owner initially agreed to supply 10 tonnes, but the personnel demanded 110 tonnes to be loaded in three tipper lorries, and issued threats to him over the phone.

Following this, Sundararajan submitted a complaint to Superintendent of Police V Prassannakumar, who ordered an inquiry. Based on the preliminary findings, the two were placed under suspension on Wednesday. ENS



The two-day International Conference on Advanced Research in Electronics and Communication Systems (ICARECS 2026) was successfully held at SRM Institute of Science and Technology, Vadapalani Campus. Dr L Srinivasan, former scientist at Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC), ISRO was the chief guest | EXPRESS

# Collectors of Thoothukudi & Salem also transferred

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1: The actor had also urged the ECI to transfer the officer heading the Intelligence Wing of the state police, and GCC Commissioner, alleging bias in giving permission and offering security for his party's campaign meetings. Commissioner of Madurai city police J Loganathan and IG of West Zone A Saravana Sundar have also been transferred. As per the ECI's directions, Sanjay Kumar, ADGP, Coastal Security Group, has been appointed as the new Tambaram city police commissioner in the place of A Amalraj, Abhishek Dixit, IG Traffic and Road Safety, Greater Chennai Police, will be the Commissioner of Police, Madurai, and RV Ramya Bharathi, IG, Crime, Chennai, will be the new IG of West Zone. The ECI said Thoothukudi Collector K Elambahavath should be transferred and Vishu Mahajan should be appointed as new Collector. Similarly, R Brindha Devi, Collector, Salem, has been replaced by A Arun Thamburaj.

# 3K birds die at pvt farm in Rasipuram

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Namakkal

FOLLOWING videos of mass burial of birds in Rasipuram, the animal husbandry department conducted inspections and found that around 3,000 poultry birds had died at a private farm in Pattanam, a small town. Videos of the same online raised serious concerns, with many suspecting a possible avian

flu outbreak. Inspections were carried out on Wednesday. A senior official said preliminary findings suggest that a pipeline malfunction disrupted the drinking water supply, and the spray system used to maintain the temperature inside the sheds was affected. "The deaths are believed to have begun on March 29," the official said. ENS

# CLASSIFIEDS

## PUBLIC NOTICE

### CHANGE OF NAME

### CHANGE OF NAME

I, Balamurale B.S, Son of Thiru B Siva, born on 2nd January, 1991 (District of Birth: Chennai), Residing at No.308/2, Belly Area, Anna Nagar, Chennai - 600040, shall henceforth be known as **BALAMURALE BALUSAMY SIVA** - Balamurale B.S

### CHANGE OF NAME

I, Akash Bala Rajesh Kanna, son of Thiru G C Rajesh Kanna, born on 2nd September 2005 (District of Birth: Chennai), residing at No. 5, DABC Lay-out, Menambedu, Ambattur, Chennai-600 053, shall henceforth be known as **G R AKASH BALA**. Chennai, 25th February 2026 AKASH BALA RAJESH KANNA

### CHANGE OF NAME

I, P. Dharmar, S/o. Perumal, Dob:10/02/1953 residing at Uppukottai, Bodinayakanur Taluk, Theni - 625534, hereby inform that I have converted to Islam and changed my name to **Mohammed Ibrahim .P** with effect from 15.06.2002. P. Dharmar

## PUBLIC NOTICE

Our client intends to purchase the property situated at Old Door No.1/8C, New No.5, Second Seaward Road, Valmiki Nagar, Thiruvaniyur, Chennai-600 041, forming part of Plot No.8, and Marked as Plot No.8C, originally comprised in Old Survey No.210/2 (Part), then Survey No.210/2A1A3A (part), currently comprised in T.S.No.24, Block No.63, in Thiruvaniyur Village, Velachery Taluk, (formerly Mylapore-Triplicane Taluk), Chennai District, measuring an extent of 4145 sq.ft. or thereabouts, together with the building existing thereon, which originally belonged to **Dr.V.V.Sastry**, son of Late V.Suryanarayana Sastry and currently belonging to Mrs.Vedula Annappurna, wife of Late Sastry Venkata Vedula.

Any person/institution having any claim or charge over the aforementioned property shall lodge their claim or objection if any together with documentary proof to the undersigned within "TEN DAYS" from the date of this Notice, failing which it would be deemed that there is no claim, charge or encumbrance whatsoever on the above mentioned property and further our client can proceed to purchase the above mentioned property and any subsequent claim or objections shall be deemed to have been waived.

**V SESHADRI & COMPANY, ADVOCATES,**  
T-58B, New No.29, 32nd Cross Street, Besant Nagar, Chennai-600 090.  
Tel.Nos.24914001 / 24914002  
Email : advocateseshadri@gmail.com  
02/04/2026

THE WAY TO GET STARTED IS TO QUIT TALKING AND BEGIN DOING | WALT DISNEY

**TELANGANA TOURISM DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION LTD.**  
"Tourism House" # 3-5-891, Himayathnagar, Hyderabad - 500029.

**e-Procurement Tender Notice No.01/SE/TGIDC/2026-27** Dated: 02.04.2026

Sl. No.	Name of the work	Bid downloading start date
1	Request for proposal for Selection of Agency for providing of Third Party Quality Control (PQC) services for Passenger Rope way Development works at Khammam Fort & Bhongir Fort in Telangana.	03.04.2026

Bids are invited on e-procurement platform from eligible contractors. Further details can be seen @ e-procurement market place [www.tender.telanganagov.in](http://www.tender.telanganagov.in).  
Sd/- Superintending Engineer, TGIDC Ltd., Hyderabad  
DIRP R.O. No.82-PP/CL/Amt/2026-27 Dt: 02/04/2026

**ICICI Bank** Branch Office: ICICI Bank Limited, SP-24, Ambattur Industrial Estate, Chennai- 600058.

**PUBLIC NOTICE-TENDER CUM E-AUCTION FOR SALE OF SECURED ASSET**  
[See proviso to Rule 8(i)]  
Notice for sale of immovable asset(s)

E-Auction Sale Notice for the sale of immovable asset(s) under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

This notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/ charged to the Secured Creditor, the physical possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of ICICI Bank Limited will be sold on 'As is what is', 'As is what is' and 'Whatever there is' as per the brief particulars given hereunder:

Sr. No.	Name of Borrower(s)/ Co-Borrower(s)/ Guarantors/ Loan Account No.	Details of the Secured asset(s) with known encumbrances, if any	Amount Outstanding	Reserve Price Earnest Money Deposit	Date and Time of Property Inspection	Date & Time of E-Auction
(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)	(G)
1.	Shree Sai Aggro Traders (Borrower) Meenakshi M & Ravikumur P (Co-Borrower) Loan Account No. TBCH00006985763	Flat No. F1, First Floor, Sivarams Hamilton, Block No.13, Tnhb Road, Indira Nagar 28th Cross Street, Adyar, Chennai- 600020. Residential Flat Super Built-Up Area 1596 Sq. Ft. and 602 Sq.ft. of Uds	Rs. 4,28,76,003/- As on April 02, 2026	Rs. 1,25,00,000/- To 12.50,000/-	April 16, 2026 From 11:00 AM To 12:30 PM	April 28, 2026 From 10:30 AM To 11:30 AM
2.	Shree Sai Aggro Traders (Borrower) Meenakshi M & Ravikumur P (Co-Borrower) Loan Account No. TBCH00006985763	Flat No. S1, Second Floor, Sivarams Hamilton, Block No.13, Tnhb Road, Indira Nagar 28th Cross Street, Adyar, Chennai-600020. Residential Flat Super Built-Up Area 1596 Sq. ft. and 601 Sq.ft. of UDS	Rs. 4,28,76,003/- As on April 02, 2026	Rs. 1,25,00,000/- To 12.50,000/-	April 16, 2026 From 11:00 AM To 12:30 PM	April 28, 2026 From 10:30 AM To 11:30 AM

The online auction will be conducted on the website (URL Link- [assets.matexauctions.com](http://assets.matexauctions.com)), of our auction agency M/s. Matex Technologies Private Limited. The Mortgagees/Notices are given a last chance to pay the total dues with further interest by April 27, 2026 before 05.00 PM else the secured asset(s) will be sold as per schedule. The prospective bidder(s) must submit the Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) Demand Draft (DD) (Refer Column E) at ICICI Bank Limited, SP-24, Ambattur Industrial Estate, Chennai-600058 on or before April 27, 2026 before 03.00 PM. Thereafter, they have to submit their offer through the website mentioned above on or before April 27, 2026 before 05.00 PM along with the scanned image of the Bank acknowledged DD towards proof of payment of EMD. In case the prospective bidder(s) is/ are unable to submit his/ her/ their offer through the website, then the signed copy of tender documents may be submitted at ICICI Bank Limited, SP-24, Ambattur Industrial Estate, Chennai-600058 on or before April 27, 2026 before 05.00 PM. Earnest Money Deposit DD/DDP should be from a Nationalised/ Scheduled Bank in favour of 'ICICI Bank Limited' payable at Chennai.

For any further clarifications in terms of inspection, Terms and Conditions of the E-Auction or submission of tenders, contact ICICI Bank Employee Phone No. 7550214251. Please note that Marketing agencies 1. MatexNet Pvt Ltd, 2. Auction Bazaar, have also been engaged for facilitating the sale of this property.

The Authorised Officer reserves the right to reject any or all the bids without furnishing any further reasons. For detailed Terms and Conditions of the sale, please visit [www.icicibank.com/h4p4s](http://www.icicibank.com/h4p4s).  
Date : April 03, 2026  
Place: Chennai  
Authorized Officer  
ICICI Bank Limited

**BENGALURU METROPOLITAN TRANSPORT CORPORATION**  
Traffic Commercial Department, Central Office, 2nd Floor, Shanthinagar TTMC, Shanthinagar, Bengaluru - 27.  
No.: BMTCC/OTR/COM/1928/20/2026-27 Date: 01.04.2026

**TENDER NOTIFICATION No. 01/2026-27 (e-Procurement Platform)**

Bengaluru Metropolitan Transport Corporation invites offers/bids from the interested Individual/Firm/Agency/Company for Maintaining/Running of vacant commercial establishments of North Zone of BMTCC Single Agency through e-procurement platform.

Date of Pre-Bid meeting	09.04.2026 at 11:00 hrs.	Place:	Chief Traffic Manager (C) Chamber, 2nd Floor, Central Office, BMTCC, Shanthinagar TTMC, Bengaluru-27.
Last date for submission of bids	04.05.2026 up to 17:00 hrs.		
Date of opening Technical bids	05.05.2026 at 17.05 hrs.		
Opening of Financial bids	To be intimated later.		

Further details on license fees, EMD, Area & other conditions log on to: [www.kppp.karnataka.gov.in](http://www.kppp.karnataka.gov.in) & Contact no: 09240214000, 09240214001, 080-22483777 & 7760991222, E-mail: [ctmc@mybmtc.com](mailto:ctmc@mybmtc.com).  
Sd/- Chief Traffic Manager (Com) (Tender inviting Authority)

**MANAPPURAM ASSET FINANCE LTD.**  
Regd. Office: Door No. 111/105, Opp: Nattika Firka Co-Op Rural Bank, Valapad (P.O)-680567 Thrissur Dt Kerala. CIN : U65921KL1987PLC004810

**GOLD AUCTION NOTICE**

The borrowers, in specific and the public, in general, are hereby notified that public auction of the gold ornaments pledged in the below mentioned is proposed to be conducted at the following branches on below mentioned dates. The auction is of the gold ornaments of defaulted customers who have failed to make payment of their loan amount despite being notified by registered letters. Change in venue or date (if any) will be displayed at the auction centre and on the company website ([www.maafin.in](http://www.maafin.in)). Unauctioned items shall be auctioned on subsequent working days after displaying the details on Company website and auction centre.

List of pledges to be auctioned on 15-04-2026 from 10.00 am onwards at the following branches.

KOKILAMBAL NAGAR: 0433490700011899.

Persons wishing to participate in the above auction shall comply with the following:- Interested Bidders should submit Rs. 10,000/- as EMD (refundable to unsuccessful bidders) by way of Cash on the same day of auction. Bidders should carry valid ID card/PAN card. For more details please contact 18005729787.

Authorised Officer  
For Manappuram Asset Finance Ltd

**Format C-1**

**Declaration about criminal cases**  
(As per the judgment dated 25th September, 2018 of Hon'ble Supreme Court in WP (Civil) No. 536 of 2011 (Public Interest Foundation & Ors. Vs. Union of India & Anr.)

Name and address of candidate: **Dr. N. MARIE WILSON** B.Tech., M.B.A.  
Son of Mr. NESTORE  
No 240, Sri Krishnan Nagar, 1st Main Road, Mannivakkam, Kancheepuram, Tamil Nadu- 600048.

Name of Political Party : **TAMILAGA VETTRI KAZHAGAM**  
\* Name of Election: **Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly**  
Name of Constituency: **11. Radha Krishnan Nagar**

**N. Marie Wilson**, a Candidate for the above-mentioned election, declare for public information the following details about my criminal antecedents:

(A) Pending Criminal Cases				
Sl. No	NAME OF CASE	CASE NO. AND DATED	STATUS OF CASE(S)	SECTION(S) OF ACTS CONCERNED AND BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF OFFENCE(S)
1.	Judicial Magistrate Mahila Court (Magistrate Level) Puducherry	CC No.558/2022	FURTHER INVESTIGATION	U/s. 448, 427, 324, 294 (b), 506 (i) IPC r/w 34 IPC
2.	Judicial Magistrate at Sriperumbudur	PRC No.4/2014	PRE TRIAL	U/s. 308, 304 (ii) IPC r/w 34 IPC

**(B) Details about cases of conviction for criminal offences**

Sl. No	Description of offence(s) & punishment imposed	Name of Court & date(s) of order(s)	Maximum Punishment Imposed
1.	NIL	NIL	NIL

**11 DR. RADHA KRISHNAN NAGAR**



You cannot negotiate with people who say what's mine is mine and what's yours is negotiable

John F. Kennedy

INDIAN EXPRESS IS NOT AN INDUSTRY. IT IS A MISSION.

— Rammath Goenka

## CIVIL AVIATION PUSH: GROUND REALITY CHECK FOR SOARING AMBITION

THE airport recently inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Jewar outside Delhi is the country's 165th. It's a milestone towards India's ambitious target of flying over a billion passengers annually by 2047 and operationalising 350-400 airports across the country. It's true that a nation as vast and populous as India needs an extensive aviation network to complement its other mass transit systems. While the government's ambition is well placed, it must ensure that the economics of the expansion is aligned with the ground reality.

The Union civil aviation minister recently announced India is set to induct 1,700 new aircraft to add to the existing fleet of over 1,200. By 2036, the country is expected to have around 3,000 aircraft if geopolitical tensions do not delay deliveries. Aircraft that were expected to be delivered in 10 years may now take up to 15 years. To operate such a large fleet, the country would require 10,000-12,000 more trained pilots, nearly double the current number. The aviation industry, which is estimated to support around 7 million jobs directly and indirectly at present, has the potential to generate 3.5 times more employment.

Infrastructure is not the primary challenge today, as the government has been generous in funding the sector. The bigger issue is the commercial viability of airline operations. India's aviation sector is currently a duopoly with IndiGo cornering 63 percent of the market and the Tata Group claiming 25 percent. The risk of one airline carrying almost two-thirds of passengers was amplified last December when IndiGo's operational issues rippled across the sector and affected lakhs of passengers.

The sector needs greater competition—a more balanced market with at least one more airline commanding over 10 percent market share—to help expand the overall pie. The government has attempted to improve regional connectivity through the UDAN scheme. However, a parliamentary panel noted last week that of the 657 routes awarded, over 150 remain uncommenced. Airlines also stop operations at most smaller centres when the subsidy to fly those routes ends. The government would not want to be left with ghost airports and unviable routes. Therefore, while the push for aviation is necessary, the government must not lose sight of its economic viability and balance.

## TEAMWORK NEEDED FOR SUCCESS OF AMARAVATI

AT long last, Amaravati has gained legal status as the capital of Andhra Pradesh. While this milestone should be a moment of celebration for over five crore people, the joy is muted—not just because of the ongoing debates between the government and the opposition, but also because it's the culmination of a struggle that began when Andhra Pradesh became the only state to be born without a capital. Over the last 73 years, the people of the region have transitioned through three capitals technically and four mentally, with Amaravati set to be the fifth following the President's assent.

While the Bill was being discussed in the Lok Sabha, former Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy even proposed an alternative, MAVIGUN—merging Machilipatnam, Vijayawada and Guntur—while arguing that the Constitution makes no explicit provision for a state capital. While it's true that the Constitution does not grant recognition to any city as a capital, the seat of governance is indirectly established through Article 174, which empowers the Governor to decide where Assembly sessions are held, and Articles 214 and 231, which govern the establishment of high courts. While the Centre has repeatedly affirmed the state's authority in deciding the capital, the legal and political tug-of-war has persisted for a decade.

Following bifurcation in 2014, the Union-appointed Sivaramakrishnan Committee warned against building a megalopolis between Vijayawada and Guntur, instead proposing decentralisation, the state government moved ahead with Amaravati and the Prime Minister laid the foundation stone on October 22, 2015. However, a new administration in 2019 proposed a 'Three Capitals' model involving Amaravati, Visakhapatnam and Kurnool, effectively stalling Amaravati's growth and leading to a five-year struggle for the farmers who had offered land for the city's construction.

This protracted uncertainty deprived the state of a primary growth engine, stifling investment and forcing citizens to continue travelling to Hyderabad, Chennai or Bengaluru for healthcare, education and employment. With the 2024 change in leadership and subsequent legislation, the construction of Amaravati has found renewed momentum. The permanent legal status will uphold Telugu self-respect and finally bring home the families of thousands of state officials currently residing in Hyderabad.

Something Amarajeevi Potti Sreeramulu wrote in September 1952 underlines the commitment required even today: "[The Andhra state] has become a home for many people, many parties, many opinions and many ideas. Everyone's self-interest is different... Unless everyone thinks with a selfless vision, they cannot reach a consensus."

### QUICK TAKE

#### CUP BRIMMETH OVER

IFA, already under fire for making the world's biggest sporting event the costliest ever, has raised the top ticket price for the World Cup final—to be held at MetLife Stadium in New Jersey on July 20—to \$10,990, up from \$1,600 in 2022. The average prices are also far higher than at Qatar 2022 and Russia 2018. Football's overlords seem oblivious to the thousands of fans across the world—including many in India—who save up for four years to make the quadrennial pilgrimage. Maybe it's just as well. With indiscriminate border enforcement and high airfares adding to the troubles, fans are better off giving the tournament in the US, Canada and Mexico a pass. Let watch parties with giant screens be the flavour this year.

HERE is a structural reality about the modern global economy. The entire \$35-trillion architecture of international trade that underpins the living standards of eight billion people flows, with remarkable concentration, through a handful of narrow waterways that are geographically irreplaceable and strategically indefensible in a durable way. As the Strait of Hormuz remains mostly closed on account of the US-Israel war on Iran for over a month now, we are witnessing a controlled detonation of the most critical node in the global supply chain. As ever, the shockwaves have begun rippling outwards instantaneously and indiscriminately.

Stretching approximately 167 km from the Persian Gulf to the Gulf of Oman and narrowing to a mere 33 km at its tightest point, Hormuz channels about a fifth of global seaborne oil and liquefied natural gas flows. For the Gulf States, there is no meaningful bypass. The pipelines that exist—owned by Saudi Arabia and Abu Dhabi—carry a fraction of Hormuz's throughput and cannot substitute for the strait's closure.

The US-Israeli strikes, predicated on the delusion that military power can be projected with surgical precision and zero systemic consequence, have detonated a time bomb buried in the foundations of world trade. The utterly predictable crisis in Hormuz is a learning, in real time and at immense cost, that no nation, however powerful, can sever the Gordian knot of interdependence without the blade swinging back to wound its own hand.

The deeper damage runs through supply chains. South Korea, which imports 97 percent of its energy, draws most of its oil and LNG directly from West Asia through Hormuz. South Korean giants Samsung and SK Hynix together control 67 percent of global dynamic random-access memory production and nearly 80 percent of high-bandwidth memory, a critical substrate of the global AI boom. Disrupting South Korea's energy supply is, in effect, disrupting the semiconductor supply chain for every AI data centre.

Then there is Qatar. Its damaged LNG trains took about 12.8 million tonnes of annual capacity offline, at a potential revenue loss exceeding \$20 billion and repairs estimated to take 3-5 years. Qatar also produces a third of the world's helium, an element irreplaceable in semiconductor fabrication; spot helium prices have already doubled.

Supply chains are nested within supply chains, and Hormuz sits atop them all.

Yet, to frame this crisis as a Hormuz

The Hormuz crisis has again made us confront the fact that maritime passages dot an interconnected global trade map. Closing one of the major corridors holds the world hostage

## NO STRAIT OUT OF MARITIME TRADE CHOKEHOLDS

MANISH TEWARI

MP, lawyer, former Union I&B minister and author of *A World Adrift*



SOURAV ROY

problem alone is to fundamentally misread the nature of the vulnerability. The global trading system rests on four major maritime chokepoints—the Strait of Hormuz, Suez Canal and Bab el-Mandeb, the Strait of Malacca and Panama Canal—apart from 20-odd passages. The failure of any one node generates immediate, disproportionate consequences across other, as rerouted traffic overwhelms the alternative passages, port hubs and logistics chains.

Hormuz's closure has already re-energised the Houthis. Their declared intention to resume attacks on commercial shipping around the Bab el-Mandeb threatens to sever the Asia-Europe maritime corridor through the Suez. Between 2023 and 2025, Houthi interdictions reduced Suez traffic from over 26,000 vessels a year to roughly 13,000. The tonnage

of ships transiting the Gulf of Aden fell by about three-fourths from the late 2023 levels. Compounded by Hormuz's closure, Houthi attacks would force virtually all Asia-Europe trade to the Cape of Good Hope route—adding 10-14 days per voyage, with a typical cost premium approaching \$400,000 per large container vessel on the East Asia-Europe route and insurance premiums that are already reflecting war risks in real time.

Further east, the Strait of Malacca carries a quarter of global seaborne trade, including 45 percent of crude and 26 percent of car shipments. At its narrowest in the Phillip Channel, it is barely 2-3 km wide, with over 80,000-100,000 vessels transiting annually under International Maritime Organization's traffic separation schemes and a mandatory under-keel clearance of 3.5 metres that caps laden

## COUNTING THE BENEFITS OF FREEBIES

THE debate over 'freebies' begins with the term itself. Some describe them as welfare measures, direct benefit transfers or financial interventions. Others dismiss them as reckless spending of taxpayers' money or mere vote-bank politics.

Those who use the term negatively may be fewer, but they are louder. Some of them even approach the judiciary seeking to stop such expenditures. They argue that their taxes are being diverted unproductively. The fact that all consumers pay indirect taxes, which means that even the beneficiaries of welfare measures participate in financing public spending, is overlooked. Consider that the tax-GDP ratio, which was 6.03 percent in 1950-51, rose to 13.26 percent in 1980-81 and stood at 19.6 percent in 2024-25, with the share of indirect taxes rising.

A second layer of the debate concerns classification. What qualifies as a freebie and what is a welfare measure? There is broad acceptance today of initiatives such as free schooling and the public distribution system. However, even these were not immediately accepted or extended. So, instead of setting aside schemes not widely considered genuine welfare measures today, we need to take a closer look before concluding either way.

Public finance experts argue that capital expenditure is preferable because it generates long-term economic returns, whereas revenue expenditure, particularly on direct benefit schemes, is less productive. Questions are also raised about fiscal sustainability, especially when such programmes are financed through debt.

Fiscal sustainability is indeed a cardinal concern. Yet, one needs to consider that revex is equally essential as it ensures adequate returns on capex. Infrastructure without operational expenditure—like a school without teachers or a dam without maintenance—can become redundant. Revex helps ensure higher efficiency of capital. It also helps build the human capital needed to operate and use the infrastructure.

Another concern frequently raised is that of poor targeting. Critics argue that welfare schemes often extend benefits to the affluent as well. While this does merit careful attention, it is also true that the concern is partly addressed through unintended consequences of public goods. Studies show that for non-monetary measures, the relatively modest quality of

goods and services often acts as a natural filter for the upwardly mobile. As a result, many such schemes overwhelmingly serve those who genuinely depend on them.

