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THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

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MONSOON ACTIVITY SUBDUED IN LARGE PARTS OF INDIA

Monsoon activity was subdued in large parts of India Sunday, with rain confined to Uttarakhand, West Bengal, and Northeast

DRY SPELLS IN NORTHWEST, CENTRAL, SOUTH

The IMD forecast weak rainfall activity in northwest, west central and over south Peninsular India in the next 6-7 days. For Uttarakhand, the IMD issued a red alert for heavy to very heavy rainfall. On Sunday, heavy rainfall triggered landslides across Uttarakhand. Himachal continued to be under a wet spell as light to moderate rains lashed parts of the state | **P7**



REPRESENTATIONAL IMAGE

BELOW NORMAL RAIN FOR UTTAR PRADESH

- The southwest monsoon has remained below normal across U.P. so far, with the state recording 158.8 mm of cumulative rainfall between June 1 and July 12 against a normal of 190.9 mm
- The Met department, however, said that an active monsoon will bring heavy rainfall over some districts of West Bengal till July 14



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MORE THAN THE AVERAGE
TEMPERATURE IN DELHI: IMD

Iran shuts Strait of Hormuz again, US retaliates with more attacks

Fate of ceasefire deal hangs in balance as Iran & US trade barbs over control of waterway

AGENCIES @ Tehran / Dubai

IRAN said the Strait of Hormuz was closed on Sunday while the United States insisted it remained open, after the confrontation over the vital waterway again sparked US and Iranian strikes.

The strait, essential to global oil and gas supplies, has become a central point of contention between the two foes, repeatedly leading to exchanges of fire despite an agreement aimed at ending the Middle East war that was struck last month.

The latest exchange on Sunday was prompted by another Iranian attack on a Cyprus-flagged container ship in the waterway whose crew was forced to abandon it after it went up in flames.

Before the war began with surprise US-Israeli strikes against Iran on February 28, there was free passage through Hormuz, but Tehran now insists that it will control the strait, while Washington is adamant it cannot.

"Following this incident... the Strait of Hormuz will be closed until further notice and until the end of American interventions in this region," Iran's Revolutionary Guards said Sunday.

The US military's Central Command countered on X that the strait was "open to all vessels seeking to lawfully transit the international waterway". It said US forces were "positioned and prepared to ensure" freedom of navigation, adding: "Iran does not control the strait. Traffic is flowing."

Iran said it had targeted two ships in Hormuz, accusing them of ignoring instructions to use an approved transit corridor or "violating regulations", IRNA said. The attacks prompted a barrage of US strikes across Iran in response, with the US



The Cyprus-flagged container ship that was hit by Iran and suffered "significant engineroom damage" according to the US | x

Oman protests Iranian attack

Oman on Sunday issued a formal protest to the Iranian ambassador following an attack on the country, state media reported, in a rare instance of it publicly accusing Tehran of targeting its territory



United States is imposing a heavy cost by continuing to degrade Iran's ability to attack civilian mariners and commercial ships freely transiting the Strait

US CENTCOM

India deplores attack on ship, urges restraint

JAYANTH JACOB @ New Delhi

INDIA on Sunday strongly condemned the attack on the merchant vessel GFS Galaxy off the coast of Oman, calling for an immediate end to attacks on commercial shipping and urging de-escalation amid rising tensions in West Asia.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said 10 of 11 Indian nationals on board the Cyprus-flagged container were rescued; one Indian remains missing.

"Our Embassy in Oman is closely monitoring the situation and proactively coordinating with Omani authorities in the ongoing search and rescue operation. We thank Omani authorities for their support," MEA said in a statement.

Describing the repeated attacks on commercial vessels in the region as "deeply worrisome", India reiterated its call for restraint and a diplomatic resolution to the crisis. "We reiterate our call for immediate de-escalation of tensions, and the conclusion of ongoing negotiations for a diplomatic solution so that peace and stability can return," the MEA said.

The ministry also stressed the importance of safeguarding international shipping lanes. "The targeting of commercial shipping and civilian infrastructure in the region must end," MEA said.

Annamalai says party will bring change in 2031

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Coimbatore

FORMER BJP Tamil Nadu president and chief mentor of We The Leaders K Annamalai on Sunday said his party would usher in a change of government in the state in 2031, hinting that it would only enter electoral politics in the next Assembly elections.

Speaking at the first conference of We The Leaders themed on 'Drug-Free Tamil Nadu' in Pollachi in Coimbatore district, Annamalai said that 54% of the people who had joined the party are below the age of 40. "It is these people, who view society differently, that brought about a change in government in Tamil Nadu in 2026. They are going to bring about another change in government in 2031," he said. Announcing the launch of a trade union forum called En Mann, En Makkal, he said 1.5 lakh people will be trained at the APJ Abdul Kalam Centre for Ethics and Politics in Coimbatore by October 2027.

"Since the organisation was launched on June 5, 19 lakh people have joined in 38 days... Just by seeing so many come here without any invitation, it is clear that there are good people in TN waiting for an opportunity. When those joining us reach 50 lakh, it will mean the people of TN are calling us," he said. Of the 19 lakh, he said 83% are men, and 17% women.

Clarifying the organisation's position, he said, "We The Leaders is going to be a healthy political party. It'll be there before the people of TN in 2031." **P5**



TEARFUL FAREWELL

S Janaki's granddaughter Apsara Vidyula performing the legendary playback singer's last rites in accordance with the family's traditions in the presence of relatives, friends, officials, and hundreds of admirers in Mysuru on Sunday | UDAYASHANKAR S

AT CHENNAI CORPN SCHOOLS

Graduate sanitation workers double as stopgap teachers

KEERTHANA CHRIS @ Chennai

EVERY morning, Vijaya* walks into a Chennai corporation school with the qualifications to teach but holding the job of a sanitation worker. A B.Ed graduate, who has cleared the Teacher Eligibility Test (TET) Paper-II, she begins her work dusting off the school's corridors instead of the blackboards. At times when a teacher takes a leave of absence, she gets to do the job she had trained for, without the pay, designation, or recognition of a teacher.

Vijaya is one of around 1,700

sanitation workers employed in the corporation's 420 schools — primary, middle, high and higher secondary — spread across the city and its extended limits, and her situation is not unique. Many sanitation workers employed on a contractual basis through the National Urban Livelihoods Mission (NULM) and Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in corporation schools are graduates, several of them first-generation learners. After years of toil for a college degree, they now work six days a week for around ₹19,000 a month, with-

out access to government social security benefits or health insurance.

Sweepers said they routinely



perform duties outside their job description, including distributing textbooks, loading and unloading heavy school equipment, serving mid-day meals, and washing utensils. Some said they were even asked to take classes in the teachers' absence.

Kanchana*, a BCom graduate who earlier worked as an administrative staff member at a private firm, is now employed as a sanitation worker at a Chennai Corporation primary school. She clocks in at 8 am, marks wher attendance on the GCC application, sweeps

the school premises, and signs off at 5 pm. However, during a visit to the school, *TNIE* found her teaching Tamil to Class 2 students in the absence of their regular teacher.

Kanchana said subject teachers sometimes call her to explain what lessons to cover, adding that the school's headmaster is aware of the arrangement but does not intervene. "I take classes for the lower grades because our school does not have permanent staff members, and an SMC (School Management Committee) teacher is yet to be appointed." **P3**

PREETHA NAIR @ New Delhi

THE government has called an all-party meeting on July 19, a day before the commencement of the Monsoon Session of Parliament. In the meet, the government is expected to outline its legislative agenda while the opposition parties are likely to spell out the issues they intend to raise during the session.

The monsoon session is expected to be stormy as the government may take up crucial constitutional amendment bills, including the 130th Constitution Amendment Bill, which seeks to automatically remove the prime minister, ministers, or chief ministers on the 31st day of their detention if they don't step down.

The Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) examining the 130th Constitution Amendment Bill is expected to adopt its report on July 17 before submitting it to Parliament. Sources said the panel has recommended that the PM, Union

ministers, and chief ministers be suspended rather than permanently removed from their posts if they are detained for 30 consecutive days on charges of serious offenses. The panel has also proposed an automatic reversal clause if such persons are acquitted or the prosecution does not proceed within a specified period.

Most opposition parties had opted out of the joint committee, as they termed the Bill a tool to destabilise governments they run.

In its report, the panel defines "serious criminal offenses", saying the term should refer to offenses punishable with jail term of 5 years or more.

To pass Constitutional amendment bills, the government needs the support of two-thirds of members present and voting in both Houses. NDA will need 360 to get a two-thirds majority. While NDA has 293 members, its strength could rise to 319 if the 20 rebel TMC MPs and six rebel Shiv Sena (UBT) extend support.



When Manmohan Singh told former CEC Quraishi 'I will commit suicide'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

FORMER prime minister Manmohan Singh was deeply upset by the face-off between some of his ministers and the then chief election commissioner S Y Quraishi during the 2012 Uttar Pradesh elections.

Divulging the details in his forthcoming book *India and I: A Hundred Memories, Not a Memoir*, Quraishi recalls that during a poll rally in January 2012, then Union minister Salman Khurshid said the Congress would raise the job quota

for Muslims from 4.5% to 9%. The BJP approached the EC, flagging violation of poll code. "We censured Khurshid, the strongest action available under the Code," Quraishi recalls.

The decision drew sharp criticism from some Congress leaders, who said the EC had become 'arrogant'. "Criticism never bothers me; innuendo does. This loose talk was not acceptable," he writes in the book.

When Quraishi met PM's press secretary Harish Khare

at an event, he conveyed his concerns. The next day, he got a call from Singh, asking: 'Quraishi ji, can I see you urgently?'

When they met at PM's residence, Singh said: 'Harish told me what you said. If that is what you think, I will commit suicide.'

Quraishi writes that he was speechless. "My remark was about some ministers' conduct, not about him." Singh then told him he was unaware of the ministers' comments and expressed deep regret.



Manmohan Singh



SINNER

SEALS THE DEAL, DEFENDS WIMBLEDON CROWN

World No 1 Jannik Sinner defended his title in London, beating French Open champ Alexander Zverev 6-7 (7/9), 7-6 (7/2), 6-3, 6-4 in the summit clash on Sunday | **P11**

TENDERS FLOATED IN JUNE

30 govt ITIs will be revamped under ₹1.4Kcr centre-backed scheme

S KUMARESAN @ Chennai

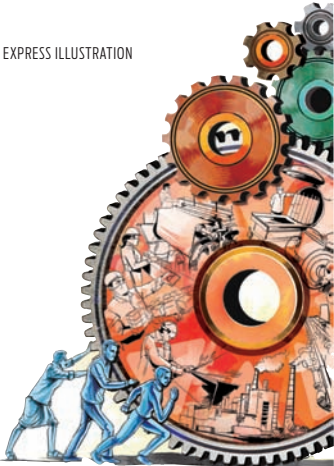
EXPRESS ILLUSTRATION

THE Tamil Nadu government has launched a ₹1,440-crore initiative to modernise 30 Government Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) under the centre's Pradhan Mantri Skilling and Employability Transformation through Upgraded ITIs (PM-SETU) scheme. The project, to be implemented through a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model, aims to transform government ITIs into centres of excellence capable of producing industry-ready skilled workers.

The government floated tenders in June inviting industry players to serve as Anchor Industry Partners for six ITI clusters in Ambattur, Coimbatore, Thoothukudi, Madurai, Tiruchy and Hosur. Each cluster will comprise one hub ITI and four spoke ITIs, taking the total to six hub institutes and 24 spoke institutes.

Estimated at ₹240 crore per cluster, including ₹80 crore for the hub institute and ₹40 crore for each spoke institute, the project seeks to upgrade infrastructure, introduce modern technologies and strengthen industry-academia collaboration.

The scheme also proposes to introduce courses in emerging sectors such as renewable energy, artificial intelligence, robotics, logistics and other advanced technologies. Sector-specific priorities have also been identified, with the Coimbatore cluster focusing on manufacturing, textiles, electronics and information technology, while the Thoothukudi cluster will cater to logistics, green energy, automobiles and



IT-related sectors.

The selected industry partners will work with the government through Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs) and will be involved in preparing development plans, upgrading infrastructure, training instructors and facilitating placements. Each hub ITI will introduce four new National Council for Vocational Training (NCVT) trades and upgrade infrastructure for at least 10 existing trades, while each spoke institute will add two new NCVT trades and modernise facilities for at least eight existing trades.

The government has set performance targets including a placement rate of over 75%, a pass percentage of 90%, higher enrolment and increased participation of women and students from disadvantaged sections.

Welcoming the initiative, Tamil Nadu Small and Tiny Industries Association (TANS-TIA) president S Vasudevan said the scheme would benefit both industries and students.

TN mulls 735 new pharmacy seats in govt med colleges

Proposal includes B Pharm courses in 11, Pharm D studies at 2 colleges

SINDUJA JANE @ Chennai

IN what could make pharmacy education more accessible and affordable, the Tamil Nadu government is studying a proposal to introduce Bachelor of Pharmacy (B Pharm) courses in 11 more government medical colleges. It is also looking at launching the Doctor of Pharmacy (Pharm D) programme at Madras Medical College (MMC), Chennai, and Government Madurai Medical College and Hospital. If approved, this will be the first time the six-year Pharm D course is offered in government institutions in the state.

Currently, B Pharm and Master of Pharmacy (M Pharm) courses are available only at the College of Pharmacy, MMC, and Government Madurai Medical College. Together, the two institutions offer 60 B Pharm seats each and 85 M Pharm seats.

The Directorate of Medical



Education and Research (DMER) has prepared a detailed project report (DPR) for the expansion and forwarded it to the health secretary for consideration. "The proposal is under examination," a senior DMER official told *TNIE*.

The proposal envisages an addition of 735 seats, comprising 660 B Pharm seats across 11 newly added medical colleges, 15 additional M Pharm seats at Madurai medical college, and 60

Pharm D seats, with 30 each at MMC and Madurai medical college. The move comes amid a long-pending demand from pharmacy associations, which have argued that limited government seats force many students to opt for self-financing colleges where fees are higher.

A B Pharm seat costs ₹50,000 annually in a government institution, compared to ₹1 lakh for a management seat in a self-financing college. For M Pharm, students pay ₹75,000 in government colleges against ₹1.25 lakh in private institutions.

"B Pharm is offered in around 100 private colleges, but only two government institutions have the programme. Expanding it to more government colleges will greatly benefit students from economically weaker sections," said G Selvaraj, former president of the Indian Pharmacy Graduates Association, Tamil Nadu branch.



BURDEN BEFORE THE BAY

Tons of plastic waste, rubber, thermocol and other debris remain strewn along the Cooum River near its mouth in Chennai, raising concerns that monsoon rains could carry the pollutants into the Bay of Bengal | ASHWIN PRASATH

What you need to know about Census 2027 Self-Enumeration

FOR the first time since Independence, residents in Tamil Nadu will have the option of providing their census details online without waiting for a census enumerator to visit their homes, as the self-enumeration phase for Census 2027 begins on July 17. The Self-Enumeration Portal (SEP) will remain open for 15 days till July 31, ahead of the 30-day house-to-house houselisting operations scheduled across the state from August 1, 2026.

In an interview with *TNIE*'s Muruganandham, M Sundaresh Babu, Director of Census Operations for Tamil Nadu and Puducherry, explains the process and answers some frequently asked questions on self-enumeration.

Q What is Self-Enumeration? Self-enumeration is a facility that allows residents to provide



M Sundaresh Babu

their census details online through the official Self-Enumeration Portal instead of waiting for a census enumerator to visit their homes.

Q Why has the Self-Enumeration option been introduced when enumerators will visit every household? The facility gives residents the flexibility to complete their census details at a convenient time. It also improves accuracy by allowing people to enter their own

information, reduces the workload of enumerators and helps the census process run more efficiently. Those who complete self-enumeration will not have to answer all 33 census questions again when the enumerator visits their household.

Q Is the Self-Enumeration Portal available in Tamil? Yes. The SEP supports 16 languages, including Tamil.

Q How can residents access the portal and submit details? Residents must first select their state or Union Territory and complete the captcha verification. They should then enter the name of the head of the household, mobile number and email address, if they wish to provide one. An OTP will be sent to the reg-

istered mobile number and email address for verification. After completing the verification, residents can select their language and begin self-enumeration. After submission, an 11-digit Self-Enumeration ID (SE ID) will be generated, if provided. Residents must show this ID to the census enumerator during the household visit.

If the SE ID is unavailable, the enumerator will collect the census information again. If the ID is forgotten, it can be retrieved using the registered mobile number.

Q Will residents have to provide the same information again when the enumerator visits their homes? No. Those who successfully complete self-enumeration and provide the SE ID to the enumerator will not have to answer all cen-

sus questions again.

Q Can mistakes made during Self-Enumeration be corrected? Residents can save the form as a draft and edit it before submission or until July 31, the last day of self-enumeration.

Once submitted, the form cannot be edited through the portal. However, necessary corrections can be made by the enumerator during household verification.

The information provided by residents will be validated only after verification by the enumerator.

Q Will Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) be included in the census? No. The census covers people living in India. However, if an NRI's household is located in Tamil Nadu, the household details may be submitted through the Self-Enumeration Portal.

the identified locations will be prioritised based on the frequency of faults, duration of outages, number of consumers affected, impact on hospitals and other essential services, seasonal or weather-related recurrence, operational and maintenance issues, and the extent of public inconvenience. These locations will be monitored continuously until permanent corrective measures are implemented.

The communication said the programme is intended to move the utility away from temporary restoration works and towards long-term engineering solutions.

Radhakrishnan has also directed every distribution region to maintain a repeat tripping register listings substations. Officials have been asked to identify recurring technical defects and carry out scientific root cause analysis so that permanent solutions can replace temporary repairs.

S GURUVANMIKANATHAN @ Chennai

TAMIL Nadu Electricity Board (TNEB) Chairman J Radhakrishnan has directed the Tamil Nadu Power Distribution Corporation Limited (TNPDC) to immediately implement a structured Repeat Tripping Elimination Programme (RTEP) to identify, analyse and eliminate the causes of recurring power tripping and supply interruptions across the state. The initiative is aimed at reducing frequent power cuts, improving the reliability of the power distribution network and ensuring uninterrupted electricity supply to consumers. All chief engineers have been instructed to identify substations, feeders, distribution transformers and other network assets that have witnessed repeated tripping over the past six months.

According to an official communication accessed by *TNIE*,



Horoscopes By Holiday

HOLIDAY MATHS

13th July: Venus Disgruntled Venus in Virgo has a beef with Uranus in Gemini today, and whatever the grievance may be, it invites discussion. Some guidelines for working things out during a Mercury retrograde: Speak of your experience, not of your conclusions. Leave room for information you don't have yet. Aim to understand instead of decide who's right.

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr. 20) It feels like the other person controls the pace of a relationship, responding in their own sweet time. But you have complete authority over how much of your attention, energy, imagination and time gets organized around that fact.

TAURUS (Apr. 20 - May 20) Someone's mixed signals have you constantly interpreting clues. Maybe they subconsciously love how this snags your attention. But you don't need to solve every mystery. The energy you spend decoding can be redirected toward observing. Patterns tell the story without requiring a detective.

