WINDOWS

CM congratulates para-badminton silver medalist

CHENNAI: Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay on Wednesday congratulated the Indian men's doubles badminton team and Tamil Nadu para-athlete Sivarajan Solaimalai for winning the silver medal at the ongoing fifth Asian Para Games in Japan. In a social media post, Vijay announced a substantial cash incentive of Rs 50 lakh from the Tamil Nadu Government to honour Solaimalai's remarkable achievement. Praising the athlete's dedication and perseverance, the government noted that this victory serves as a powerful inspiration for aspiring para-athletes across the state, wishing him continued success in bringing further glory to Tamil Nadu and India.

Govt puts 8,200 personnel on alert as N-E monsoon intensifies

CHENNAI: Tamil Nadu has placed around 8,200 fire and rescue personnel on alert as the northeast monsoon intensifies, deploying specialist teams in vulnerable areas and mobilising boats, emergency equipment and volunteers to respond to flooding. The Tamil Nadu Fire and Rescue Services Department has directed its 375 fire stations and three rescue stations at Hogenakkal, Kotagiri and Chennai's Marina Beach to remain operational round the clock.

National and State Disaster Response Force teams have also been deployed in areas facing heavy rainfall. Police and fire personnel are monitoring approximately 4,400 locations identified by the State Disaster Management Authority as vulnerable to flooding. The fire department is separately maintaining surveillance over 1,343 low-lying locations across Tamil Nadu. Rescue teams have been positioned at 125 locations where previous floods caused significant casualties and property damage. Each deployment comprises 20 personnel equipped with rescue vehicles, rubber boats, drones and life jackets.District-level preparations include two commando teams, trained rescue swimmers and personnel specialising in rope operations. Equipment kept ready includes motorboats, rubber boats, power saws for removing fallen trees, pumps for draining floodwater, ropes and life jackets. Advanced devices, including rope launchers, rope riders and motion-imaging cameras, are available to help locate and rescue people trapped amid debris. Walkie-talkies have been readied to maintain communication if regular networks are disrupted, officials said.

Govt hikes contingency fund for police stations

CHENNAI: The Tamil Nadu government on Wednesday substantially hiked the monthly contingency fund for all police stations in the state, allocating over Rs 71 crore annually for the purpose. This hike will help "to prevent and eradicate corrupt practices," an official release from the government said.Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay announced the hike during the demand for grants for the police department for the year 2026-27 in Assembly, the release added. The initiative is designed to meet the rising day-to-day administrative and operational expenses of police stations. The government noted that enhancing these funds will reduce the stations' dependence on unofficial financial sources, thereby helping to prevent and eradicate corrupt practices. Under the revised structure, police stations across the state have been classified into three categories based on the volume of crimes registered.The monthly contingency fund allocation has been increased from Rs 3,750 to Rs 30,000 for the first category, from Rs 6,000 to Rs 40,000 for the second category, and from Rs 8,250 to Rs 50,000 for the third category.

Modi expresses grief over demise of Sengol craftsman Vummidi Ethiraj

Chennai

Recalls his contribution to India's heritage

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi has expressed grief over the passing of Vummidi Ethiraj, remembering his role in crafting the historic Sengol presented to India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, and honouring his contribution to the country's cultural heritage.

The master craftsman, who was born on November 25, 1926, passed away on Wednesday.In a condolence message issued in English and Tamil, PM Modi recalled Ethiraj's association with the sceptre, which was installed in the new Parliament building in 2023.

He extended his condolences to the craftsman's family and admirers. The Prime Minister said Ethiraj belonged to a distinguished family based in Tamil Nadu and would be remembered for helping create an object closely associated with India's journey to Independence.

PM Modi also recalled meeting Ethiraj when the Sengol received renewed national attention during preparations for the inauguration of the new Parliament building.He said the meeting provided an opportunity to thank the veteran craftsman for his service to the nation and its culture.

Describing the installation as an honour for his government, PM Modi said the decision gave the Sengol a prominent place in Parliament, bringing its history and craftsmanship before a new generation.

His tribute highlighted the connection between traditional artistic skills and the country's national story, recognising Ethiraj's work as part of a cultural legacy that continued to resonate decades after the sceptre was made.

The Sengol was crafted by the Chennai-based Vummidi Bangaru Chetty family and presented to Nehru in 1947. Its installation near the Lok Sabha Speaker's chair on May 28, 2023, brought renewed recognition to the family and the artisans associated with its creation.

For Ethiraj, that recognition connected work undertaken around the time of Independence with a major event in contemporary parliamentary history. His meeting with PM Modi became part of the public acknowledgement of the family's contribution.