One attack on direct benefit transfers is that they make recipients lethargic. The allegation is insulting to those who depend on them. Several studies including ones by Nobel laureate Abhijit Banerjee found no evidence of reduced urge to work. A meta study evaluating 72 unconditional cash transfer programmes in 34 low- and middle-income countries co-authored by Dean Karlan of Northwestern University pointed to their long-term impact in increased consumption, labour supply and entrepreneurial activity.



SANKARGANESH KARUPIAH

Indian Revenue Service officer

Despite criticism to the contrary, a closer look at welfare measures or freebies reveals their direct and indirect benefits through higher consumption, labour supply and entrepreneurship. We need to evaluate their impacts in a clearer manner

In the 1980s, Tamil Nadu introduced free electricity to huts, restricting usage to a single 60-watt bulb. Today, most of them are concrete houses and pay for electricity, though a few of them may be paying at a subsidised rate. Most families who availed of free public education send their children to private schools today.

Let's keep aside the criticisms for a moment and look at the impact of 'freebies'. They stimulate the economy by boosting consumption and building human capital. In some ways, they operate like free samples distributed by private companies to familiarise consumers with prod-

ucts. For instance, free tooth powder was briefly distributed in the 1980s at Tamil Nadu schools when the product was largely unknown in villages; today, toothpaste use is commonplace in those places. Spend on household consumer durables given for free to families once returns to the exchequer through indirect taxes on subsequent consumption.

There are other substantive indirect effects. Kitchen goods that reduce manual labour can empower women to improve employability and increase their workforce participation. Tamil Nadu's comparatively high female workforce participation is partly attributed to such measures. A 2009 study published in *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* highlighted the positive impact of television—given for free in many states—on women through increased autonomy, lower fertility rates and decreased acceptance of domestic violence.

Programmes like the public distribution system and rural employment guarantee scheme have altered social power structures, enhancing the bargaining power of disadvantaged groups. A 2022 study published in the *Journal of Development Effectiveness* found that the rural jobs scheme reduced outstanding debts among vulnerable households.

In a stratified society structured by caste and resource disparities, benefits may take considerable time to reach the most vulnerable, if they reach them at all. Direct benefit schemes, therefore, are a useful tool for welfare delivery. However, research on these schemes' outcomes remains limited, allowing critics' voices to dominate. The answer should be more rigorous research.

Instead of calling for an end to direct benefit welfare schemes, states should be required to clearly justify their introduction through detailed project reports the way it is done for infrastructure projects—outlining the need, cost and expected benefit, conducting pre-implementation assessments and post-implementation evaluations to measure their impact. After all, fairness needs to be established for all.

(Views are personal)

### MAIL BAG

WRITE TO: letters@newindianexpress.com

#### Other deadlines

Ref: *Governance must speak* (Apr 2). Guns have been silenced, yet poverty sustains. Transformation should be democratic and painless. Amid the hype, dissenters of government policies are eliminated and not poverty. Unemployment is growing, real wages are declining and livelihoods are imperilled. There's no deadline to eliminate these woes so far.  
**AG Rajmohan, Anantapur**

#### Pregnancy preparedness

Ref: *Curb maternal deaths* (Apr 2). Post-partum haemorrhage is certainly a major contributing factor to maternal deaths. The best way to tackle it is to actively prevent it, for which we have all the armamentarium apart from blood. Conditions like amniotic fluid embolism—that has a high mortality rate—can take an obstetrician unawares. Conditions like these require prompt multidisciplinary management.  
**Dr P S K Rao, Palakkad**

#### Manipur's fragility

Ref: *Fire spreads* (Apr 2). Manipur's crisis resists simple narratives and overlapping familiar majority-minority templates only distorts understanding. The Kuki-Naga friction confirms this. Codifying customary land laws in a just, universally applicable framework is the most durable path forward.  
**SM Jeeva, Chennai**

#### Tax waiver

Ref: *PM takes stock* (Apr 2). A pragmatic approach to "shield citizens" amid the crisis is to not leave them to bear the unbearable burden of war. Hence, we look forward to the PM to wholly waive the unjustifiable high taxes on essential goods that can provide some respite under these turbulent times.  
**TM Uday Shankar, Hyderabad**

#### Waning superpower

Ref: *Trump weighs Nato exit* (Apr 2). The US's threatened exit from Nato is a clear indication of frustration. Geopolitical realism warrants contemporary nation-states to act as per their own interests and not as collective needs. The US is rapidly losing its 'superpower' status by the day.  
**Jalkishan N, Bengaluru**

#### Consult stakeholders

Ref: *FCRA bill put on hold* (Apr 2). Rather than beating around the bush, buying time and blaming the opposition, a government delegation must meet all church leaders and address their concerns. FCRA must never be transformed into a controlling framework.  
**Biju C Mathew, Thiruvananthapuram**



**Jairam Ramesh** @Jairam\_Ramesh  
The National Clean Air Program needs complete revamp to focus sharply on reduction of PM2.5 levels which has become a severe public health disaster



**Akhilesh Yadav** @yadavakhilesh  
Those on whose strength claims of women's safety are made, those 1090 workers are feeling insecure and humiliated in the BJP government



**Amit Malviya** @amitmalviya  
When experienced voices within the party itself begin to dissent, it raises serious questions about the credibility and coherence of Rahul Gandhi's leadership.

2-3 day Parliament agenda also includes bills to raise Lok Sabha strength from 543 to 816 • Many Oppn members say the bill should be referred to a JPC for scrutiny

# Budget session reconvened on April 16 for women's bill

PARVEZ SULTAN @ New Delhi

A sharp verbal clash broke out in the Rajya Sabha on Thursday as the Congress and the government sparred over the adjournment of the Budget Session and the timing of a proposed women's reservation bill. Later, it was announced that Parliament would reconvene on April 16 for two to three days. The agenda includes bills to raise the Lok Sabha strength from 543 to 816 and measures to operationalise the women's reservation law.

The government has also held back-channel talks with the Opposition on bringing bills to implement the quota and delink delimitation from the Census.

The confrontation began after Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju said the House would be adjourned and reconvened in two to three weeks to take up a "very important" bill on women's reservation. "We have certain Bills and certain important issues which we have shared with our members from the Opposition parties also. We are going to have a very important Bill in the next two to three weeks' time. So today, the government would propose that the House be adjourned, and we will meet very soon for a very specific period...for the purpose of the session...is already known to the members," he said.

Seeking clarity, Congress Chief Whip Jairam Ramesh asked, "Is the House going to be



TNIE reported on April 2, 2026

## Rijiju defends move



Defending the move, Rijiju said, "For us, this has nothing to do with a specific state election... We have to take it forward

because we face certain limitations when looking at the time scale...The principal Opposition party has written to us requesting that we convene the meeting after April 29. We have noted down.

adjourned today? Are we meeting tomorrow? Is it being adjourned sine die? Is it being adjourned till a later date to be notified? Please clarify. What is the intention of the Government?"

The announcement triggered sharp exchanges. Defending the move, Rijiju said, "For us, this has nothing to do with a specific state election... We have to take it forward because we face certain limitations when looking at the time scale...The principal Opposition party has

written to us requesting that we convene the meeting after April 29. We have noted down. But the problem is, the government is bound by the timeline, which is its limitation. We have a general election coming in 2026... Let us not go into the dates, but please cooperate with the government."

The Congress accused the government of seeking political mileage ahead of assembly elections and flagged a possible violation of the Model Code of Conduct. Leader of Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge said he had twice asked for an all-party meeting after April 29 and added, "We are not against women's reservation. We are the first ones to bring that. It has become unanimous with our support only. These people take credit whenever they want. Everybody agrees...but at what time, how to bring it, how to do it...stop your games. If you had to do it, why didn't you bring it at the beginning of this session? We discussed rural development for three days. Could we not have discussed this? You call after the election, we will all cooperate... don't take credit before the election."

Leader of the House JP Nadda, responded to Kharge, blaming the Congress government for delaying women quota in legislatures for 30 years. "You were not able to pass it in 30 years. We have already taken credit for it. You always see everything from the angle of politics, not humanity..." he said.

## POWER CORRIDOR

### 1.4K PLANES GROUNDED DUE TO TECH DEFECTS

Minister of State for Civil Aviation Murlidhar Mohol on Thursday said 1,436 aircraft have been grounded since 2023 till date due to technical defects or maintenance issues. He was responding to a written query in the Lok Sabha from MPs Tanuj Punia and Dr Kirsan Namdeo. Giving a break-up on grounded aircraft, Mohol said 356 in 2023, 414 in 2024, 567 in 2025, and 99 in 2026 (upto 25th of March). Mohol also said that Air India was warned on August 11, 2025 for exceeding the stipulated Flying Time the same year.

### CENTRAL VISTA: TREES TRANSPLANTED PERISH

Around 43% of trees transplanted for the government's ambitious Central Vista redevelopment project have perished, the Lok Sabha was informed on Thursday. In a written reply to a question, Union Minister of State for Housing and Urban Affairs Tokhan Sahu said a total of 3,609 trees were transplanted as part of the project, of which 1,545 trees have perished post-transplantation. According to data provided by the minister, 402 trees were transplanted to NTPC Eco Park in Badarpur.



### 73% WELLS SHOW GROUNDWATER RISE: GOVT

About 73% of wells monitored across the country recorded a rise in groundwater levels in the 2025 post-monsoon period compared to the decadal mean between 2015-2024, the government told the Lok Sabha on Thursday. In a written reply to a question, Union Jal Shakti Minister C R Patil said annual assessment of dynamic groundwater resources, being conducted since 2022 by the Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) in coordination with the state governments, shows that total groundwater recharge has increased from 432 billion cubic metres (BCM) in 2017 to 448.52 BCM in 2025. The minister added that the share of 'safe' assessment units has increased significantly from 62.6% to 73.14%

# Upper House passes CAPF Bill with voice vote amid Oppn walkout

PREETHA NAIR @ New Delhi



AMID opposition boycott, the Central Armed Police Forces (General Administration) Bill, 2026 was passed by Parliament on Thursday after Lok Sabha approved it by voice vote. The bill seeks to create a unified legal framework governing personnel across different CAPFs, replacing the current patchwork of separate service-rule regimes for the five central forces. The bill was passed by the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday amid protests.

Replying to the debate on the Bill, Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai said it aims to regulate the general rules governing the recruitment and conditions of service of Group A General Duty Officers and other officers in the Central Armed Police Forces.

Opposing the Bill, several opposition members said the bill should be referred to a joint committee of Parliament for threadbare scrutiny and stakeholder consultations. Later Congress MP Manickam Tagore said, "We boycotted the passage of the bill as Home Minister Amit Shah was not there to reply to the CAPF bill".

An amendment moved by Trinamool Congress (TMC) MP Mahua Moitra to refer the bill to a select committee of the Lok Sabha was also negated by a voice vote.

Participating in the debate, Moitra said the government was attempting to overrule a

**Bill brought in haste: Cong**  
The Bill in current form creates differences between officers and employees, and divisiveness in the armed forces is not good for the country and internal security, Congress MP Harish Meena said. The Bill has been brought in haste without discussion and to bypass the Supreme Court order of October, 2025, the MP said.

Supreme Court judgment through legislation. She claimed that by this Bill, the State is killing the officer morale with structural stagnation. In October last year, the SC dismissed the Centre's plea seeking a review of its 2025 verdict that directed that IPS officers' deputation in CAPFs up to the level of Senior Administrative Grade (SAG) should be "progressively reduced".

Opposing the Bill, Congress MP Harish Chandra Meena demanded that the government send the Bill to joint parliamentary committees for comprehensive discussion.

# Govt: Don't ignore faceless complaints on online crimes against women, kids

MUKESH RANJAN @ New Delhi

THE Centre has issued an advisory to states and Union Territories (UTs), directing them not to dismiss anonymous cyber-crime complaints, particularly those involving crimes against women and children. The move comes amid growing concern that law enforcement agencies are routinely closing such cases on the grounds that the victim cannot be identified, allowing harmful online content to remain accessible.

According to officials familiar with the development, several complaints filed through the National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal (NCRP) are being ignored or prematurely closed without adequate intervention and investigation. They noted that this trend undermines the very purpose of the portal, which was designed to enable victims and witnesses to report sensitive crimes without fear of exposure.

"States and UTs are regularly

### 5-fold increase in CSAM

Data recently presented by the MHA in Parliament reveals that the cases related to child pornography and CSAM increased nearly fivefold from 2,109 in 2021 to 10,431 in 2025. Complaints involving impersonating profiles surged from 15,843 to 46,784.



closing anonymous complaints and 'Report and Track' complaints citing the inability to identify the victim, while no concrete action is taken to remove the reported content," an official said.

The Centre has now clarified that the anonymity of a com-

plainant or non-identification of victim cannot be used as a valid reason to shut down a case. This is critical in cases involving child sexual abuse material (CSAM), child pornography and other such content, where timely intervention is essential to prevent harm.

The NCRP, managed by the Indian Cybercrime Coordination Centre (I4C) under the MHA, allows users to report offences anonymously, particularly in cases related to rape, gang rape and child abuse imagery. But officials indicated that the intent behind this feature was being diluted at the state level. In the advisory it has been said that even if the identity of the complainant remains unknown, law enforcement agencies must initiate action.

The directive comes against the backdrop of a sharp rise in cybercrime complaints. Data recently presented by the MHA in Parliament reveals that the cases related to CSAM increased nearly fivefold.

# War: Flights see surge in GPS spoofing

S LALITHA @ New Delhi

THE over a month-long West Asia conflict is having an unintended consequence - civil aviation flights from India operated in the UAE air space are frequently flying a bit off track due to the tactics deployed by the warring countries. This is making them travel a bit longer, resulting in waste of aviation turbine fuel (ATF) and potentially endangering passenger safety, sources said.

Global Positioning System (GPS) spoofing, which involves tampering with the navigation signals of a vehicle to misdirect it from its original path, has surged manifold. A senior official of the Airport Authority of India, which controls the Air Traffic Control (ATC) centres, and multiple sources from airlines in India confirmed that they are battling against this hazard in the skies.

"With Iran, Israel and Iraq air space off limits for airlines presently, many airlines in India operate flights on and off to the UAE region, including to Sharjah, Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Fu-



Radio Navigation Satellite Service interference can impact aircraft operations far beyond the immediate affected area, creating potential safety risks across multiple flight regions

Juan Carlos Salazar, ICAO secretary general

jairah and Ras Al Khaimah airports. The flights primarily encounter GPS spoofing there," an airline official told this newspaper. He said this was a tactic now adopted by many nations to safeguard their own skies. "They want to divert the GPS system of drones as well as missiles and hence put in place massive spoofing technologies.

This ends up misleading civilian planes flying in the airspace," he added.

The official said pilots are able to take back their flights to safety after switching over to the manual process. "When it comes to my airline, I will not call spoofing a big threat to passenger safety. However, they end up delaying the journey for everyone on

board as well as adding expenses to each trip due to the extra fuel used because of the wrong route taken," he said. A senior AAI official confirmed that they were observing a surge in flights going off track a bit and getting back to the original route later.

During a summit in Montreal last year, International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) General Secretary General Juan Carlos Salazar had said, "Radio Navigation Satellite Service interference can impact aircraft operations far beyond the immediate affected area, creating potential safety risks across multiple flight regions." He said ICAO was working with its members to implement protective measures through aviation safety frameworks and standards.

Aviation enthusiast Shardul Chauhan, who witnessed multiple instances of GPS spoofing through flight tracking platforms, said, "GPS spoofing is a reality which spans land, air and now the seas. It is used by state and non-state actors to mislead aircraft, drones, ships and weapons."

# Ravi Varma painting sells for record ₹167 crore

PARAMITA GHOSH @ New Delhi

THE image of Raja Ravi Varma's most expensive painting, Yashoda milking a cow with an infant Krishna beside her, made during his heyday in the 1890s, is well-known in Indian households. It has not only bested Husain's 'Gram Yatra' as the most expensive Indian artwork sold, but has also broken category records.

'Yashoda and Krishna', a 35x28.25 oil on canvas, has sold for ₹167.2 crore (approximately \$18 million), topping the Husain painting sold at Christie's New York last March for R118-119 crore (\$13.6-13.8 million).

After an intense bidding war at Saffronart's Spring Live Auction in Mumbai on Wednesday, the work was acquired by Cyrus Poonawalla, industrialist and founder of the Serum Institute of India, who, according to reports, has committed to making it available for public viewing periodically.

Mother-and-child paintings acquire almost instant iconicity at auctions as they draw from historical significance as religious icons (Madonna and

### Work acquired by industrialist

After an intense bidding war at Saffronart's Spring Live Auction in Mumbai, the work was acquired by Cyrus Poonawalla, industrialist and founder of the Serum Institute of India, who, according to reports, has committed to making it available for public viewing.



Child), the high acclaim of artists who painted them (from Titian, Sandro Botticelli to Pablo Picasso and Gustav Klimt), and the use of precious materials like gold leaf in older masterpieces.

'Titan's 'Madonna and Child' sold in 2011 for \$16.88 million. Botticelli's 'Madonna and Child' sold in 2024 for £8.6 million (\$10.8M+) in Dec 2024. Ahish Anand, CEO and MD,

DAG, who holds one of the largest collections of Indian modern art, said: "This is a defining moment for the Indian art market. At ₹167.2 crore, Raja Ravi Varma's Yashoda and Krishna—a universal subject reminiscent as much of Madonna and Christ, has not only achieved a new world record, it has done so with conviction, more than doubling its lower estimate of ₹80 crore, exceed-

ing it by ₹87.2 crore—an increase of over 100%.

Just as importantly, it advances the market decisively beyond the previous benchmark set by M. F. Husain at ₹118 crore, surpassing it by ₹49.2 crore—an increase of over 40%. In any global context, that is a significant recalibration of value, not a marginal progression.

What this result demonstrates is depth: depth of demand, depth of scholarship, and depth of confidence in works of true art-historical importance. Ravi Varma has long been central to India's visual imagination; today, the market has aligned with that significance at the highest level."

Born into an aristocratic family in Travancore, Ravi Varma was largely self-taught initially. He eventually learnt the intricacies of oil painting and the European technique of chiaroscuro from a British painter. The technique of portraying mythological figures as expressive human beings was his own. He was supported by the former Travancore royal family, and his success led to other commissions from India's elite.

# Covid-19 Cicada variant spreads to 29 US states; WHO says checking

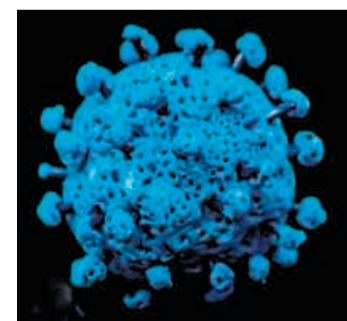
KAVITA BAJELI-DATT @ New Delhi

A highly mutated Covid-19 variant, which is spreading fast in the US and parts of Europe, has triggered worldwide concern. However, experts said there is no immediate risk in India.

Nicknamed Cicada, it is on the list of variants being tracked by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). It was first detected in 2024, but became the focus of policymakers and experts after it accounted for a high number of infections over the past month. In the US, the variant was detected in wastewater samples in at least 29 states, according to the CDC.

Though cases due to Cicada are rising, experts said it is not driving large waves of infection or more severe disease. In the US, it is primarily affecting children.

Dr Rajeev Jayadevan, co-chairman of the National IMA COVID Task Force, said that SARS-CoV-2, the virus that



### 'No large-scale impact'

He said that there was no large-scale impact due to "widespread population immunity to prior versions of this virus... and equally widespread immune memory in the population to the virus's basic template—from vaccination and surviving bouts of natural infection".

causes Covid-19, is constantly evolving. "This means the virus is continually making changes to its genetic structure, so that it can escape being detected by existing human immune responses that were

based on earlier versions of the virus," he said.

Dr Jayadevan, convener of the research cell for Kerala at the Indian Medical Association, said, "This extraordinary change is believed to be the result of the earlier virus having lived in a person of reduced immunity for several years, gradually accumulating one mutation at a time." However, he said that there was no Covid surge happening in India. "In countries reporting it, there is no evidence that it is causing more severe disease," he said.

He said that there was no large-scale impact due to "widespread population immunity to prior versions of this virus... and equally widespread immune memory in the population to the virus's basic template—from vaccination and surviving bouts of natural infection". He added, "In other words, although it is still capable of infecting people, the immune response in healthy individuals can get rid of the virus before the body develops severe disease."

INDIA	Max	Min	Mumbai	Max	Min
Ahmedabad	37	25	Mumbai	32	25
Bhopal	38	22	Panaji	33	25
Jaipur	36	21	Patna	36	22
Amritsar	31	17	Lucknow	36	21
Chennai	34	26	Port Blair	31	26
Kolkata	35	25	Imphal	25	15
Srinagar	08	-2	Chandigarh	35	20

# HC serves notice to Raj poll panel over delay in local body elections

Asks how voter list revision can go beyond court-mandated deadline

RAJESH ASNANI @ Jaipur

EXPRESSING displeasure over the long delay in conducting Gram Panchayat and urban local body elections, the Rajasthan High Court has issued contempt notices to the State Election Commission and its head Rajeshwar Singh.

A division bench, headed by acting Chief Justice S P Sharma, passed the order on a contempt petition filed by former MLA Sanyam Lodha. The court has sought a response from the commission within four weeks, questioning how it issued a voter list revision schedule that extends beyond the court-mandated deadline.

The court had earlier directed that panchayat and local body elections be completed by April 15, 2026. However, during the hearing, Lodha's counsel informed the bench that the final voter list was scheduled to be published on April 22, making it impossible to meet the deadline. Advocate General Rajendra Prasad, appearing for the state, however argued that the government planned to move a plea seeking postponement of the elections. The bench noted that such matters could be considered separately.

The earlier directive, issued on November 14 last year had also mandated completion of



'Elections for 59 municipal bodies pending since Nov'

State Congress president Govind Singh Dotasra criticised the government over the delay in conducting elections, accusing it of "making a mockery of democracy" and saying that it has no intention of holding elections. He pointed out that polls for 59 municipal bodies had been pending since November 2024.

the delimitation process by December 31, 2025. The timeline was subsequently upheld by the Supreme Court.

The issue has given the Opposition an opportunity to target the government. State Congress president Govind Singh Dotasra criticised the government over the delay in conducting elections, accusing it of "making a mockery of democracy" and saying that it has no intention of holding elections. He pointed out that polls for 59 municipal bodies had been pending since November 2024

and that all urban local bodies were currently being run by the administrators appointed by the state government. He also criticised the government for extending the tenure of the OBC Commission.

Responding to the allegations, BJP spokesperson Ramlal Sharma said that the extension of the OBC Commission's tenure was a regular legislative process. He also asserted that elections would be conducted under the "One State, One Election" framework once the commission completes its mandate.

## No pension for 'disqualified' MLAs in HP

HARPREET BAJWA @ Chandigarh

THE Himachal Pradesh assembly on Thursday passed a bill to stop pension benefits for MLAs disqualified under the anti-defection law after a heated debate between the treasury benches and the Opposition over the legality of the move.

The bill says the existing Himachal Pradesh Legislative Assembly (Allowances and Pension of Members) Act, 1971, does not contain a deterrent mechanism to discourage defections. The bill proposes insertion of a new sub-section (2-A), which states that an MLA disqualified under the anti-defection law will not be entitled to pension.

Calling it a blow to democratic principles, leader of Opposition Jai Ram Thakur alleged that the amendment was being brought due to "political vendetta". BJP MLA Trilok Jamwal said such a law should be prospective.

CM Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu said, "The bill is not aimed at any individual or political party. It is meant to uphold morality, honesty and transparency in public life."

## Cong: Maha SIR must be done with no hurry, in impartial and fair way

SUDHIR SURYAWANSHI @ Mumbai

A Maharashtra Congress delegation urged the state election commission on Thursday to implement the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in a fair and transparent manner. The delegation submitted a letter with certain demands, concerns and suggestions to state Chief Electoral Officer S Chokalingam regarding the SIR drive, expected this month.

State Congress president Harshwardhan Sapkal pointed out that concerns have been raised in several states where the revision exercise had been conducted earlier, with complaints alleging deliberate exclusion of voters belonging to specific castes and religions. He claimed that in some states, irregularities were reported in the revision process conducted ahead of elections, allegedly benefiting ruling parties.