GEMINI (May 21 - June 21) You're not waiting to be chosen. Maybe it seems like they're deciding what role you play in their life, and maybe you don't yet feel any which way about that because you're busy deciding what role they play in yours.

CANCER (June 22 - July 22) Human interactions are complex, detailed and varied from person to person, so it's impossible to get them exactly right for everyone. But if you try and please yourself, you have a good chance of succeeding with at least one person.

LEO (July 23 - Aug. 22) Initiation is a form of power. You start the ball rolling and influence where it's going. You're socially courageous and curious. The question isn't whether you're reaching out. It's whether you're reaching toward people who reach back.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 - Sept. 22) Does it seem like a relationship would improve if the other person changed one particular behavior? You could be right, although your leverage isn't in changing them. It's in deciding what you can tolerate, encourage, reciprocate and build around.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 - Oct. 23) You're taking responsibility for another person's happiness, as if their happiness (or your own, for that matter) is really up to you. Happiness is like a butterfly. All you can do is grow the right flowers to make a visitation more likely.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24 - Nov. 21) Just because you care a lot doesn't mean the other person holds all the cards. Caring deeply isn't weakness. Remember, your feelings belong to you, not to the person who inspired them.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 - Dec. 21) You really do accept what you cannot control, and it gives you a serenity around relationships today. People feel easygoing and real around you. Without all the "fronting," you learn what's actually going on.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 - Jan. 19) You know where you stand with someone even though they haven't explicitly stated it. You pay attention to actions, which usually give much more accurate and comprehensive information.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 - Feb. 18) Ask for what you want. A clear request may change the relationship, but uncertainty would change it, too. Being honest at least gives you the chance to change things in a direction aligned with the truth.

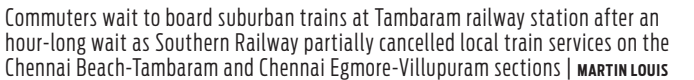
PISCES (Feb. 19 - Mar 20) The other person seems to have more options than you do, but this is an illusion. They have the freedom to choose their actions. You're free to choose your response, your investment, your availability and your future.

Sudoku puzzle grid with numbers 1-9. Includes text: "SUDOKU HARD", "TEST YOUR NUMBER CRUNCHING SKILL WITH OUR UNIQUE PUZZLE", and "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."

Crossword puzzle grid with numbers 1-27. Includes text: "CROSS WORD", "ACROSS", and "SATURDAY'S SOLUTIONS".

Crossword puzzle grid with numbers 1-27. Includes text: "CROSS WORD", "ACROSS", and "SATURDAY'S SOLUTIONS".

Jumble puzzle grid with words: AHCBT, RKNAD, LRATLE, TRFCAY. Includes text: "JUMBLE", "UNSCRAMBLE THESE JUMBLES, ONE LETTER TO EACH SQUARE, TO FORM FOUR ORDINARY WORDS.", and "THE MOBILE HOT DOG VENDOR DID GREAT BUSINESS SELLING EVERYTHING".



EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Chennai

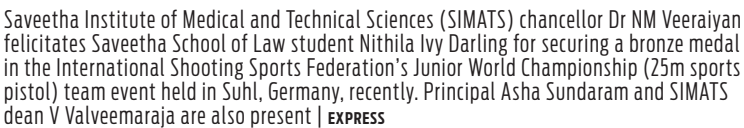
After learning about the cancellations, passengers had to

Southern Railway had issued press releases on July 3 and July 11 announcing modifications to train timings and the cancellation of certain services.

Tirupattur: Two women on a motorcycle lost their lives in a road accident on the Bengaluru-Chennai National Highway near Ambur on Saturday. Police said the rider died on Sunday. She had allegedly swerved to avoid hitting a pedestrian who had suddenly attempted to cross the road. The deceased were identified as Saranya and Fathima, both residents of Gudiyatham in Vellore who were engaged in the garment business. Police said that a woman suddenly attempted to cross the highway, prompting Saranya, who was riding the motorcycle, to swerve in an effort to avoid a collision. She then reportedly lost control of the motorcycle and the vehicle overturned on the road. ENS

Chennai: The department of optometry at the School of Allied Health Sciences, Vinayaka Mission's Research Foundation, organised V-OTPO 2026 hands-on workshop on ocular prosthesis under the theme 'Revive and Rehabilitate' on its Chennai campus on Friday. The workshop featured expert sessions by Priya Balasubharamaniam, founder of Eyeris Perfect Maxillofacial & Ocular Prosthesis Clinic and Sathishkumar, senior lecturer, Government College of Optometry. The event was attended by nearly 350 academicians, faculty and students from various educational institutions. ENS

Chennai: A 90-year-old woman died after a compound wall collapsed on her while construction debris was being dumped as part of renovation work at her house on Gangaiaimman Koil Street in Kolathur on Saturday morning. The Rajamangalam police arrested Karthik (34), of MGR Nagar, on charges of causing the accident through negligent dumping of the debris. The victim, Chellammal, who lived with her son and his family, was washing vessels near the compound wall when debris was being unloaded during the renovation work, the police said. Neighbours rushed her to the Periyar Nagar Government Hospital, where she succumbed to her injuries. The Rajamangalam police registered a case and arrested Karthik. ENS



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

While neither the Greater Chennai Corporation nor the workers' associations had an estimate of how many sanitation workers are graduates, *TNIE* spoke to four such workers over the past week -- two with B.Sc Computer Science degrees, one with a B.Ed degree, and another with a B.A in Economics. Most had previously worked as office assistants or in food outlets before taking up sanitation work after a family member retired from the same post, allowing them to be considered for the

CITU Chennai district general secretary R Loganathan, who works closely with sanitation workers in corporation schools, said the scale of the issue was much more than what meets the eye. "Across Chennai, there are likely hundreds of graduates

GCC Joint Commissioner for Education Karpagam IAS said she was unaware of degree-holding sanitation workers stepping in for teachers. “Our officers regularly go for school inspections; if the HMs and teachers are utilising the sanitation workers for teaching, we would definitely take action.”

(*Names of the workers were changed to protect their identity)

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Chennai

“As the crane was passing the two, the belt holding the beam



Meanwhile, Metro Water sources said that the incident occurred when the contract company was



Puzhal Lake, one of Chennai's primary drinking water reservoirs, has witnessed receding water levels following prolonged summer heat and extreme temperatures, exposing sections of the lakebed and underscoring seasonal pressure on the city's water resources | **P JAWHAR**

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Chennai

Investigation revealed that the murder was allegedly linked to an assault last year, when Sunil allegedly attacked friends of the accused during a mourning event. Seeking revenge, the four allegedly took Sunil to the riverbank on the pretext of consuming alcohol, hacked him to death and disfigured his face with a broken beer bottle before fleeing.

 Open Tender Notice

Open Tender Notice No.: AEE_WP_PH42_TMSHOP, Dated : 08.07.2026. e-Tenders are invited for and on behalf of the President of India for the following items: **SL No.: [01]. Tender No.: AEE_WP_PH42_TMSHOP. Description**
Work : Laying of track connecting long catenary line with TMSH via proposed point. P-18A and other ancillary works in CLW/ Chittaranjan.
Approx. Value (Rupees) : ₹ 1,72,87,484.02. Earnest Money/ Bid Security (Rupees) : ₹ 3,45,800.00. Cost of Tender Document (Rupees) : Nil for downloading from IREPS portal.
Completion Period : 12 Months.
Validity of Tender : 60 Days. **Tender Closing/Opening Date :** 30.07.2026.
NOTE : 1. The bidder must upload all necessary qualification documents and scanned copies of PAN/GSTIN on the IREPS portal. 2. The bidder must have a Class-III Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) to participate in the e-tender. 3. The work will be subject to applicable taxes, including GST, BOCWW (Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare), Income Tax and other statutory taxes as per regulations. 4. For detailed information on the tender document and tender notice, visit the Railway website : www.ireps.gov.in
Dy. Chief Electrical Engineer/E.R./S./CLW/Chittaranjan
[PR4/2026]
Like us on : www.facebook.com/clwraivjan

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN to all shareholders, stakeholders, banks, financial institutions, creditors and the general public that the purported Extra-Ordinary General Meeting (EGM) of Bestbuy Mobiles Private Limited, proposed to be held on **13.07.2026 at 11:00 AM by Mr. ISMAIL HASAN NATHANI**, a shareholder holding 30% of the share capital of the Company, is void as not being compliant with section 100 and various other provisions of the Companies Act, 2013 and the Rules made thereunder, and the board of directors has also recognised the same. Accordingly, the proposed EGM is based on void and invalid notice and is without authority in law. Any resolutions purportedly passed or actions taken pursuant to the said meeting shall have no force in law as the same is void, non-est. All concerned are hereby advised to take due notice of the above.

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN to all shareholders, stakeholders, banks, financial institutions, creditors and the general public that the purported Extra-Ordinary General Meeting (EGM) of Gofix Solutions Private Limited, proposed to be held on **13.07.2026 at 02:00 PM** by **Mr. ISMAIL HASAN NATHANI**, a shareholder holding 30% of the share capital of the Company, is void as not being compliant with section 100 and various other provisions of the Companies Act, 2013 and the Rules made thereunder, and the board of directors has also recognised the same. Accordingly, the proposed EGM is based on void and invalid notice and is without authority in law. Any resolutions purportedly passed or actions taken pursuant to the said meeting shall have no force in law as the same is void, non-est. All concerned are hereby advised to take due notice of the above.

Director of Gofix Solutions Private Limited (DIN: 08108496)
No.18, EVK Sampath Road, Veppery,
Chennai, Tamil Nadu - 600007.
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HR&CE officials ‘blocked’ 13L acres of inam land without revenue nod

30 lakh live on these lands, DMK-era govt order says decision to block pattas was ‘arbitrary’

B ANBUSELVAN @Chennai

A government order (G.O.) issued by the revenue department on September 30 last year, following a meeting chaired by then Chief Secretary N Murganandam during the DMK regime, held that the HR&CE department’s decision to block pattas of inam lands in the official revenue and registration records was arbitrary and had been carried out without the approval of either the state government or the revenue department.

According to official estimates, around 13 lakh acres of inam lands for which ryotwari pattas had been issued under the Tamil Nadu Minor Inams (Abolition and Conversion into Ryotwari) Act, 1963, have been blocked by the HR&CE department since 2019. Nearly 30 lakh people reside on these lands, which comprise residential plots, agricultural holdings and commercial properties.

The pattas were rendered ineffective and the guideline value of the properties was reduced to zero in Tamil Nilam, the state’s land registration database. As a result, lakhs of landowners holding valid pattas issued since 1963 have been unable to register property transactions, obtain bank loans, construct houses or avail themselves of crop loans.

Official says errors being rectified now

Ryotwari pattas were legally issued for eligible inam lands under the Tamil Nadu Minor Inams (Abolition and Conversion into Ryotwari) Act, 1963. The HR&CE department should not have blocked inam lands that already have valid titles, said an official from the revenue department. The errors are now being rectified, he said

Against this backdrop, restrictions were lifted on 3,084.95 acres of inam land spread across 471 survey numbers in Karur district. The remaining such lands with valid titles are currently being scrutinised jointly by the revenue and HR&CE departments.

The G.O. issued by P Amudha, the then Additional Chief Secretary of the revenue department, noted that officials of the HR&CE had been sending communications to sub-registrars and revenue officials seeking cancellation of pattas for inam lands and blocking of property transactions on the Tamil Nilam portal based on pre-UDR (updating of revenue records) entries and the Inam Fair Register. They had also

sought transfer of such lands in the names of temples. However, the revenue department pointed out that the UDR records were updated between 1979 and 1984. “Such actions were arbitrary, procedurally improper and undertaken without the approval of either the government or the revenue department,” the G.O. stated.

Multiple sources from the revenue department told *TNIE* that since 2018, the guideline values of several categories of government lands –including anadheenam lands, waterbodies, temple lands, Waqf Board properties, Depressed Class lands originally assigned to landless SC/ST families during the British period and after Independence, and other poramboke lands – had been reduced to zero in the Tamil Nilam software to prevent transfer of ownership.

“The survey numbers sent to sub-registrars for blocking were based on pre-UDR revenue records dating back to the 1950s and even earlier. However, the UDR exercise carried out between 1979 and 1984 superseded those records. While there is no legal provision to convert Depressed Class, waterbodies and anadheenam lands into regular pattas, ryotwari pattas were legally issued for eligible inam lands under the

Tamil Nadu Minor Inams (Abolition and Conversion into Ryotwari) Act, 1963. Therefore, the HR&CE department should not have blocked inam lands that already have valid titles,” said a senior official from the revenue department. The errors committed by the HR&CE officials are now being rectified, added the officials.

Another official explained that there are two categories of temple inam lands in Tamil Nadu. “The first comprises lands granted directly to temple deities for their perpetual maintenance, daily rituals, festivals and upkeep, or to meet the expenses of temple administration. The second category consists of lands granted to individual temple servants or artisans – such as archakas, musicians and other hereditary service holders –as remuneration for performing their duties.”

As a large portion of inam lands had remained poorly administered for decades, the then Madras State enacted the Tamil Nadu Minor Inams (Abolition and Conversion into Ryotwari) Act, 1963, to bring these lands under the regular revenue administration, providing land rights through ryotwari pattas to eligible occupants and, at the same time, safeguard lands that legitimately belonged to temples.



DMK students wing staging a protest against the centre in Chennai | FILE PIC

Stalin banks on cadre power to revive DMK

PRABHAKAR TAMILARASU

@ Chennai

AFTER suffering a decisive defeat in the Assembly elections, the DMK has begun an internal restructuring exercise, marking a shift in the way the party functions. Moving away from a highly centralised decision-making process, the party leadership is increasingly relying on second-rung leaders, grassroots functionaries and district-level leaders to shape political strategies and organisational programmes.

As a part of the organisational reforms and restructuring to suit the changing political climate, DMK president MK Stalin has given a free hand to the party workers to take on the opposition politically and ideologically, focusing on people’s issues. Senior party leaders said the emphasis is now on reviving the cadre-driven model that once defined the DMK’s organisational strength.

According to several senior leaders that *TNIE* spoke to, all the party units have been encouraged to organise public interactions, grievance meetings and welfare initiatives without waiting for directions from the headquarters, but keep the party informed about the issues, campaigns, movements, and protests they initiate.

“Rather than issuing directives from the top, the leadership has asked second-rung leaders, party’s different units including youth wing and staple wing leaders, district secretaries, constituency in-charges and booth-level workers to

identify local issues, devise outreach programmes, organise protests, movements and formulate strategies suited to the political scenario of their respective regions,” a former MLA who did not want to be named said.

“The party has realised that a one-size-fits-all approach does not work across Tamil Nadu. Local leaders understand the aspirations and grievances of the people better than anyone else. They have now been given greater autonomy to respond to those concerns. The leadership believes this decentralised approach will help reconnect the party with voters after the electoral setback,” a former minister and sitting MLA added.

A senior leader in the party’s legal wing said the move also aims to restore the confidence of second-rung leaders and cadre, many of whom felt sidelined in recent years as decision-making became increasingly centralised.

“The leadership has also stressed that the focus should be on sustained engagement with the public rather than event-based political mobilisation,” he said. The cadre have been asked to remain accessible to people, take up local civic issues, partymen’s legal issues, and strengthen the party’s presence at the grassroots. The restructuring exercise is expected to continue over the coming months, with organisational responsibilities likely to be redistributed to more young people, and improve coordination between the headquarters and district units.

Velu returns from Singapore, says ready to face inquiry

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

@ Chennai

SENIOR DMK leader EV Velu on Sunday said he is ready to appear before the DVAC for questioning, while dismissing claims that he had travelled to Singapore to evade the probe into alleged irregularities in state road projects under the previous DMK government.

The former PWD minister, who had travelled to Singapore for medical treatment, returned to Chennai on Sunday. Speaking to reporters at the Chennai international airport, Velu clarified that he had been undergoing medical treatment for allergy, heart and neurological ailments at a hospital in Singapore since 2016 and his latest



trip was part of a scheduled follow-up visit. Velu said he had booked tickets to Singapore on June 25, but following the DVAC searches on his premises, he postponed his departure by a day.

Velu’s remarks assumed significance as Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay had on Friday taken an apparent swipe at him during a public meeting in Karur, stating that the DMK leader had run away from the probe.

The former minister said the DVAC first summoned him to appear for an inquiry on July 3. He informed the agency that his medical check-up would take about 10 days and that he would be available any day after July 12. Despite this, he said, another summons was issued asking him to appear on July 9. “From now on, I am ready to appear for any inquiry,” he said.

HONOUR KILLING

Basha panel seeks 9 months to complete consultations

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

@ Thoothukudi

SOCIAL Justice Minister Vanni Arasu on Sunday said the Basha Commission has sought an additional nine months to complete its consultations. The commission was constituted by the previous DMK government to recommend a law to prevent caste-based crimes committed in the name of honour. Its request has been conveyed to the chief minister. A law to curb honour killing will be formulated based on the recommendations of the Basha Commission, the minister said.

Speaking to reporters at Kovilpatti, Vanni Arasu said the members of the Justice KN Basha Commission met him recently and apprised him of the ongoing inquiry. The commission has received opinions on the proposed law from VCK and the CPM, and they are awaiting responses from other parties, he added.

EXPRESS READ

Leaders mourn veteran singer Janaki’s demise

Chennai: TNCC president Manickam Tagore, MDMK general secretary Vaiko, PMK president Anbumani Ramadoss and DK president K Veeramani on Sunday mourned the death of veteran playback singer S Janaki. Describing Janaki’s demise as an irreplaceable loss, Tagore said her voice would continue to resonate through generations. Vaiko said her songs will remain timeless classics. Anbumani Ramadoss said Janaki had sung alongside musicians from five generations and earned a permanent place in the hearts of music lovers. Veeramani said Janaki’s decision to return the Padma Bhushan, citing the inordinate delay in conferring the honour, reflected rare courage and conviction. ENS

Guv urged to summon 6 AIADMK MLAs who quit

Chennai: Puthiya Tamilagam president K Krishnasamy on Sunday urged Governor Rajendra Arlekar to summon and seek explanation from the six AIADMK MLAs who resigned from the Assembly and later joined the ruling TVK. Speaking to reporters outside Lok Bhavan, Krishnasamy urged the governor to advise the Speaker not to accept the resignations, alleging they resulted from horsetrading. He suggested that the governor question each of them individually about circumstances behind the resignations, contending they were induced by promises of re-election or other posts. He further urged the governor to report to the Union Home Ministry and recommend action over the ‘political instability’ in the state. ENS

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

@ Chennai

THE state government has constituted a search committee to shortlist the next state chief information commissioner and three information commissioners. As per a notification issued by the Human Resources Management department on July 8, retired Madras High Court judge RS Ramanathan is the chairman of the search committee.