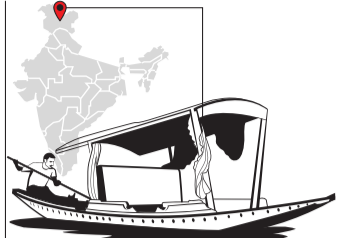
Speaking to reporters after meeting the CEO, Sapkal noted that the last SIR of electoral rolls in Maharashtra was conducted between 2002 and 2004 over a period of nearly 13 months. Given that the voter base has increased by around 3.5 crore since then, he opined that the upcoming exercise should be planned accordingly and carried out over a suffi-



ciently long duration of time. "Since no major elections are scheduled in the state in the next two to three years, the revision process could be conducted over 18 to 24 months to eliminate any doubts in people's minds," Sapkal said.

The Congress said the SIR process should not be conducted simultaneously with the Census by the same officials, and added parties should be provided electoral data in soft copy, machine-readable formats as well as in hard copy.

The Opposition party sought a minimum one-month window for filing objections and responding to notices, and at least seven days' notice before deletion of any voter's name from the rolls. Sapkal emphasised that safeguards must be put in place to ensure that BLOs are able to work freely and without any pressure.



## SRINAGAR DIARY

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### HC asks MHA to bring back boy from Pak

The J&K and Ladakh High Court has directed the MHA to take steps to bring back a minor boy from Gujranwala, Pakistan pursuant to 'leave India notice' on April 25, 2025 following the Pahalgam attack and consider his application for extension of long-term visa and Indian citizenship. The HC passed the order while disposing of a petition filed by Sajjad Ahmed Rajouri seeking repatriation of his son Aasim Sajjad born on October 26, 2006. Sajjad had married a Pakistani woman in 2005 and returned to the country with the baby on October 9, 2007. Aasim, his father said, was forcibly deported to Pakistan despite living in J&K for years on a long-term visa.



### 68,000 kg drugs seized in UT in five years

Over 68,000 kgs of drugs have been seized in J&K by law enforcement in the last five years, according to data released by Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. The data shows that over 1.3 million adults in the UT are using addictive substances, with opioids emerging as the most commonly consumed drug. The government has strengthened its counter-narcotics framework to prevent smuggling of drugs. The BSF and other border forces have been empowered under the NDPS Act to conduct searches, seizures and arrests. An upgraded surveillance grid featuring AI-based systems and night vision devices have been deployed.

### NIT secures patent for indoor heating system

The NIT, Srinagar has secured a patent for an innovative system aimed at modernising the traditional 'hamaam' through an AI and internet of things (IoT)-based automation. 'Hamaam' has long served as an essential source of indoor heating during winters in Kashmir and other cold regions. According to inventors Saniya Zahoor, Shabir A Sofi, and Syed Farmaan Ali, the system employs IoT-enabled sensors and AI algorithms to regulate underfloor heating in real time. An AI-driven module determines fuel requirements dynamically, activating the fuel feed mechanism as needed to optimise energy use.

## C'GARH HC asks Jogi's son to surrender in murder case

EJAZ KAISER @ Raipur

THE Chhattisgarh High Court has delivered a blow to Amit Jogi, son of the state's first Chief Minister Ajit Jogi, in the 2003 NCP leader Ram Avatar Jaggi murder case.

Following a hearing on Thursday, a Division Bench headed by Chief Justice Ramesh Sinha has directed Amit Jogi, formerly the main accused in the case, to surrender before the court within three weeks. Amit Jogi, former MLA, expressed regret saying that the high court accepted the CBI's appeal against him in just 40 minutes—without granting a fair opportunity for a hearing.

"Someone previously acquitted has been declared guilty without being heard. This is unprecedented. I have full faith that I will receive justice from the Supreme Court. Truth shall prevail", Jogi said.

The case dates back to June 4, 2003, when Ram Avatar Jaggi, a prominent leader of the NCP, was shot dead. Jaggi, a businessman, was known to be a staunch loyalist of veteran leader and former Union Minister Vidya Charan Shukla. When Shukla left the Congress to join NCP, Jaggi followed him.

## Yogi govt razes Lucknow mosque built on govt land, triggers uproar

NAMITA BAJPAI @ Lucknow

A mosque built on Gram Sabha land near Lucknow was demolished early Thursday following a High Court order.

Authorities said the structure stood on public land and no valid documents were produced to prove ownership. Notices had been issued earlier, asking those concerned to remove it, but they did not comply within the given time.

At around 3 am, a team of officials and police reached the site. Three bulldozers were used, and the structure was demolished within about an hour. A heavy police force was deployed to maintain order, and officials said there was no resistance during the operation. Those linked to the mosque had told the court it was built many years ago by local residents and used only for prayers.

The court, however, found that the land belonged to the Gram Sabha and the claim was not supported by records. It said such cases can be decided on the basis of documents and affidavits, without the need for cross-examination in every instance. Based on this, the eviction order was upheld, and the administration carried out

### Extortionist killed in police encounter

Moradabad police eliminated an extortionist, who had demanded ₹5 crore from a businessman and exporter, late on Wednesday night. Criminal identified as Ashu, alias Monty, was a sharp shooter associated with Udham Singh gang. He had 33 cases registered against him. Ashu was on the run in connection with an extortion case carrying a cash reward of ₹50,000 for his whereabouts.

the demolition.

According to ADM Administration Rakesh Singh, upon receiving information about the action, there was news of resistance from the encroachers. Upon this, an inspection was carried out with the SDM. After taking stock, the administration issued a clear warning that illegal encroachment would be removed. The encroachers were also told that any obstruction to law and order won't be tolerated.

The administration added that action against illegal encroachments on public land will continue.

## Turmoil, factional feuds rattle U'khand Cong ahead of polls

NARENDRA SETHI @ Dehradun

THE Uttarakhand unit of the Congress, which was hoping to bury the hatchet ahead of the 2027 Assembly elections, finds itself battling factionalism again. A few days back, former Chief Minister Harish Rawat announced a 15-day break from active politics over the non-induction of his loyalist Sanjay Negi—a former block pramukh from Ramnagar—in the list of recent state appointments. Now, it has spiralled into an open confrontation.

The conflict intensified after former Cabinet minister Harak Singh Rawat, a known Harish Rawat opponent, launched a critique against the "cult of personality" surrounding the former chief minister. His remarks have provoked a counter-offensive from the loyalists of Harish Rawat.

The backlash was spearheaded by Dharchula MLA Harish Dhami. "Harak Singh Rawat is the same individual who destabilised the Congress government in 2016 by orchestrating the defection of MLAs to the BJP," Dhami asserted. "He committed the 'great sin' of defection in this Devbhoomi, which led to immense hardship for the party. The high com-



The decision rests with the high command. With my wife currently serving as the block pramukh in Ramnagar, my entry would guarantee a Congress victory in the constituency. I am capable of winning

Sanjay Negi, Congress leader



mand must remember that a person who can betray once is capable of doing it again," he added. Dhami further said that supporters for Harish Rawat should submit their resignations to "uphold his dignity".

The feud gained momentum following a statement made by former Assembly Speaker Govind Singh Kunjwal, a Harish Rawat loyalist, when he claimed that the Congress was synonymous with Harish Rawat in Uttarakhand. Harak Singh responded sharply. "Harish Rawat has received everything from politics. He became a block pramukh, MLA, MP, Union minister, and CM. He

has held every post except that of the PM. His dissatisfaction is beyond comprehension," Harak Singh said.

At the heart of the crisis is the stalled induction of Negi. While six other leaders were inducted in the Congress organisational setup on March 28, Negi's entry was blocked due to opposition from certain factions. Former MP Mahendra Pal also publicly opposed Negi's return.

Negi, however, remains defiant. "The decision rests with the high command. I am capable of winning, and I have other paths open to me if needed," Negi warned.

## Bishnoi gang member surrenders over ₹10 cr extortion threat to MP bizman

ANURAAG SINGH @ Bhopal

AN alleged member of the Lawrence Bishnoi gang surrendered before police in Nagda town of Madhya Pradesh's Ujjain on Thursday in connection with one of the six cases of extortion threats to businessmen in the name of gang's key operative Harry Boxer.

The gang member, Rajpal Singh Chandrawat, of Nagda surrendered in connection with an extortion case registered last month in Khargone district by cotton businessman Dilip Rathore. The businessman had reported to police about firing outside his house and receiving ₹10 crore extortion threat via WhatsApp call in the name of Boxer, who is operating from abroad.

Rajpal told reporters that he surrendered following pressure on his family members by police. "I'm associated with the



### SIX CASES

- 6 businessmen reported to police about receiving ₹5-₹15 cr extortion threats in Harry Boxer's name
- 9-member SIT has been probing the cases

Lawrence Bishnoi gang and the case in which I've surrendered is lodged at Khargone's Kasrawad police station. Our gang came to know that Rathore was exploiting farmers and teenage-young girls," Rajpal told police. "Our gang cooperated

with administration and investigation agencies. I've cooperated in the past during interrogation by Delhi, Punjab and Maharashtra police," he said.

While Rajpal claimed that the police came to know about him and the gang through his aide Kuldip Singh, he alleged that another key aide Yogesh Bhati too was in Kasrawad police's custody. However, police denied Bhati's detention.

Khargone police have arrested three other men in last month's extortion case.

Arrested in 2023 by Delhi Police's in a case of weapon smuggling, Rajpal came in contact with Bishnoi in Tihar Jail. Since then teams of police and NIA have raided his premises in Nagda in connection April 2022 killing of builder Sanjay Biyani in Nanded and 2024 murder of former Maharashtra minister Baba Siddique, among others.

## Trace honey-trap gangs targeting innocents: HC

NAMITA BAJPAI @ Lucknow

A division bench of the Allahabad High Court has called for a thorough investigation into rising incidents of honey-trapping and extortion, observing that such crimes pose a serious threat to society.

The bench, comprising Justices JJ Munir and Tarun Saxena, on March 30 directed the Uttar Pradesh government and senior police officials, including Additional Chief Secretary (Home), DGP and IG, Meerut Zone, to curb such gangs.

The directions came while hearing a writ petition filed in connection with a case from Bijnor district involving a woman and three others, including two police constables and a local politician. The accused were allegedly part of a honey-trap gang targeting a businessman.

According to the court's observations, the woman first contacted the victim through WhatsApp and lured him with "sweet talk." She later called



him to Bijnor and took him to a hotel, where intimate relations took place. During the meeting, she allegedly recorded video clips without his knowledge.

The court noted that the videos were later used to blackmail the businessman. The clips were reportedly shared with the other accused, including the politician, who summoned the victim. The two policemen were also present during the meeting, where the victim was shown the video and questioned.

A demand of ₹10 lakh was al-

legedly made, which was later negotiated to ₹8 lakh. The victim, under fear, did not pay the money and instead reported the matter to the police.

During the hearing, counsel for the petitioners sought permission to withdraw the writ petition, which the court allowed. However, the bench took suo motu cognisance of the issue, terming it a "very pernicious state of affairs in society". It directed the IG, Meerut Zone, to conduct a detailed investigation and alert district police chiefs to maintain strict vigilance against such gangs which "blackmail innocent people by utilising women for springing a honey trap".

The court emphasised that if such offences were allowed to continue, "life in a decent society would become extremely difficult". The petition was dismissed as withdrawn, but the court issued directions for strict action and preventive measures against similar criminal activities.

## 'GST officials' raid jewellery shop, steal ₹20L gold

MUKESH RANJAN @ Ranchi

FIVE men posing as GST officials raided a jeweller's shop at Giridih and allegedly decamped with jewellery worth ₹20 lakh after the owner failed to produce documents. The imposters also took the owner, Harihar Saw, along in their SUV and later dropped him several kilometres away in Deoghar.

According to family members, the jeweller even offered to settle the matter, but the "officers" refused to accept it. The imposters seized gold jewellery worth ₹20 lakh, forced Harihar into the Scorpio with them, and then drove away. The accused arrived in a Scorpio, with one of them being dressed in police uniform, while another wearing a black coat.

Trump pushes endgame narrative as war remains midgame

Threats of tougher strikes accompany quick end assurances, leaving conflict direction uncertain

JAYANTH JACOB @ New Delhi

US President Donald Trump spoke for nearly 19 minutes, but the address felt less like a turning point and more like a recap of familiar warnings, recycled grievances, and well-worn talking points repackaged for the prime-time audience.

The line the White House clearly wanted to land was simple. America's "core strategic objectives are nearing completion." Trump true to himself, doubled down, insisting the US is "very close" and will "finish it very fast." The message was aimed squarely at an increasingly war-weary public.

The core problem is that the so-called "finish line" is still undefined. President Trump speaks of objectives being nearly complete, but those goals have never been clearly or consistently spelled out.

There is one inherent danger. When the objectives are so broad and shifting, "success" becomes subjective. It can be declared politically rather than demonstrated strategically.

That might leave the key question unresolved—what concrete outcome actually marks the end of this war, and who gets to make that call and when?

That ambiguity was undercut further by a competing tone in the speech. Alongside assurances of a near-term end came threats of intensified force, with Iran warned of "extremely hard" strikes and even more sweeping destruction in the weeks ahead.

The speech underwhelmed largely because expectations had spun out of control beforehand. Speculation ranged from a dramatic NATO rupture to the possibility of US ground op-



Donald Trump points at journalists after speaking at a televised address on the conflict in the West Asia from the Cross Hall of the White House in Washington | AFP

erations targeting Iran's nuclear assets. None of that materialised. Instead, Trump returned to familiar ground.

He spoke of Iran's history of hostility, criticism of the Obama-era nuclear deal, and claims of success in degrading Tehran's military capabilities.

For anyone following the conflict, there was little new. What did shift, however, was the market reaction. And that may matter more to Trump than the immediate political reviews.

Oil prices surged sharply after the speech, with global benchmarks jumping as traders digested the lack of a clear off-ramp and the more aggressive rhetoric.

US stock futures also slid, signaling broader unease. The market response reflects a simple concern— not just how this war ends, but whether anyone in Washington can clearly articulate that end.

Rising fuel costs are already feeding domestic pressure. Gas prices have climbed significantly since the conflict began, even as Trump frames the increase as temporary and blames Iran's actions in regional oil routes.

The administration's bet is that economic pain will be short-lived. At the centre of it all is the unresolved issue of control over a critical global shipping artery.

Trump projected confidence, suggesting it would reopen "naturally" once the conflict ends. That optimism stands in stark contrast to Iran's stated intent to keep it closed and to the caution shown so far by the US military in avoiding direct confrontation there.

Even on alliances, where tensions had been widely anticipated, Trump pulled his punches. His critique of other nations was pointed but restrained by his standards, stopping short of a full-scale rupture while still nudging allies to shoulder more of the burden.

In the end, the speech revealed less about the end of the war than about the administration's current position which is rhetorically confident, strategically ambiguous, and navigating a narrowing path between escalation and exit. If there is a finish line, it remains just out of view.



Iran claims 7 million citizen ready to fight

Tehran: Iran's parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf said 7 million citizens are ready to fight any US ground invasion. He cited a rapid national campaign, though the figure remains unverified.

China in talks with 'all parties' about Hormuz

BEIJING: China said it is in contact with all parties to restore stability in the Strait of Hormuz, calling for an early ceasefire. It blamed US and Israeli actions for the disruption, urging an end to hostilities.

Iran calls nuclear weapons claims 'lie'

Vienna: Iran is not enriching uranium to bomb-grade levels, its envoy to the UN nuclear watchdog said, rejecting US-Israeli claims as a "lie".

Iran fires missiles at Tel Aviv, warns of 'crushing' attacks on US and Israel

DUBAI

IRAN on Thursday threatened "crushing" attacks on the US and Israel, firing missiles at Tel Aviv after Donald Trump vowed to bomb the Islamic republic "back to the Stone Ages".

The war continues to disrupt oil and shipping, with British Foreign Minister Yvette Cooper stressing the "urgent need" to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, where one-fifth of the world's oil usually passes.

Blasts hit Tehran, plants shut

Meanwhile, in Tehran, AFP journalists reported a series of loud explosions hitting the Iranian capital, shaking buildings and sending reverberations across the city.

People gather for Sizdeh Bedar

Despite the bombardments, Iranian families gathered at Tehran's Melat park for the 13th day after Nowruz, the Persian New Year, when people traditionally picnic outdoors.

In Israel, Jewish Israelis were also celebrating Passover, which some were forced to do underground due to Iran's attacks.

Russian tanker drifts off Libya as towing fails

CAIRO

THE operation to tow a damaged Russian tanker that has been drifting in the Mediterranean has failed due to harsh weather conditions.

The Arctic Metagaz, which was damaged in a suspected sea drone attack in March, is part of Russia's so-called shadow fleet transporting fossil fuels in violation of international sanctions over Moscow's war on Ukraine.

Libya's western coast in an operation last week, according to Libya's coast guard.

Strikes kill 2 in Ukraine amid Easter talks

KYIV: Aerial attacks on Ukrainian cities killed two people and injured at least three, officials said, as both sides prepare a possible Easter prisoner exchange.

However, Libya's Ports and Maritime Transport Authority

said the towing operation failed at 4 am local time on Thursday due to "harsh" weather conditions and strong winds that caused the tanker to drift "out of control."

"The tanker is unable to return to redo the towing operation under these dangerous weather conditions," the authority wrote in a statement, urging all vessels and naval units to maintain a distance of at least 10 nautical miles from the drifting tanker.

The Malta Today newspaper reported that the tanker was towed to the limits of Malta's search and rescue zone.

Plans are on to send 2nd oil tanker to Cuba

MOSCOW: Russia plans a second oil tanker to Cuba as the island faces a deepening fuel crisis. Energy Minister Sergei Tsivilyov said the shipment is being loaded after a recent delivery ended a three-month gap.

Don sacks Pam Bondi, Blanche named new acting attorney general

WASHINGTON

US President Donald Trump said on Thursday that Pam Bondi is out as his attorney general, ending the contentious tenure of a loyalist who upended the Justice Department's culture of independence from the White House.

The announcement follows months of scrutiny over the Justice Department's handling of files related to Jeffrey Epstein's sex trafficking investigation that made Bondi the target of angry conservatives even with her close relationship with Trump.

Trump named Deputy Attorney General Todd Blanche as the acting attorney general, though three people familiar with the matter have said he has privately discussed Lee Zeldin, the head of the Environmental Protection Agency, as a permanent pick.

Bondi, a former Florida attorney general, pledged not to politicise the Justice Department but soon launched probes into Trump foes, sparking criticism that it was used to advance his agenda.



Pam Bondi

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EASTERN RAILWAY Tender Notice No. ENGG-10/25-26 (OPEN), Dated : 30.03.2026 (Capital tender). E-Tenders are invited by Chief Works Manager, Eastern Railway, Kancharapara Workshop, North 24 Parganas, West Bengal, PIN-743145...

SOUTH CENTRAL RAILWAY Tender Notice No. 38 to 40, DRM\_W\_HYB\_26 dt. 31/03/2026 On behalf of the President of India, Divisional Railway Manager/Works, Hyderabad Division, South Central Railway, Secunderabad invites Open Tenders for the following works through e-procurement up to 15.00 hours of 30/04/2026.

Divisional Railway Manager/Works/Hyderabad TENDER NOTICE On behalf of the President of India, Sr. Divisional Signal & Telecom Engineer, Secunderabad Division, South Central Railway, Secunderabad invites open tenders for the following works through e-procurement of the tenders.

# Tech firms redirect resources to AI, cut jobs

What links these recent layoffs by tech companies is not weak demand but industry-wide shift in spending patterns

PADMINI DHURVARAJ @ Bengaluru

ORACLE laid off thousands of employees even as the company's revenues rise in a bid to increase its investment in artificial intelligence and cloud infrastructure. The move is part of a broader pattern now visible across big technology companies.

Over 75 technology companies have cut nearly 41,500 jobs so far in 2026, according to Layoffs.fyi, as companies redirect resources towards AI, cloud capacity and automation. Meta last week laid off 700 employees across multiple teams. Amazon has removed nearly 16,000 corporate and technical roles, including jobs in its cloud division AWS, while Atlasian cut 1,600 employees, or nearly 10% of its workforce, to focus more on AI products and enterprise growth.

Oracle began layoffs this week, affecting at least 20,000-30,000 employees globally, including nearly 12,000 in India, as it increases spending on AI

## STRUCTURAL SHIFT

Oracle began layoffs this week, affecting at least 20,000-30,000 employees globally, including nearly 12,000 IN INDIA

The layoffs come even as Oracle's financial performance remains strong

More than 75 technology companies have cut nearly 41,500 jobs so far in 2026

Oracle is reportedly planning to raise as much as \$50 billion through debt and equity to expand cloud and AI data centre capabilities for major customers, including Nvidia, Meta Platforms and OpenAI



Meta last week laid off employees across multiple teams

Amazon has removed roughly 16,000 corporate & technical roles

ATLASSIAN CUT ABOUT 1,600 EMPLOYEES, OR NEARLY 10% OF ITS WORKFORCE

infrastructure to compete with rivals such as Amazon, Microsoft and Alphabet.

In a filing for March, the company said restructuring costs for fiscal 2026 could reach as much as \$2.1 billion, driven by severance and related expenses. The layoffs come even as Oracle's financial performance

remains strong. The company recently beat quarterly earnings estimates, reporting \$17.19 billion in revenue, and said demand from the AI data-centre boom is expected to support growth through at least 2027.

What links these layoffs is not weak demand but an industry-wide shift in spending.

Oracle is reportedly planning to raise as much as \$50 billion through debt and equity to expand cloud and AI data centre capabilities for major customers, including Nvidia, Meta Platforms and OpenAI. That shift is changing how companies think about costs.

Meanwhile, in India too the

technology sector is seeing a shift from volume hiring to selective recruitment as companies increase spending on AI, cloud and cybersecurity. Industry body NASSCOM says FY27 is likely to mark a maturation phase for enterprise AI spending, with firms focusing more on productivity-led deployments and measurable outcomes. Hiring remains cautious, mainly for entry-level roles, even as demand for specialised AI and data talent continues to rise.

### Global tech spending

Global technology spending is set to rise sharply in 2026, driven largely by artificial intelligence infrastructure, cloud capacity and data centre expansion. As per Gartner, worldwide IT spending is projected to reach \$6.15 trillion in 2026, up 10.8% from \$5.55 trillion in 2025. This follows an earlier increase of 7.9% in 2025, when global IT spending was estimated at \$5.43 trillion.

# Rupee closes 1.6% up at 93.14, biggest gain since 2013

BENN KOCHUVEEDAN @ Mumbai

THE rupee witnessed biggest gain in 12 years, rallying 1.6% to close at 93.14 on the first day of trade in the new fiscal on Thursday, a day after the Reserve Bank introduced additional measures to curb currency volatility.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 94.62 and registered a sharp single-day surge of 188 paise to touch an intra-day high of 92.82 or 2.1% against the greenback and ended the session at 93.14 (provisional), higher by 156 paise, or 1.6%, from its previous closing level of 94.83, its lowest-ever closing on Monday after breaching 95.24 intra-day.

The rupee is still under pressure due to the unabated withdrawal of foreign capital. In last fiscal, they have pulled out more than \$37 billion, of which in March alone they withdrew \$14 billion — the highest on record, on the back of a strengthening dollar and rising crude oil prices amid a volatile geopolitical situation, forex analysts said.

On April 1, RBI barred banks from offering rupee non-deliverable forwards (NDF) to resident and non-resident clients as rupee crossed 95 level. It also said companies can't re-book cancelled foreign exchange derivatives contracts. The RBI had earlier capped bank's daily net open NDF position at \$100 million.

In the near-term, these measures are likely to trigger unwinding of such positions, reducing artificial demand for dollars and providing support to the rupee, potentially leading to appreciation bias or at least enhanced stability, said Amit Pabari, managing director at CR Forex Advisory. FY26 was the worst year for the rupee in more than a decade due to a combination of factors such as rise in Brent crude prices and persistent outflows from foreign investors, among others. The rupee closed the fiscal with 9.55%, its worst since fiscal 2012 when the unit had lost 12.4%. The latest RBI move will impact as much as 70% of the forex market players, according to Ritesh Bhansali, deputy chief executive at Mecklaj Financial Services.

"In the near term, it is a huge positive for the rupee as it will bring down the level of speculation," added Bhansali.

The new rules take effect immediately and come just days after the RBI capped lenders' daily onshore currency positions at \$100 million from April 10. Though banks have sought more time to unwind, else they stare at Rs 4,000 crore loss, the RBI has not budged. The new directive sent banks scrambling to unwind at least \$30 billion of arbitrage trades, according to traders who estimate that between \$4 billion and \$10 billion have already been unwound so far.



In the near term, it (RBI measures to minimise volatility in rupee) is a huge positive for rupee as it will bring down the level of speculation

Ritish Bhansali, deputy CEO, Mecklaj Financial Services

## TELECOM

### CAG flags delay in Airtel's rural public project

RAKESH KUMAR @ New Delhi

A Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) report has flagged Airtel for delays in a public project and noted that the government failed to strictly enforce penalties, leading to incomplete work and financial loss. According to the report released on Thursday, Airtel failed to complete 756 planned mobile tower sites on time, with only 431 operational by April 2021. Even after revising the target to 562 sites, 124 sites remained incomplete as of April 2025.

Due to these delays, penalties such as Liquidated Damages (LD) and Non-Performance Penalty (NPP), totaling ₹19.47 crore, were imposed. However, the government recovered only ₹10.98 crore, leaving ₹8.49 crore unpaid.

Bharti Airtel Ltd. was assigned the project under the Digital Bharat Nidhi to provide mobile connectivity in remote areas of Assam and Sikkim. The agreement, signed in 2017, required completion by June 2019, but deadlines were repeatedly extended to October 2020.

The report also highlighted serious irregularities in the management of telecom tower assets by Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) during 2018-19 to 2022-23. According to the audit, BSNL failed to maintain proper ownership records, with 36% of land parcels used for towers not registered in its name. Additionally, 27% of leased sites continued operations despite expired agreements.

# Govt to take ₹1.8k cr hit for petchem duty relief

PUSHPITA DEY @ New Delhi

THE Customs duty exemption on critical petrochemical products to minimise the impact of the conflict in West Asia will have a revenue implication of ₹1,800 crore, as per the estimates of the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC).

"The estimated revenue loss from this measure over the three-month period is nearly ₹1,800 crore. However, this figure is based on past trends, and the exact revenue impact cannot be precisely forecasted under the current circumstances. The decision was made after extensive consultations with relevant ministries, which further engaged their respective industry and trade stakeholders"

ers," said CBIC Member Sanjay Mangal on Thursday.

Amid the ongoing conflict in West Asia and the consequent disruptions in global supply chains, the government has decided to provide full Customs exemption on certain critical petrochemical products for a period of three months in light of the ongoing conflict in West Asia and the resulting disruptions in global supply chains. This measure aims to ensure the continued availability of

critical petrochemical inputs for domestic industries, reduce cost pressures on downstream sectors, and safeguard supply stability in the country.

Mangal also added that critical products for downstream industries were identified, and Customs duties on these products have been temporarily reduced to zero for three months. This exemption is expected to stabilise prices for these sectors, improve supply chains, and support the continued production

of these critical products.

The announcement came a day after the Ministry of Finance announced duty benefits for special economic zones (SEZs). As a one-time move, India has allowed SEZ units to increase sales in the domestic market with marginal customs duty concessions, in a move aimed at supporting exporters grappling with weak global demand. However, the department has not quantified the revenue implication for the duty benefits given to SEZ.

Officials from CBIC confirmed that targets for customs have been met as per provisional data. For the previous financial year, customs collections reached 102% of Revised Estimates (RE).

## WINDFALL TAX NOT APPLICABLE TO RIL SEZ REFINERY

RAKESH KUMAR @ New Delhi

THE windfall tax on exported diesel and aviation turbine fuel (ATF) will not be applicable to Reliance Industries' special economic zone (SEZ) refinery due to judicial rulings, a senior government official said.

As per Jainendra Singh Kandhari, joint secretary, Department of Revenue, the special additional excise duty and additional excise duty are not applicable to SEZ refineries.

Amid the ongoing conflict in West Asia between Iran and Israel, which has impacted India's energy supply, the government announced export duties of ₹21.50 per litre on diesel and ₹29.50 per litre on ATF. However, initially it was not clear whether exports from Reliance's SEZ refinery—one of the largest contributors to India's refined product exports—would be exempt. Reliance was exempted during the 2022 windfall tax regime. "As per judicial pronouncements on this issue, special additional excise duty and additional excise duty are not applicable on SEZ refineries," said Kandhari.

The levy, first introduced in July 2022 following Russia's invasion of Ukraine and withdrawn in December 2024, has been re-imposed in the form of a special additional excise duty (SAED) to encourage refiners to prioritise domestic sales over exports. Reliance has two refineries at Jamnagar in Gujarat—a 33 million tonnes per year unit catering to the domestic market and a 35.2 million tonnes per year export-oriented SEZ unit.

# India, China initiate fresh trade talks, UK FTA to take effect within a month

PUSHPITA DEY @ New Delhi

UNION Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Thursday said India and China have initiated fresh discussions on trade to expand market access for Indian exporters, following a meeting with his Chinese counterpart after a long gap.

On the sidelines of the WTO Ministerial meeting in Cameroon, Goyal had a bilateral meeting with Chinese counterpart and delegates to discuss trade issues.

Describing the interaction as "a good start", Goyal said both sides explored ways to build greater trust and smoothen trade flows amid concerns over India's widening trade deficit with China. This is the first time both countries got into a discussion on trade after India backed out of the China-led Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) negotiations in 2019. India has recently



### Govt to come up with more measures to aid exporters

Commerce ministry will come up with more measures to ensure that the Indian exporters are least affected due to the ongoing West Asia crisis. The ministry has introduced temporary Customs duty relief for some products, and also working on various export incentives schemes.

partially relaxed its FDI regulations under Press Note 3 (2020), allowing minority investments (up to 10% beneficial ownership) from neighboring countries, including China, under the automatic route for certain manufacturing sectors.

Meanwhile, Goyal said the proposed India-UK FTA, along with double contribution con-

vention (DCC), is likely to come into effect in a month, with the trade pact likely to become the fastest deal to secure approval by the UK Parliament. "The UK is pleased at the speed with which India-UK FTA passed both Houses of Parliament... and we are looking at a possible entry into force of the agreement over 30-45 days," Goyal added.

# Subscription model: Rapido targets 50 lakh drivers by FY27

PADMINI DHURVARAJ @ Bengaluru

RAPIDO is targeting 50 lakh active drivers or captains by FY27 as it doubles down on its zero-commission SaaS model, shifting revenue from per-ride commissions to fixed subscriptions paid by drivers nationwide, said Pavan Guntupalli, co-founder of the company.

Rapido currently has nearly 30 lakh active captains every month across the country and expects this to rise sharply over the next financial year.

"Now, as of today, we have around 3 million, which is 30 lakh captains active every single month. And we expect it to reach to 50 lakh captains by this financial year FY27," he said. Speaking about the company's business model, Guntupalli said Rapido has moved away from the traditional commission-based ride aggregation model and now operates as a software-as-a-service platform for driver partners, whom the company refers to as captains.

"At first, we were a ride sharing, ride aggregator platform. But in 2023, Rapido being one of the first companies to make a major move in changing our entire business model, from a commission ride aggregator platform to becoming a zero commission SaaS platform," he said. He added that under the revised model, the company's revenues are no longer linked to a percentage of drivers' earnings or per-ride commissions. Instead, captains pay a fixed daily fee to access the platform and its technology tools.

"Each captain pays a fixed amount of let's say 19 rupees or 29 rupees per day. And that is how our income is generated for Rapido," Guntupalli said.

Guntupalli said the company now tracks the number of captains on its platform more closely than conventional revenue metrics. "One of the major things that we keep focusing on is number of captains we have on our system," he said.

# TVS Venu Group to acquire PGIM India's asset management business

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU @ Chennai

CHENNAI-based TVS Venu Group has decided to enter the lucrative asset management business. The company on Thursday said it has entered into definitive agreements, through TVS Venu Management and Consultancy Services and its affiliates, to acquire Prudential Financial Inc's (PFI) 100% stake in PGIM India Asset Management (PGIM India) and PGIM India Trustees.

Completion of the transaction is subject to regulatory approvals and other customary closing conditions, TVS Venu Group said in a statement on Thursday. It has not disclosed the amount it paid for the acquisition. The PGIM India is a wholly-owned business of PGIM, the global investment management business of US-based PFI. It is a full-serv-



ice investment manager offering a broad range of equity, fixed income and multi-asset solutions to retail and institutional investors, managing over ₹30,000 crore of assets as of December 31, 2025.

Khaitan & Co acted as legal adviser to TVS Venu Group and Shardul Amarchand Mangaldas & Co acted as the legal adviser to PFI. Ernst & Young LLP acted as the exclusive M&A adviser to PFI.

The PGIM India manages 25 open-ended MFs as of March 2026 and offers alternative investment funds, portfolio management services, and offshore advisory. The acquisition will give TVS Venu Group access to a full-service investment management platform in India. Prudential Financial has been exploring a sale of its underperforming India unit, which manages ₹27,000 crore in mutual fund assets, for some time.

## EXPRESS READ

### Mfg sector growth slips to 4-year low in March

NEW DELHI: Manufacturing sector growth eased to a four-year low in March as cost pressures, fierce competition, market uncertainty and the war in the Middle East, a report said on Thursday. The HSBC India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) fell from 56.9 in February to 53.9 in March, indicating the weakest improvement in overall business conditions in about four years. ENS

### March UPI transactions touch 22.64 billion

NEW DELHI: Transaction via Unified Payments Interface (UPI) touched a record high of 22.64 billion in volume terms in March. "UPI achieves 22.64 bn transactions in March '26. In volume terms, 22.64 billion transactions were carried during the month as compared to 18.3 billion a year ago, posting a growth of 24%." ENS

# Sebi moots revival of open market share buybacks

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU @ Mumbai

IN a major move, capital market regulator Sebi has proposed reintroduction of open market share buybacks through stock exchanges.

This option was available in the past but discontinued due to tax-related concerns. The open market share buybacks via stock exchanges is now being reconsidered after changes in the taxation framework addressed earlier inequities.

In a consultation paper released on Thursday, the Sebi suggested that companies be allowed once again to repurchase their shares directly from secondary market as an additional method under existing buyback regulations. Under the revised provisions of the In-

come Tax Act, buyback proceeds will be taxed as capital gains in the hands of shareholders. This aligns tax treatment of buybacks with regular market transactions, eliminating the disparity that previously existed between shareholders who participated in buybacks and those who did not.

"Shifting of tax burden from the company undertaking buyback to public shareholders participating in buyback, has made selling in market equal to selling in buyback through stock exchange. Further, the open market buy-back method through stock exchange is also a widely adopted method in international jurisdictions which facilitates continuous price discovery and enhances liquidity," Sebi said in the paper.



Sri Lankan pacer Nuwan Thushara sought a court order to secure his playing rights in the IPL after the country's cricket board refused to grant him a No Objection Certificate due to "failed fitness tests". Thushara, who is contracted to RCB, has pleaded that his contract with the SLC ended on March 31 and he had no desire to seek an extension.

# Ruturaj and Super Kings aim for fresh start on homecoming

Five-time winners are up against Punjab Kings who have won their last three outings at MA Chidambaram Stadium

ASHOK VENUGOPAL @Chennai



MS Dhoni having a conversation with Ayush Mhatre on Thursday | EXPRESS

RUTURAJ Gaikwad was a picture of calm as he sat down in the press conference room at the MA Chidambaram Stadium to take questions. Chennai Super Kings had lost their first match in Guwahati a few days ago, but the five-time champions and their captain remain positive as they return to their home ground for the clash against Punjab Kings on Friday.

It is not like they do not have concerns. MS Dhoni is still out of action. Dewald Brevis trained on Thursday, but is not yet clear whether he will take part in the upcoming game. Gaikwad, however, remains confident. "It is a new group, new batch," Gaikwad said on Thursday. "The more games they get, they will get better and better. The mindset is really positive. I feel it's a long tournament. You tend to lose some, you tend to win some. You just have to keep moving on and focus on the next one," CSK skipper added.

The good thing for them, how-

ever, is that Chennai in recent years have become a batting friendly surface unlike the past where it aided spin predominantly. CSK expressed their displeasure in the past, but now have a line-up that could put on big totals on such surfaces. When asked about what the team is expecting from the Chepauk surface, Gaikwad said the way the surface behaves also depends on the weather and they will have to adapt for whatever comes their way.

Even as they gear up for a good homecoming at Chepauk, it will not be easy. Punjab, in recent years, have challenged Chennai at the MA Chidambaram Stadium and this year would be no different. Every time they played CSK at Chepauk in the last three years, Punjab Kings have gotten across the line without breaking a sweat. Chennai, on the other hand, are looking to put behind the forgettable season they had last year and move forward with a young squad.

Part of that was acknowledging that they did not have the best of squads. Gaikwad said as much.

In 2025, what also did not help was that he was ruled out early on and had to watch from the sidelines in what was his second season as CSK captain after taking over from Dhoni. Asked how he is approaching this season as a captain and leader, Gaikwad did not hesitate to break it down. "I am not forcing it, to be honest. I think we didn't have the best of squads last year. When I say that, (I mean) no disrespect to any players. I think the combination didn't just click the way we wanted. The second year of the cycle, you just have limited options, limited pool available. You try to fill in those gaps with whatever players available and kind of hope that things will fall in place. We might have missed out on a few good players in the main auction that happened. But it is a learning process. Sometimes, auctions not going really well or things not falling into place can change the outlook of the whole cycle. This

year we tried to fix some of the places," he said, before adding, "Looking at this team now, it is a very young team. Obviously excitement is there. But, at the same time, there is a lot of difference between experienced players and inexperienced players. You have to allow them to make mistakes. You have to allow them to express themselves. You have to make sure that they are in a good headspace. That is what me and (Stephen Fleming) Flem or the whole coaching management job is. That is what we are trying to do."

### Despite swelling, Iyer to play

Meanwhile, Punjab skipper Shreyas Iyer, who suffered an injury during their first match against Gujarat Titans, is set to play despite the swelling in his hand. "No fracture, that's a good thing. Although there is some swelling. It's just about getting the swelling down and getting the movement back in the hand. He should be right for tomorrow (on Friday) though," said assistant coach Brad Haddin.

## CSK SEEK TURNAROUND AT CHEPAUK

AFTER THEIR DRUBBING AGAINST IN GUWAHATI, CHENNAI SUPER KINGS FACE PUNJAB KINGS AT HOME ON FRIDAY. A LOOK...

### CAN CHENNAI BOUNCE BACK?

The new-look CSK team filled with youngsters would like to leave the big defeat in Guwahati behind. Considering how the surface in Chepauk played in the recent T20 World Cup, it should be a good batting wicket on Friday. Sanju Samson would be looking to make a big impact in front of home fans. More will be expected from Sarfaraz Khan and Kartik Sharma.

### PBKS LOOK FOR MOMENTUM

Last year's runners-up are now up and running this season after their win against Gujarat Titans. They now have a reliable number three in Cooper Connolly, who anchored a tense chase against Titans. One concern they would have is how the middle-order collapsed in what should have been a straightforward chase. Can they make it two in two?

### WILL BREVIS PLAY?

South African batter Dewald Brevis impressed when he walked into the team as an injury replacement last year. This season, he missed out against the Royals due to a side strain. There is still no clarity over his fitness in the lead-up to the match against Punjab. However, it should not be a surprise if he misses out once again as they would not want to risk him.

CHENNAI SUPER KINGS VS PUNJAB KINGS, CHENNAI  
LIVE ON STAR SPORTS & JIHOTSTAR, 7.30PM

## Valuation of RR, RCB on expected lines: PBKS CEO

SWAROOP SWAMINATHAN @Chennai

OVER the last few weeks, two Indian Premier League (IPL) sides were sold for a combined ₹31,500 cr. While the sales of Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) and Rajasthan Royals (RR) were in the post for a few months, the values raised eyebrows because of the compounding growth the teams fetched for its sellers. One person who felt the valuation 'was on expected lines' was Satish Menon, Punjab Kings' chief executive officer. "There will always be interest in IPL irrespective of whether there is compounding growth in terms of broadcast (rights)," he told this daily. "The valuation was on expected lines."

One reason why the valuation raised eyebrows is that the broadcast rights are due for renewal after the 2027 season. While the stakeholders involved in the sales process pencilled in a broadcast revenue growth of over 40% — i.e. compounding — there are some headwinds to keep in mind. One major advertising industry is now out of bounds (real money gaming) while two serious players merged into one (Star and Viacom).

It's why there's a lot of interest in the bidding process post next year. For the record, the first cycle was worth ₹8200cr. From 2018-22, it went for over ₹16000cr. The current cycle is worth just north of ₹48,000cr. If the values keep compounding in the same manner, it could potentially be looking at a ₹100,000 cr valuation in the next five-year cycle. But there are of course those headwinds to keep in mind.

Some of the things baked into this valuation is the IPL's ability to be a cash generating machine and its potential to grow. For example, it's a given that at some point the league will become an home-and-away format league with a minimum of 18 league games before the qualifiers and eliminator (teams right now play 14 league games). There's also the prospect of a resuscitated Champions League T20. Menon said 'we would be happy to play more games'. "We would be happy to go by what the BCCI decides," he said.

The league has again shown a robustness in pivoting in terms of revenue. Post 2025's RMG ban, teams and the league were forced to look at alternative revenue streams but Menon said 'there was nothing to worry about'. "All of the sponsors have come at a substantially higher price," he said. "It's not that just because one sponsor moves out, the whole ecosystem comes to a halt. It's business as usual. Our sponsorship revenues have increased, the no. of sponsors have also increased."

Satish Menon, PBKS CEO

Speaking of evolution, PBKS themselves have evolved over the last 12 months thanks to the new regime of Shreyas Iyer as captain and Ricky Ponting as coach. "It's teamwork all the way," he said. "This is a well knit group working together. This is what is putting us right in the front." After a good but slightly nervy start, they have the chance to go back-to-back at the MA Chidambaram Stadium on Friday. Irrespective of what happens in that game, they are an upwardly mobile unit.

## Travishek is back and so are Sunrisers



Abhishek Sharma and Travis Head of Sunrisers Hyderabad in action on Thursday | BCCI

82

Head and Abhishek added 82 runs in 5.2 overs

6th

This is also the 6th best partnership between the SRH duo

GOMESH S @Chennai

TRAVISHEK is back. Anyone who had followed the Indian Premier League (IPL) over the last few years would know what it means. Essentially, it is a moniker coined to describe the Sunrisers Hyderabad's opening duo of Travis Head and Abhishek Sharma.

After a forgettable season last year, Head (21-ball 46) and Sharma (21-ball 48) took apart Kolkata Knight Riders' bowling attack, adding 82 runs for the first wicket in just 5.4 overs. Their stand

set up the innings for the rest and Heinrich Klaasen (52 off 35 balls) made the most of it taking SRH to 226/8. In reply, KKR were all out for 161.

When the SRH opening pair got together in the 2024 season, Head was coming off an ODI World Cup-winning show and Sharma was searching for that one season to launch his career. With Head as partner, he got that as the Pat Cummins-led side rallied around a template of bravado batting. Bash bowling attacks all over the park in the first six overs that teams never

really recover from. And it was possible only because Head and Sharma worked together as a pair and took out bowlers for fun. It worked, and incredibly so, to an extent where Hyderabad cruised to their first final since 2016. There are a lot of reasons why SRH was successful that season but at the core of it all was Head and Sharma leading the way.

However, such a batting style comes with risks. When it comes off, they look like an unstoppable dream. They did so in 2024. But when they do not click, things spiral. And pretty quickly as was visible in 2025. Teams came prepared in the second season and Travishek did not kick on. It showed in the results as Sunrisers finished sixth.

It is not an understatement. In 2024, Head and Abhishek had four fifty-plus opening stands and of them, three were century stands. Their highest in that season was an unbeaten 167 to beat Lucknow Super Giants by ten wickets in 9.4 overs. The year that followed saw the pair top it with a 171-run stand against Punjab Kings but that was the only high point. With just one more 50-plus stand in the season, the duo could not sustain the momentum.

When they failed to get going in the first game against Royal Challengers Bengaluru this year, it raised questions. Could this be a repeat of 2024? Can they turn it around and set the platform for Ishan Kishan and Heinrich Klaasen to kick on? What happens when they fail? Some of it were answered on Thursday as Head and Sharma took it upon themselves to set the tone.

If the tall Zimbabwe pacer Blessing Muzarabani was welcomed with a 16-run over, Vaibhav Arora soon received a smacking. Head smashed two fours and as many sixes, taking 21 runs off the pacer. Sunil Narine was played out but the duo compensated against Varun CV — 25 runs came of the fifth over. By the time Head had done his job. Soon Sharma took on Narine before eventually getting out to Muzarabani.

However, they had set the platform and announced that Travishek is back. With an in-form Kishan and Klaasen, they only make SRH all the more dangerous. Now, it will be all about whether they can sustain the intent into the tournament.

**Brief scores:** SRH 226/8 in 20 ovs (Klaasen 52; Muzarabani 4/41) bt KKR 161 in 16 ovs (Raghuvanshi 52; Unadkat 3/21).

## Raider Ayan eager to continue red-hot form

CHANDRU PRABHU @Chennai

AS the talent pool for Indian kabaddi came together to hone their skills during a training camp at the Inspire Institute of Sport in Ballari, Karnataka ahead of an important year, one cannot ignore the presence of 20-year-old raider Ayan Lohchab. Ayan comes fresh off the back of a record-breaking Pro Kabaddi League season, and is keen on continuing this form in the lead up to the Asian Games.

Organised by the Amateur Kabaddi Federation of India (AKFI), along with Mashal Sports, to identify and shortlist probable players for the Asian Games in Japan, Aryan was one of the names to watch for in the camp. As many as 45 men and the same number of women trained for a week during the camp that concluded on Thursday. "I got to improve my strength, mobility and agility. There were classes on agility. The knowledge (on Kabaddi) has gotten better, more than I knew already," said Aryan.

Dubbed as a one for the future ahead of PKL 2025, the raider from Haryana put in performances that positioned him as a force to reckon with. He helped Patna Pirates leap from 12th in the league table to the knockouts, scoring 316 raid points. There, they won the play-in tournament, but only travelled as far as eliminator 3 where they lost to Telugu Titans. For Aryan, who was awarded the New Young Player Award in PKL 2024, leading the team to the qualifier was a big feat. "The coach in Patna had said even if you lose, you give your best. And the management and everything had supported us throughout our journey."

Full story: newindianexpress.com

### EXPRESS READ

#### Boxer Aditya registers easy win, advances at Asian Championships

ULANBAATAR (MONGOLIA): India's Aditya delivered a commanding win on day 4 of the Asian Boxing Championships here. Competing in the men's 65kg category, Aditya, the National Champion who recently clinched gold at the ninth Elite Men's National Boxing Championship in January 2026, secured a 5-0 unanimous decision victory over Mousa Alhawsaw of Saudi Arabia, showcasing control and precision throughout the bout. With this win, the Indian boxer advances to the next round, where he will face Uzbekistan's Abdulloh Madaminov in what promises to be a competitive contest.

#### Italy football president resigns after Azzurri miss third straight WC

ROME: Italy's football federation president resigned amid political pressure on Thursday, two days after the Azzurri failed to qualify for a third consecutive World Cup. Gabriele Gravina's decision will likely lead to the ouster of Italy coach Gennaro Gattuso, too. Italy Sports Minister Andrea Abodi called for a change in the country's soccer leadership after Gravina oversaw two sets of disappointing World Cup qualifiers. Italy's chances of reaching this year's tournament in North America ended on Tuesday after a penalty shootout loss to Bosnia and Herzegovina in a qualifying playoff.

#### India's woeful Shotgun World Cup campaign ends without medal

TANGIER (MOROCCO): Indian shooters' disappointing run showed no signs of abating, as both mixed team pairs turned in sub-par performances to finish way down in the standings, capping a forgettable outing at the ISSF Shotgun World Cup. Extending India's run of underwhelming results in the men's and women's skeet and trap events, the mixed doubles pair of Olympian Prithviraj Tondaiman and Kiruti Gupta could only muster an aggregate of 134, slumping to a disappointing 18th place in a 33-team field.