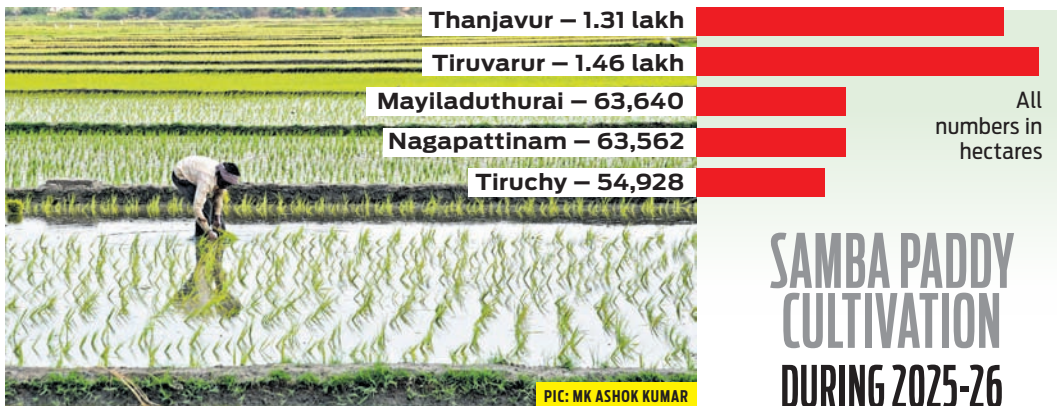
Principal secretary of the department C Samayamoorthy

Delay in opening Mettur could lead to 12 lakh tonne paddy loss

N RAMESH @ Thanjavur

WITH uncertainty looming over the release of water from Mettur dam for taking up irrigation in delta districts, given low storage, the farmers who used to cultivate a single crop of Samba paddy, using canal water, are a worried lot, anxiously waiting for enough rain in Cauvery catchment areas for the increased inflow into Mettur dam.

The Cauvery water from Mettur dam could not be released on the customary date of June 12 this year as the storage was very low. On Sunday (July 12), the water level in the dam stood at 75.83 feet (37.93 TMC) and the inflow was only 91 cusecs. Last year, on the same date, the dam was full with water level at 120 feet (93.47 TMC). Farmers solely dependent on canal water for irrigation did not take up the short-term Kuruvai crop in the hope that they could cultivate the single crop of Samba paddy.



According to an estimate, around three lakh farmers take up Samba paddy cultivation in the five districts of Thanjavur, Tiruvavur, Mayiladuthurai, Nagapattinam and Tiruchy.

S Vimalnathan, secretary of Tamil Nadu Farmers Protection Association, said, “If water is released late, Samba cultivation cannot be taken up in around six lakh acres in delta districts, which could lead to a

production loss of 12 lakh tonnes of paddy.” The farmers taking up Samba cultivation need to be provided with a special package akin to Kuruvai package, he added. He also demanded convening a meeting of ministers and secretaries concerned along with farmers to assess the situation and to recommend alternative solutions. P Kalaivanan of senior agro technologists forum said

even if water is released from Mettur in September first week, around 130-140 TMC will be needed for the Samba, thaladi crop in the delta region.

“There was also no significant rain in the area and the groundwater level is also declining,” said KA Koothalingam, a farmer from Pallathur in Thanjavur. R Sukumaran of Orathanadu in Thanjavur district said, “Leave alone cultivat-

PORTRAIT WAR

Vijay, Stalin, Kamaraj or EPS? Who gets space on govt wall is a matter of choice

PRABHAKAR TAMILARASU

@ Chennai

POLITICAL battles over portraits have become an unlikely feature of civic body meetings in Tamil Nadu. Recently, councillors in the Tiruppur corporation clashed over displaying portraits of former CMs MK Stalin, K Kamaraj and Edappadi K Palaniswami. A similar scene played out in Sivagangai municipality, where an independent councillor proposed displaying actor Trisha’s photograph. The episodes raise a simple question: Who can have their portrait displayed in govern-

ment offices?

Government orders issued over the past five decades permit the display of portraits of the chief minister, former chief ministers and several national and state leaders in public offices. However, none of these orders makes it mandatory. Significantly, every government order uses the word “may”, making the provision optional rather than compulsory.

The first comprehensive order, G.O. (Ms) No. 47, was issued by the Public (General-I) Department on January 7, 1978, to end this confusion. It permitted the display of photographs of

the incumbent President and Prime Minister of India, Mahatma Gandhi and former PM Jawaharlal Nehru in public offices and buildings. For Tamil Nadu, the list included Saint Thiruvalluvar, former CMs C Rajagopalachari, K Kamaraj and Arignar Anna, besides social reformer Thanthai Periyar. The G.O. also directed that portraits of “all others may be removed”. The list was expanded through G.O. (Ms) No. 2363, dated October 24, 1990, which added Dr BR Ambedkar. Even then, the order merely stated that his portrait “can also be displayed”, retaining the optional nature of



DMK councillors staging protest with the photo of ex-CM MK Stalin in Coimbatore | S SENBAGAPANDIYAN

the provision. A more significant expansion came in 2006 through G.O. (Ms) No. 457, dated June 4. It added freedom fighters Pasumpon Muthuramalinga Thevar, VO Chidambaram and Quaid-e-Millath, along with former PM Indira Gandhi. Crucially, the order also permitted the display of portraits of the incumbent CM and former CMs of TN, taking the total number of eligible categories of leaders to 16. Yet, the wording continued to be enabling rather than mandatory.

The Madras High Court has also endorsed this interpretation. During the hearing of a

writ petition in 2021 seeking mandatory display of the President’s and prime minister’s portraits in all government offices, the then Advocate General informed the court that the relevant government notification merely gave offices the option to display one or more portraits of the approved leaders.

An IAS officer of secretary rank, speaking to *TNIE*, said the decision rests with the government. “The incumbent CM’s picture will be displayed, but the display of pictures of other leaders is the choice of people in that particular office,” the officer said.

K'taka goes on hiring spree after order to fill 72K posts

Around 2.5 lakh posts are vacant in various departments and no major recruitment has been made in the last two years by state government

ASHWINI M SRIPAD @Bengaluru

THE Karnataka government has gone on a recruitment spree, issuing a series of job notifications to fill vacancies across various departments, within two weeks of issuing an order to expedite the recruitment of over 72,000 posts in government departments. Over the last two weeks, at least 15 different notifications have been issued to fill thousands of posts.

The Karnataka Examinations Authority (KEA) has invited on-

line applications for direct recruitment of 320 teaching posts in Morarji Desai, Kittur Rani Chennamma, Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Indira Gandhi residential schools and pre-university colleges functioning under the Karnataka Residential Educational Institutions Society (KREIS).

In another major drive, applications have been invited for 560 land surveyor posts in the Department of Survey, Settlement and Land Records under the Residual Parent Cadre (RPC). The

Revenue Department has also invited applications to fill 505 village administrative officer (VAO) posts, including 67 posts under the Hyderabad-Karnataka Cadre quota.

The Karnataka Excise Department has invited applications to fill 1,207 posts of constables and excise sub-inspectors (ESIs). The forest department has invited applications to fill 750 forest observer posts. KEA has already called to fill 3,395 Karnataka police civil constable

posts.

The fresh notifications come after the state government initiated measures to accelerate direct recruitment across departments. The responsibility of expediting recruitment to posts in 17 departments has been assigned to Additional Chief Secretary and Development Commissioner Uma Mahadevan. Another additional chief secretary has been entrusted with overseeing and completing direct recruit-

ment to vacant posts in 34 departments.

Government recruitment in Karnataka had been stalled because of litigation in courts over reservation and no recruitment had been done since 2023. The government had also relaxed the age limit by up to five years as there were delays in recruitment since 2019 because of Covid. Around 2.5 lakh posts are vacant in various departments and no major recruitment has been made in the last two years.

A senior Congress leader on

anonymity said that in the party election manifesto in 2023, Congress had promised to fill vacant government posts within a year if the party comes to power. "We could not do that for various reasons, including the reservation issue, lack of finances as a large amount was being spent on guarantee schemes and others. We have less than two years in power and there is pressure to fill these posts. There have been flash protests over lack of recruitment," he said.



The injured calf was found by forest officials, who offered treatment, but the calf passed away | EXPRESS

TWO-YEAR-OLD

Elephant calf injured in tiger attack succumbs

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Erode

A two-year-old male elephant calf, rescued with injuries near Gunderipallam Dam in Erode district, died after treatment proved unsuccessful. The post-mortem examination has revealed that it died as a result of a tiger attack.

A male elephant calf, about two years old, was found by the frontline staff of the forest department in the water-spread area of the Gunderipallam Dam, under TN Palayam forest range, in Erode district on Saturday. Subsequently, a team of veterinarians, led by S Sathasivam, a wildlife veterinarian at the Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve (STR), continued to treat the calf.

However, the calf died at 8.30 pm on Saturday, as the treatment proved unsuccessful.

Subsequently, veterinarians from the forest department conducted a post-mortem of the deceased elephant calf on Sunday, in accordance with EDAF procedures and court mandates. Following this, the calf was buried near the water-spread area of the dam.

"The elephant calf has been severely attacked by a tiger. There were injuries in many places on its body. The attack likely happened about five days ago as the wounds were festering. However, we made strenuous efforts to save it. But, the calf succumbed to its injuries. Since a lot of medicine had been administered to its body, we buried it instead of leaving for the wild animals," a senior official said.

Clashes erupt over covered Ambedkar statue near Gangavalli, 15 under custody

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Salem

TENSION prevailed at Othiyathur village near Gangavalli in Salem after a dispute over an Ambedkar statue, which had remained covered for several years following earlier objections, resurfaced, and led to protests, clashes and the arrest of 15 persons.

Police sources said a section of residents had installed an Ambedkar statue near a bus stop in Othiyathur in 2021. Soon after its installation, objections were raised by another section of residents over the manner in which the statue had been erected, leading to protests and tension in the village. As a precautionary measure, revenue department officials covered the statue with metal sheets, and it had remained in that condition since then.

Police sources said that the metal covering over the statue was removed by unidentified persons around midnight two days ago. The development led to



The Ambedkar statue covered with metal sheets in Othiyathur | EXPRESS

fresh objections from another section of residents, who staged a road blockade seeking intervention by the authorities.

Following the protest, Attur Revenue Divisional Officer R Tamizhmani convened peace talks with representatives of both sides. During the discussions, officials decided to restore the earlier arrangement by covering the statue again in view of the prevailing law and order situation. However, police sources said a section of residents objected to the move, following which tensions escalated and a

clash broke out. Three police personnel and two members of the public sustained injuries during the incident and were treated at the Gangavalli Government Hospital, police sources said. As a precaution, police personnel were deployed in and around the village under the supervision of senior officers from the Salem police. Revenue department officials subsequently covered the statues of Dr. B R Ambedkar, Kamaraj and Rajiv Gandhi, located in the vicinity, with metal sheets to prevent any further tension.

Reject centre's directive on Vande Mataram: Thiruma to govt

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Chennai

URGING the centre to withdraw its latest circular making the rendition of Vande Mataram compulsory at government functions, VCK president Thol Thirumavalavan, on Sunday, called upon the TVK government to reject the directive. Describing Vande Mataram as a song associated with a particular religion, Thirumavalavan contended that making its rendition compulsory at official functions was contrary to the principle of secularism. In a statement, the VCK leader said the circular issued by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs was a threat to India's pluralistic character and amounted to interference in the powers of state governments. He requested Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay to formally inform the centre that the state government would not accept this directive.

Temple land scam: Another govt official in UT arrested

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Puducherry

A Sureshraj, Director of the Puducherry Department of Information and Publicity, was arrested on Saturday by the Vigilance and Anti-Corruption Wing in connection with the fraudulent transfer of land belonging to the Kamatchiamman Temple. The multi-crore scam involves the alleged misappropriation of temple-owned land, valued at over ₹12 crore by guideline estimation (and up to ₹50 crore in market value), through forged documents. A land extent of approximately 64,085 square feet in a prime area in Rainbow Nagar was sold using fake will and various forged documents.

The key arrests span private conspirators and senior government officials who allegedly facilitated the fraudulent patta (land ownership document) transfers. Arrested persons include MS Ramesh, former direc-

tor of survey, settlement and land records (who also held additional charge as District Registrar), D Balaji, former director of fisheries and former revenue official, who was arrested for illegally updating the patta under the name of one of the prime accused using a fraudulent will. V Sivasamy, sub-registrar of Villianur Taluk, Chinnasamy (alias Palani), a former village administrative officer (VAO), for his assistance in generating fake local clearance records.

Investigators said Sureshraj was serving as a sub-registrar in the registration office in Oulgaret when the offences took place. He is accused of permitting the registration without verifying the fraudulent documents. Following his arrest, Sureshraj was produced before Puducherry CJM TV Anand at the judge's residence and was remanded in judicial custody in Kalapet Central Prison on Saturday night. He has since been released on bail.

Efforts on to improve infra of govt colleges, says official

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"INSTITUTIONS are functioning largely with guest faculty members, and that inevitably affects the quality of education," said TN Government College Teachers' Association general secretary S Suresh.

He added that inadequate infrastructure, including poorly equipped laboratories, shortage of classrooms, insufficient sanitation facilities, and outdated libraries, has further weakened the appeal of government colleges.

Retired professor K Srinivasan said government institutions are struggling to keep pace with changing student expectations.

"At a time when private colleges are introducing AI-related and other emerging courses, while offering better campus facilities and extracurricular opportunities, many government colleges are unable to provide even adequate classrooms and laboratories.

Naturally, students look elsewhere."

Another major factor that the academicians pointed out was the delayed admission schedule followed by government colleges.

Private self-financing institutions begin admissions much

earlier, with many completing the process and commencing classes before the first round of counselling in government colleges begins. Suresh said, "The admission guidelines are common for government, government-aided, and private colleges. However, government colleges alone adhere rigidly to the prescribed schedule, by which time many students have already secured seats elsewhere."

DCE officials said that they were examining the infrastructure requirements in government colleges. "We are working to improve the infrastructure in government colleges," said an official.



Admission guidelines are common for govt, govt-aided, and private colleges. However, govt colleges alone adhere rigidly to the prescribed schedule, by which time many students have already secured seats elsewhere

S Suresh, general secretary of TN Govt College Teachers' Assn

'We have done enough politics with caste and religion'

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

ANNAMALAI said, "When we have the right number of members and the right leaders, this organisation will become a political party. Not now." He added that the conference was not a political rally and the aim was not to create trouble for the newly-formed TVK government.

"Some people asked me to speak against the TVK govern-

ment. The government has come to power in 2026 with the support of 1.68 crore people. Except for Minister KA Sengottaiyan, most of them are first-time MLAs. They will stumble a little. When they stumble, we should lift them up, not push them down. Our organisation has not come to capture power arrogantly," he claimed. Speaking of his departure from BJP, he said there was anger, but it had to be shown responsibly. Although DMK had

raised doubts of him being the BJP's B-team, he was firm that he should not speak ill while leaving a party, Annamalai said.

Welcoming the HR&CE department's decision to lift the bar on registration of 3085 acres of Inam land in Karur, he said he supported the TVK government's move and was being called anti-Hindu for it. "Though I belong to the Hindu religion, I will stand with all of you as a common person without caste or religious identi-

ty. We have done enough politics with caste and religion," he claimed. Stressing the need to close more liquor shops, he said the organisation will push the government in a healthy manner. He said awareness campaigns against drugs will be held every July; the organisation had a six-month plan to focus on one public issue each month. The conference passed six resolutions demanding to make the state as drug and liquor-free.

EXPRESS READ



Sankara Nethralaya hosted its annual scientific meeting, Retina Summit 008, on July 10 and 11. The theme for this year's summit was crisis control, with an emphasis on prevention, recognition, and management of medical and surgical complications in retinal practice | EXPRESS

S Janaki cremated with state honours in Mysuru

MYSURU: People from all walks of life bid a tearful farewell to legendary playback singer S Janaki as she was cremated with full state honours at a farmhouse in Kaniyanahundi village on HD Kote Road near Mysuru on Sunday evening, fulfilling her cherished wish of spending her final days and having her last rites performed in the city she had come to call home. The solemn ceremony was marked by a ceremonial guard of honour by Karnataka government. Earlier in the day, Janaki's mortal remains were kept at Maharaja's College Grounds, where thousands paid their final respects. ENS

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA, OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER, CENTRAL RURAL WORKS CIRCLE, BHUBANESWAR					
No. 3985 / Date:- 04.07.2026					
25001/713/2627 "e" Procurement Notice for Road Works					
1. Name of the Work	:	Road Works under MMSY - Transferred Road Improvement Programme (MMSY - TRIP), MMSY-Roads for the year 2024-25, 2025-26 & 2026-27			
2. Total No. of works	:	11 Nos. of Road works for the year 2024-25, 2025-26 & 2026-27			
3. Estimated Cost of the work	:	Varies from Rs.99.67 lakh to Rs.831.75 lakh			
4. Class of Contractor	:				
a) Estimated cost more than Rs. 20.00 lakh up to Rs. 3.00 Crores.	:	B Class (of Odisha PWD) or relevant class of other licensing authorities			
b) Estimated cost more than Rs. 1.00 Crore up to Rs. 20.00 Crores.	:	A Class (of Odisha PWD) or relevant class of other licensing authorities			
c) Estimated cost more than Rs. 6.00 Crore up to Rs. 50.00 Crores.	:	Special Class (of Odisha PWD) or relevant class of other licensing authorities			
d) Estimated cost more than Rs. 20.00 Crores.	:	Super Class (of Odisha PWD) or relevant class of other licensing authorities			
5. Period of completion	:	As mentioned in Column-7 of Annexure			
6. Offered rates by bidder	:	The offered rate by the contractor shall be excluding GST			
7. Other details	:				
Procurement Officer		Bid Identification No.	Availability of Tender on-line for bidding	Date & Time of opening of tender	
1	2	3	4	5	6
Chief Construction Engineer, Central Rural Works Circle, Bhubaneswar	Tender-C.C.11 of 2026	17.07.2026 at 11.00 AM	29.07.2026 Up to 5.00 PM	30.07.2026 at 11.00 AM	To be intimated later on
Further details can be seen from the web site www.tendersodisha.gov.in					
OIPR- 25001/25082/1/26-27/0011 Sd/- Chief Construction Engineer, Central Rural Works Circle, Bhubaneswar					