## Jupiter SC's Sasidharan takes 8-fer

ENS @Chennai

LEFT-ARM spinner R Sasidharan's 8/35 came in handy for Jupiter SC to take a six-run lead over Jolly Rovers on Day one of the ninth round of the TNCA Senior Division league at IIT-Chempal. Jolly Rovers where 136 for 2 in 35 overs in their second

essay at stumps. Meanwhile, Wilkins Victor and DT Chandrasekhar scalped seven wickets for Young Stars CC and Sea Hawks CC respectively. **Brief scores:** At IITM-Chempal: Jolly Rovers 81 in 28.4 ovs (R Sasidharan 8/35) & 136/2 in 35 ovs (B Sachin 51 batting) vs Jupiter SC 87 in 21.1 ovs (S Lakshay Jain 6/28); At Wahe Guru 'A': Globe Trotters 223 in 62.1 ovs (S Guru Raghavendran 58;

Shoaib Mohd. Khan 5/110) vs Nelson 95/5 in 27 ovs (R Srinivasan 3/41); At SRMC (Turf): Young Stars 107 in 42.3 ovs (Sammar Galjar 4/32) & 15/2 in 7 ovs vs Vijay 117 in 49.4 ovs (Wilkins Victor 7/18); At Tagore Medical: Sea Hawks 177 in 56.1 ovs (S Sujay 47, J Hemchudeshan 5/40) & 33/0 in 9 ovs vs Grand Slam 94 in 25 ovs (RK Jayant 48, DT Chandrasekar 7/28); At RKM Vivekananda: Alwarpet 98 in 18.1 ovs (Rahil Shah 4/48, M Ganesh Moorthi 4/26) & 34/1 in 11 ovs vs SKM CC 206 in 57.4 ovs (S Swaminathan 98; P Vidyuth 4/56); At AM Jain: MRC 'A' 297/7 in 90 ovs (NS Chaturved 122, B Arun 4/77) vs Singam Pulli.

### STRICT ANTI-CHEATING MEASURES

## Feel like Mossad in Iran: Hikaru on FIDE rules

ENS @Chennai

HIKARU Nakamura has hit out at FIDE, chess's world governing body, over the stringent anti-cheating measures in place at the ongoing Candidates tournament in Cyprus. The US GM, in an interview on YouTube, called it 'complete nonsense'.

He was of the opinion that scanners and machines around the playing hall area made the players feel like Mossad agents inside Iran. "My general view about the whole topic of delay, cheating over the board, all that stuff is that I frankly think it's nonsense," he said on said on his channel during a conversation with Norwegian GM Jon Ludvig Hammer and Luxembourg's WIM Fiona Steil-Antoni. "I do think it really is, con-

### STANDINGS

**Open:** 1 Sindarov 3.5, 2 Fabiano Caruana 2.5, T3 Anish Giri, R Praggananandhaa, Matthias Bluebaum 2, T6 Nakamura, Wei Yi 1.5, 8 Andrey Esipenko 1. **Women:** T1 Anna Muzychuk, Bibisara Assaubayeva 2.5, T3 Zhu Jiner, Aleksandra Goryachkina, Kateryna Lagno, R Vaishali 2, T7 Tan Zhongyi, Divya Deshmukh 1.5.

sidering the amount of machines they have to scan the players in the room.

"They have the metal detectors, they have the separate scanners, I mean... I feel like what are we all? Mossad agents inside Iran or something. Come on, we are chess players, let's be real, seriously, let's be real."

"That's not to say I have a



Hikaru Nakamura has spoken out against FIDE's tight anti-cheating measures at the Candidates | FIDE/YOAV NIS

problem with that per se but I just think that the fears that some players have expressed. I'm just going to be honest... they scan us before the games they scan us after the game," he said. Asked if he had given his

feedback to FIDE, he said he didn't "see a reason" to do so. "(But) my general view is that it's all overblown. At a smaller open tournament where you don't have all these scanners and equipment, I can understand the concerns."

"But at an event like this, where everybody is in a room, there are arbiters watching everyone, and cameras on everyone... I mean, without inside help, nothing can happen. I just think it's all nonsense."

The World No. 2, one of the favourites to win the Candidates before it began, has had a slow start. After four rounds, he's in sixth place with 1.5 points. After the first rest day of the tournament, he faces leader Javokhir Sindarov on Friday.

SMARTPHONE SALES SLIP 9% AMID RISING PRICES AND WEAK DEMAND

RAKESH KUMAR @ New Delhi

INDIA'S smartphone sales declined 9% year-on-year in the first nine weeks of 2026, according to Counterpoint Research. The decline in sales is mainly due to supply-side pressures, especially rising memory component costs, along with the usual slow demand at the beginning of the year.

Price hikes and limited boost from sales

As per the report, until Week 9, more than eight brands had already increased prices of key SKUs, with an average hike of ₹1,500, which is expected to rise further. New product launches are also coming at higher price points.

While volumes remained under pressure, value growth stayed steady due to continued premiumisation, a trend seen throughout 2025 and now extending into early 2026.

"India's smartphone market started the year on a low note, as persistent price increases continued to weigh on consumer demand," said Prachir Singh, senior research analyst at Counterpoint Research.

Outlook remains cautious

Research Director Tarun Pathak is of the view that ongoing global uncertainties, including geopolitical tensions and rising essential commodity prices, are expected to continue to weigh on discretionary spending, with India's smartphone market projected to decline by around 10% in 2026.



Hot smartphones to watch in April

HERE'S WHAT TO EXPECT

RAKESH KUMAR @ New Delhi

WITH April beginning, major smartphone brands are gearing up to launch new devices across segments. From Vivo and Oppo to Realme and OnePlus, companies are preparing to introduce smartphones with upgraded features, better cameras and bigger batteries.

Oppo Find X9 Ultra

Oppo is expected to launch its flagship Find X9 Ultra in April 2026, although the exact date is not yet confirmed. This will be the brand's first "Ultra" model to launch globally after being limited to China earlier.



200MP primary camera.

Vivo V70 FE

Realme 16 launched in India on April 2, 2026, starting at ₹31,999 for the 8GB + 128GB variant. The phone features a 50MP rear camera with a built-in selfie mirror and a 50MP front camera.



50MP camera (Main+Night+Ultra wide)

OnePlus Nord 6

The OnePlus Nord 6 is set to launch on April 7. It is expected to come with a 6.78-inch AMOLED display and a high 165Hz refresh rate, making it suitable for gaming.

Vivo T5 Pro

The Vivo T5 Pro is likely to launch in mid-April, although the date is not official yet. It is expected to target the mid-range segment with a price between ₹30,000 and ₹35,000.



on 8 Elite Gen 5 chipset, along with up to 16GB RAM and 512GB storage. The camera setup could be a major highlight, with multiple high-resolution sensors including a 200MP primary camera.

The device is also expected to pack a 7,050mAh battery with fast wired and wireless charging.

EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY E-TENDER NOTICE

E-Tenders is invited for execution of the following work by Divisional Railway Manager (Commercial), E.C. Railway, Dhanbad: Tender No.: C-710-CHRK-GCT-26, SL.No.:

MAHARASHTRA METRO RAIL CORPORATION LTD.

(A joint venture of Govt. of India & Govt. of Maharashtra) "Metro Bhavan", VIP Road, Near Dikshabhoomi, Ramdaspeth, Nagpur-440010. E-mail: md.nmrcitenders@gmail.com

The Brihanmumbai Electric Supply & Transport Undertaking

TENDER NOTICE E-tenders are invited for the supply of following item. (1) 81558 - 11KV/415V, 2000 KVA and 2500 KVA Single Ratio, Synthetic Ester Oil filled KNaN type Distribution Transformers,

ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಸರ್ಕಾರ ಕಾರ್ಯಪಾಲಕ ಇಂಜಿನಿಯರ ರವರ ಕಛೇರಿ, ಲೋಕೋಪಯೋಗಿ ಇಲಾಖೆ, ಚಕ್ರಮಗಳೂರು ವಿಭಾಗ, ಚಕ್ರಮಗಳೂರು ಅಲ್ಪಾವಧಿ ಟೆಂಡರ್ ಪ್ರಕಟಣೆ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ : 41/2025-26 ದಿನಾಂಕ:31-03-2026

ICICI Bank PUBLIC NOTICE-TENDER CUM E-AUCTION FOR SALE OF SECURED ASSET

Table with columns: Sr. No., Name of Borrower(s)/Co-Borrowers/Guarantor, Loan Account No., Details of the Secured asset(s) with known encumbrances, if any, Amount Outstanding, Reserve Price/Earnest Money Deposit, Date and Time of Property Inspection, Date & Time of E-Auction.

CIDCO WE MAKE CITIES

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)

Development of International Corporate Park (ICP) at Kharghar, Navi Mumbai The City and Industrial Development Corporation of Maharashtra Limited (the "Authority" or "CIDCO") invites Request For Proposal (RFP) from reputed Developers/Companies to undertake the Development of International Corporate Park (ICP), a first of its kind project at Kharghar, Navi Mumbai (the "Project") based on State Government approved policy of "Theme-Based and Iconic City Development" to facilitate the development of bulk land parcels in a holistic manner through Construction & Development Operator (CDO) Agreement.

Indian Overseas Bank ASSET RECOVERY MANAGEMENT BRANCH e-AUCTION SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8(6) (1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.



THE NEW  
**INDIAN  
EXPRESS**

# INDIAN EXPRESS

Priyanka Mohan on leading her first female-centric film, *Made in Korea*, navigating cross-cultural sets, choosing stories that excite her, and more  
**P12**

**SEOUL  
SEARCHING**

things to do

INDULGE

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Dear readers,

This week on our cover, we have the unstoppable Kollywood star Priyanka Mohan, fresh from the cross-cultural film, *Made in Korea*. She spills the beans on navigating a set where cultures collide, what cinema has taught her about people, and why she's currently in an experimentation mode.



For the fashion-savvy in Chennai, we chat with Payal Pratap Singh, who debuts her Spring/Summer 2026 collection *Wildflower Soul*. Think gingham and cross-stitch with a generous dose of nostalgia meets modern ease. We also decode the jewellery game at the much-talked-about wedding of Vijay Deverakonda and Rashmika Mandanna—heritage pieces have never looked so good. On home décor, a 10-year milestone sparks a collaborative platform bringing designers and craftsmen together to reinvent the humble chair.

Easter is hopping our way, and we've got a list of festive offerings across city restaurants guaranteed to make your celebrations eggs-traordinary. In the meantime, we also dive into the rich flavours of Punjab at the *Shaan-E-Punjab* food festival at Hilton, and roll through Rolls Kings' latest temptations, including pizza rolls and momo rolls.

On the culture pages, we feature *Trilogy*, a new exhibition presenting three distinctive themes, mythology, minimalism, and mathematics, by C Douglas, K Muralidharan, and Rm. Palaniappan. We also catch up with theatre exponent Jill Navarre about her upcoming play *Julius Caesar*, where she reimagines the story as one of assassination, ambition, and chaos.

And we save the best for last with a one-on-one interview with Def Leppard's Rick Allen following the band's much-anticipated India tour.

Enjoy!

Edison Thomas  
Editor, Indulge

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rsvp/events



Unfiltered jokes

**April 5 | Mylapore**  
An evening of spontaneous humour awaits you as comedian Pranit More brings his solo show to the city. Put together his signature crowd work with relatable stories from his childhood and behind-the-scenes gossip from his time on *Bigg Boss*, this performance promises a raw and entertaining experience. ₹1,499 onwards. 7.30 pm onwards. At Rasika Ranjani Sabha.

Playful couture

**April 7 | Royapettah**  
Step into a world of uninhibited imagination with *Doodles*, the Spring Summer 2026 collection by péro. Inspired by the spontaneity of childhood sketches, the showcase transforms garments into canvases featuring hand-drawn crayon strokes, neon accents, and intricate appliqué that celebrate the joy of creating without boundaries. Till April 9. 11 am to 7.30 pm. At The Folly, Amethyst.



INDULGE  
THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS  
FRIDAY, APRIL 3, 2026 | CHENNAI

Festive sale

**April 3 | Alwarpet**  
Festive season calls for some shopping and here is an opportunity for you to fill your shopping bags. Hues Botique has curated a *Summer Pop Up Sale*, that features over 2,000 exclusive saris and traditional ensembles. From elegant *Tussars* and soft silks to breezy block-printed *Kotas* and a dedicated *Indigo Blue* collection, this exhibition can be the one-stop destination for your Tamil New Year wardrobe essentials. Till April 4. 10 am to 8 pm. At CP Art Centre.



CHART THE WEEK AHEAD



Meditative melodies

**April 3 | Periamet**  
Find your inner calm at *Sitar for Mental Health*, a concert by Rishab Rikhiram Sharma that blends classical tradition with modern electronic soundscapes. This 150-minute experience is designed to guide the audience through a reflective journey of relaxation and wellness, featuring compositions like *Chanakya* and *The Burning Ghat*. ₹4,399 onwards. From 7.30 pm. At Jawaharlal Nehru Indoor Stadium.

Soulful Sufi

**April 5 | Chetpet**  
Experience a soul-stirring fusion of tradition and contemporary hits at *Sukoon: A Grand Sufi Concert*. Celebrated artiste Rais Anis Sabri will perform a special set melding his devotional talent with Bollywood melodies, preceded by an opening performance by Darshan Chopra. ₹1,199 onwards. From 6.30 pm. At Sir Mutha Venkatasubba Rao Concert Hall.



Sacred archetypes

**April 6 | Thousand Lights**  
Art enthusiasts, be ready! *Ekaa: The One-The 64 Yogini Trail*, a 11,000 km national art trail by Beena S Unnikrishnan is happening in the city. This non-commercial exhibition features 64 contemporary paintings of Yoginis, reimagining ancient feminine energy through a modern lens. The showcase also includes daily interactive talks and exclusive preview screenings of the documentary *Y-64: Whispers of the Unseen* at Tagore Theatre. Till April 11. 11 am to 7 pm. At Lalit Kala Akademi.

Cosmic quest

**April 3 | AGS Cinemas**  
Mario and Luigi trade the Mushroom Kingdom for deep space in *The Super Mario Galaxy Movie*, the high-flying animated sequel from Nintendo and Illumination. This time, the duo must navigate strange planets and reverse gravity to rescue Princess Rosalina from the clutches of Bowser Jr. The film features a star-studded voice cast including Chris Pratt, Anya Taylor-Joy, and Glen Powell. In theatres.



Skyline sixes

**April 3 | Alwarpet**  
Elevate your cricket-watching experience this season at the rooftop lounge Above Sea Level. Catch every match live under the open sky while enjoying signature cocktails, beer bucket deals, and specially curated food combos with a panoramic view of the city. Till May 31. 7 pm onwards. At The Raintree.

INDULGE

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after dark



Paloma



Swetha and Ayesha



Swati



Pavitra and Mehndi

Anukeerthy Vyas, Samyuktha Shan, and Yashika Aannand. In a unique highlight, faculty members of the college joined Prabhu Deva for a special dance performance, alongside the college dance team Rugged, students personally trained by him over the past month.



Sudeshna

Shruti

# STARS IN SYNC

**S**OME WEEKENDS ARRIVE quietly—others announce themselves with the unmistakable promise of a Def Leppard chorus waiting at the end. The weekend built itself around the concert, anticipation humming for days, with a huge crowd of people from Chennai making a trip to Bengaluru. I was in peak fangirl mode. I even made a custom T-shirt (only to find myself joyfully absorbed into a sea of band merch). The crowd spanned generations, all of



Prabhu Deva

AR Rahman

us leaning into shared nostalgia. We sang every familiar chorus, including my all-time favourite—*Two Steps Behind*.

Meanwhile, back in Chennai, to mark its first anniversary, Bodycraft Salon Spa & Clinic hosted a beauty soiree that felt equal parts indulgent and intimate. Picture women bonding over matcha while moving between blow-dries, footspas, vitamin C peels, and nail ser-

vices, the room humming with easy conversation and curiosity. As the evening unfolded, guests gathered upstairs for wine, laughter, and a fun beauty quiz, with treats from L'Oréal and Kérastase adding to the excitement. Safe to say, we came for the glow-up but stayed for the vibes, and left feeling like 'that girl'.

Looks like it was a week of fabulous performances. At Rajalakshmi Engineering College, *RECHARGE 2026* felt less like a college cultural and more like a full-blown phenomenon. With over 18,000 students turning up, Day 1 made history, especially when AR Rahman took the stage, marking a rare and unforgettable campus performance. Backed by powerhouse voices like Shweta Mohan and Haricharan, it was a night to remember. And with Day 2 bringing Prabhu Deva into the mix, *RECHARGE* really raised the bar. The evening also included performances by Saanvee Meghana, Nikki Galrani, Sayyeshaa, Shriya Saran,



where was i

PALOMA RAO

TV Host and Lifestyle Influencer, Paloma Rao gives you a ringside view to the biggest parties in town.

## Trend parade

The *Trendsetting Fashion Edit* by Hi Life Exhibition returned to the city, drawing Chennai's swish set for a glamorous showcase. With racks of designer wear and accessories, the space buzzed with browsing, conversations, and a relaxed, fashion-forward weekend mood.



Janani

Pari

Riya

Kavitha Ramu

Neha

Johanna

Aby

Priyanka



Ashvin

Shuchi

Sugandha

Priya

Jaiveer

## Frame fête

The second edition of CPB International Open Call culminated at Avtar Foundation for the Arts, one of three venues, alongside VR Chennai Mall and OSR Park, where inauguration unfolded into a lively evening. Guests mingled over a grazing table as conversations flowed, celebrating photography, creativity, and a shared love for visual storytelling.



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after dark



Vijay Sethupathi



Milind Soman



Kathir



Gayatri and Pushkar



Dhanya

# SCREENING SPECTACLE

The city saw a starry gathering as the team of *Muthu Engira Kaattaa* came together for a special screening. With Vijay Sethupathi and the ensemble in attendance, the evening unfolded with candid moments, media buzz, and plenty of camera flashes.



Ramakrishnan



Risha Jacob



Muthu Kumar



Parvathy



Abi Nakshatra



Pooja and Gaurang



Shivanka, Vijaylakshmi and Sujatha



Bharat Jhaver



Chandrasekharan, Raghunathan and Raamasubramanian



Neha and Mayank



Sarvanan, Abhay and Puneet



Radhakrishnan



Sruthi



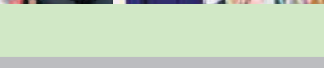
Mahalakshmi and Arun



Vijay and Sujata



Myoungsun Lee



Tamanna

## Golfing gala

The TNGF Premier League 2026 concluded in style at the success party, honouring the Fairway Assassins as champions. Beyond the trophies, the evening celebrated sporting camaraderie with a vibrant dinner, bringing together the city's golf elite for a night of triumph.

## Crafted curations

The Folly at Amethyst transformed into a haven for mindful fashion as *Shuffling Suitcases* arrived in Chennai. The two-day pop-up featured a curated mix of homegrown labels, blending traditional craftsmanship with contemporary Spring/Summer silhouettes for the city's design-conscious crowd.



Rujuta



Anjali and Devyani



Sindhu and Rupa



Jahnabi



Khyati



Surbhi and Sarika



Amit and Juhi



Anam



Parineeta



Ayesha



Hema

festive special

food & drink



treats

# 'Eggs'quisite spread

Here are the best spots in Chennai to celebrate Easter with your beloveds

From gourmet feasts to decadent desserts, Chennai comes alive this Easter with curated brunches, live kitchens, and festive treats. Explore these top venues for indulgence, togetherness, and a memorable celebration.

Sweet indulgence

Celebrate the season with *Together We Easter* collection from Theobroma, featuring handcrafted choco eggs, carrot cream cupcakes, hot cross buns, and indulgent *babkas*. Perfect for gifting or intimate gatherings, the menu blends nostalgic Easter treats with signature bakes. *From 8 am to 12 am. Till April 5. At all Theobroma outlets.*



Spring spread

Welcome the season at *Easter Sunday Brunch* that celebrates spring and togetherness at Food Exchange, Novotel. Expect a lavish buffet with live counters, alongside kids' activities and live music for a relaxed, family-friendly afternoon. *On April 5. From 12.30 pm to 4 pm. At Food Exchange, Novotel Chennai, Chamiers Road.*



Festive feast

Step into *Easter Eggcitement* at ITC Grand Chola, where an elegant brunch pairs global delicacies with interactive stations and artisanal desserts. Part of the hotel's themed dining series for Sundays, this experience brings together joyful flavours, immersive dining, and the warmth of togetherness. *₹3,950 onwards. On April 5. 12.30 pm to 3.30 pm. At Madras Pavilion, ITC Grand Chola.*

Elegant easter

Indulge in a luxurious Easter brunch at Spectra, The Leela Palace Chennai, featuring gourmet dishes, festive cocktails, and live music. The celebration extends to a whimsical Easter egg hunt with a hita experience, making it perfect for families. *₹5,251 onwards. From 12.30 pm. At Spectra, The Leela Palace Chennai, MRC Nagar.*

Global grazing

Celebrate Easter with a lavish spread at The Flying Elephant, where *Easter Brunch* brings together global flavours—from Cajun-spiced prawns and Lamb *kleftiko* to *Sushi*, Eggs Benedict, and *Murgh dum biriyani*. With live kitchens and decadent desserts like hot cross bun pudding, it's a feast designed for indulgence and variety. *₹3,200 ++ onwards. On April 5. From 12.30 pm to 3.30 pm. At The Flying Elephant, Park Hyatt, Guindy.*



# FROM PASSION TO CALIFORNIA SENATOR RECOGNITION: EV MASTER ELEVATES INDIAN DANCE CULTURE IN USA

IN A PROUD moment for the Bay Area arts community, Macha Swag Dance LLC and its founders, Ezhilvanan Oppilamani (EV Master) and Renukha K Raj (Renu Master), have been honoured with a Certificate of Recognition from the California State Senate, presented by State Senator Aisha Wahab and District Representative Elizabeth Vacca. This recognition celebrates their continued dedication to promoting Indian dance and creating meaningful cultural impact across California.

At the centre of this achievement is EV Master, a versatile and high-energy choreographer known for his mastery in *Kuthu*, Bollywood, and Hip-Hop. His choreography reflects a distinctive style that combines intensity, precision, and creativity, making every performance both powerful and engaging. By blending traditional South Indian influences with modern elements, he has carved a unique identity that resonates with today's generation while preserving cultural roots.

Through his vision, EV Master has built Macha Swag Dance into a thriving platform that goes beyond dance training. The organisation has become a space where students not only learn movement but also develop confidence, discipline, and stage presence. His commitment to excellence has led students to perform in



high-visibility environments, including major events and collaborations that showcase their talent on larger stages.

Working alongside him, Renu Master has been a driving force in shaping the structure and consistency of the academy.

Her dedication to mentoring students and maintaining quality training has helped create a supportive and growth-focused environment. She emphasises expression, clarity in technique, and performance readiness, ensuring that every student receives a well-rounded experience.

Together, EV Master and Renu Master have established Macha Swag Dance as a recognised name in the Bay Area's cultural landscape. Their programs bring together individuals from diverse backgrounds, fostering a sense of unity through the performing arts. By organising showcases, workshops, and performance opportunities, they have created a pathway for students to continuously evolve and present their skills with confidence.



What distinguishes EV Master is his ability to transform dance into an experience that connects deeply with audiences. His work consistently reflects energy, storytelling, and cultural pride, making each routine memorable and impactful. His leadership has played a key role in expanding the reach of Indian dance styles, especially *Kuthu*, into mainstream platforms in the region.

The recognition from the California State Senate highlights not only their artistic accomplishments but also their contribution to community engagement. Their efforts have helped strengthen cultural awareness while encouraging youth to stay connected to their roots through creative expression.

Speaking on the occasion, EV Master expressed gratitude for the support received from students, families, and the community. He emphasised that this recognition is a shared achievement and reaffirmed his commitment to elevating Indian dance to greater levels.

As Macha Swag Dance continues to grow, this milestone reflects the impact of passion, consistency, and vision. With EV Master leading the artistic direction and Renu Master strengthening the foundation, the organisation is set to inspire many more dancers in the years ahead.

regional

# THALI TALES

The Shaan-E-Punjab food festival transports you to the slow-simmered heart of Punjab

WE WALK INTO Ayna at Hilton Chennai, and the first thing that greets us is warmth, not just from the lighting or the hospitality but from the food festival *Shaan-E-Punjab* itself. Right at the threshold, two pots of welcome drinks wait like an introduction to what's to come.

As we settle in, the drinks arrive alongside Chef Harjyot Bamrah, who speaks about the festival with an easy pride. "We decided—let's do authentic Punjabi and only that," he tells us. No Chennai adaptations, no dilution. Just Punjab, as it is.

We start with the *Gulabi kachchi lassi*, light and floral, a rose-infused cooler that's perfect for the Chennai summer. The *Pudine waali shikanjvi* follows, minty, citrusy, and sharp in the best possible way.

Before the *thali* makes its grand entry, a flurry of accompaniments lands at the table: *Dahi bhalla* draped in *saunth* chutney, soft and tangy; a simple carrot-radish salad that crunches with freshness; spiced vinegar shallots that bite back; mango pickle that hits you with nostalgia; and crisp Amritsari *papad*. "We even get Punjabi *papad* from outside—otherwise you don't get that here," the chef mentions.

Then, the *thali* arrives. We begin with the *Keema bhari tangdi*, and it immediately becomes our favourite. A chicken drumstick generously stuffed with spiced minced meat, this dish plays a clever game of contrast. The marinade on the out-

side is gentle, almost understated, while the *keema* within carries its own quiet depth of flavour. Neither overpowers the other.

Then come the mains: the *Saagwala kukkad* is comfort in its purest form, a lush, leafy embrace paired perfectly with *Makki ki roti*. "It's our take on *saag* and *makki ki roti*, just adapted for both vegetarians and non-vegetarians," he explains. The vegetarian option being *Saagwala paneer*.

The *Pindi chole* here is darker, deeper, thanks to a muslim cloth of tea leaves brewed into it. "That's what gives it the colour and that earthy flavour," he says. You taste it, that quiet, almost smoky depth, especially when paired with *Ajwaini pooris* that we keep going back to.

Meat Beliram, the festival's showstopper, is named after the chef who first prepared this lamb dish for his king, who loved it instantly just as we did. This dish is aromatic with three forms of coriander—powder, crushed seeds, and

fresh leaves, giving it a layered, earthy, fresh flavour that hits every bite.

The Amritsari *kali dal* brings the conversation at the table to a pause. Slow-cooked for hours with *makkhan* instead of cream, it's both rustic and indulgent. "This has a dollop of *makkhan*; it gives a very distinct flavour," the chef notes. Unlike *Dal makhani*, which is creamy and mild, this is much richer.

Also on the menu: *Bharwan achaari khumbh*, punchy with pickle spices and *Makkhan moti pulao*, dotted with chickpeas like pearls, tying the meal together with subtle sweetness and indulgence.

Dessert is a mixed bag. The *Imarti* with *rabdi* doesn't quite land, slightly stale, but the *Matka kulfi* redeems everything: Creamy, dense, impossible to stop at one bite, even if you probably should.



Chef Harjyot

Meal for two: ₹2,500 AI.  
From 6.30 pm to 11 pm. At Ayna, Hilton, Guindy.  
—Shivani Illakiya  
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innovative

# Roll with it

From momo mashups to cheesy indulgence, these rolls deliver on both novelty and taste

WITH CHENNAI'S SCORCHING summer sun making even the idea of stepping into the kitchen feels like a full-on Olympic event, quick and satisfying bites start to feel less like a treat and more like a survival tactic. RollsKing, a brand known for its grab-and-go format and indulgent *kathi* rolls, has rolled out its latest additions, Momo rolls and Pizza rolls, across select outlets.

When a box of these landed at our office, we tucked in before they had a chance to cool. And given the heat situation, we leaned towards the Veg momo roll over anything too heavy on

chicken. Packed with golden, crisped *momos* and coated in a bold, spicy seasoning, then finished with chutneys and a sharp crunch of onions, this one delivers on flavour while still feeling just restrained enough to justify the choice.

We would usually pick *momos* over pizza without a second thought, but when it came to these rolls, the tables turned. The veg pizza roll leans unapologetically into indulgence. We were quite impressed by the way the molten cheese, herby notes, and classic pizza toppings were all snugly wrapped in a *kathi* roll. It is rich and cheesy, and ensure you have it hot. We quite liked how the flavours came together, especially when the cheese bursts into your mouth with the herbs and the crunch of the onion lends a unique flavour.

And of course, we couldn't just cheat on the Chicken *seekh* pizza roll. The chicken was juicy and well-spiced, with just a whisper of cardamom adding a bit of flair. A light layer of mint-coriander chutney brought in a refreshing lift, rounding

things off rather nicely.

One of the highlights here is the choice of base. Whether you're after a flaky *lachha paratha* for that proper street-style crunch, a multigrain option for a nod to healthier habits, or whole wheat, there's a roll for every mood.

To wash it down, we went for some smart summer choices. The *Aam panna* was tangy, cooling, and exactly what's needed when Chennai decides to turn up the heat. But the true champion was the Indian *masala shikanji*. Zesty lemon, gentle spices like roasted cumin, black salt, and ginger, with just the right touch of sweetness, made it both refreshing and hydrating. Most importantly, neither beverage was overly sweet. The *shikanji* did such a stellar job that we almost forgot how hot it was, a small miracle in itself.

₹149 onwards.

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# When stars align in gold

ONE OF THE most anticipated celebrity weddings of the year saw Vijay Deverakonda and Rashmika Mandanna celebrate their union through a jewellery collection deeply rooted in South Indian heritage. Crafted by SHREE Jewellers, the bespoke collection brought together intricate craftsmanship, layered storytelling and a renewed perspective on both bridal and groom adornment.

Abhishek Agarwal and Kaushik Kumar, who envisioned the wedding jewellery, let us in on the conceptualisation of the entire collection. "The idea was not to replicate the familiar, but to reimagine it through a layered, sculptural approach to gold," explain Abhishek. The result was a collection where every element contributed to a larger visual story.

For Rashmika, the inspiration took on an almost divine quality. Drawing from the iconography of Goddess Lakshmi, the designers created what they describe as an "immersive, head-to-toe composition." Her bridal look comprised over 13 pieces, including a choker, layered harams, jhumkas, jada billa, and vaddanam, each working in harmony with the other. "The intention was to create a look that felt complete and immersive, where the jewellery did not just adorn but transformed," says Kaushik. High-relief Nakshi work added sculptural depth, while delicate Rava detailing introduced rhythm and texture, allowing the gold to feel fluid despite its scale.

In contrast, Vijay's jewellery explored a language of power and presence—an area often underplayed in men's wedding styling. "There was a clear intent to move away from the conventional approach to groom styling," Abhishek and Kaushik note. His pieces, which included haars, cuffs, a belt and even earrings, were designed to feel architectural and commanding. Motifs of elephants and tigers—symbols of wisdom and strength—ran through the collection, softened by floral elements that added refinement. "The idea was to create something more layered, where power and elegance could coexist," they add.

South Indian heritage served as the foundation for the entire collection, not just in its visual

Rashmika Mandanna channels divine grace while Vijay Deverakonda brings cinematic power to a bold new language of jewellery



At the Telugu wedding ceremony



At the Sangeet



Mehendi ceremony



Reception

motifs but in its philosophy. "We looked at classical forms, traditional silhouettes and time-honoured ornamentation, and reinterpreted them through a more sculptural and immersive lens," the designers explain. This approach ensured that while the pieces felt rooted, they also spoke to a modern bridal narrative.

Techniques of Nakshi craftsmanship and Rava detailing were central to this expression. "Nakshi allows motifs to emerge with a sculptural quality, creating dimension and storytelling within the gold itself," they say. Rava work, with its intricate granulation, added a sense of movement and lightness. It is a balance between structure and fluidity.

What made the collection particularly distinctive was the level of involvement from both the bride and groom. "They knew what they wanted," Abhishek and Kaushik share. Rashmika was intuitive and detail-oriented, closely engaged in fittings and refinements to ensure the pieces achieved the right balance. Vijay, on the other hand, wanted a more experimental approach. "He was open to exploring unconventional ideas, especially when it came to men's jewellery," they say, adding that his willingness helped shape a new visual language for grooms.

The process itself spanned nearly 10 months, with a lot of extensive research, sketching, prototyping and multiple fittings. Beyond the wedding ceremony, the collection featured in other celebrations. The Sangeet, for instance, marked a shift toward a more contemporary, gemstone-led aesthetic. "It was about lightness, movement and a modern glamour," they explain. Rashmika's pieces featured fluid, vine-like designs set with luminous stones, while Vijay's look drew from Art Deco influences, anchored by a striking emerald.

The wedding was more than a moment of visual grandeur. It signalled a shift in how jewellery is perceived. "Jewellery is no longer confined to tradition alone, nor is it purely decorative," Abhishek and Kaushik observe. "It is becoming more narrative-led, more experimental and more personal."

—Manu Vipin

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**FLOWER  
POWER**

Jubinav Chadha's award-winning collection takes a leaf out of Uttarakhand's iconic Valley of Flowers

**J**UBINAV CHADHA IS one of the winners of the 41st edition of NIF Global Presents GenNext. The collection, *Postcard from Valley of Flowers*, displayed at the recently held Lakme Fashion Week x FDCI, is inspired by the iconic Valley of Flowers in Uttarakhand. Landscapes are brought alive through quilting and patchwork, with latitudes and longitudes woven into textiles. Custom postcard prints deliver nostalgia while flora bloom through intricate embroidery. Modern yet classic silhouettes balance experimentation with structure anchored by earthy colours. It captures the joy of escapism.

Jubinav further experiments with basket-weaving techniques to map geographical latitudes and longitudes, creating engineered textiles that reflect both emotional and geographical experiences of travel. Fabric choices include Turkish linen, cotton silk, micro-crepe, micro-suede, cotton fleece and vegan leather. The colour story mirrored the valley's natural hues of greens, beiges, browns and greys, punctuated with vibrant thread-embroidered accents inspired by wildflowers. The Delhi-based designer took us through this vibrant range.

**What's the idea behind the collection?**

It's inspired by watching a lot of travel vlogs and the idea of longing for travel.

The idea behind the collection is to translate a memory of a landscape into garments. During our research, we found that landscapes are among the most shared images on *Instagram*, so we instantly knew this would resonate with our audience. The "postcard" element represents memory, which we trans-



From the collection

lated into embroidered floral stamps and digital prints. We explored the concept of memory, memoir, and visual landscapes in multiple ways.

**What inspires your designs?**

I create every design for myself—I am the muse of the brand. If I were to wear it somewhere, I'm confident it would attract a tribe of people who relate to my sense of style.

**What are the relaxed and casual wear silhouettes that are trending this year?**

Japanese-style pleated pants are going to be a trend; they're relaxed yet formal. We've created our own version of this in the collection.

**What colours can men explore this summer apart from monochromes?**

I believe men should never restrict themselves to a particular colour or palette. My advice would be to explore any and every colour that suits you and enhances your confi-

dence and mood. We often underestimate the power of colour, but it can truly uplift or bring you down. Hence, every colour deserves respect.

**Tell us about your other upcoming collections.**

We have two labels under our company: Jubinav Chadha and Jubinav. While Jubinav explores Western wear, Jubinav Chadha focuses on Indian wear and festive clothing. We are now planning to launch a version of *A Postcard from Valley of Flowers* in an Indian wear format. This is something we have never done before, and this collection truly deserves that extension.

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structural

**About lines and grids**

Deepit Chugh's latest collection draws from Mumbai's urban architecture

DESIGNER DEEPIK CHUGH'S bespoke label Line Out Line's new edit, *Chapter 8*, looked at the city as something lived in, not just built for its showcase at the recently concluded FDCI x Lakme Fashion Week in Mumbai.

Known for crafting contemporary, unisex creations, Deepit derives inspiration from focusing on how people move through urban spaces, how clothes bend, shift, and change through long days, crowded streets, and moments of stillness in between. The collection examines everyday moments through the lens of anonymity and movement.

The silhouettes take cues from architecture and infrastructure in the form of straight lines, layered structures, and repeating grids. While surface treatments like denim washing, raw edges and laser cutting reflect time and use.

The reflection of time is also reminiscent of overexposed imagery and worn textures. These are buildings that carry weight and emotion.

Deepit has used cotton for its comfort and durability. Raw edges and patchwork allow garments to feel open and unfinished, while modular elements introduce adaptability. All the pieces can be layered, removed, or reconfig-

ured as needed. Deepit takes us through the same.

**What inspires your new collection?**

*Chapter 8* draws from Mumbai's urban infrastructure, its grids, scaffolding, and constant motion. The palette stays grounded in indigo, washed blues, greys, and muted neutrals. We've worked with structured denim, lightweight cottons, and textured blends, using raw edges, panelling, and layered constructions. Silhouettes are relaxed yet architectural and boxy shirts, elongated jackets, and modular separates.



Ankush Bahuguna in Chapter 8 ensemble

There's a balance between structure and fluidity, mirroring urban life.

**What inspires your designs?**

Architecture, cities, and lived experiences. Growing up across different cities shaped how I see clothing. Clothing for me is something that responds to space, movement, and environment.

**What are your plans for the label?**

To continue building a strong narrative with each chapter, while expanding our material exploration and strengthening the brand's visual identity.

**Give us with some styling tips for summer.**

Keep it breathable, and layered lightweight fabrics, relaxed fits, and pieces that can transition through the day.

**What are your upcoming collections?**

The next chapter will further explore handwork and different textures.

—SG

relaxed

Payal Pratap Singh's *Wildflower Soul* Spring/Summer 2026 collection is a departure from the performative nature of dressing

FOR NEW DELHI-BASED designer Payal Pratap Singh, fashion has never been about spectacle. It is, instead, a slow, deliberate unfolding—of craft, of process, of emotion. A graduate of NIFT, her journey has been one of quiet evolution, shaped by years in the industry before building her eponymous label, which today resonates across both domestic and international markets.

Her design language exists in the space between the hand and the heart—where India's living traditions are not preserved as relics, but reimagined with sensitivity for the present. Sustainability, in her world, is not an afterthought but a way of working—"a practice."

This philosophy comes into gentle focus with her Spring/Summer 2026 collection, *Wildflower Soul*. The starting point, she explains, was deeply introspective. "The starting point was my muse—the artist at home in a quiet interior space, both physical and emotional. I was drawn to the idea of a woman within her own environment, away from external expectations. A home filled with light, stillness, and time."

From this place of stillness, the collection takes shape. It is a departure from the performative nature of dressing, leaning instead into something quieter, more intimate. "I was interested in the moments where a woman is most herself, when she is not performing for the world," Payal says. "There is a certain honesty in how we dress in private, a sense of ease that often gets lost in public life."

That idea of intimacy becomes central to *Wildflower Soul*. In a landscape where luxury is often defined by visibility, Payal turns inward. "Here, it becomes inward," she says about reframing luxury as something felt rather than seen.

The garments themselves follow this rhythm. They are shaped not by occasion, but by everyday rituals—those small, grounding moments that define a day. "Rituals bring a sense of grounding, whether it's having tea, reading, or simply moving through a quiet space," she explains. "These moments informed the pace of the collection."

As a result, the clothes feel intuitive, almost instinctive. They don't impose themselves on the wearer; they move with her. "The garments are designed to exist within those rhythms, to feel natural, unforced, and in sync with the wearer's day rather than dictating it," she says.

Comfort, then, becomes more than just a functional consideration—it is integral to the design language. But Payal is careful to distinguish ease from simplicity. "For me, ease does not mean the absence of design," she notes. "It's about control—how a garment falls, how it moves, how it holds structure without rigidity."

It is in these nuances—proportion, fabric, restraint—that her identity reveals itself. "When these elements are considered carefully, comfort becomes a refinement rather than a compromise," she adds.

This season, that refinement is expressed through a quiet play of familiarity and reinterpretation. Gingham and cross-stitch emerge as recurring motifs, carrying with them a sense of nostalgia. "Both elements have

IN HER ELEMENT



a sense of familiarity, but I wanted to reinterpret them in a more refined context."

Gingham, with its understated, almost domestic quality, aligns seamlessly with the mood of the collection, while cross-stitch introduces a tactile intimacy—something inherently handmade. "They ground the collection in something recognisable, yet elevated," she explains.

Fabric, as always, remains at the heart of her process. For Spring/Summer, the focus shifts to breathable, natural materials like fine cottons, linens, and lightweight silks that respond gently to the body and to light. "It needed to feel soft, but not fragile; fluid, but with presence. The idea was to create garments that feel lived-in from the very first wear," she says.

There is an ease to these pieces that feels almost second nature—nothing forced, nothing overly considered, yet everything intentional.

The woman at the centre of *Wildflower Soul* embodies this sensibility. "She is thoughtful, self-assured, and not driven by trends. She values how something feels as much as how it looks." There is, in her words, "a quiet confidence" to this woman—one who dresses not for attention, but for herself.

"She doesn't seek attention, but she is always composed," Payal adds—a line that feels as much a reflection of the designer as of her muse.

With this collection, she also gently reframes the idea of quiet luxury—a term often reduced to minimalism or understatement. "Quiet luxury becomes more internal. It moves away from being about minimalism or understatement alone, and becomes about intimacy—how a garment is experienced rather than how it is perceived," she adds.

Price on request.  
At Collage, Rutland Gate.  
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“

For me, ease does not mean the absence of design. It's about control—how a garment falls, how it moves, how it holds structure without rigidity

Gingham and cross-stitch take centre stage as recurring motifs

tête-à-tête

Actor Priyanka Mohan on *Made in Korea*, cross-cultural sets, filtering feedback online, and more  
By Shivani Illakiya

# FINDING HER FRAME



“Cinema opened me up to a different perspective. I'm not from a cinema background, so it helped me connect with a larger audience. Even people you've never met can support you with unconditional love. It's very powerful, it can take you to a different plane of existence. That humanity is what cinema taught me

Priyanka Mohan



A still from *Made in Korea*

FOR AN ACTOR who has steadily built a presence across Telugu and Tamil cinema, Priyanka Mohan has long been a familiar face, even if not always the focal point. From her debut in the Kannada film *Onth Katha Hella* to mainstream successes like *Doctor* and *Don* opposite Sivakarthiskeyan, the action adventure film *Captain Miller*, and the Telugu outing *Gang Leader* with Nani, her filmography has been marked by range and a quiet screen presence that audiences have come to recognise.

But *Made in Korea* marks a significant shift. For the first time, she is anchoring a narrative, a female-centric story that places her at the heart of both the emotional arc and the cinematic gaze. Interestingly, the decision to take it on wasn't driven by strategy as much as instinct. "I didn't think of it in a bigger aspect," she admits, approaching the project with curiosity, even scepticism. "Why can't I just try it out?"

Beyond the film, we catch up with her on navigating a cross-cultural film set, building resilience in a hyper-visible industry, what cinema has taught her about people, her evolving approach to choosing roles, and why she's currently in a phase of simply exploring, experimenting, and showing up for stories that excite her. Excerpts:

**What made *Made in Korea* feel like something you wanted to take on?**  
When this story came in, I actually didn't think of it in a bigger aspect. I thought, 'Okay, this is a very nice, interesting story. Why can't I just try it out?' You know, this is my first female-centric film. Like, I haven't done anything of this sort before. I was a little sceptical in the beginning.

But then, this film really pushed me to try out something like this. It was one-of-a-kind. I don't think anybody has tried this before. So, I thought, let me just give it a try.

**How did you prepare for this role, and were there any series you watched as part of that process?**  
To be honest, I didn't prepare much. I just watched films and then kind of understood the culture, just basic things.

The character that I played in the movie, Shenbagam, knew more about Korea than me. So, I wanted to go there and experience everything. I watched *Something in the Rain*, then *The Legend of the Blue Sea* and *My Love from the Star*.

And when I came back from Korea, I watched *When Life Gives You Tangerines*. That's like my all-time favourite Korean series.

**Before *Made in Korea*, you had worked across the Telugu, Kannada, and Tamil industries. How different was it working with a predominantly Korean cast and crew?**

A lot, actually. One thing that I really didn't notice much here in the Indian film industry is the reading sessions that Koreans do. I think they follow an American or Western style of filmmaking.

They sit for readings, and they do rehearsals before you begin shooting. So, we went through the entire story again and again to understand the craft, the plot, the characters and the emotions better. That actually is very rare here in India, I feel.

Reading sessions really help us a lot to bond. So, that's one thing I really want to bring here.

**Beyond reading sessions, were there any smaller, more nuanced differences you noticed while working on a Korean set?**  
They're all extremely sweet. The minute you enter the set, they

greet you — they bow. And even when they pack up, when they say 'pack up', we usually just leave, right? Sometimes we don't even say bye to the entire cast. But there, they wait till everyone is done, and then they all bow again and wish each other good night before leaving.

That was something I really liked and appreciated. It felt very nice to experience that, because here it isn't always the case. On some sets, yes, but often everyone is busy thinking about the next day or the next schedule. There, they make sure to take a moment to say thank you, appreciate each other's work, and then leave.

**Did you get the chance to explore South Korea beyond the sets?**  
Not much, because we were shooting almost every day. But once in a while, I went out, tried barbecues, went shopping, skincare, and all that.

**Do you see yourself exploring more cross-cultural or international projects going forward?**  
Yes, I would love to. Right now I'm in that zone of trying out new languages and cross-cultures. Because it's the best genre ever.

**In today's hyper-visible industry, where artists are constantly judged online, how do you separate meaningful feedback from noise?**  
To be honest, anybody who has a public account now has to develop a very thick skin. Because now that social media is accessible to everybody. Everybody has a voice, and they all want to tell us how they feel. So, I think you have to develop a really thick skin.

If it is constructive, take it. Otherwise, if it is hurting you, I think you have to just ignore it. I know it is very, very difficult. But then I think it's better we ignore the noise than to not.

“

Never take anything for granted. Life doesn't give you multiple chances. When it does, take it and respect it every minute of the day

**Coming from an engineering background, what has cinema taught you about people that you might not have learned otherwise?**  
Cinema opened me up to a different perspective. I'm not from a cinema background, so it helped me connect with a larger audience.

Even people you've never met can support you with unconditional love. It's very powerful, it can take you to a different plane of existence. That humanity is what cinema taught me. You have to be kind no matter what. We are here because of the audience and the love they give us. That's something I've learned from being in this industry.

**Your upcoming projects span multiple films like *666 Operation Dream Theatre* and *Arasan*. What are you hoping to explore through these roles at this stage in your career?**

All the movies that I'm doing next are all going to be of different genres. And I get to play different, different characters, which I'm really looking forward to.

Because at this point in time in my career, I'm just like looking forward to doing different kinds of roles. And stories that really make me want to go on to the set every single day, wake up and go there. And then I don't want to hear the word 'pack up', you know.

And I'm that state right now, where I'm so passionate about being in front of the camera. So, I'm actually enjoying the process of making movies now.

**Years from now, what do you hope people remember most about you and your work?**

Honestly, people don't remember everything. People have forgotten about COVID. Can you believe it? So, you can't expect everyone to remember you.

But we leave digital imprints. I want to make sure I take my career seriously and do responsible films.

Maybe someday, if someone watches my work, I hope it puts a smile on their face.

**What's one life lesson you strongly believe in?**  
Never take anything for granted. Life doesn't give you multiple chances. When it does, take it and respect it every minute of the day.

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## Quick bytes

**Go-to café order?**  
My go-to-order is an Americano. And probably a cookie. I'm also liking matcha these days.

**If you weren't a public figure, which subculture would you belong to?**  
Supper clubs, definitely. Or I would be a street photographer.

**A book or film that has stayed with you? Why?**  
I really love *Inside Out*. It shows that at the end of the day, we are all the same, whether kids or adults. We're all that child inside.  
And the book, *Ikigai*.

**Actors you'd love to work with?**  
I really love Leonardo DiCaprio, Brad Pitt, Tom Hanks, Timothée Chalamet, Michael B Jordan, so many.

fashion



contemporary

# QUIET LUXURY, LOUD LEGACY!

With *Yatra*, designer Angom Dhaneshwor Singh's Karles elevates indigenous craft into his contemporary menswear narrative...



Silhouettes from *Yatra*



**I**N THE QUIET yet culturally rich enclave of Singjamei in Imphal, a new voice in Indian menswear is beginning to resonate with assured clarity. Karles, established in 2025 by designer Angom Dhaneshwor Singh, is not merely a label — it is a narrative woven from memory, heritage and a deeply personal design philosophy. Rooted in Manipur yet attuned to a global sensibility, Karles signals the arrival of a designer who understands that true luxury lies as much in storytelling as it does in the brand's craftsmanship.