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA, DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES, OFFICE OF THE ADDITIONAL CHIEF ENGINEER, BALANGIR MINOR IRRIGATION CIRCLE, BALANGIR	
e-Procurement Notice	
Bid Identification No: BMIC-BLGR/02/2026-27	
No.32001/534/2627 : The Chief Engineer, Balangir M.I. Circle, Balangir on behalf of Hon'ble Governor of Odisha invites percentage rate bids in Double cover only through ONLINE mode for the Construction of works detailed in the table from "B & A" Class Contractors registered with the State Government and contractors of equivalent Grade/Class registered with Central Government /M.E./S.Railways for execution of civil works on production of definite proof from the appropriate authority. The bidders may submit bids for any or all of the following works.	
1. Name of the works	Civil Construction works under M.I. Division, Balangir for the year 2026-27
2. Total No. of works.	06(Six) Nos.
3. Estimated Cost.	Varies from Rs. 100.41 lakh to 122.76 lakh (Approximately)
4. Class of Contractor	Class "B & A"
5. Period of completion	Refer DTGN
6. Date & Time of Availability of Bid Document in the Portal for online bidding.	From 13.07.2026 at 10.00 A.M. to 22.07.2026 up to 5.00 PM.
7. Last date/Time for receipt of Bid only in ONLINE.	22.07.2026 up to 5.00 P.M.
8. Date and place of Opening of Technical Bid.	23.07.2026 at 11.00 A.M. at Office of the Additional Chief Engineer, Balangir M.I. Circle, Balangir.
9. Date/ Time of Opening of Financial Bid.	To be intimated through website/E-mail after evaluation of Technical Bid.
10. Date of Transparent Lottery (if cases arise).	To be intimated through website/E-mail after evaluation of Financial Bid.
11. Name & Address of the Officer - Inviting the Bid.	Office of the Additional Chief Engineer, Balangir M.I. Circle, Balangir, Near Sub-Collector Office, Women's College Chowk, Dist. -Balangir, Pin-767001, E-mail ID:- acemicalangir2023@gmail.com
Further details can be seen from the "e" Procurement Portal https://tendersodisha.gov.in	
OIPR- 32001/32347/1/26-27/0004 Sd/- Chief Engineer, Balangir M.I. Circle, Balangir	

CHITTARANJAN LOCOMOTIVE WORKS	
CORRIGENDUM	
Tender No.: 91260051, Dated: 09/07/2026. The following Corrigendum against Tender No. 91260051 scheduled to be opened on 24.07.2026, at 11:00 Hrs. is carried out as under- SL.No.:[1].	
Particulars: Tender Opening Date. As per Tender Document:10/07/2026. To be Read As:24/07/2026.	
PR6/422	AMM (PJCLW/Chittaranjan)
Visit us on: www.facebook.com/cwlrailways	
Quote Express NEVER COMPLAIN AND NEVER EXPLAIN	
BENJAMIN DISRAELI	

INTEGRAL COACH FACTORY, CHENNAI - 600 038				
INDIAN RAILWAYS				
TENDER Notice No. ICF/EL/Cons/2026-27, dt. 13.07.2026				
For and on behalf of The President of India, The Dy. Chief Electrical Engineer / Maintenance/Shell, Integral Coach Factory, invites E-tender for the following works.				
Tender No.	Name of the Work	Approx. Value in Lakhs ₹	EMD (Rupees) ₹	Tender Closing Date and time
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
2026245212289	EL-W-933 Electrical works for Provision of Air Conditioner in various offices at ICF	₹67.14	₹1,34,300/-	05.08.2026 at 15.30 hrs.
2026245212292	EL-W-934 Replacement of Conventional Ceiling fans with BLDC fans Phase-I	₹16.50	₹33,000/-	05.08.2026 at 15.30 hrs.
Web site for submission of offer: www.ireps.gov.in				
Hindi version of the above tender notification is available in: https://icf.indianrailways.gov.in				

PNB Housing				
Regd. Off: 9 th Floor, Antriksh Bhawan, 22, K. G. Marg, New Delhi-110001. Ph.: 011-23357474, 23357172, 23705414, Web: www.pnbhousing.com				
Branch Office: Inter-alia at, 3rd Floor, 104/1, Muthulinga Reddy Street, West Tambaram, Chennai-600045				
POSSESSION NOTICE For immoveable property as per Rule 8(1) and Appendix-IV				
Whereas the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the PNB Housing Finance Ltd. under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets & in compliance of Rule 8(1) of Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002, and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002, issued demand notice(s) on the date mentioned against each account calling upon the respective borrower(s) to repay the amount as mentioned against each account within 60 days from the date of notice(s) / date of receipt of the said notice(s). The borrower(s) having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower(s) and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property/ies described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said Rules on the dates mentioned against each account.				
The borrower/s in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property/ies and any dealing with the property/ies will be subject to the charge of PNB Housing Finance Ltd., for the amount and interest thereon as per loan agreement. The borrower/s' attention is invited to provisions of Sub-section (8) of Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.				
Loan Account Number(s)	Name of Borrower/ Co-borrower/ Guarantor(s)/Legal Heirs	Date of Demand Notice	Amount as on date in Demand Notice	Date of Possession Taken/Type of Possession
HOU/TAMB/ 0125/5141231	Mr./Ms. Dharanishankar S (Borrower), Mr./Ms. S Kalaiavan & Mr./Ms. S Saranya (Co-Borrower)	07th Oct 2025	Rs.23,11,826.00 (Rupees Twenty Three Lakhs Eleven Thousand Eight Hundred Twenty Six Only)	09-07-2026 (PHYSICAL)
All That Part And Parcel Of S Nos 1616 Patta No568 Plot No 57 Thalai Garden, Chennai, Siperumbudur, Kancheepuram, Tamil Nadu, India, 600116				
DATE: 13-07-2026 PLACE: Sivaganga Sd/- Authorized Officer, PNB Housing Finance Limited				

FEDBANK FINANCIAL SERVICES LTD. AUCTION NOTICE	
This is to inform the public at large that FEDBANK FINANCIAL SERVICES LTD. has decided to conduct Auction of Gold ornaments belonging to accounts (mentioned below) which are NPA (Non-performing Asset) or margin breach account/s or any account/s falling into the loan recall clause as specified in the terms & condition of the Loan. The Auction would be held as per the schedule provided below:	
District auction date : 23/07/2026	Online auction date : 24/07/2026
Base Branch - Alangulam - Contact: 9500749888 District - Alangulam - Contact: 9500749888 FEDG00270005746 Base Branch - AVADI - Contact: 9543071752 District - WEST MAMBALAM - Contact: 8281847506 FEDG01650009172 Base Branch - DINDIGUL - Contact: FEDG01900008747 District - DINDIGUL - Contact: 9790395264 Base Branch - Hosur - Contact: 9361250552 District - Krishnagiri - Contact: 9751555817 FEDG04620003958, 003959 Base Branch - Krishnagiri - Contact: 9751555817 District - Krishnagiri - Contact: 9751555817 FEDG03960004901 Base Branch - MANAGALAM ROAD - Contact: 9790191421 District - MANAGALAM ROAD - Contact: 9790191421 Base Branch - Neyveli - Contact: 9677304616 District - Cuddalore - Contact: 9715206678 FEDG0440004845, 005617 Base Branch - PALAKKARAI - Contact: 9952354799 District - PALAKKARAI - Contact: 9952354799 FEDG01850008125, 008654 Base Branch - PALLADAM ROAD - Contact: 9626967652 District - MANAGALAM ROAD - Contact: 9790191421 FEDG01240009653 Base Branch - PALLIPALAYAM - Contact: 9976370274 District - PALLIPALAYAM - Contact: 9976370274 Base Branch - PARK ROAD - Contact: 8526968750 District - PARK ROAD - Contact: 8526968750 FEDG0187001488 Base Branch - Redhills - Contact: 8015949346 District - West Mambalam - Contact: 8281847506 FEDG04670001035 Base Branch - TIRUNELVELI - Contact: 7502761586 District - TIRUNELVELI - Contact: 7502761586 FEDG02300008885, 009066, 009126, 009831, 009860 Base Branch - Tirupattur - Contact: 9808511094 District - Tirupattur - Contact: 9808511094 FEDG004160002176, 002581 Base Branch - TUTICORIN - Contact: 9488475171 District - TUTICORIN - Contact: 9488475171 FEDG01240009653 Base Branch - V M CHATTRAM - Contact: 8344447256 District - TIRUNELVELI - Contact: 7502761586 FEDG05290000497, 000790 Base Branch - Pondicherry - Contact: 9944538705 District - Pondicherry - Contact: 9944538705 FEDG040900002173	Change in Venue or Date, if any, will be displayed on our Website https://www.fedbank.com/gold-loan/special-sections/auction-venue/ . Customer who want to release their ornaments shall visit any of the above branch/es or contact at the number mentioned above on or before auction date subject to the terms and condition applicable. Auction will be conducted at respective Districts. In case the auction does not get completed on the given date due to any reasons, the auction in respect thereto shall be conducted on subsequent working days at district level as per above schedule. This would continue till the auction process is over. On failure of the first offline auction at

NIJJAR PROBE EXPOSES THE HIGH COST OF PREMATURE BLAME

NEW Delhi appeared vindicated last week after reports emerged that a US-led investigation found no evidence linking Indian government agents to the 2023 killing of Khalistani separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar in Canada. The investigation reportedly traced the intelligence input to communications involving a rogue R&AW officer who had allegedly plotted the murder of Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, another Khalistani separatist based in the US. After the conspiracy surfaced, the officer was taken into custody and his associate pleaded guilty in the US. Investigators then followed the evidence across multiple jurisdictions. Their findings reportedly concluded that the Nijjar assassination was ordered by gangsters Lawrence Bishnoi and Satinderjeet Singh alias Goldy Brar, not by the Indian state. Bishnoi remains in an Indian jail, while Brar is a fugitive.

The findings cast the diplomatic rupture that followed in a different light. Then Canadian prime minister Justin Trudeau chose to publicly accuse India before the evidentiary record had been established, raising the issue with Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the G20 summit in New Delhi. The allegations triggered an unprecedented breakdown in bilateral ties, with relations improving only after Trudeau left office. His successor, Mark Carney, has rightly sought to prevent one issue from holding the relationship hostage. Significantly, his government has identified violent Khalistani extremism as a national security concern, while the Canadian Security Intelligence Service has maintained the distinction between lawful advocacy for a separate Khalistan and violent extremism.

India has consistently argued that countries must work together against violent extremism and transnational criminal networks, irrespective of ideology. The reported findings broadly reinforce that position. They also underline a principle that extends beyond this case. Intelligence may warrant investigation, but it cannot substitute for proof. Democracies undermine both the rule of law and diplomacy when allegations harden into official conclusions before the evidence is tested. If the findings withstand scrutiny, they vindicate New Delhi's long-standing insistence that conclusions must follow facts—not political expediency. The larger challenge, for India and its partners alike, remains dismantling the criminal networks that exploit extremist causes for violence and profit.

FOR AMMA, REFORM CANNOT WAIT LONGER

CONTROVERSY has long shadowed the Association of Malayalam Movie Artists (AMMA), formed in 1994 to support ailing actors in the Malayalam film industry through welfare schemes. Yet the association has repeatedly found itself in the spotlight for internal conflicts, public disputes and questions over its credibility. The last decade has been especially turbulent. The 2017 actor assault case marked a turning point, with Dileep's arrest dividing the association and exposing sharp fault lines within its leadership and membership. Since then, regaining the trust of actors and the wider public has remained an uphill task. Several prominent women, including Parvathy, resigned, citing what they described as anti-women positions. More female actors followed, alleging favouritism, sexism and an unwillingness to address their concerns. The Justice Hema Committee report, published in 2024, laid bare allegations of widespread sexual misconduct in the Malayalam film industry, dealing another blow to AMMA. The fallout led to the resignation of the executive committee headed by actor Mohanlal.

Against this backdrop, the election of Shwetha Menon as the first woman president raised hopes of a fresh beginning. With several women elected to key positions, many believed the association had an opportunity to restore stability and confidence. Those expectations, however, quickly faded. Ansiba, elected unopposed as an office-bearer, resigned, alleging financial irregularities and unfair treatment. Her claims of Islamophobia and being called “jihadi” drew counter-allegations, widening the dispute. Shwetha Menon announced her resignation, saying she did not wish to be anybody's “puppet”, before later withdrawing it. The matter is now before the Kerala High Court.

The latest episode, however, points to a deeper institutional problem. Over the past decade, controversies have outlived different office-bearers, executive committees and even a historic change in leadership. The new leadership, elected on a promise of renewal, has itself become caught in disputes over financial transparency and internal functioning. When successive leaderships end in controversy, the problem can no longer be explained away as one of personalities alone.

The recent general body meeting also reflected a growing demand among members for greater accountability, with finances and decision-making coming under closer scrutiny. The court may settle the legal issues, but it cannot restore AMMA's credibility. Only transparent governance, financial accountability and genuine internal democracy can ensure that an industry celebrated for producing some of India's finest cinema is represented by an organisation worthy of its reputation.

QUICK TAKE

THE HEIGHT OF HARM

A new American study finds that rising SUV hood heights have contributed to thousands of pedestrian deaths over the past two decades. Average SUV hood heights have increased by 11 to 24 percent in this period, placing the point of impact above a pedestrian's centre of gravity. Instead of rolling onto the hood, victims are thrown onto the road. Taller front ends also create larger blind spots that make children and shorter adults harder to see. The findings deserve attention in India, where SUVs now account for well over 50 percent of new passenger vehicle sales and feature taller front ends. Stronger pedestrian-safety standards should keep pace with this market shift.

A temple dedicated to *Maryada Purushottama* Sri Rama must itself become an institution upholding *maryada*—righteousness and rectitude. Who, in their right mind, would cavil or quarrel with such an expectation? Yet the controversy erupting over the Ramjanmabhumi temple *chanda chori* or dacoity of offerings, partly acknowledged but much more alleged, reminds us of the huge gap between proclaimed ideals and actual practice.

Even in the holiest of our shrines. But tell me, which important shrine, irrespective of religious affiliation or denomination, has been wholly free of allegations, controversies, scams, scandals or incidents of violence or lawlessness? Extend this question beyond Hindu temples to the holiest of the holies of other faith traditions, whether it is Harmandir Sahib, Mecca or the Vatican itself.

None, I am afraid, has been exempt.

About the Ayodhya Ram temple scandal, much has already been written, and far more spoken. The irregularities, to put it mildly, have cast a shadow over India's most visible temple. Predictably, the issue has degenerated into partisan mudslinging.

The Opposition has seized upon it to embarrass the ruling dispensation. The BJP and the larger Sangh Parivar will undoubtedly strive to contain the damage, restore public confidence and rectify whatever has gone wrong. Television studios, digital platforms and social media have all done what they do best: amplify outrage, apportion blame and deepen existing political divides.

None of this is surprising.

For the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya is no ordinary place of worship. It is the culmination of one of independent India's most significant religious and cultural movements. For millions, it symbolises not merely the construction of a magnificent shrine but the rectification of what they regarded as a long-standing historical wrong. The emotional investment in Ayodhya, therefore, extends far beyond architecture or ritual. Any stain on its reputation inevitably wounds the sentiments of countless devotees.

What is more, the Ramjanmabhumi Movement and the subsequent return of Sri Rama to his birth city and the capital of his kingdom, many would agree, propelled the BJP to power in both Uttar Pradesh and, soon after the Centre. Now, those plotting their defeat hope that it is the same Ram Mandir that will bring about their downfall.

I wish, therefore, to steer clear of the beaten track and offer a rather different

The true test of any iconic institution is not whether scandal strikes, but whether it responds with transparency, accountability and reforms that restore people's confidence

AYODHYA AND THE BURDEN OF PUBLIC TRUST



RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE



MANDAR PARDIKAR

way of looking at this unhappy episode.

Every public controversy in India now seems destined to become a partisan contest. The first question invariably asked is: who stands to gain politically? A more useful question is different: what should we learn institutionally and morally?

Democracies do not mature merely by changing governments; they mature by improving institutions. Civilisations endure not because they are free of humiliations or setbacks but because they possess the capacity for self-correction and re-invention. If the present controversy prompts us to rethink how our most sacred institutions ought to be governed, posterity may judge it less by the allegations themselves than by the reforms they eventually inspired.

If the allegations are proven true, what has occurred is not merely an administrative lapse. It is a breach of trust. The issue is not simply financial impropriety or managerial incompetence. It concerns fidelity to the very ideals embodied by Lord Rama himself. This is so obvious that few, on either side of the political spectrum, would deny it.

Sri Rama, revered as *Maryada Purushottama*, the supreme exemplar of righteousness, restraint, propriety and duty, is worshipped not only because he was victorious. But because he exercised power in the service of justice, fulfilled all his duties and subordinated personal interest, even conjugal happiness, to uphold larger moral obligation.

It follows that a temple dedicated to him cannot be judged solely by the grandeur

DHUMINI'S DARK LESSON



sequences. It is told by a demon to prince Mitragupta to prove a cynical point about human nature. In passing, 'Dhumini' means 'dark smoke', an appropriate choice of name for a frightening character in a stark story.

The demon catches Mitragupta and discusses existential questions, like the Yaksha in the *Mahabharata*. The Q&A goes: What is wicked? A woman's heart (this view is in this story, there are other stories about decent and wise women). What enables the welfare of a householder? A wife's good qualities. What is love? Imagination. What helps in accomplishing difficult things? Wisdom. The illustrative tales follow.



WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Dandin's storybooks achieve a realistic depiction of ordinary life in ancient India. While associating most of his characters with a spectrum of personalities, Dhumini stands out with her traits of betrayal and deception—offering a hard reality check on human nature's dark side

Dhumini's tale goes that in Trigarta, a Himalayan kingdom, there lived three brothers named Dhanaka, Dhaanyaka and Dhanyaka. When a terrible famine fell on them, they first devoured grain and cattle. To Dhanyaka's horror, his two older brothers then ate their own wives. When they turned to eat Dhumini, the wife of Dhanyaka, he escaped with her to the forest from these humans-turned-cannibals.

Out there, they found the badly mutilated victim of a crime with missing

limbs, ears and nose. Dhanyaka fed him berries and applied medicinal herbs on his wounds, before going in search of food. Left alone with the cripple, Dhumini was overcome by desire for him. She forced the disabled man to satisfy her. When Dhanyaka returned, she pretended she had a headache and asked him to fetch water. When he went to a well some distance away, she followed him to push him in, and ran away to Avanti in the plains, carrying the cripple. Everyone thought the cripple was her husband and that she was a noble *pativrata* selflessly taking care of him. Touched by her seeming plight, the king of Avanti gave her money. Meanwhile, Dhumini's husband was rescued by some passers-by and chanced upon his way to Avanti, where he went around begging for alms. Catching sight of him, Dhumini raised an outcry that Dhanyaka was the one who had crippled her 'husband'.

Dhanyaka was declared guilty and sentenced to death. When the executioners marched him to the gallows, he pleaded, "Gentlemen, I beg of you! Please ask that handicapped man just once, if it was indeed I who cut off his limbs. If he says yes, then certainly hang me." Mercifully, they agreed. The cripple, a sorry survivor who was not evil at heart, revealed how Dhanyaka had saved him from death and cared for him with kindness by giving him food and herbal medicines. He also disclosed Dhumini's villainess and that he had felt too helpless to combat it. When the king got to know of these sordid facts, he was rightly enraged. He ordered that Dhanyaka be freed and Dhumini be mutilated for her crimes. She fled the city after her punishment, howling in disgrace. In reparation, the king bestowed land and money on Dhanyaka, who began a new life in Avanti.

This unlovely story did not lose its impact when retold down the ages in other languages. Don't you think the *Dasha Kumara Charita* is worth a look even today for the hard reality check it offers on the dark side of human nature, irrespective of gender?