Dhaneshwor's journey into fashion is anything but linear and perhaps that is precisely what lends his work its layered depth. A graduate of the Vogue Institute of Fashion Technology, his early career unfolded within the structured world of retail, beginning as a Sales Representative with Tommy

Hilfiger India before transitioning into Visual Merchandising. His tenure with industry giants such as Landmark Group India, Future Group India and Reliance Industries Limited honed his understanding of consumer psychology, spatial design and visual storytelling. Notably, a collaboration involving a window display for cover story alongside Karl Lagerfeld stands out as a formative moment — an intersection of global fashion language and individual creativity.

Yet, beneath this polished professional trajectory lies a far more intimate origin story. Creativity, for Dhaneshwor, is inherited. His grandfather, a respected tailor and his moth-

er, a celebrated *potloi setpi* — responsible for styling bridal attire in traditional Manipuri weddings — created an environment where artistry was both lived and revered. It is within this familial legacy that Karles finds its emotional anchor.

The label's latest collection, *Yatra*, is emblematic of this synthesis between the personal and the universal. Conceived as an exploration of movement — both physical and metaphysical — *Yatra* captures the essence

of travel as a transformative experience. It is, as the designer describes, "an emotional and spiritual excursion that unites landscapes, customs and identities." This season, however, the notion of journey expands further to encompass marriage — a deeply symbolic passage where two lives converge, bringing with them tradition, love and the promise of new beginnings.

This thematic richness is mirrored in the collection's aesthetic direction. While previous edits saw Dhaneshwor engaging with a broader spectrum of Indian textiles and prints, *Yatra* marks a deliberate shift inward. Here, the focus is on the cultural lexicon of Manipur — its motifs, textiles and artisanal nuances

— reinterpreted through a contemporary lens. "The Meitei *khoi* motif emerges as a central design element, its intricate beauty rendered through refined appliqué, delicate thread embroidery and opulent *zardozi* work. The result is a language that feels both rooted and refreshingly modern," he tells us.

The palette, too, speaks in a restrained yet evocative tone. "Shades of brown, ink blue and white dominate, creating a visual rhythm that is understated yet deeply expressive. White, in particular, carries a profound cultural resonance, symbolising purity and grace within Manipuri wedding traditions. Accents of gold punctuate the collection, lending a subtle luminosity that elevates the garments without overwhelming their inherent simplicity," Dhaneshwor explains.

Fabric choices reinforce this ethos of quiet luxury. "Cotton, linen and silk form the backbone of *Yatra*, selected not only for their tactile appeal but also for their timeless versatility. There is an emphasis on comfort and breathability, suggesting a wardrobe designed for movement — both literal and symbolic. These are garments that travel with the wearer, adapting to different contexts while retaining their intrinsic identity," the popular designer reveals.

Silhouettes remain true to Dhaneshwor's signature: anti-fit, yet meticulously constructed. There is a deliberate ease to the cuts, a refusal to conform to rigid tailoring conventions, balanced by an underlying precision that ensures each piece holds its form. It is within this interplay of structure and fluidity that Karles finds its distinct bohemian voice.

Beyond the garments themselves, what sets Karles apart is its growing cultural footprint. The label has already garnered admiration from a spectrum of Manipuri creatives and public figures, including actress Narmada Shougaijam, actor Teny Nongmaithem, playback singer Chand Ningthou, celebrity photographer Silheiba Sanasam, artist Zaurin Thoidingjam and DJ Shiphu.

With *Yatra*, Angom Dhaneshwor Singh invites us to consider fashion as a journey — one that honours where we come from while embracing where we are headed. It is a perspective that feels both timely and timeless, marking the emergence of a designer whose work is as thoughtful as it is compelling.

₹999 onwards. Available online.  
— Romal Laisram  
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beauty

must-haves

**Sun shield**

Ounce Organics's Sun Protect Sunscreen SPF 50 is the kind of daily essential that does the heavy lifting without making a fuss. Powered by zinc oxide, titanium dioxide, ceramides and hyaluronic acid, it delivers broad-spectrum protection while keeping skin hydrated. Lightweight, non-greasy and built for Indian weather, it's your everyday defence against sunburn, ageing and dullness. *Priced at ₹1,149. Available online.*



**FACE VALUE**

From high-performance skincare to mood-lifting fragrances, this is your no-nonsense upgrade to looking (and smelling) great!

Smart formulations, global cult favourites, and a few indulgent picks that earn their place on your shelf. Because good grooming isn't extra—it's essential.

**Retinal reset**

Celimax's The Vita-A Retinal Shot Tightening Booster—now at SkinBae—is for those ready to level up. With 0.1 per cent retinal and Matrixyl 3000, it targets fine lines, pores and firmness. Add in its advanced delivery system, and you've got a serious night treatment that delivers visible results over time. *Priced at ₹2,199. Available online.*



**Fresh fix**

Communal's Underarm Roll-On is a quiet essential done right. It keeps sweat and odour in check while working on pigmentation over time. Lightweight, non-sticky and gentle, it fits seamlessly into your routine—no drama, just reliable, everyday performance. *Price on request. Available online.*



**Juicy notes**

Kayali's Eden duo—Sparkling Lychee | 39 and Juicy Apple | 0—is fresh, flirty and impossible to ignore. Think fruity bursts balanced with soft florals, designed for everyday wear. Light enough for day, but with enough presence to last into the night, these are crowd-pleasers that don't try too hard. *Price on request. Available online.*



**Glow ritual**

Dusky India keeps skincare uncomplicated with its toner-serum duo. The Moondew Mogra Toner refreshes and balances, while the Glow Getter Gotukola Serum hydrates and strengthens. Together, they form an easy AM-PM routine that feels indulgent but works hard—perfect for anyone who wants results without a 10-step routine. *Priced at ₹3,398. Available online.*



**Aloe upgrade**

Forever Living's Forever Aloe Vera Gel—now made in India—keeps things simple and effective. Crafted with 99.7 per cent pure inner leaf aloe, it supports digestion, hydration and overall wellness. With decades of aloe expertise behind it and a vertically integrated process ensuring quality, this is less a trend and more a daily ritual that quietly does its job. *Price on request. Available online.*



**Colour focus**

Indus Valley's Bio-Organic Dark Brown Henna Hair Colour is for those who want coverage without compromise. This micro-fine, herbal powder delivers a rich brown tone while nourishing the hair. No harsh chemicals, no damage—just shine, softness and a natural finish that actually improves your hair over time. *Priced at ₹219. Available online.*

**Underarm care**

NIVEA's Derma Control range upgrades your underarm routine. With hyaluronic acid, vitamin C and pro-vitamin B5, it tackles irritation, pigmentation and uneven tone. Available in roll-on and spray formats, it's skincare-first thinking applied to an often-overlooked area. *Price on request. Available online.*



**Olfactory tales**

Now in India via Indulge Shop, Zielinski & Rozen is all about personal fragrance. Handcrafted, ingredient-led and rooted in memory, each scent feels intimate and distinctive. From peppery blends to soft florals, this is perfumery for those who want something less mainstream, but more meaningful. *Price on request. Available online.*



**Hero intense**

Burberry Beauty's Hero Elixir turns up the volume on the original. Richer, deeper and more concentrated, it's a confident blend that balances strength with subtlety. Designed for those who like their fragrances bold but refined, it's an easy signature scent upgrade. *Priced at ₹12,200. Available online.*

**Snack scent**

Fraganote's Caramel Loaded Popcorn is exactly what it sounds like—in the best way. Warm caramel, buttery popcorn and nutty undertones come together in a scent that's nostalgic and addictive. It's playful, unexpected and perfect for anyone bored of predictable perfumes. *Price on request. Available online.*



**Block mode**

Oshea Herbals's UVShield SPF 50 Sun Block Cream goes beyond basic protection. Designed for combination to dry skin, it tackles UVA, UVB and HEVL exposure while working on pigmentation and dullness. Infused with papaya, green tea and liquorice extracts, it doubles up as skincare—lightweight, non-greasy and built for everyday wear. *Price on request. Available online.*



— Team Indulge

# HYDRATION BOOST GUIDE

**S**UMMERS CAN FEEL draining, right? The scorching heat zaps your energy, makes your skin break out, and leaves you feeling tired, drained and bloated. But here's the good news: you don't have to just "survive" the heat. With a few smart, everyday choices, you can stay energetic, hydrated, and healthy all season long. When temperatures rise, your body works extra hard to stay cool. This can slow digestion, increase inflammation, and make you lose more water and minerals through sweat, which further results in skin issues, heat exhaustion, dehydration, and tummy troubles as well. The fix is simple: try to support your body with the right fluids, foods, and habits. Let's look at a

Try these easy, everyday tips to keep your body cool, hydrated, and energised

few practical tips that you can follow this summer:

- Hot weather makes your skin react with pimples, boils, or irritation. To manage it better, take a bath with room-temperature or cool water twice a day. Wash your face with plain tap water (skip soap if possible). Add a handful of oatmeal to your bathwater for soothing relief. Drink at least three litres of water daily, and the hydration levels can be increased, keeping your activity levels in mind.

- Your body can overheat quickly, leading to nausea, dizziness, or fainting. Always carry a bottle of lemon water or unsweetened *kokum* juice with you; try to add a pinch of salt in the same to replenish the electrolyte loss. If you must step out in the afternoon, cover your head with a light cotton cloth or cap. Stay in the shade and rest in a cool place as soon as you feel tired.

- You lose water fast through sweat, especially if you're active. Dry mouth, giddiness, and tiredness are early warning signs. Try to carry this electrolyte water and sip on it during the day: 500ml water with 1 tsp lemon juice, a pinch of rock salt and half a teaspoon of jaggery. Add a teaspoon of *sabja* (basil) seeds for

extra cooling. Never wait till you feel thirsty; always drink small sips regularly.

- Heat slows down your digestion, so heavy meals sit longer and cause gas, acidity, or loose motions. Try to choose light, easy-to-digest foods like plenty of cucumber, watermelon, muskmelon, buttermilk, and soaked *dals*. Skip large portions of non-veg, fried snacks, spicy gravies, and processed foods. Eat smaller meals and focus on chewing the food well to manage gut health better.

- Rest is recovery, so don't miss your sleep cycle because your body will need enough rest for you to become productive and energetic the next day. Lack of sleep will make you feel even more drained and tired.

You don't need fancy diets or expensive supplements. Just these small, consistent steps will keep your energy high and your body cool. This summer, choose to feel light, fresh, and strong. Your body already knows what to do, and you just need to support it.

## HEALTHY LIVING DEEPIKA RATHOD

Chief Nutrition Officer, Luke Coutinho Holistic Healing Systems. The writer is a clinical nutritionist with a focus on healthy lifestyle choices.



**ARIES**  
(Mar 21 - Apr 19)

When you give, you also receive. Monitor your expenses and spend wisely. The time has come to make some very important decisions, so be clear about what you truly want and act accordingly. Detoxifying your body, mind, and soul is essential at this moment. Your *karmic* cycle is coming to a completion this week. A happy ending is leading to a new beginning. Lucky colour: **Red**

**TAURUS**  
(Apr 20 - May 20)

A very lucky week awaits you. Make a wish and watch your dreams turn into reality. This is a joyful phase of life, so make the most of it. Committed romantic relationships will sweep you off your feet. Matters of the heart will take centre stage. Love may come in many forms and expressions. On the work front, it is time to act on your plans. Lucky colour: **Purple, rust**

**GEMINI**  
(May 21 - June 20)

You can attain freedom if you make a courageous decision to change your situation. Overwhelming emotions may be clouding your judgement. It is safe to trust those around you, as they are capable and supportive. Follow your creative passions. At work, believe in yourself, listen to your heart, and pursue what brings you joy. Lucky colours: **Brown, Pista**

## Angel Calendar

This weekly column is based on angel oracle guidance and numbers



### AALIYAA H JARIWALA

Chaldean numerologist,  
Angel oracle guide & healer

**LIBRA**  
(Sep 23 - Oct 22)

It is time for celebration. Your hard work will bring abundant rewards. Release yourself from burdensome situations. Things will improve once you make a clear decision. Over-analysing will not help, but finding a compromise will. There is light at the end of the tunnel. You can finally relax and make travel plans. Relocation or travel opportunities are likely. Lucky colour: **Royal blue**

**SCORPIO**  
(Oct 23 - Nov 21)

Your worries about the future are unnecessary and stem from a lack of self-confidence. Focus your thoughts on your desired outcomes. Release feelings of regret, guilt, or worry. Your material needs will be fulfilled in unexpected and magical ways. Acts of kindness will amplify your blessings. Your strength lies in forgiveness and self-belief. Stay focused and continue motivating yourself. Lucky colour: **Rose pink**

**SAGITTARIUS**  
(Nov 22 - Dec 21)

It is advisable to avoid conflicts and arguments. Challenges can be resolved if you remain calm and avoid impulsive decisions. Be patient with yourself and others, as situations may feel overwhelming. Starting a new life and discovering your purpose is a beautiful journey, but it requires forgiveness and compassion. Continue your work, as your skills will improve further. Lucky colour: **White**

**CANCER**  
(June 21 - July 22)

You are a beautiful soul who sees the good in others. Your soulmate shares this journey with you to create something rooted in pure love. Release the past and grow stronger from previous experiences. New opportunities for excitement and adventure are on their way. For those planning to start a family, this is an auspicious time. Lucky colour: **Olive green**

**LEO**  
(July 23 - Aug 22)

Starting a new life is a beautiful possibility filled with excitement and unknown challenges. Now that you have discovered your life purpose, it is time to focus on new beginnings with compassion and forgiveness for the past. Seek new avenues for happiness and look for the magic in life. Stay aware of your emotions. Lucky colour: **White**

**VIRGO**  
(Aug 23 - Sep 22)

An important situation in your life will come to an end this week, freeing you to embrace new opportunities for happiness. Leave the past behind, as the future holds greater rewards. At work, stand firm in your beliefs with confidence and claim your personal power. Your past investments will soon bear fruit, so remain patient. Lucky colour: **Pink**

**CAPRICORN**  
(Dec 22 - Jan 19)

At work, make bold and ambitious choices. Significant progress is possible, especially when you collaborate with like-minded individuals. Follow your heart. Love for home and family will be a highlight this week. Trust your intuition, as it will guide you. On a personal level, learn to release the past. Time will heal all wounds. Lucky colour: **Orange**

**AQUARIUS**  
(Jan 20 - Feb 18)

You tend to worry too much about the future. Focus instead on your desired outcomes. Let go of regret, guilt, and worry. Your hard work will be rewarded at the right time. This is a fortunate week for you, with wishes related to romance, finances, and material gains likely to be fulfilled. If you are seeking love, it may find you this week. Remain open to receiving. Lucky colour: **Deep green**

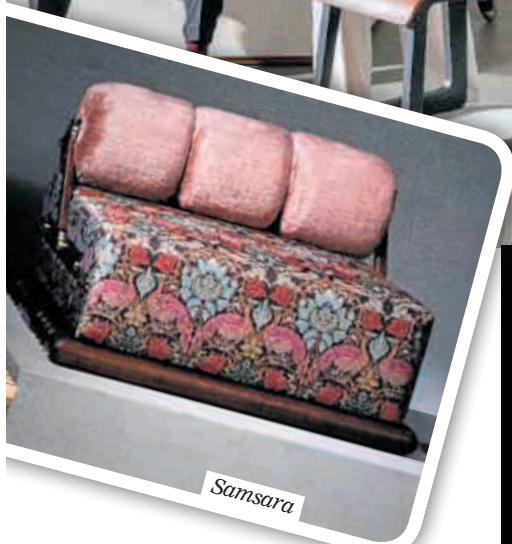
**PISCES**  
(Feb 19 - Mar 20)

A deeply traumatic situation from the past is finally coming to a close. You can now move forward with peace of mind. New opportunities for happiness will follow. There will be many reasons to celebrate with friends and family. This is also a good time to refine your plans. Trust your intuition for accurate guidance. Lucky colour: **Powder blue**

home  
décor



(From left) Dev Desai, Sana Raja, Hitharth Majithiya, Netra Bafna, Dhruvkant Amin, Saloni Desai, and Meet Shah



AS TECTONA GRANDIS Furniture completes a decade, the Ahmedabad-based studio is looking beyond its own practice. With the launch of *The Chair Affair*, the brand introduces a new platform that brings emerging designers and master craftsmen together, using the chair as a starting point to explore form, comfort and precision.

Founded in 2015 by Dhruvkant Amin and Jalpa Amin, Tectona Grandis Furniture has grown from a founder-led workshop into a design house known for its handcrafted teak furniture and deep material expertise. Over the years, its work has been defined by a close collaboration with architects and designers—an approach that now expands into a more structured, institutional format.

“As we complete a decade, it is important to extend our role beyond our own practice and contribute to the larger design ecosystem,” says Dhruvkant. *The Chair Affair*, he explains, was conceived as a way to engage with designers who primarily work at the scale of spaces, inviting them into the more intimate, exacting world of product design. “It reflects our intent to build dialogue, expand boundaries, and position Indian design with greater presence globally.”

At the centre of this initiative is the chair—an object that, while seemingly simple, demands precision. “The chair is one of the most distilled expressions of design,” Dhruvkant notes. “It demands clarity in ergonomics, structure and material while allowing a strong individual voice.” For designers accustomed to thinking in spatial terms, it becomes a focused exercise, one that reveals both intent and execution within a compact footprint.

The five resulting works showcase a bold shift in contemporary Indian design. *Samsara* (VMeet Design Studio) explores permanence through a sculptural wooden frame and evolving textiles, while *The Barrow Chair* (Terra Firma) uses wheelbarrow-inspired mechanics for adjustable seating. *The Seat of Continuum* (ASAO Objects) features a carved base with a seamless, draped



# DESIGN TAKES A SEAT

As it marks a decade, this studio looks outward with *The Chair Affair*—a platform connecting designers and craftsmen

surface; meanwhile, *Aathirai* (PRAVI) champions sustainability through reclaimed teak and exposed joinery. Finally, *Obliq* (Sana Raja Designs) presents a geometric, forward-leaning frame that extends into a matching companion stool.

The process itself is deeply collaborative. Each selected design is paired with a master crafts person, ensuring that material knowledge and construction logic inform the concept from the outset. “With inputs from the crafts person and our internal design and technical team, drawings were refined to resolve joinery, strength and usability,” Jalpa explains. And this leads to an iterative journey of prototyping and refinement, where ideas are tested, adjusted and strengthened through making.

For participating designers, the journey begins with an open call and a carefully curated selection process. Once chosen, they enter a structured exchange with the founders and senior craftsmen. “Through this dialogue, concepts were refined to address ergonomics, material behaviour and construction logic, leading to a resolved and production-ready outcome,” says Jalpa.

Importantly, *The Chair Affair* also introduces a royalty-based framework for designers—an uncommon move in the Indian furniture space. “The intent was to recognise design as an ongoing contribution,” Jalpa notes. By ensuring designers remain connected to their work beyond its creation, the platform establishes a more thoughtful approach to authorship and ownership.

Looking ahead, the founders see initiatives like this playing a key role in shaping the future of Indian design. “Indian design has a strong foundation, but its original voice has often been overshadowed,” Dhruvkant reflects. “There is now a clear opportunity to reassert that identity with confidence.”

—Manu Vipin  
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✉ @ManuVipin



on the shelf



## Sculptural edge

Known for blurring the lines between art and furniture, Bent Collective delivers a bold statement with the *Ravon Chair*. Defined by sharp geometry and a striking marbled finish, it embraces angularity as design language. A triangular cut-out introduces depth and shadow play, transforming it into a monolithic, collectible object—one that commands attention rather than quietly blending into its surroundings.

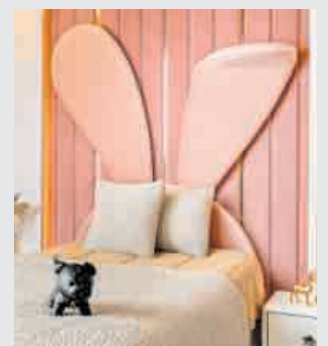
Price on request. Available online.



## Layered luxury

The *Fold Sofa* by Baxter, available at Sources Unlimited, brings together sculptural elegance and tactile comfort. Crafted with a beech plywood structure and plush, differentiated foam padding, it balances support with softness. Upholstered in rich leather and set on sleek metal feet, it introduces depth and quiet sophistication to contemporary, texture-led living spaces.

Price on request. Available online.



## Playful comfort

AE Living introduces a sense of whimsy with the *Bunny Ear Bed*, where design meets imagination. The upholstered headboard, shaped with soft ear-like curves, becomes an instant focal point. Rendered in muted pastel tones, it lends a light, spring-ready feel—creating a bedroom that feels warm, inviting and subtly expressive, without compromising on comfort or visual charm.

Price on request. Available online.

music

**B**Y THE TIME Def Leppard closed their first full India tour at Bengaluru's NICE Grounds last weekend, the city had made its feelings abundantly clear — the audience's hearts, both young and old, belonged to the popular English rock band! Before taking to the stage in the city, Rick Allen, who joined the band when he was only 15 as a drummer, sat down with us to converse about their new music, five decades of an unbreakable brotherhood, and his curiosity about India — which were only among the few things that he got candid about; and threading through all of it were hilarious anecdotes alongside the fact that the band's voice, even after 49 long years, remains as crisp as when they started.

For every artiste we witness commanding the stage in a blaze of glory, there is a complex, often exhausting side unfolding frantically behind the scenes. The glamour of performing across the globe is undeniable, yet the toll it takes on a musician's mental health is profound and that sits at the very heart of our conversation. Rick walks us through simple tricks that help him keep grounded at all times. "These days, the moment I wake up, my instinct is love and gratitude. It wasn't always that way. But now, I find myself thinking about the things that fulfill me — my home, my wife, my daughters and everything I've been able to build — rather than what I don't have. That shift changes everything. Before any show, I take care of my body first with water followed by the right food. Today, it was papaya, nuts and a masala *dosé*, which was an excellent start. Then, I thank my higher power and let go. It quiets the mind chatter — the voice that says: maybe tonight won't be as good as last night. So, I remember my parents and once I've done that, I feel ready," the drummer begins.

Even after all this time, one particular performance remains etched in Rick's heart and it is the same positive mindset that made it possible for him to write one of rock history's most remarkable second acts. "The agreement beforehand was simple — treat *The Monsters of Rock* festival in 1986 (his first performance after suffering a left-arm amputation) like any other show. Joe said he wasn't going to address the audience, just play. But as the set went on, you could feel this overwhelming anticipation building. Thousands of people, all holding something back; and when it finally broke, it was one of the most emotional moments of my life. It wasn't about the performance but the feeling of being accepted — as a musician, as an artiste and as a human being! That will always register for me as one of the most special moments I've ever lived. I've learned through the years to surround myself with people and organisations that lift me up; and Ahhaa (a mental wellness platform) — the format of it, the way it genuinely makes people feel seen — is the only truly sustainable way we can interact with one another. Any conflict is short-lived but the way they share people's experiences, the way it elevates them — the rest of the world could really take note," the artiste recalls.

Earlier when Rick mentioned masala *dosé*, we simply had to know more about what else caught his interest during his brief stay in the country and his answer did not disappoint. "Three cities, three very different flavours. Shillong was extraordinary — the location, the landscape. I'll be honest, I assumed India was hot everywhere but it got quite chilly up there. What I'll carry from that city the most is the people. Every time I smiled at someone, they smiled back — genuinely, completely. I also learned about the turmeric grown there, apparently some of the finest on the planet; and the tea, which was fantastic," the drummer reveals.

Circling back to music, we shifted the focus on integrating technology to adapt to his new drumming style after his accident and how it



Ashwin Srisailam, Rick, and Diane Bacchus

tête-à-tête

# ROCKIN' AROUND THE CLOCK!

Def Leppard's popular drummer, Rick Allen, opens up about how mental fitness forms the back-bone of a musician, fun anecdotes, and why their brand new music makes the band feel alive!



Rick Allen



PIC: KEVIN NASHON



*Right now we have five or six songs we're collectively working on — not necessarily all in the same room, but that's the beauty of how we operate today... the music we're working on right now is becoming our favourite music...*

became a signature part of the Def Leppard sound. "It made us far less afraid of technology, of genuinely embracing what hadn't been widely explored yet. I still love acoustic drums, that's what got me started as a boy — the feel and sound of them. But, when I began working with electronic drums, I realised there was an entirely new potential there. Fresh sounds. New territory; and that energy carried into everything we created together," he smiles.