(Views are personal)
(shebaba09@gmail.com)

of its architecture or the scale of its revenues. It must also be judged by the integrity of those entrusted with its care.

For years, many Hindus have argued that Hindu temples deserve greater autonomy and less governmental interference. Whether one agrees entirely with that position or not, one principle surely follows. Greater autonomy must be matched by greater accountability.

Sacred institutions cannot ask to be trusted while resisting scrutiny. Transparency is not the enemy of faith; it is one of its strongest allies.

Indeed, Hindu civilisation has always possessed within itself the resources for ethical renewal. *Dharma* is not merely ritual observance; it's righteous conduct. Temple wealth has never been meant to enrich individuals but to sustain worship, serve pilgrims and advance the larger good.

The Ram temple, indeed Hindu society, now has an unprecedented opportunity. Out of the present embarrassment can emerge a new benchmark for temple administration in India. Indeed, faith has nothing to fear; but everything to gain, from honesty.

Not that this is only a Hindu concern. Every religious community in India, every public institution, confronts the same challenge: how to ensure that power remains accountable and trust is never taken for granted. The Ram Mandir occupies a uniquely visible place in the nation's imagination. Precisely because expectations are so high, its standards must be higher still.

The true triumph of the Ram Mandir movement will not be measured only by the temple that has been built, but by the institutional apparatus that preserves and safeguards the faith of millions. That is why the greatest opportunity presented by this unhappy controversy is one that few are yet discussing.

Hindu temples must become models of integrity, transparency, public service and ethical leadership. If Ayodhya can show the way, the present moment, painful though it is, may yet mark not the diminution of a great national achievement but the beginning of its moral fulfillment.

As a Ram *bhakt* and Hindu, I want our temples to be the cleanest, most honest and best managed. They should be an example to all other communities, not lag behind pitifully. That is what belonging to the majority community means.

And let the Ramjanmabhumi temple show the way. Let the custodians of the temple do whatever it takes to ensure this. That will not only serve as the *prayaschitta* or atonement, but also as restitution exceeding the crime.

(Views are personal)
(On X @MakrandParanspe)

MAIL BAG

WRITE TO: letters@newindianexpress.com

Pushing context

Ref: *Explainer on India* (Jul 12). The point about explainer culture flattening complex subjects into bite-sized takeaways is well made. Genuine understanding needs context, not just facts served fast. Schools and newsrooms can help by pairing explainers with longer reads for those wanting depth, rather than assuming audiences want everything condensed to a reel.

Abbhama Barathi, Chennai

Power play

Politics has become pure entertainment. Neither actors nor the audience seem to take it seriously. Didi appears to engage in cinematic bids to evoke sympathy across state Assembly elections. Vijay, on the other hand, resorts to theatrical gestures in the Assembly to thwart the movie-like dialogues of Udayanithi. On a typical day, politicians are putting Orwellian tactics to shame.

G Nataraja Perumal, Tenkasi

Public accountability

Ref: *Republic of recurring surprises* (Jul 12). Mumbai's floods return every monsoon, yet planning starts afresh each time. There is a severe lack of accountability for unimplemented duties. Committees should be judged on execution, not formation. A public dashboard tracking disaster management proposals against actual completion would bring some discipline.

A Senthil Kumar, email

Amma's tunes

Ref: *Janaki Amma special* (Jul 12). The passing away of Janaki Amma, undoubtedly is a monumental loss to Indian film music. She was a rare-breed singer whose diction and rendition were in perfect harmony in most of the songs she sang.

Krishnaprasad S, Palakkad

Fuel distress

Ref: *Ethanol swindle* (*The New Sunday Express Magazine*, Jul 12). The government seems to be misguiding the people by selectively mentioning only the benefits, concealing the entire story including long-term financial losses to vehicle owners.

V Padmanabhan, Bengaluru

Identity politics

Ref: *Fodder scam shadow on Bankipur* (Jul 12). The report indubitably corroborates that casteism is inseparably blended with our politics and no party can claim immunity from this anomaly. Our politicians, instead of eradicating casteism from the country, nefariously jeopardise national interests.

Thomas K M, email

THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

Chairman of the Board: Manoj Kumar Sonthalia Editor: Santwana Bhattacharya

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The meet provided a valuable platform to deepen mutual understanding, foster people-to-people connections, and strengthen both interpersonal and institutional ties among the participating delegations the release added.

New I-T Act, but tax returns as per old laws

New forms are expected to include more structured disclosures, particularly for capital gains, foreign assets

ALAKSHYA SINGH & PUSHPITA DEY @ New Delhi

INDIA'S new Income Tax Act has come into effect from April 1, replacing the 1961 Act after more than six decades. However, taxpayers filing their returns this July for Assessment Year 2026-27 will continue to follow the existing rules, forms and compliance framework under the old law.

The new filing framework will apply only from the next return filing cycle, expected from July 2027 onwards.

"The new return filing framework is not expected to apply for the returns being filed in July 2026. Individual taxpayers filing returns for the current filing season will continue to follow the existing return forms and compliance processes under the prevailing

framework," said Radhika Viswanathan, Executive Director, Deloitte India.

Under the new law, the concept of tax year replaces the earlier distinction between previous year and assessment year. A tax year refers to the financial year from April 1 to March 31 in which income is earned and reported.

However, returns filed this year will continue to cover income earned during FY 2025-26 under the provisions of the Income Tax Act, 1961.

Experts said taxpayers do not need to change their filing process immediately, but should ensure accurate reporting and reconciliation of information available with the tax department.

"The new Act focuses largely on textual and structural simplification. There is no modifi-



cation in tax rates and no major tax policy changes have been introduced, ensuring predictability for taxpayers," Viswanathan said.

The new return forms, once introduced, are expected to include more structured disclosures, particularly for capital gains, foreign assets and digital assets. For the current filing season, individuals will

continue to use existing ITR forms based on their income sources, including ITR-1, ITR-2, ITR-3 and ITR-4.

Check AIS, TIS, Form 26AS

With increasing data sharing between institutions and the tax department, experts asks taxpayers to verify all information before filing returns.

Saimon Farooqui of Liberty Bell Law Offices LLP said taxpayers should not rely only on pre-filled data. "To avoid mistakes, do not rely solely on pre-filled data. Reconcile AIS, TIS and Form 26AS, choose the correct ITR form, disclose all sources of income and verify the return within the prescribed time," he said.

Taxpayers should ensure complete reporting of income from interest, dividends, capital gains, rental properties and

foreign sources, wherever applicable.

Foreign asset disclosures

Foreign assets and income disclosures are expected to receive greater scrutiny as the government expands information sharing through systems such as CRS and FATCA.

The CBDT has directed that foreign asset and income-related information be reflected in taxpayers' information statements. CA Mrinal Mehta, Treasurer, Bombay Chartered Accountants' Society, said this will increase visibility of overseas assets and accounts. "India has been receiving CRS and FATCA data since 2017, but that information largely remained within the systems. The same will now sit in Form 26AS under the 1961 Act and in the new Form 168," he said.

IN CONVERSATION



BINOD KUMAR
Managing Director & Chief Executive Officer of Indian Bank

'We are confident of maintaining CASA deposit ratio at 40%'

GOVERNMENT-OWNED Indian Bank began the new financial year with a strong set of numbers, with first quarter profit showing a 10% jump and net interest income increasing by 17% even as asset quality continues to improve. MD & CEO **Binod Kumar** spoke with **Dipak Mondal** on factors that helped the bank's Q1 performance. **Edited Excerpts:**

Indian Bank reported strong deposit and credit growth despite a challenging operating environment. What drove this performance?

CASA remained our key challenge because Q1 is usually sluggish due to transfers, promotions and a slower economy. We focused on activating dormant accounts, improving balances in low-activity accounts and providing fintech solutions to government departments, universities and colleges. These solutions generate float balances that stay with us for a few days. We were also disciplined in managing advances and avoided raising expensive bulk deposits when market rates were high. As a result, the average savings account balance increased to ₹53,000, and we added around 60,000 salary accounts during the quarter.

Could you elaborate on these fintech solutions?

We provide digital solutions such as fee collection modules, MIS dashboards, auto-debit facilities and collection accounts. These help institutions manage their finances efficiently while giving us temporary float balances. We have implemented 217 such fintech solutions.

How did the bank improve balances in savings accounts?

We activated nearly 17 lakh inoperative accounts with balances of around ₹1,649 crore. We have also developed a churn prediction model that identifies accounts likely to become dormant. We proactively contact customers, which has resulted in balances increasing by nearly ₹2,000 crore in these accounts.

Deposit and credit growth were both above 13%. Can this momentum continue?

We achieved this without increasing bulk deposits, which remained at around Rs 1.61 lakh crore. CASA grew by about 15%, while retail term deposits rose around 13%. While CASA growth may moderate to 12-13%, I am confident of maintaining our CASA ratio of around 40%.

What gives you the confidence to sustain CASA levels?

My confidence comes from our people. We are focusing on relationships, salary accounts and float balances. We have significantly expanded POS machines, QR code deployments and FASTag penetration. The average balance in QR-code-linked accounts has increased substantially. Small initiatives collectively make a big difference.

Public sector bank employees often speak about increasing work stress. How are you addressing this?

Stress is largely a mindset. I encourage employees to view work positively. I also ensure a healthy work culture—I normally leave office by 6.30-7 pm and encourage others to do the same. Employees can directly email me with any problems. Most importantly, targets are decided through consensus rather than being imposed, which improves ownership.

How is Indian Bank using artificial intelligence?

We have already implemented six to seven AI use cases. One is an Employee Assist platform, where staff can instantly get answers to operational queries, reducing knowledge gaps and stress. We are also using AI in collections, which has contributed to reducing our SMA portfolio from 7.99% to 4.69%.

We are also using AI in collections, which has contributed to reducing our SMA portfolio from 7.99% to 4.69%. We are now working on conversational AI that will allow customers to perform banking transactions through voice commands after authentication

MONEY-WISE

RISKS & PROSPECTS OF SERVICES FUNDS



FINANCIAL ADVICE
ASHOK KUMAR
An experienced investor and can be contacted at ceolotus@hotmail.com

At the outset itself, one must be forewarned that in theory and in practice, thematic and sectoral funds rank high on the Risk scales as there is inherent sectoral concentration risk involved. Before delving deeper into this discussion, it is worth noting that the services sector has also become India's largest employment provider, accounting for over 17 crore jobs, surpassing even agriculture and manufacturing combined. Government estimates project a 22% increase in employment within this sector by 2028, further underlining its importance in driving growth and livelihood creation.

So, what is a Services Fund? It is a thematic equity investment that seeks to capture the strong growth potential, diversification benefits, and structural opportunities within India's rapidly expanding services sector. This fund type invests in businesses that operate across a wide spectrum of services-related industries, offering investors access to sectors that are expected to lead India's economic evolution. The country's service sector is not just large — it is transformational. It spans a wide range of sunrise industries including health care, finance, information technology, media, telecom, logistics, hospitality, and e-commerce, each with significant long-term rel-

evance and scalability.

Several structural trends are fueling this sector's rise. GST implementation and widespread UPI adoption have significantly regularised and boosted efficiency in industries such as retail, hospitality, and financial services. The Digital India campaign, Aadhaar-based KYC, and fintech infrastructure are accelerating the shift from an unorganised to an organized economy, while changing income distribution is reshaping demand patterns. The proportion of India's population in the low-income group is expected to decline from 68% in 2010 to 47% by 2035, while middle and upper-middle-income households are on the rise. This demographic shift is catalyzing premium consumption across healthcare, travel, digital content, financial services, and education. The liberalization of FDI regulations in sectors like insurance, telecom, healthcare, and financial services has encouraged capital inflows. In FY25 alone, the services sector attracted \$9.35 billion in FDI, accounting for 19% of total inflows. The government initiatives and tourism infrastructure development are also giving the sector a major push.

A Services Fund typically diversifies across several high-growth segments. These include BFSI such as banking, insurance, NBFCs, fintech, and wealth management; IT and ITes, covering outsourcing, cloud services, cybersecurity, and generative AI solutions; healthcare industries like hospitals, diagnostics, healthtech, and medical tourism; telecom, and telecommunications, including mobile services, broadband, and 5G infrastructure; consumer services such as hospitality, organised retail, entertainment, and e-commerce; and even power utilities, particularly distribution, smart energy grids, and renewable infrastructure.



WHILE INVESTING, TRUST IN HISTORY MATTERS



FINANCIAL KNOWLEDGE
RAJAS KELKAR
(The author is editor-in-chief at www.moneyminute.in)

FOR investors in Indian equities, exasperation is the mood. India's fundamentals are strong, yet share prices have taken an unprecedented knock over the past year. Foreign money has moved out in droves, and domestic flows have somehow managed to hold the bottom.

Global fund managers and stock market investors measure valuation using the forward price-to-earnings multiple. It is the market-to-profit ratio for benchmark indices such as the Nifty 50 or the BSE Sensex. If average emerging markets were trading at a multiple of 10, Indian shares consistently traded at a multiple of 20 or more for years. That is 100% or beyond. At current prices, that valuation premium has shrunk to the lowest level ever at 18%, according to an analysis by Motilal Oswal, a Mumbai-based financial services firm. By comparison, the long-term average is 73%, and at the peak of the stock market rally in the financial year 2022, it was 147%, as per to analysts.

Over the past year or more, money has moved out of India and into a few chosen companies at the forefront of the artificial intelligence value chain in the US, Europe, Korea, and Taiwan. It was mentioned that the three most valuable companies across America, Europe, and Asia, are microchip manufacturers experiencing unprecedented demand.

Share prices today are a function of tomorrow's profits. At the moment, investors appear to believe a handful of companies worldwide are the biggest disruptors and creators of value. That means other businesses whose products and services customers continue to buy are un-

likely to maintain the same momentum. Heroes of the past are no longer heroes of the future.

Over the years, financial markets have witnessed such concentrated surges. There was an unprecedented rally in technology companies during the dot-com boom of the 2000s. It ended with a bust. Boom-and-bust cycles have also happened in commodities across decades.

Going forward, the situation may look worrying for investors in Indian equities. In every update, global institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund are marginally lowering India's econom-



Cigarette industry faces turbulent FY27 Airtel bets on financial services, data centres, cloud to drive digital growth

DIPAK MONDAL @ New Delhi

INDIA'S cigarette industry is bracing for one of its toughest years, with manufacturers warning that an unprecedented tax hike, rising illicit trade, intense price competition and pressure on margins could weigh on growth in FY27.

The concerns, flagged in the latest annual reports and earnings presentations of ITC, VST Industries and Godfrey Phillips India, come after the government sharply increased the tax incidence on cigarettes from February 1 by raising GST and excise duty. Cigarettes attract a flat 40% GST (against earlier 28%) combined with an additional excise duty ranging from ₹2,050 to ₹8,500 per 1,000 sticks, plus a National Calamity Contingent Duty (NCCD).

VST Industries chairman Naresh Sethi described the in-



crease as unprecedented in known history, warning that its impact could extend well beyond FY27. He said the industry faces "multiple headwinds, including supply chain and margin pressures, intense price competition in all segments and threat of illicit."

Godfrey Phillips echoed the cautious outlook. In its FY26 earnings presentation, the company said the steep increase in taxation in Q4 FY26

will make the next year challenging and that it would adopt calibrated price increases to ensure the impact on consumers is phased rather than immediate. The company also said it expects demand moderation following the tax increase and will rely on pricing and product mix optimisation to protect margins while strengthening brands, improving market execution and enhancing operational efficiencies.

ITC, in its FY26 annual report, said the legal cigarette industry continues to operate under a punitive and discriminatory taxation and regulatory regime.

According to the company, the latest GST and excise duty changes have resulted in an unprecedented increase in the tax burden on cigarettes.

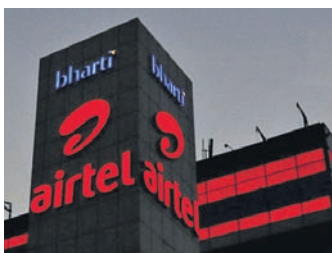
All three companies expressed concern that higher taxes could accelerate the shift towards illicit cigarettes. VST Industries Managing Director and CEO Piyush Srivastava said the company remains mindful of heightened consumer price sensitivity and the potential expansion of illicit trade under the new tax regime.

ITC said excessive taxation has encouraged consumers to switch to illicit cigarettes and other lightly taxed tobacco products.

DIPAK MONDAL @ New Delhi

BHARTI Airtel is preparing for its next phase of growth by expanding beyond traditional telecom services and building new digital businesses across financial services, data centres and cloud infrastructure. Chairman Sunil Bharti Mittal said in his annual letter to shareholders.

With India's digital economy accelerating and demand for connectivity, cloud services and artificial intelligence (AI) rising, Airtel plans to leverage its network strength, customer base and technology capabilities to create new growth engines. "Over the last few years, we took a calibrated approach to build new growth engines for Airtel. These bold bets yielded strong outcomes and have



WAY FORWARD

- 1 Airtel Money to operate as non-deposit taking NBFC
- 2 Nxtra to build 1 GW of capacity in next few years
- 3 Airtel Cloud to avail secure, locally hosted cloud service

grown our conviction in three agencies, where we believe Airtel has a clear right to win — financial services, data

centres and Airtel Cloud," he said.

A key pillar of Airtel's expansion strategy is financial services. Its subsidiary Airtel Money Limited has received approval from the Reserve Bank of India to operate as a non-deposit taking Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC).

Its data centre arm Nxtra is on track to build around 1 GW of capacity over the next few years. The company recently raised \$1 billion from marquee investors. Its data centre arm Nxtra is on track to build around 1 GW of capacity over the next few years.

Airtel's third growth engine, Airtel Cloud, is focused on providing secure and locally hosted cloud solutions to enterprises.



Belligol: Jude the man in hot & humid Florida

SWAROOP SWAMINATHAN
@ Bengaluru

EVEN before Norway and England lined up for the anthems, one thing was fairly clear. This was going to be a fair old slog between two Western European nations unaccustomed to the heat and humidity of coastal Florida. The feels-like temperature was hovering around the 40°C and the first twenty or so minutes were being played at walking pace; England stringing together passes and Norway preferring to maintain shape. Pressing triggers were minimal as both sides slowly started to come to terms with the heat and humidity. Off the TV, the sweat was visible. For all intents and purposes, the speed of the game suggested this was a pre-season friendly rather than a World Cup quarterfinal.

That the game's first shot on goal came in the 29th minute was proof enough that the conditions weren't really suited for elite outdoor football. But one man rose above it all to beat both the conditions and Norway. Jude Bellingham. In a match billed as one between two of the game's best No. 9s currently — Harry Kane and Erling Haaland — it was Haaland's great friend and former colleague at Borussia Dortmund who decided the contest to drag his team to only their fourth semifinal in the WC history.

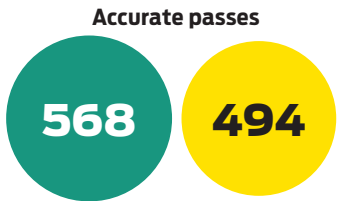
Norway had taken the lead through Andreas Schjelderup in the 36th minute, a cross-cum-shot that flew across Jordan Pickford before nestling in the top corner. England are a fine team with a fine collection of individuals, but what they have seldom had is the 'I'm him' character. Kane, one of the frontrunners for the Ballon d'Or, has frequently bailed them out, but even he can occasionally be found wanting. It's why Bellingham is different. He's very much 'I'm him'. Main character energy. Without the Real Madrid midfielder, England would have been packing their bags home. Now, they have a genuine chance of ending 60 years of anguish.

For his first goal, he received



Jude Bellingham (R), also known as Belligol, after scoring against Norway | AFP

MATCH STATS			
ENGLAND		NORWAY	
52	POSSESSION	48	
2	Goals	1	
1.04	xG	0.68	
14	Total shots	13	
8	Shots on target	4	
2	Big chances	1	



Anthony Gordon's pass on the edge of the area. With no clear option in front of him, he decided to do the hardest option. Marshalled by three Norwegian bodies, the first touch was inch-perfect. It allowed him some space inside the penalty area before two further touches opened an angle of sorts for him to shoot at goal. The fourth touch — the finish — had to be precise. It was exactly that as he ar-rowed it past the keeper. It was the kind of imagination and invention many an England team had previously been lacking on the game's biggest stages.

If the first goal was all high-grade art and weapons-grade skill, the second was good, old poacher's instinct honed on the streets of Birmingham and polished in Germany and Spain. After Eberечи Eze had recycled possession back to Morgan Rogers, the midfielder's long-range effort was parried by Orjan Nyland to a dangerous area. There were six Norwegian bodies in the box, but the one who reacted the quickest was Bellingham, who was already on his toes as he had anticipated a mistake. A sliding first-time right-footed finish sent the England fans into raptures at the beginning of extra-time. Six goals and a pair of braces in consecutive knockout matches on the game's biggest stage: at 23, the second youngest to do it. The youngest? Pele in 1958.

There's something arresting about Bellingham as a footballer. He's very English in the way he plays the game — passionate and front-footed — but he marries this with some very un-English traits. He's a man built for the biggest occasions. A mentality monster who scores the kind of goals for England they have been famous for letting in the past. Even as other English bodies and legs were giving up on them in the wilting heat and humidity, he found a higher plane.

Quicker we learn, the better: Captain Shreyas

ENS @ Chennai

BEING an Indian cricket team captain is not an easy job. When the highs come, praises ring like it is the most important position in the sport and when the lows hit, it hammers them. Shreyas Iyer is learning it the hard way after failing to win a single match across seven T20Is as skipper in England and Ireland. In their first two series after the T20 World Cup triumph, the Men in Blue fell flat in all departments with both Iyer and head coach Gautam Gambhir coming under the scanner.

Ask him if the expectations weighed down on his shoulders, Iyer said it is not that hard. For him, the biggest learning from the series is to remain positive and nurture the players around him, making this team his own. India, in the next 24 months, will be touring a lot overseas, especially with the next edition of the T20 World Cup set to happen in Australia in 2028. The Mumbai batter, while acknowledging that the loss hurt, said that the sooner they learn, it is better.

Full story: newindianexpress.com

Bhatia ton puts India on brink of historic win

AGENCIES @ London

YASTIKA Bhatia became the first female Test centurion at Lord's before India declared their second innings at the stroke of tea, setting hosts England a massive 457-run target on day three of the one-off game here on Sunday. In reply, England were reduced to 130/6 as India are on the brink of a historic Test win, their first one away from home since 2014.

In the first women's Test at the iconic venue, India declared their second innings at 341 for seven following Richa Ghosh's 50 off 52 balls. Ghosh's entertaining effort came after Yastika's sublime 113 off 158 balls that allowed India to extend their dominance in the game. England spinner Sophie Ecclestone took a five-wicket haul.

In the morning, Bhatia inched towards a memorable hundred as India reached 250 for four at lunch despite the loss of three wickets in the session. Smriti Mandhana (70 off 130) was caught down the leg-side off Lauren Bell for a soft dismissal early in the session. Pacer Bell was the standout bowler of the morning, removing not just



Yastika Bhatia | acci

Mandhana but also Jemimah Rodrigues (3 off 12).

Harmanpreet Kaur (16 off 34) was scratchy and fell to left-arm spinner Sophie Ecclestone. The on-field umpire was not convinced but Ecclestone got the DRS call in her favour. Bhatia (91 batting off 139) was batting alongside Deepti Sharma (10 batting off 38) at the break. The hallmark of Bhatia's effort has been the use of feet against the spinners and the sumptuous straight drives off the pacers. **Brief scores:** India 285 & 341/7 decl (Bhatia 113, Mandhana 70, Ghosh 50 n.o.; Ecclestone 5/118) vs England 170 & 130/6 in 40 ovs (Sayali 2/19, Rana 2/33).



START TO FINISH: Julian Alvarez handed Argentina the lead during the extra-time with a stunning curling effort into the top corner at the Kansas City Stadium on Saturday | AP/AFP

ALVAREZ'S MOMENT OF MAGIC

On a night where Messi was kept under a tight leash by Swiss team, Atletico forward steps up with a stunning goal in extra time to send holders Argentina into semifinals

SWAROOP SWAMINATHAN

AMONG Barcelona and Argentina supporters, a new word had quietly entered the mainstream over the last 15 years.

Messidependencia. Coined during his time at Barcelona in La Liga, it highlighted how much the Catalan Club had become a one-man team. An over-reliance on Messi. Messi and vibes. Maximum Messi. After he left for PSG, it lived on thanks to Argentines who had adopted that word and tattooed it on their foreheads. The problem was that even their players started believing in it. Give it to Messi and watch him. Need a goal? Give it to him. Need somebody to come up with a moment of magic? Pass it to him? Down and out? Messi will find a way. Not much time remaining? Messi needs only a moment.

Against Switzerland in Kansas on Saturday night, Messi tried to be that guy. For over 110 minutes, he kept trying. It was so desperate he even started receiving passes off his centre-backs inside his own half. Nothing, though, seemed to break down the red wall in front of him. Playing with 10 men since

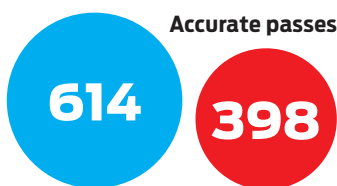
Breel Embolo's red card, Switzerland, organised and known for defensive discipline when playing with 11, had shut the door and buried the key. The 39-year-old, who had 101 touches off the ball, was so far away from the zone of influence he only had four inside the opposition box during the game.

This, then, had to be a night for one of the support cast.

And the most likely person stepped up. Julian Alvarez. As always, the move had started with Messi firing one at Gregor Kobel's goal from outside the box, but it was parried comfortably. When it was time to recycle possession, Jose Lopez, on the pitch for only two minutes, deviated from the script. He passed it to Alvarez, who had stationed himself away from goal left of centre.

The pass wasn't to feet, so the attacker had to re-adjust. But as soon as the Atletico Madrid forward took a touch with his right foot, two things happened simultaneously. Because he had a running start, he knew he could generate momentum if he had a crack at goal. Because the position was prioritising shape

MATCH STATS			
ARGENTINA		SWITZERLAND	
59	POSSESSION	41	
3	Goals	1	
1.94	xG	0.47	
22	Total shots	11	



and structure over closing down, the over half-a-dozen Swiss defenders inside the box were happy for Alvarez to shoot. Remarkably, it was Argentina's only 11th shot on goal from open play in the entire game (a measure of how well Switzerland had cut the supply and won the battle in midfield).

But when it comes to players like Alvarez, a forward capable of moments of genius, all it takes is a second to change the entire complexion of the game. That running momentum and one touch to set himself was one of the few times an attack-

er in sky blue had found some space all game. Alvarez didn't need a second invitation to have a shot. It came to pass as his shot from outside the box — travelling at over 80 kph according to FIFA's in-game graphics — hit the top corner on the inside. Kobel and his troops looked behind them in the hope that the ball would fly over, but they knew that the game was finally up. A heroic watch to drag this game to extra-time and, perhaps, penalties, had ended agonisingly.

As soon as the ball hit the net, the Argentina bench emptied as all of Alvarez's colleagues wanted a piece of him. He dodged a few of them, but on this night of nights, the 26-year-old was soon mobbed. Lautaro Martinez added a third on the break, but Saturday night belonged to the man long identified as Messi's successor in terms of inspiring the albiceleste. When the team had assembled in the US last month, it was expected that Alvarez would assume the lead role. However, he had picked up an ankle issue in May. The three-time champions will hope that he's ready and raring for the final two acts.

QUICK PASS

FIFA to examine 64-team WC

FIFA president Gianni Infantino has said the global body will examine expanding the World Cup by a further 16 nations to a 64-team tournament ahead of its next edition in 2030. "It (a 64-team tournament) is definitely an issue that will be examined and discussed in the relevant committees after this World Cup," Infantino said in an interview with Swiss media outlet Bluewin. FIFA boss reiterated that the tournament was "for the whole world, not just Europe and South America."

Unpacking another night of VAR mayhem

VIDEO Assistant Referee (VAR) has given stars a tough competition this World Cup. On Saturday, it was front and centre in both quarterfinals. Here's unpacking the three instances...

A Norway goal-kick hitting the cable, ball falling to Anderson's feet before England equalising

That old FIFA connected ball technology, heartbeat and sensors were all at play. As soon as

Bellingham displayed his dancing feet to evade a few defenders before slotting the ball home, the Norwegian players did appeal to the referee. Even when the game was on, FIFA put out a statement saying they looked at the incident but cleared it because there was no spike when the ball allegedly came into contact with the camera cable.

Norway's goal from a corner chalked off

Over the last season, the Premier League saw a lot of grappling from corners with attack-

Switzerland's Breel Embolo receiving a second yellow

Embolo, already on a yellow, quite clearly dived after receiving the ball in the second half. Initially, the referee had booked Paredes, thinking the midfielder had fouled the forward. But replays clearly showed that Embolo was the guilty party.

Fifth Major crown for Sinner the winner

AGENCIES @ London

JANNIK Sinner was at his clinical best as he successfully defended his Wimbledon title with a tense four-set victory over French Open champion Alexander Zverev in Sunday's final.

The World No 1 recovered from losing the first set in a match largely dominated by serve, eventually wearing Zverev down to secure a 6-7 (7), 7-6 (2), 6-3, 6-4 win.

Sinner's fifth Grand Slam title came in his first tournament since a second-round meltdown at the French Open, when he wilted in a Paris heat wave.

A year ago, Sinner beat Carlos Alcaraz in the final at the All England Club after wasting



Jannik Sinner celebrates after winning the final on Sunday | AFP

three match points against his rival in the Roland Garros final. With Alcaraz missing this edition, Sinner had a rough

start in the first round against Miomir Kecmanovic but since then had breezed past every opponent including Novak Djokovic

vic in the semifinal. It was Sinner's 10th straight victory over Zverev, including five this year.

EXPRESS READ

McCullum sacked as Eng's Test head coach

LONDON: Brendon McCullum will stand down as England Men's Test head coach but will continue to guide the white ball teams, ECB said in a statement on Sunday. The development comes close on the heels of Ben Stokes' retirement from international cricket.

Dhiraj, Kirti miss Archery WC bronze

MADRID: India's recurve mixed pair of Dhiraj Bommadevara and Kirti Sharma squandered a 3-1 lead to miss out on the bronze, losing 3-5 to Italy at the Archery World Cup Stage 4. India also ended their campaign individual section with Kirti losing her semifinal & bronze playoff.

Pavade powers Pune to 9-6 victory against UP

PANAJI (GOA): French Olympian and UTT debutant Prithvi Pavade produced a powerhouse performance as PBG Pune Jaguars defeated UP Prometheans 9-6 in a UTT Season 7 tie at the Dr Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Indoor Stadium on Sunday.

Asian U23 C'ships: Javelin gold for Anand

ORDOS (CHINA): Javelin thrower Anand Singh and the women's 4x400m relay team clinched a gold medal each as India ended their campaign on a strong note at the inaugural Asian U23 Athletics C'ships. Overall, the Indian team won 16 medals — 3 gold, 4 silver and 9 bronze.



UPCOMING
EXAMINATIONS



RPSC SENIOR
TEACHER EXAM

Dates:
July 12-18

BPSC APO
RECRUITMENT EXAM

Date:
July 15

UPSC CAPF (ASSISTANT
COMMANDANTS)

Date:
July 19

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12

100% Natural, 'Chemical-Free' Classrooms



SOHAN MITRA

In classrooms, teachers are finding themselves in the midst of a battle that seems to be slowly tipping against them, against viral misinformation masquerading as science. From "chemical-free" foods to "toxin-free" cosmetics and fears around preservatives, educators suggest students are coming to classrooms carrying misconceptions fuelled by reels and targeted advertising. The challenge lies in competing with emotionally appealing online content that sounds more convincing than the curriculum.

"Influencers confidently promote ideas like 'all preservatives are harmful' or 'synthetic means toxic' without scientific context," says Subham Kansabanik, Chemistry teacher at Bedibhawan Rabitirtha Vidyalaya in Nadia, West Bengal. "Students spend far more time on social media than in scientific discussions, making it harder for teachers to counter misinformation." According to Kansabanik, many viral claims ignore a basic scientific principle: dosage matters. "People often think any exposure to chemicals is dangerous. But toxicity depends on amount, duration, and route of exposure," he says, adding that even naturally occurring acids like citric acid in lemons are not corrosive in everyday use.

This confusion often stems from a fundamental misunderstanding of terminology. "Many students assume that if something is natural, it is automatically safe," says Abhishek Pal, Assistant Professor in the Department of Microbiology at Ramakrishna Mission Vidyamandira, Belur Math. He believes that the word "chemical" has unfairly become synonymous with danger. "Natural substances themselves are made of chemicals, however: Fruit peels, for instance, contain cellulose, silica, and several other compounds with distinct chemical properties. Water, oxygen, and DNA are all chemicals," he explains.

Both educators emphasise that schools and families must encourage critical thinking instead of blind acceptance of claims, especially online. "The problem is not science. The problem is when marketing language replaces scientific understanding," Kansabanik concludes. As short-form content continues to dominate young people's screens, scientific literacy has become a survival skill in the digital age.



NIKHIL ABHISHEK

GRADUATES stepping into today's workforce possess one distinct advantage. Born as digital natives, this cohort was moulded and nurtured by an era of democratised knowledge. They navigated virtual schooling during critical academic years and adopted self-directed learning as a primary survival mechanism. Surendra Koutarapu, Chief Business Officer at Growth School, a platform that upskills working professionals in emerging technologies and AI integration, believes the demographic is inherently equipped to handle structural disruption.

"This generation has experienced unprecedented learning access. It does not matter whether a student lives in a city or some remote village. They have access to the same Stanford professor on YouTube as a peer in California," Koutarapu notes. However, the transition from campus to corporate life has both evolved, and mutated, much over the past few years. Can they keep up?

The algorithmic echo chamber

We have arrived at a peculiar moment in human history where the very tools designed to amplify our potential are making it harder to identify genuine talent. A growing number of candidates are finding that while placements remain a steady reality, the mechanical friction of securing a job has increased manifold. The consensus is that much of this stems from generative AI levelling the playing field to an extreme degree.

"Because candidates across the board are using tools like ChatGPT and Claude to refine their profiles, every fresher resume now looks exactly the same," Koutarapu explains. "They all feature perfect language and the right keywords. For the people screening these candidates, it is becoming incredibly difficult to identify who is genuinely capable."

With every applicant presenting a flawless document, legacy automated tracking systems have begun failing, resulting in highly capable candidates slipping through the cracks. To manage the deluge, companies are deploying their own AI architectures to act as the initial gatekeepers. The astute reader will note that this, unfortunately, means that the modern interview effectively



Some tips

- 1 Embrace continuous learning as the primary way to future-proof your career
- 2 Prioritise hands-on projects to prove your genuine skills to the potential recruiter
- 3 Use AI to improve your efficiency, not to replace your own thinking
- 4 Ditch generic resumes; focus on building a unique and verified portfolio

begins as a machine-to-machine interaction.

For students, this filtration process can be both exhausting and demoralising. Dr Sakthi Kumaresh, Placement Officer at MOP Vaishnav College for Women in Chennai, regularly sees the visceral toll it takes.

"Students frequently mention that the recruitment process has become incredibly complex and multi-layered. Online aptitude tests now incorporate cognitive ability and behavioural assessments to supplement technical questions," Dr Kumaresh states. "Navigating these highly sophisticated virtual screening tools is significantly

cantly increasing anxiety levels."

Proof of work as the new currency

Although these barriers seem imposing, they should not discourage. Even as the hiring landscape changes, the path to employment remains wide open for those who can demonstrate genuine ability, and willingness to adapt. Put more simply, resumes do still matter, they're just no longer enough on their own. Recruiters and employers now want proof of ability, through personal projects, open-source contributions, freelance work, or anything else that demonstrates what one can actually accomplish. For applicants, this is an opportunity. Every problem solved, every skill put into practice, gives employers something tangible to evaluate. One can cut through automated filters by giving people a reason to look beyond them.

"More often than not, the candidates who make it past initial screening here are ones who have sent in portfolios along-

side their resumes. Having projects in your portfolio that you successfully executed is now essentially table stakes," Koutarapu says. "If someone shares proof of work, it is infinitely easier to hire them."

The mentorship pathway

If demonstrable skills are becoming the price of admission, what happens after candidates make it through the door? Should companies also be responsible for developing the talent they recruit? There is precedent. During the early IT and BPO boom, international employers routinely absorbed raw graduates and subjected them to intensive accent and soft skills training to fit specific operational pipelines. Today, corporate requirements have expanded to include technological contextualisation.

Ayaskant Sarangi, Global Chief Human Resource Officer at Mphasis, an enterprise-scale IT solutions provider, views this ongoing skill development as a fundamental corporate responsibility.

"Employees can gather knowledge easily as it is available everywhere today," Sarangi explains. "Where an organisation or employer can add value is in contextualising how to apply that knowledge. It is vitally important for us to build a strong learning culture, and impart skills to our employees rather than just knowledge."

Some companies are restructuring their hiring models around this philosophy, instead of expecting graduates to arrive fully job-ready. An emerging approach is to transition away from mass immediate hiring in favour of extended internship pipelines. Mphasis, for example, is actively constructing frameworks to train and evaluate talent before making formal full-time commitments.

"Instead of direct placements, we onboard talent as interns for a multi-month period," Sarangi details. "They are trained on new technologies through real-world projects, and guided directly by veteran mentors from our organisation. We conduct frequent assessments to elevate their competency before bringing them on full-time upon graduation."

Simulating the crucible

Proactive institutions are rolling out training that recreates the modern hiring experience. By exposing students to digital evaluation platforms through continuous practice, they aim to reduce anxiety and eliminate any shock factor well before the actual hiring drives begin.

"For instance, we have launched round-the-clock AI-based placement training for all final-year students to enhance career readiness," Dr Kumaresh explains. "This platform enables continuous monitoring of their progress, helping them build greater confidence in attending virtual assessments while familiarising them with the exact AI-driven evaluation processes they will face."