Now on another massive world tour, their fans are still left wondering how they manage to maintain the same level of discipline and vocal 'muscle memory' even after five decades since their inception. "We get accused of using backing tracks but, I can tell you exactly what it is. We work with a vocal coach and there are a series of warm-ups he's developed — very methodical, very thorough — working through every part of the throat. Depending on the atmosphere or how everyone's feeling that day, we can spend three or four hours in the dressing room just running through it. It's an old-school approach and there's no shortcut — it's hard work and an absolute commitment to maintaining a certain standard; and when you do it consistently, it stops feeling like discipline and just becomes your reality," the musician elucidates.

What started as a performance for a group of six friends eventually evolved into a legendary band that thrived through various eras of the music industry — from vinyls to CDs and now streaming. We then ask him how this evolution has changed their relationship with music, particularly in countries like India. "Streaming is a good thing in many ways, it gets the music to more people. But it has, in another sense devalued it. There was a time when people understood that music cost something, because it did — in time, in hard work and everything we put into it. Now there's an expectation that it should be free. The shift is also that streaming has essentially become your calling card, an invitation for people to come and experience the live show and that has made the concerts even more spectacular," he shares.

But the true question really is: what is it about Def Leppard that bridges that gap between die-hard fans and new listeners who weren't even born when *Hysteria* (1987 album) dropped. "New music. That's the answer. Right now, we have five or six songs we're collectively working on — not necessarily all in the same room, but that's the beauty of how we operate today. I can go home, listen, come back with ideas. That matters to people, it signals that we're not just threading on the past. The music we're working on right now is becoming our favourite music and I think audiences feel that," he explains. We took that as our cue and jumped straight onto enquiring about their highly-anticipated new album and when it's expected to drop. "Right after this interview, I actually have a meeting with the rest of the band to discuss exactly that — logistics and timelines. What I can tell you is that we're being more experimental with it than we've been in the past. We borrow from our past when something works, there's no shame in that and a certain part of our audience expects a certain sound. But, we're also pushing into new territory and most of the time, people genuinely appreciate that. The music we're making right now feels alive," he smiles.

Lastly, we bring up *Definitely: The Official Story of Def Leppard*, a book that is essentially a time capsule recording the band's journey and what anecdotes didn't make it to the memoir. "English humour is, as you may know, a little twisted. We were playing in Tennessee and it was absolutely freezing. I had hand warmers in my shoes. We were all looking at each other going: I genuinely don't know how we pull this off tonight. I don't think I warmed up until the last song. A few of us got sick after. That's the reality of it. People assume that a rock star's life is perfect at all times. It very much isn't," he signs off!

*Def Leppard's latest single, Rejoice, is streaming on major platforms.*  
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# DID YOU KNOW?

In 2006, Rick Allen met Ashwin Srisailam (co-founder of Ahhaa, of which, the drummer is also an ambassador) in Chennai during a period of quiet personal reflection. What began as conversations around clarity and inner awareness gradually deepened over time. Through Ashwin's mind-fitness approach, Rick built resilience and inner growth — deepening his journey of clarity and presence beyond music. "The mind has a tendency to give up quickly and the reason for that is straightforward — there are two stories that can run in your head at any given moment. One tells you why you can't. The other tells you why you can. We gravitate towards the first, almost by default, because the brain is wired that way. If you've seen one setback, it prepares you for a hundred more. It protects you by steering you away from risk. The shift happens when you start genuinely asking how can I, instead and everything changes. All those reasons you'd assembled for why something wasn't possible are suddenly outnumbered. The single most powerful catalyst, as Rick mentioned, is gratitude as a daily practice," says Ashwin. Co-founder, Diane Bacchus also walks through the significance of wellness practises not only for a musician, but everyone! "A lot of the time we're not even using our breath properly. We're just tight, holding it all in. But open up, take a deep breath, five minutes in the morning — that's where it starts. When you consider everything Rick Allen has navigated physically, you begin by setting the intention and take baby steps. The same way you would approach meditation or a breathing practice or gratitude. You don't need a special window of time for it. It's just an experience you're having at that moment," Diane explains.

culture



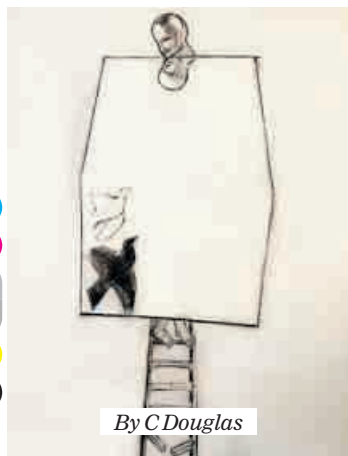
By K Muralidharan

showcase



An exhibition where mythology, minimalism, and mathematics walk into the same room

# THREE'S COMPANY



By C Douglas



By Rm Palaniappan



**T**HINK OF IT like three books from the same shelf. Same institution, same teachers, same air—and then three completely different stories. That's the simplest way to understand *Trilogy*, the new exhibition at Artworld—Sarala's Art Centre that brings together senior artists C Douglas, K Muralidharan, and Rm Palaniappan under one roof.

The occasion is significant. Sarala's Art Centre turns 60 this year, and curator Bishwajit Banerjee has chosen to mark it not with a retrospective but with a conversation—between three artists who all came out of the Madras School and then, over decades of work, developed visual languages of their own.

"These three artists, when you talk about the Madras School of Art, are the last prolific and established artists of that school. They lived in the surroundings of the Madras Art College with all the master professors and teachers, and they have worked for many years and moved ahead from the tenets of



It's a sequel of three artists moving out of the same institution and speaking totally different

the Madras school—forging new paths and discovering and creating their own visual language," says Bishwajit.

The idea of this exhibition he says was conceived during one of his infrequent visits to Chennai from Kodaikanal. "As we approached our 60th year, I found myself reflecting on artists who have not only witnessed the journey of the Madras School but have, in their own ways, shaped and extended it. Douglas, Muralidharan, and Palaniappan came to mind almost instinctively."

This idea culminates at *Trilogy* that sees about 50 artworks of the trio.

Muralidharan's canvases are the most immediately alive—mythological figures spread across vivid, almost irreverent colour. His works move between memory and instinct, where playful forms and imagery carry the cultural reference.

Mythology in painting usually tends toward the hushed and historical, but Muralidharan has other

ideas. "Normally when you talk about mythology, you talk about muted colours. But he has played around with that and made them pop and more fun using colours," Bishwajit notes.

Meanwhile, Douglas has gone somewhere quieter this time. His earlier works were richly layered, maximal in texture and detail. This series, however, is more spare and symbolic. Douglas's work features dense, layered works where figures, symbols and structures overlap and dissolve, creating surfaces that feel psychologically charged and inward. "His paintings were normally what I call maximal and minimal art, but this series has been a lot more quiet, minimalistic, surreal and very symbolic. Just simple drawing," says Bishwajit. What comes through most strongly, he says, is the line—that foundational quality of the South Indian school, now stripped of everything that used to surround it and allowed to speak on its own.

The third set of series belongs to Palaniappan, whose practice is grounded in structure and rhythm. He approaches the canvas with the rigour of a mathematician. Grids, geometry, measured spatial relationships—his work is about balance and rhythm arrived at through precision, not instinct. It might sound austere but reads as meditative, the kind of work that may ask you to slow down and check the art again.

An interesting factor about this exhibition is that instead of a single theme, one can witness the three distinctive practices that continue to evolve, while remaining anchored within a shared history. The intent is not to unify but rather display the artworks side by side, Bishwajit says.

The name of the exhibition came from Bishwajit sitting with the concept of a sequel. "Trilogy is a sequel of three books," he explains. "If I consider that these three people are the same characters studying in the same background of the Madras Art College, and if you see the life, it's like three different stories appearing. That's why I called it trilogy. It's a sequel of three artists moving out of the same institution and speaking totally different."

"The story is different and the language is totally different" he adds.

Open to all. On till April 20. 6 pm to 8.30 pm. At Sarala's Art Centre, Teynampet.

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drama

## Power Play

Jill Navarre reimagines *Julius Caesar* as a tale of assassination, ambition and chaos that follows when there is no plan

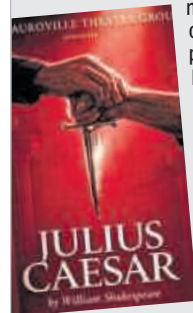


Auroville Theatre Group

VETERAN THEATRE EXPONENT Jill Navarre returns with her Auroville troupe to stage *Julius Caesar*, a play where betrayal is only the beginning and the real tragedy lies in what follows. Known for her enduring engagement with the Bard, Jill approaches this political tragedy with both reverence and a contemporary lens.

"Another year, another Shakespeare play," she tells *Indulge*. "I can't go too long without my 'Shakespeare fix'. It gives me a high like no other playwright I can name." This time, though, the spark came from outside the rehearsal room. "When world politics began to shake and chaos was on the horizon, I knew that we must show our audience what happens when foolish men do foolish things. After reading the play multiple times, I began to see a message I hadn't anticipated. Shakespeare, to stay safe, didn't directly call out a tyrant. Instead, he focused on Brutus and Cassius, the men behind the conspiracy, and what happens after they succeed."

That 'after', she explains, is where the real tragedy lies. "They didn't have a follow-up plan. Like, what happens after we assassinate Julius Caesar? You mean you just take him out and then hope the people support you. Does this sound familiar?"



In the rehearsal room, the toughest nut to crack was the assassination itself. "So far, the most challenging scene to direct is the actual assassination scene. I'm still not satisfied that we understand what is happening

there. But no spoilers. We are still in the process."

With this being her ninth Shakespeare production, Jill is confident that the play will strike a chord with modern audiences. "The connection to today's headlines does half the work. Maybe it's not just Rome we're looking at."

What keeps *Julius Caesar* alive, she says, is its emotional clarity. "It's so human. Two marriages, Caesar and Calphurnia, Brutus and Portia. Two worried wives. Two friends caught in something bigger than themselves. It's almost like a modern bromance. Everyone is standing at a moment of decision, and the consequences are huge and tragic."

Entry free. April 10-12, 7 pm onwards.  
At CRIPA, Auroville.  
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**Thriller: Vadh 2**

Shambhunath Mishra (Sanjay Mishra), a low-ranking prison guard, has formed a bond with Manju Singh (Neena Gupta), an inmate who has been locked up for 28 years for a crime she claims she did not commit. When the disappearance of a violent and politically connected inmate shakes up their normal routines, along with everyone else in the prison, a high-stakes investigation uncovers systemic corruption, caste-based discrimination further blurring the lines that define the characters of these individuals on either side of the law. *April 3. On Netflix.*



**Drama: Maa Ka Sum**

Agastya (Mihir Ahuja) is a young mathematical prodigy for whom logic, data and algorithms run the world. Guided by the belief that every problem can be solved with a formula, he attempts to help his single mother, Vinita (Mona Singh), find a perfect partner. Support and encouragement from a scholar, Ira Raina (Angira Dhar), in his quest is also met by her attempt to challenge his rigid belief and trust in numbers. In this unique journey, Agastya learns much about emotions and how they are the most defining factor in humans. *April 3. On Prime Video.*

**Superhero Thriller: The Boys (Season 5)**

With the previous season's concluding moments presenting the egomaniacal superhero aka 'supe' Homelander's (Antony Starr) ascent to power, this season begins on a bleak note. The new world order allows the 'supes' absolute power in a world where the core vigilante group, The Boys, is almost disbanded, with most of them in custody. As the stakes reach a tipping point, the team's former leader, Billy Butcher (Karl Urban) equipped with a weapon to kill every 'supe,' must get to Homelander while navigating the freedom of the squad. *April 8. On Prime Video.*



**Comedy: Sitaare Zameen Par**

A spiritual successor to the 2007 classic *Taare Zameen Par*, this film follows Amir Khan playing Gulshan Arora, a gifted but short-tempered basketball coach to 10 neurodivergent adults. Interacting with the team's players like Satbir (Aroush Datta), Golu (Simran Mangeshkar) and Bantu (Vedant Sharma), Gulshan eventually learns much about resilience, support and perspective and gradually forms a strong bond with them. *April 3. On JioHotstar.*



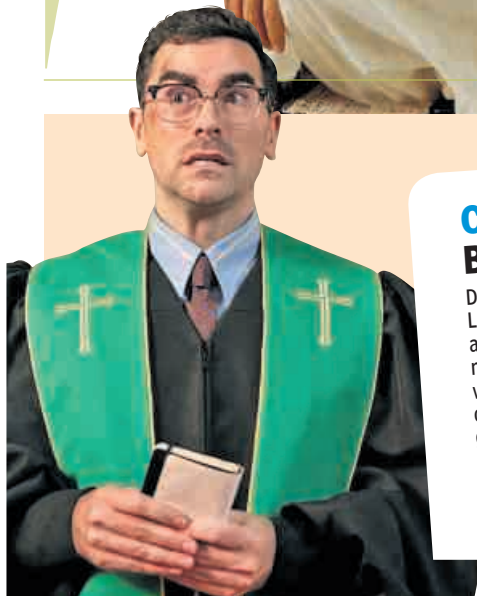
**Comedy: Maamla Legal Hai (Season 2)**

VD Tyagi (Ravi Kishan), known for his street-smart tactics as a lawyer, has adopted a new ambition for this upcoming season — becoming a judge. While the rest of his colleagues from the Patparganj legal squad face their own struggles, this season brings new and further odd cases like rats eating marijuana and the dealings with a human monkey. *April 3. On Netflix.*



**Comedy: Big Mistakes**

Dysfunctional siblings Nicky (Dan Levy) and Morgan (Taylor Ortega) are in too deep trouble after a misguided theft goes horribly wrong. With the action carried out to save their dying grandmother, the duo get involved in organised crime and are forced to carry out dangerous criminal activities, all while dealing with the film's other eccentric characters. *April 9. On Netflix.*



**Drama: Your Friends & Neighbours (Season 2)**

Having fallen from grace in the first season, Andrew 'Coop' Cooper (Jon Hamm) has found the risk in carrying out robberies in his neighbourhood quite addictive. Having doubled down on this secret aspect of his life this season, the induction of Owen Ashe (James Marsden), a wealthy and charismatic person, into the neighbourhood threatens to reveal this side of Coop, putting his family and himself in greater risk. *April 3. On Apple TV+.*

hot  
stuff



**Brave Ark**

Brave Ark is a powerful tab with loaded features and a super-sharp 12.95" 2.8K IPS display with 144Hz refresh and 700 nits brightness. The Ark also sports a massive 14550 mAh battery while being only 7.6mm thin. Brave Ark also comes with a Brave Keyboard with backlit keys and magnetic attachments as well as a smart Brave Ark Pen. The Ark runs on an SD 8s Gen 3 platform with 12GB RAM and 256GB storage with an Adreno 732 GPU and Qualcomm Hexagon NPU. There's also DTS Audio with 8 speakers and Brave PC mode for a desktop experience. On usage I found the Brave Ark to offer tremendous value as well as being extremely functional. During my time with Brave Ark, I could use it to watch content, play games, draw and doodle notes and use it like a PC (with the keyboard) for email and work. [amazon.in/brave.tech](https://amazon.in/brave.tech)

Gadget  
Review

**Dell Pro Plus Earbuds**

Dell's Pro Plus Earbuds (EB525) are ideal for all work-spaces and come with exceptional voice clarity. I've been using these for a month now for all my Zoom/Teams/Meet sessions, and the experience has been remarkable. They offer adaptive ANC and AI-based noise-cancelling filtering out background noise and voices to deliver clear call quality every time. Special AI-based Noise-cancelling Mics as well as on-device touch controls ensure seamless use. These buds also fit extremely well thanks to ergonomic design and four ear tip sizes, along with IP54 dust and water resistance built in. The Pro Plus buds also offer a harmonious, balanced audio experience when it comes to music of all genres. BT 5.3 ensures faster, more stable connections (you can pair with 8 devices - 2 simultaneously). [dellstore.com](https://dellstore.com)



**Tecno Spark 50 5G**

Tecno's Spark 50 5G is a super-charged smartphone offering top-notch connectivity, durability, and endurance in a great-looking package. During my usage over the last 10 days I've received compliments and enquiries from several people impressed by the aesthetics of this device. The phone is crafted from aerospace-grade aluminium with a unique camera deco design and also boasts a 6500mAh battery that lasts a day and a half with 45W charge speeds. There's up to 18GB extended RAM to keep apps running smoothly, a 120 Hz display and IP 64PRO resistance allowing MIL-STD 1.5m drop resistance and water exposure up to 20cm (5mins). You also get 4x4 MIMO stronger connectivity for wifi and up to 400% stronger network performance (5G+). Built in AI features are top-notch and include Ella AI assistant, Circle to Search and AI ANC. [techno-mobile.in/flipkart.com/amazon.in](https://techno-mobile.in/flipkart.com/amazon.in)

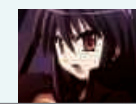
**Rimowa Grid Trunk**

Rimowa's new Grid collection reinterprets a distinctive archival design from 1969 for an innovative geometric aesthetic updated for the modern traveller. The stylish Classic Aluminium Grid Trunk featured here showcases an exquisite exterior, while on the inside, the motif continues with quilted lining and the use of rich materials and refined leather. The Trunk is suited for more than 2 weeks of travel with features including a stage-free telescopic handle, RIMOWA multi-wheel system, ergonomic leather grab handle and height-adjustable flex dividers. The Grid Trunk also comes with TSA-approved locks and a lifetime guarantee. [rimowa.com](https://rimowa.com)



**Casio S100X Urushi**

Casio Japan has a special Urushi edition calculator with Japanese Lacquer (S100X-JC1-U). The unique calculator has hand-applied Japanese Lacquer by master artisans to deliver a deep, rich lustre, radiating brilliance. Manufactured in Japan, these come with an aluminium body and a FSTN LCD with AR coating on both sides for preventing glare and increasing legibility. [Casio.com/jp](https://casio.com/jp)



**GADGET BOY**

Is there a shiny new gadget you'd like to tell us about? Mail [ashokpandian@gmail.com](mailto:ashokpandian@gmail.com)

**Leica Sofort 2**

Leica's Sofort 2 is a hybrid instant camera that allows for user-friendly operation, seamless connectivity and creative features while giving you instant pics to capture the moment immediately. The Sofort 2 allows you to print images from the FOTOS app gallery as well as from other Leica cameras. You get 10 Filmstyles and 10 Lensstyles for creative image compositions. There's also a Micro SD storage option with USB-C charging. Sofort 2 is great for capturing memories! [Leica-store.in](https://leica-store.in)



**Ashok Pandian**  
@ashokpandian

car  
&  
bike

first drive/look

INDULGE  
THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS  
FRIDAY, APRIL 3, 2026 | CHENNAI

The week  
that was



• **New Guerrilla 450**

Royal Enfield has launched the 2026 Guerrilla 450 APEX, a sharper, more focused expression of its street-performance roadster. Built around the same visceral Sherpa engine, the APEX features a lower, more committed riding posture, road-focused tyres, and design elements that amplify its corner-hungry character. All variants will receive updated ride modes with mode retention. You also get the Tripper Dash—a circular 4-inch TFT display with Google Maps-powered navigation and seamless smartphone connectivity. Prices start at ₹2.49 lakh, ex-showroom.

• **TVS Apache 160 upgraded**

The TVS Apache RTR 160 4V now has an all-new 2026 range with the introduction of a projector headlamp, all-LED lighting and Assist & Slipper Clutch technology in two more variants alongside the existing TFT variant. The new features enhance rider safety, night-time visibility and rider control, driven by cutting-edge technology, performance-first engineering and distinctive design. Prices start at ₹1.25 lakh, ex-showroom.



# DONE AND DUSTERED

An SUV that has a loyal fan following, thanks to its rugged mechanicals and no-nonsense interiors, gets a significant refresh with updated features

reliable

**R**ENAULT IS BACK with a bang, with the new Duster. The previous avatar, sold between 2012 and 2024, clocked sales of over 2,00,000 units, so obviously expectations with the new model remain high. Based on the unique Renault Global Modular Platform (RGMP), a derivative of the Common Module Family - B (CMFB) platform, the India version gets totally unique features like a new Electrical & Electronics (E&E) architecture based on a modern electronic system (SWEET400) co-developed with Google, allowing for better inte-

gration of advanced features like ADAS (Advanced Driver Assistance Systems).

The older car had a reputation for being rugged, and Renault has worked hard on that for the new gen Duster. Black cladding dominates all around, giving a butch look, while a generous ground clearance of 212 mm means you are unlikely to strike most objects on the road. LED lighting abounds like most modern cars, and at the rear, the triangular taillights get a connected light bar, which is unique to India. The height of the India-spec Duster is much higher, given the fact that a panoram-

ic sunroof had to be accommodated for Indian market preferences.

Step inside, and a brand-new cabin greets you. The infotainment system is on a vibrant 10.1-inch display, and since it's co-developed with Google, features like Google Maps are native to the unit.

There is a 10.25-inch display for the driver as well, which can be highly customised with vibrant colour displays. Thankfully, the HVAC van can still be controlled with physical buttons, but the placement of the seat ventilation buttons is counter-intuitive. The audio control stalk is also somewhat fiddly to operate. Surprisingly for a car that's so Indian market cen-

tric, rear sunshades are missing.

Currently two engines are on offer – a 1.0-litre 3-pot with 100 PS and a 1.3-litre 4-cylinder with 160 horses on tap. The latter can be specified with a 6-speed dual-clutch transmission (DCT). A 1.8-litre strong hybrid will be available later this year. The car has 17 ADAS features, which appeared to be well calibrated, with lane-keeping assist, blind spot monitoring, and rear cross traffic alert features working well. Six airbags are standard.

The new Duster aims to be a revolutionary product, though some key features are missing. This is definitely a rugged, technologically advanced family SUV.

Prices start at ₹10.29 lakh, ex-showroom onwards.

— Ranojoy Mukerji

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grandeur

## The ultimate star

**I**N 2026, MERCEDES-BENZ MARKS 140 years since the invention of the automobile. And for 105 years, Maybach has elevated them into expressions of the future of luxury. Mercedes-Maybach combines the cutting-edge technology and perfection of Mercedes-Benz with the exclusivity and elegance of Maybach.

In the new Maybach S-Class, a new, more sculptural interpretation of the Maybach grille is 20 per cent larger and available with a luminous surround. The Maybach emblem on the C-pillar and even the upright Mercedes-Benz star atop the bonnet are gracefully illuminated.

The cockpit feels like entering an exquisite lounge, as the redesigned interior blends high craftsmanship with the graceful modernity of the MBUX Superscreen, bathed in a Maybach-specific ambient style. New open-pore wood, including beautifully grained oak, is paired with soft

The new Mercedes-Maybach S-Class arrives with profound intent to redefine what a luxury saloon can be

light, deep materials and smooth digital surfaces. The result is an enveloping calm — the signature Maybach cocooning effect, reinterpreted. For the first time, leather-free upholstery graces the interior, including the new high-grade “Mirville” textile with its natural-fibre look, complemented by deep white piping and an exclu-

sive open-quilted diamond-stitched graphic.

The new Mercedes-Maybach S-Class offers an even more refined driving experience, harmoniously combining serenity, efficiency and effortless power. Automatic comfort doors, executive rear seats, a dedicated refrigerated compartment and silver-plated Robbe & Berking cham-

pagne flutes reinforce the feeling of curated indulgence.

A powerful ADAS system offers advanced capabilities. The car introduces a water-cooled supercomputer with substantial performance reserves, designed to support future capabilities. The MB.DRIVE ASSIST package is fitted as standard, including Active Distance Assist DISTRONIC with Steering Assist and Lane Change Assist.

The combustion range has been extensively re-engineered and readied for future emissions regulations. The latest evolution of the eight-cylinder (M 177 Evo) in the Mercedes-Maybach S 680, delivers 603 hp + 23 hp and 850 Nm + 205 Nm for greater power and sharper response—now on a par with the current 12-cylinder unit. In the S 580, the now more powerful V8 develops 530 hp + 23 hp and 750 Nm + 205 Nm. For purists, the Mercedes-Maybach S 680 will be offered with the celebrated V12 (M 279), rated at 603 hp.

Prices expected to start at ₹3 crore onwards, ex-showroom.

— RM



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