The entry-level hiring pipeline has undoubtedly become more demanding. Standardisation has rendered the traditional degree insufficient, and polished resumes do not distinguish one applicant from another anymore. Yet this new ecosystem has also created a new kind of meritocracy. Candidates who can demonstrate real work, whether through portfolios or internships, give employers something algorithms cannot easily replicate: credibility.

SUCCESS BY DESIGN

MASTERING ESSENTIAL SKILLS FOR LIFE

While your qualifications may open doors, it is your daily choices, even in small moments, that will ultimately determine the trajectory of your future. These five practical skills provide a foundation for success in both professional and academic settings



Emotional resilience

When facing any setback, pause and separate objective facts from emotional interpretations by writing them down. This restores perspective and helps you respond deliberately instead of reacting impulsively.



Clear communication

Practise breaking complex ideas into logical steps when talking, without oversimplifying. Clear thinking and clear communication helps others understand you while respecting their time.



Financial awareness

Keeping a track of where your money goes reduces systemic stress. Wise financial decisions provide the ultimate freedom to make life choices based on passion, not panic.



Conflict resolution

When conflict arises in groups, learn to separate the issue from the person and focus on facts and shared goals. More importantly, apologise sincerely if needed.



Critical thinking

Before accepting or sharing information, check where it came from. Examine what evidence supports it. Thoughtful scepticism protects your decisions, reputation, and independence throughout your life.

TREND SPOTTER

Fashion merchandising: Where style meets strategy

THE fashion industry offers careers far beyond designing clothes. Fashion buying and merchandising combines market research and business strategy to decide which products consumers actually see on store shelves. Panchami, assistant buying manager at Landmark Group, Dubai, says the role requires understanding customer preferences and translating them into commercial product collections.

"Fashion buying is about understanding consumer behav-

If you enjoy fashion as much as strategy and analytics, buying and merchandising offers a career that influences what consumers see, buy and wear every season



our, analysing trends, working closely with suppliers, and ensuring the right products reach customers at the right time," she explains.

The role also involves developing pricing strategies, monitoring product performance after launch, and collaborating

with design, sourcing, and marketing teams.

A bachelor's degree in fashion technology or related fields can open doors to this career. However, Panchami emphasises that internships and practical exposure are equally valuable. She also recommends becoming proficient at tools such as Microsoft Excel, Power BI and Adobe Illustrator, along with pursuing courses in fashion buying and

trend forecasting.

Career pathways include roles like fashion buyer, merchandise planner, category manager, and sourcing manager. India's expanding retail and e-commerce sectors maintain a steady demand for such professionals. Fresh graduates typically see starting salaries

ranging from ₹50,000 to ₹1 lakh per month, with senior positions at international retailers commanding significantly higher packages.

"If you want to get into this industry, stay curious about fashion and consumer trends, strengthen your analytical skills, gain experience, and keep learning. Adaptability is the biggest strength you can have," Panchami advises.

CAREER: FASHION BUYING AND MERCHANDISING

Eligibility: Bachelor's degree in fashion technology, fashion design, fashion management, retail management, business administration or related fields | **Starting salary:** ₹50,000-₹1 lakh per month

This week CHANGED EVERYTHING



July 13

The 1st 'modern' college

In 1830, the Scottish Church College began, mixing Western sciences with local languages, creating India's modern educational.



July 15

The cadet corps raised

In 1948, the National Cadet Corps brought military discipline into schools, building a massive voluntary youth network.



July 14

A new era for women

In 1914, Madras College for Women opened its doors and science labs, allowing marginalised women to pursue professional careers.



July 15

Skill India Mission

In 2015, India launched its flagship programme to certify informal workers and tightly align training with industry demands.

A DECADE OF SKILLING INDIA

YECHURI SASHIKANTH

SIMPACT Scheme

Performance

1 **Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY 4.0)**
27.74 lakh candidates trained (as of March 31, 2026)



skill
report

LAUNCHED in 2015 under the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, the Skill India Mission (SIM) aims to provide skill, reskill, and up-skill training through a nationwide network of development centres. Major schemes under the mission — including the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS), National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS), and the Craftsman Training Scheme (CTS) — enhance employment opportunities for the working-age population by fostering technical, digital, and soft skills.

● **PMKVY:** Over four phases, this initiative evolved from a pilot incentive-based certification programme into a large-scale, demand-driven, outcome-oriented skilling ecosystem.

● **JSS:** Provides non-formal skill training at the doorsteps of beneficiaries through registered societies with full government funding.

● **NAPS:** Strengthens the apprenticeship ecosystem by providing partial stipend and advocacy support to stakeholders.

● **CTS:** Ensures a steady flow of skilled workers for domestic industries through Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs).

Over the past decade, the mission has evolved into a broader workforce transformation agenda. Dr Dipti Ranjan Sarangi, Vice President of Medhavi Skills University, notes, "The India Skills Report 2026 indicates an improvement in employability to 56.35%. However, this implies that one in every two young Indians is unprepared for employment, which highlights the challenge ahead. The next phase must focus on enhancing learning outcomes, fostering academia-industry collaboration, and promoting lifelong learning to build a workforce capable of adapting to an AI-driven economy."

2 **Jan Shikshan Sansthan**

36.48 lakh+ beneficiaries trained (as of March 31, 2026)

3 **National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme**

54.41 lakh+ apprentices engaged across sectors (as of March 31, 2026)

4 **Craftsman Training Scheme**

14.70 lakh enrolled in FY 2025-26

Source: Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship



DAY'S DIARY

Hello, Hollywood!

On this day in 1923, a 50-foot tall letters sign 'HOLLYWOODLAND', was dedicated in the Hollywood Hills, Los Angeles, to promote a subdivision

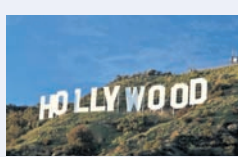
PROMOTIONAL SIGN

The worldwide symbol of the entertainment industry was conceived as an outdoor ad campaign for a suburban housing development of the same name



ARTIST BEHIND THE SIGN

Making the sign was commissioned to Thomas Fisk Goff, a London-born artist settled in Los Angeles, to create and install the sign



TOUGH AS NAILS

The massive billboard, originally intended to last just a year and a half, has endured more than a century and is still going strong

Photos that carry emotions

PG 3



'Thumbithu Manava' from Mahishasura Mardhini (1959)

While in 1991 an experienced Janaki worked with the best, in 1959 the bright-eyed soprano sang 'Thumbithu Manava' from *Mahishasura Mardhini* (1959), composed by the relatively new GK Venkatesh and written by Sadaashiviah, with Dr Rajkumar, in his second-credit as a playback singer, accompanying her. But here, as we dwell within the comforts of a palace, we see a doe-eyed princess describing her never-ending attraction for her lover, and Janaki facilitates the audience's journey through the ebb and flow of emotions.



'Vaalittezhuthiya' from Onnanu Nammal (1984)

'Vaalittezhuthiya' from *Onnanu Nammal* (1984) is a perfect example of how Janaki could make a mark without uttering a single word. While Ilaiyaraaja and KJ Yesudas work with Bichu Thirumala's lyrics, which are an intimate description of a man's love for a woman, Janaki's vocal interludes enable listeners to experience the woman's shyness, which is a result of the man's overwhelming love for her. While Yesudas is an expert in elongating individual notes, Janaki takes on the challenge and seamlessly combines styles with Yesudas, while not compromising on her own style.



'I Love You' from Akalmam (1984)

In 'I Love You' from *Akalmam* (1984), composed by Laxmikant-Pyarelal with lyrics by Anand Bakshi, Janaki embodies the reactionary nature of Sridevi's character, a Tamil woman who shares a caricature-like romance with Jeetendra's character. As North meets South in the story and in the characters, Kishore Kumar's versatile voice finds a perfect foil in Janaki's voice, which carries the levity of playful love. And as she had done a thousand times before, and a thousand times after, Janaki's voice easily meshes into the actor's original voice, and it makes you wonder if it was Sridevi herself who was singing.



'Amma Amma' from Velaiyilla Pattathari (2014)

In what can be considered her swansong in Tamil, 'Amma Amma' from *Velaiyilla Pattathari* (2014), which has music by Anirudh, features grief-stricken lyrics by Dhanush, who also sings along with the legendary singer. While the song is about a son who seeks forgiveness and solace from his late mother, the line 'Endhan Moochu Unakullum Undu (Your breath will always have mine, too)' sung by Janaki can now be taken as the singer's message to her legacy. A message that is exactly like Janaki's voice...a mother's embrace that will continue to linger as long as the receiver wants to hold on to it.



1938 - 2026

A VOICE FOR THE AGES

On legendary singer S Janaki's passing, *CE* takes a look at eight songs across languages that convey to the listeners the Janaki Amma brand, which is now firmly imprinted in memory

ASHWIN S

IN *Velayilla Pattathaari* (2014), we see Raghuvaran, a grief-stricken son—played by Dhanush—who misses his late mother as he drowns out the crashing of his life with a familiar voice. A voice that has, for decades, walked alongside many a heart that craved love, affection, and more importantly, a sense of familiarity. And as Raghuvaran walks on the beach burdened by loneliness, we see a new set of footprints appear beside him from beyond the grave. And then the familiar voice goes, "Naa pona pinne, nee vaazha vendum (Even after I go, your life must move on)." Following the Nightingale of South India, S Janaki's passing, let's take a look at some songs across Indian languages that convey the emotions she brought to listeners, one that will always be etched on the sands of time.



'Mudhalvane' from Mudhalvan (1999)

In 'Mudhalvane' from *Mudhalvan* (1999), composed by AR Rahman and written by Vairamuthu, Janaki was featured in a song with beat switches propelled by genre shifts. The song starts with a march band-like regal music, which is replaced by personalised melody, and then elevation, with music that brings out deceit and plots that signify danger. Janaki makes her mark with every change in the song, making it seem as if it was composed around her rather than the other way round.



'Sundari Kannal Oru Thalapathi' from Sundari Kannal (1991)

In *Thalapathi* (1991), the crème de la crème of Tamil cinema assembled for 'Sundari Kannal'. As Mani Ratnam and Santosh Sivan captured the tale of a king's consort remembering the romantic courtship with her loved one, who is away at war, Ilaiyaraaja and Vaali created a ballad that would showcase heartbreak felt from both sides of the courtship. While the legendary SP Balasubrahmanyam voiced the king, Janaki voiced the queen and acted as the shining beacon that guided the audience through the vulnerability, yearning, separation, sadness, and finally the happiness that came with the reunion of the lovers.



'Nee Charanam Kamalam' from Nee Charanam Kamalam (1988)

It is poetic that as we remember Janaki's legacy, we recall a song that describes love across seven lifetimes. After ballads, bonhomie, and beats, 'Ni Charanam Kamalam' from *Nee Charanam Kamalam* (1988), composed by Ilaiyaraaja and written by Veturi, is structured like a poetic battle where Janaki and SP Balasubrahmanyam try to one-up each other by raising the stakes in expressing a couple's love for each other across lifetimes.



'Sundhari Neeyum Sundharan Naanum' from Sundhari Neeyum Sundharan Naanum (1990)

While 'Sundhari Neeyum Sundharan Naanum' from *Sundhari Neeyum Sundharan Naanum* (1990), which has music by Ilaiyaraaja and lyrics by Panchu Arunachalam and Poovachal Khader, can be easily categorised as the simplest song amongst this list, its impact is far from that. Janaki is not battling, she is not shy, nor going through a range of emotions. Instead, she expresses the fundamentals that creates a relationship which is as festive and colourful as it can be, through her vocals.

'GD Naidu's intentions were greater than his inventions'



In this exclusive interview, Madhavan speaks about his upcoming film *GDN*, the marvellous feats of GD Naidu, and his reaction to getting the Padma Shri Award

ASHWIN S, ROHINI M

MADHAVAN'S filmography reveals a unique pattern. A man who was once dubbed the 'chocolate boy' of Tamil cinema has now played multiple characters based on real people. Now, Madhavan steps into the shoes of inventor GD Naidu, in the upcoming biopic *GDN*, which opens in theatres on July 17. In this exclusive interview with *CE*, Madhavan speaks about the marvellous feats of GD Naidu, the challenges he faces in portraying real people and his reaction to getting the Padma Shri Award.

What drove you to work on GDN?

It is a crime to not know great people from our country and appreciate them. GD Naidu tried to build cars like Mercedes Benz in India. In pursuance of a contract for that he faced obstacles from the British first, and then Indians. But it is not just about knowing the man's achievements, it is more about knowing the man. Satyaraj sir, who plays a crucial role in the film, has said, 'When I was growing up, GD Naidu set the bar for knowledge.' Even I was guilty of not knowing the greatness of the man. If he was able to realise his ideas and vision completely, India would have gone through a tremendous transformation. Be it technological advancements in any field, GD Naidu had ideated them and had built them. Beyond GD Naidu's inventions, his intentions are extraordinary. For example, he fought to change the duration of an engineering course from four to two years, because he was a champion of practical application of knowledge. With the onset of AI, the path to learn is changing. It is not about what you learn, it is about what you will learn. GD Naidu was someone who believed that whatever one learns should be helpful throughout life. Now this mantra is in need more than ever.

(Continued on Page 4)

FOCUS FEATURE AN SMD INITIATIVE

THE ART OF THE POUR MEETS THE HISTORY OF A PORT CITY

The library bar at the leela palace chennai introduces an immersive experience where every cocktail is inspired by the voyages that connected chennai to the world



WHERE HISTORY IS poured, stories are served, and every evening becomes a journey of discovery.

Some of the world's finest bars are remembered not merely for what they serve, but for the stories they tell.

At The Leela Palace Chennai, The Library Bar enters a remarkable new chapter with Tales of Tradean immersive cocktail and dining experience inspired by Chennai's centuries-old legacy as one of the Indian Ocean's great maritime trading ports. More than a destination for fine cocktails, it is an elegant ode to the exchange of cultures, ingredients and ideas that once shaped the city's coastline.

Designed as a contemporary library of trade, the space draws guests into a world where merchant journals, botanical discoveries and forgotten voyages become the inspiration for an extraordinary evening. Shelves lined with books and curated artefacts, intimate lighting, and a quietly sophisticated atmosphere create a setting that invites conversation, curiosity and unhurried indulgence. At its heart is The Prose of Pours, a thoughtfully curated cocktail programme where every creation is composed as though it were another entry in a living manuscript. Historic trade ingredients such as spices, botanicals and rare aromatics are reinterpreted through contemporary mixology, producing cocktails that reveal themselves in measured layers, rewarding every sip with nuance and discovery rather than spectacle.

The accompanying culinary offering unfolds



as Tasting Chapters, a menu inspired by coastal kitchens and the movement of flavours across continents. Designed to complement the cocktail programme, each dish becomes another page in the evening's narrative, balancing familiarity with exploration.

Beyond the menu, The Library Bar introduces a series of signature rituals that elevate hospitality into theatre. Every visit begins with The Welcome Ledger, a graceful welcome pour that marks the opening chapter of the guest's journey. The Merchant's Chest invites guests to explore spices, botanicals and ingredients once carried across the Coromandel Coast, allowing personal preferences to shape bespoke cocktail creations. The experience concludes with Message in a Bottle, a signature



ture cocktail accompanied by a keepsake containing a little-known story from Chennai's rich maritime history.

The atmosphere itself evolves throughout the day. Between afternoon and dusk, The Library Bar transforms into The Listening Room, where guests are invited to browse an extensive vinyl collection and curate the soundtrack of the space themselves. As evening unfolds, the room naturally shifts from quiet reflection to lively conversation, while always retaining its sense of refinement.

Speaking on the launch, Sunil Kumar, Vice President & General Manager, The Leela Palace Chennai, said:

"The Library Bar has always been one of the most distinctive spaces within our hotel. With 'Tales of Trade', we wanted to create something that feels deeply rooted in Chennai while speaking to the expectations of the global luxury traveller. Every element from the design and rituals to the cocktails and cuisine has been thoughtfully curated to celebrate the city's extraordinary maritime heritage through a contemporary lens. It is an experience that encourages guests to slow down, discover, engage and leave with a story of their own."

More than a bar, The Library Bar is a destination where history, craftsmanship and contemporary hospitality converge. Every cocktail



becomes a conversation. Every ingredient recalls a journey. Every evening adds another page to an ever-evolving archive of taste.

The Library Bar's evolving rhythm is further enriched by a thoughtfully curated calendar of live entertainment. Throughout the week, an eclectic line-up of acclaimed DJs and live bands brings fresh energy to the space, with each performance carefully selected to complement the bar's refined ambience rather than overpower it. As day transitions into night, music becomes another layer of the narrative—creating an atmosphere that is as sophisticated as it is vibrant.

Designed to accommodate both leisurely afternoons and unhurried late evenings, The Library Bar welcomes guests from 5:00 PM to 1:00 AM on weekdays and extends the experience from 3:00 PM to 1:00 AM on weekends. The extended hours position it as one of Chennai's premier late-evening destinations, inviting guests to continue their evening long after standalone venues across the city con-

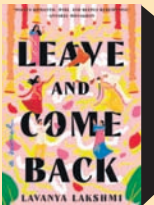


clude service, while enjoying exceptional cocktails, elevated cuisine and immersive entertainment within the timeless elegance of The Leela Palace Chennai.

As luxury hospitality increasingly embraces immersive storytelling, The Library Bar offers something both timeless and refreshingly original—a place where Chennai's past is not simply remembered, but experienced, one carefully composed pour at a time.

Stories. Served.

BOOK
NOOK



Leave and Come Back

by Lavanya Lakshmi

Simran returns to her much avoided family home after seven years to attend a cousin's wedding when her boyfriend crashes the engagement party. She must find a way to heal her wounds or risk losing her happy ending with Leo and her family.



We Dance Upon Demons

by Vaishnavi Patel

The depressing abortion bans and screaming protestors led Nisha, a reproductive healthcare worker from Chicago, to the Indian art exhibit. There, a strange power courses through her, forcing her to confront her centuries-old mysterious abilities.



Abundance

by Hafeez Lakhani

Sakeena doesn't believe in medical interventions. Desperately wanting her to seek medical help, Ramzan, her husband, asks his children, who are occupied with their own lives, to convince Sakeena.



A Light That Never Goes Dark

by Mansi Jikadara B

A poetry and prose collection for those finding it difficult to navigate life. This book will gently guide you back to the light that exists within.



ANALOG MEETS DIGITAL

A visitor poses with an antique wood-carved telephone receiver at the Handicrafts Expo, organised by the Tamilnadu Handicrafts Development Corporation. | P JAWAHAR

QUICKFIX

HALF-AND-HALF ONION-FETA PAV

INGREDIENTS

- Pav breads: 4-5
- Onion: 1, small
- Feta cheese: As per preference
- Olives: 5-6
- Garlic cloves: 3-4
- Soy sauce: 1-2 spoons
- Thyme/chilli flakes
- Olive oil
- Jalapenos (optional)
- Water

METHOD

- Slice 4 pavs in the centre, splitting them in half to open them up. Keep them aside
- Boil some water in a pan. Add soy sauce, garlic cloves, and olive oil to it. Then, put in rondelle-cut onions.
- Let it stay on the heat till all the water evaporates. You should be left with sticky, dark, sauce coated onions.
- Assemble your pavs. Place the soy onions on one side.
- On the other side, place crushed feta cheese blocks and olives (cut or whole).
- Sprinkle both sides with thyme and chilli-flakes. You can add jalapenos or even a layer of cream cheese to both sides.
- Toast pavs in the oven till lightly brown, and serve.



Contributed by Jas Khubchandani, Chennai

ASK AN
XPERT

cool, shaded area before offering water gradually in small amounts. Always ensure access to fresh, clean drinking water during hot weather to avoid dehydration. Signs such as persistent panting, weakness, vomiting, or trouble recovering from heat should be examined by a veterinarian.

EXPRESS
CONNECT

HAVE A RECIPE OR ART
WORK TO SHARE, OR
A QUESTION TO ASK?

✉ @xpresstn

✉ cityexpresschennai@gmail.com

📱 @newindianexpress

FITBIT

SITTING ALL DAY? SIMPLE
EXERCISES CAN HELP
REDUCE STIFFNESS

Long hours at a desk, behind the wheel, or in front of a computer have become common for many people. While sitting is often unavoidable, staying in the same position for long periods can lead to tight muscles, poor posture, and reduced mobility. Fitness experts say that regular movement and targeted exercises can help reduce these effects. Prolonged sitting often tightens the muscles at the front of the body, including chest and hip flexors, while weakening the back and glute muscles. Adding a few stretches and strengthening exercises to your routine can help restore balance.

CAT-CAMEL STRETCH

Start on your hands and knees. Slowly round your back while tucking your chin, then gently arch your back and lift your head. Repeat 5 to 10 times to improve movement in the spine.

HIP FLEXOR STRETCH

Lie on your back and pull one knee towards your chest while extending the other leg. Hold for 15 seconds and switch sides. This helps loosen tight hip muscles caused by prolonged sitting.

CHEST STRETCH

Stand in a doorway and place your forearms against the frame. Lean forward gently until you feel a stretch across the chest. Hold for 15 to 20 seconds while breathing normally.

WALL SLIDES

Stand with your back against a wall and move your arms from a 'Y' position to a 'W' shape. This exercise improves shoulder movement and strengthens the upper back.

HIP THRUSTS

Rest on a bench or sturdy chair with your feet flat on the floor. Lift your hips until your body forms a straight line from shoulders to knees, then lower slowly. Repeat 10 to 12 times to strengthen the glutes.

BAND WALKS

Place a resistance band around your ankles and take small side steps while keeping your toes pointing forward. This activates the hip and glute muscles.



By Chandana Jagadeeshan, fitness expert, cult — a fitness and wellness platform

WHATWHENWHYWHERE

A summer line

Amethyst presents Endless Summer, a vibrant pop-up showcasing easy, breezy silhouettes crafted in beautiful textiles by an exciting line-up of designers including Meld Studio, Karnam, Paeony, Paramita Banerjee, and more.

📅 **WHEN:** Till July 15-19, 11 am to 7:30 pm



A sweet break

Misat, the 24-hour cafe at Turvaa Chennai, introduces a delightful mid-day indulgence this July with a classic pairing of freshly brewed cappuccino and a slice of cheesecake. Designed for guests seeking a simple yet comforting break, the offering brings together warm flavours in a relaxed cafe setting. For reservations: 7845085888 / 9597086814

📅 **WHEN:** Till July 30, 9 am to 9 pm



Midsummer collection

Raw Mango's Midsummer 2026 SOOTI collection is an ongoing exploration of handwoven cotton saris, with new expressions of weave, colour, and form.

📍 **WHERE:** Malligai, No. 2/15 Cenotaph 1st Lane, Ganapathy Colony Main Road, Teynampet. Also on rawmango.com



Unlimited evenings

Elevate your evenings at Samasa, Turvaa Chennai, with the Kebab & Beer Fiesta. Guests can indulge in a one-hour package featuring unlimited kebabs and beer.

📅 **WHEN:** Till July 31, 7:30 pm

₹ **Price:** ₹1,750 + taxes



Wardrobe calls

Amethyst presents 'Malli Kili', the latest collection by Anavila, presented alongside 'Sheetal Zaveri by Vithaldas' exquisite sterling silver jewellery collection.

📅 **WHEN:** Till July 14

Seasonal Pours

Above Sea Level at The Raintree, St. Mary's, presents Botanical Expressions, the latest chapter of its Seasonal Pours series. Inspired by seasonal ingredients and botanical finesse, the limited-time cocktail collection brings together premium spirits, fresh botanical, and contemporary flavours.

📅 **WHEN:** Till July 26



Karigar Bazaar

For the first time, Chennai will witness one of India's largest celebrations as Karigar Bazaar – Chennai Edition 2026 brings together over 200 artisans.

📅 **WHEN:** Till July 19

📍 **WHERE:** Mantra Gardens, Nandanam Extension



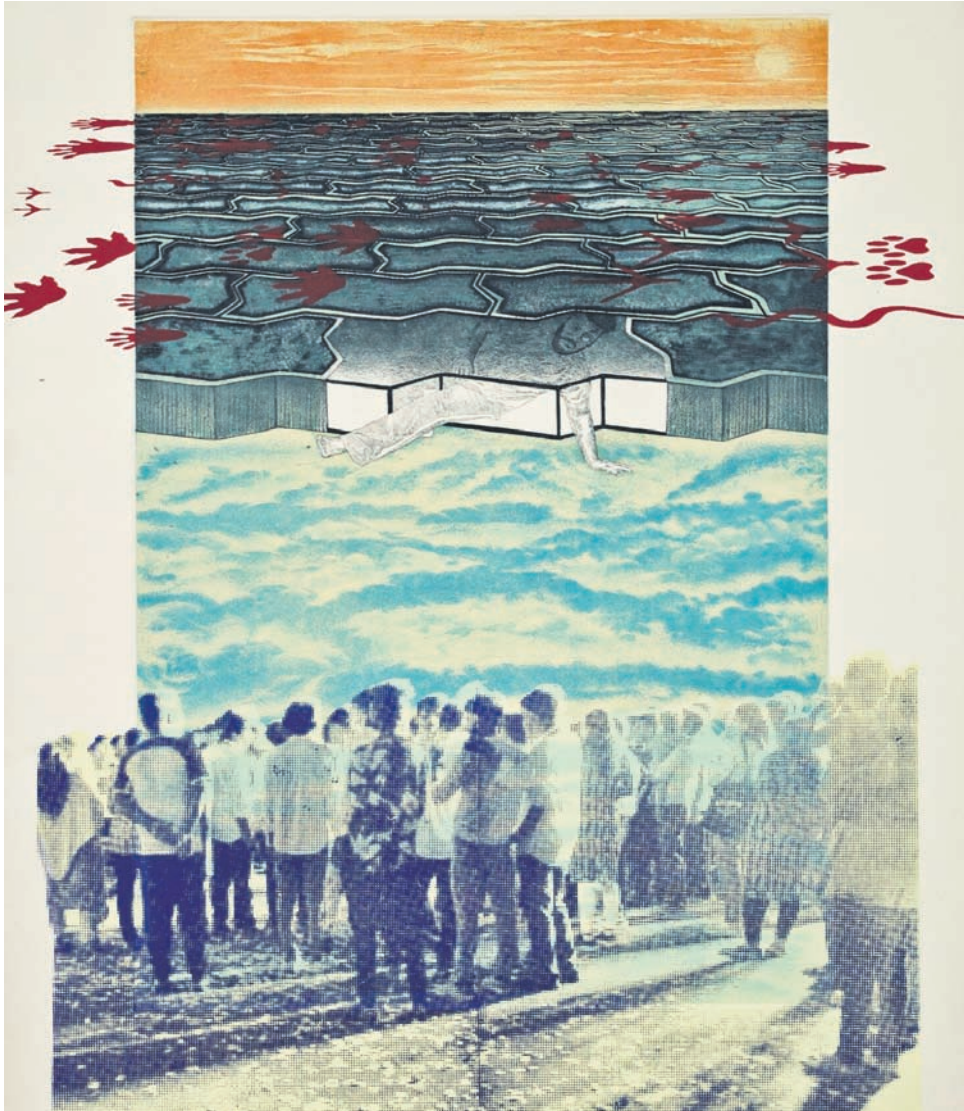
Feeling like BBQ?

This season, the grills are hotter, the flavours are bolder, and the experience is bigger than ever as Cappella, a global cuisine at The Palomar by Crossway, launches its much awaited BBQ Food Festival.

📅 **WHEN:** Till August 30, 11 am-11 pm



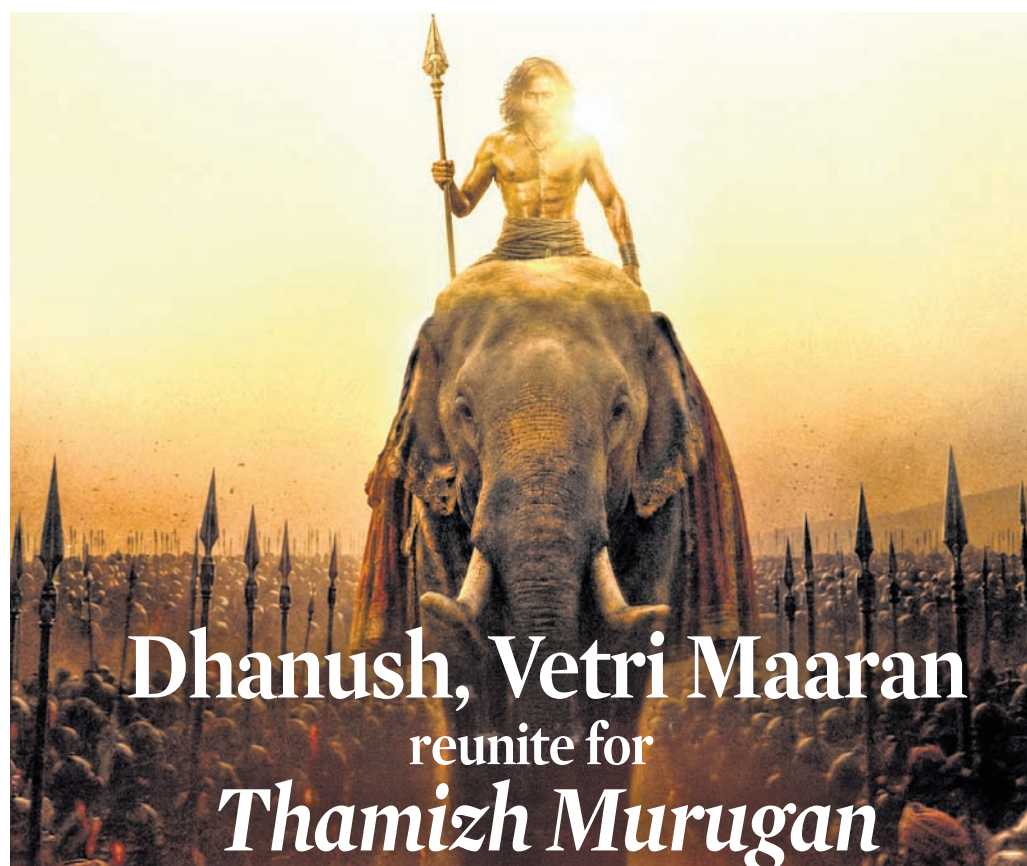
ARTCORNER



ECHOES OF SURVIVAL

In 'Cartography of Survival', artist Nitin Kumar creates a multi-layered landscape that maps the boundaries between collective human presence, systemic entrapment, and the raw instinct to endure.





Dhanush, Vetri Maaran reunite for *Thamizh Murugan*

THE *Vada Chennai* duo is back. On Friday, Dhanush announced that he will reunite with director Vetri Maaran for *Thamizh Murugan*. Sai Abhyankkar will compose music for the upcoming film, continuing his collaboration with Dhanush after *Om*. Dhanush will back *Thamizh Murugan* under his Wunderbar Films banner, while Arivumathi will serve as the film's writer. The banner Production Miles To Go will also back the

upcoming film. Although the makers are yet to confirm, reports state that Vijay Sethupathi is also part of



Thamizh Murugan. Vetri Maaran and Dhanush are also reuniting for *Vada Chennai II: Anbuvin Ezhuchi*, production on the film is yet to begin. Meanwhile, Vetri Maaran is currently filming *Arasan*, which stars Silambarasan TR in the lead and is set in the world of *Vada Chennai*.

On the other hand, Dhanush will next be seen in Rajkumar Periasamy's *Om*, which is set to release on October 15. The film's cast also includes Mammooty, Naseeruddin Shah, Sai Pallavi, and Sreeleela.



Jana Nayagan gears up for release

RECENTLY, we reported about Chief Minister Vijay's final film, *Jana Nayagan* being certified 'A' by the Censor Board after the makers of the film adhered to its 12 modification suggestions. Earlier this Saturday, the film's makers, Venkat K Narayana's KVN Productions, confirmed that it has received an 'A' certificate from the CBFC and that it will release in theatres soon.

The caption for the announcement poster also addressed Vijay as the Chief Minister for the first time in the film's promotional run. The makers are yet to announce the official release date, but it is expected to hit theatres towards the end of July. Directed by H Vinodh, *Jana Nayagan* also stars Mamitha Baiju, Pooja Hegde, Prakash Raj, Bobby Deol, Gautham Vasudev Menon, Priyaman, and Narain, among others. On the technical front, the upcoming film has composer Anirudh, cinematographer Sathyan Sooryan, editor Pradeep E Ragav, and production designer V Selvakumar.

'GD NAIDU'S LIFE SHOULD BE STUDIED IN SCHOOLS'



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

■ **Was portraying a real person a fun endeavor for you?**

As actors, we have to learn something new with each role. When I did *Rocketry: The Nambi Effect*, I learnt the science behind rockets, with GDN I learnt engineering and the vehicles built by GD Naidu, and the efforts taken to create those vehicles. But this learning is something I always enjoy.

■ **Did you face any challenges while doing a biopic?**

An actor has to express every emotion needed. Even when we stick to realism, we can only show two to three variations. But a tougher job is bringing freshness to your performance after years of experience, as every take can remind me of a *Minnale* (2001) or a *Thambi* (2006). I am driven by the desire for the audience to forget me as the film is playing on screen, and for them to remember that it is me after the film has ended.

■ **You have taken on very story-driven films these past few years...**

I completely believe that if I do four to five commercial films, they would all be successes. I can survive with that formulaic thinking for a while. But I am scared whenever I think about the kind of legacy I leave behind. When someone thinks

about Madhavan, will they only talk about the 'chocolate boy' era, or that I did some action and romantic films? So when this question arose, I wanted to work with storytellers of the next generation.

■ **But such story driven films are often at the risk of failing commercially...**

The only reason a film gets stuck in production is that it has not been made properly. An evolved people need an evolved storytelling structure. For example, in the *Dhurandhar* films, the narrative was fast paced even though it was two films. Even then, people could understand everything that was put in front of them. The success of a film doesn't just rely on the story; it depends on the filmmaker.

■ **Audiences also wish to see you in a film like *Run* (2002) again.**

I feel that if I do the same kind of films in my 50s as I did in my 20s, it wouldn't be appropriate. But I hope there is another Madhavan who does those kinds of films again.

■ **Do you think that audiences won't accept middle-aged women actors as they have accepted you now?**

That is not true. Take Jyotika, for example, even though she is not as old as me, she takes on roles typically reserved for younger actors and audiences



I feel that if I do the same kind of films in my 50s as I did in my 20s, it wouldn't be appropriate

—Madhavan



have accepted her. On the other hand, that is the job of the storyteller and not the actor. We had director Visu, whose stories featured middle-aged women in prominent roles. Now, there is a dearth of writers who can write those characters.

■ **You are now a recipient of the Padma Shri. How did that feel?**

I never expected it or pursued it. But it is a huge honour. Seeing Mammooty sir or anyone who was awarded along with me, I realised that most of them were everyday people who did

extraordinary feats without the expectation of a reward. I did feel slightly embarrassed receiving the Padma Shri along with such great people. While cinema may or may not bring real change, those people brought tangible changes to their hometowns.

■ **What will convince you that *GDN* has succeeded?**

When people across India learn about GD Naidu's life, write about his achievements, and an academic syllabus contains stories about him, I consider that a victory.



The *Nightingale* gets new release date

PUSHING the release date by a month, *The Nightingale* makers have announced that the film, starring Elle Fanning and Dakota Fanning, will release on March 19, 2027. Directed by Michael Morris, the film was originally planned for release on February 12, 2027. It will now clash with *Sonic the Hedgehog 4*. Written by Dana Stevens, *The Nightingale* is an adaptation of Kristin Hannah's novel of the same name. Along with the Fanning sisters, the film also stars Douglas Hodge, Shira Haas, Mark Rylance, Vinette Robinson, Gwilym Lee, Alrecht Schuch, and Edmund Donovan. Set against World War 2, the upcoming film follows two sisters who embark on separate and dangerous paths in the fight for survival, love, and freedom in German-occupied, war-torn France.



Operation Safed Sagar to premiere in August

SIDDHARTH and Jimmy Shergill's upcoming series *Operation Safed Sagar* is all set to premiere on Netflix on August 7. The show, inspired by the Indian Air Force's role in the 1999 Kargil War, also stars Abhay Verma, Adil Hussain, Mihir Ahuja, Taaruk Raina, Arnav Bhasin, Dia

Mirza, Prajakta Koli, and Amrta Bagchi. Directed by Oni Sen, the show has been created by Abhijeet Singh Parmar and Kushal Srivastava. The military drama tells an untold story of the Golden Arrows Squadron, who defied impossible odds and the people behind the operation, highlighting their courage, sacrifice,

and spirit, the OTT platform revealed in a statement. Producer Sanjay Rautray of Matchbox Shots LLP said the story demanded to be told with "honesty and scale". He added, "*Operation Safed Sagar* is a story that reminds us that the greatest acts of heroism are often driven by duty, sacrifice, and humanity.

Juliane Moore to star in Rebecca Miller's next

ACTORS Julianne Moore and Elle Fanning are set to share screen space in Rebecca Miller's upcoming film, *Moonson: A Life In Seven Verses*, which is the story of famous children's book author Margaret Wise Brown. Based on the book *Margaret Wise Brown: Awakened by the Moon* by Leonard S Marcus, *Moonson* is Miller's ninth film.

Moore, last seen alongside Sydney Sweeney in *Echo Valley* (2025), just completed filming for Tom Ford's *Cry to Heaven* and will next be seen in Jesse Eisenberg's *The Debut*. Fanning, meanwhile, stars in and produces *Margo's Got Money Troubles*. She will next be seen in *The Hunger Games: Sunrise on the Reaping*, *The Nightingale*, which she stars in and produces with her sister, Dakota Fanning, and in *Discretion*, where she stars opposite Nicole Kidman.