The Prime Minister's message focused on both that historical association and the human skill behind the Sengol. He remembered Ethiraj as a craftsman whose life reflected the enduring relationship between India's traditions and its national development.

The tribute also drew attention to the people behind historic objects, acknowledging how their skills can preserve cultural memory across generations. In recalling their meeting, PM Modi placed Ethiraj's personal contribution alongside the wider significance attached to the Sengol.PM Modi concluded by conveying sympathy to the bereaved family and those who admired Ethiraj, ending his message with the prayer, "Om Shanti".

EPS grip on AIADMK machinery could blunt fresh leadership challenges

Chennai

AIADMK General Secretary, Edappadi K Palaniswami, faces renewed questions over his leadership following the party's defeats in the Madurantakam and Dharapuram Assembly bye-elections, but his control over its organisational machinery could limit efforts to mount an internal challenge.

Senior leaders S.P. Velumani and C Ve Shanmugam are reportedly seeking a leadership change amid dissatisfaction over the party's electoral performance.However, Palaniswami's earlier organisational changes are believed to have strengthened his position within the General Council, the body central to any leadership contest.

The removal of dissenting functionaries from key posts has reduced their influence within the party and narrowed their ability to mobilise support.Changes affecting their representation and voting strength have also made it harder for disgruntled leaders to translate dissatisfaction into an effective challenge.

Several functionaries associated with the Velumani faction reportedly lost organisational positions, weakening the group's district-level networks.Their reduced presence in the party structure has given Palaniswami an advantage as demands grow for a General Council meeting to review the bypoll setbacks.

With around 2,300 members, the General Council has emerged as the principal arena for the unfolding struggle.Palaniswami's supporters are believed to command a majority, potentially allowing him to withstand criticism and retain control even if a meeting is convened.

For the dissenters, a council meeting would provide an opportunity to question electoral strategy, organisational decisions and the leadership's response to successive setbacks.Their immediate task, however, would be to secure support beyond their existing circles and demonstrate that their concerns reflect broader sentiment.

The defeats have supplied fresh grounds for demands for accountability, but electoral disappointment alone may not alter the internal balance of power.Any attempt to press for leadership change would require substantial backing within the council and among influential district functionaries. Palaniswami, meanwhile, must manage discontent while responding to concerns about the AIADMK's ability to regain electoral momentum.His organisational strength offers protection against an immediate revolt, although it does not resolve the political questions raised by the results.

The coming weeks could test whether dissatisfied leaders can build a wider coalition or whether Palaniswami's command of the party structure will keep the challenge contained.

For now, the balance appears to favour the general secretary, with his critics facing a considerable gap between expressing dissent and securing the numbers needed to act.

CM launches state-wide rainwater harvesting awareness campaign

Chennai

TAMIL Nadu Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay on Wednesday launched a state-wide awareness campaign to promote rainwater harvesting, unveiling a dedicated logo and a mascot named 'Thuli'.

During the event, Vijay inspected models of rainwater harvesting systems designed to encourage water conservation among the public.The mascot, 'Thuli', which means a drop of water, is depicted as a blue water character carrying a house, highlighting the importance of rainwater harvesting in residential buildings.

The campaign comes ahead of the Northeast monsoon, the state's primary source of rainfall.The initiative follows a petition submitted by Chennai Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs) in mid-September, urging the CM to strictly enforce rainwater harvesting norms across the city and launch large-scale public awareness programmes on water conservation, official sources said.

Maiden Durga Puja celebrations at IIT Madras a big success

Kolkata

THE first ever Durga Puja held with the campus of the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras turned out to be a great hit, with more than 2,500 people attending over the last four days. The Durga Puja has been organised by the IIT Madras Bengali community in association with Diganto.

Diganto is an independent student body and cultural club under Sangam -- the institute's cultural club umbrella.It celebrates Bengali culture, language and festivals on campus."The five-day festivities bring the vibrant traditions and cultural spirit of Bengal to the campus, from Sasthi evening to Vijaya Dashami," IIT Madras said in a statement.

From Vedic chanting, Homam and Arati to the participation of IIT Madras Director V. Kamakoti, who joined the rituals and chanted chapters from the Durga Saptashati, the celebrations are filled with devotion, cultural heritage and community spirit," it said.

The Puja was organised at the institute's community hall and everybody, including people from the neighbourhood were encouraged to participate."It has brought together students, faculty, staff, campus families and visitors from across Chennai, reflecting the inclusive spirit of IIT Madras," the institute said.

A professor said how attention was paid to every detail. There were some who got the opportunity to participate in a Durga Puja for a first time and all the rituals were explained to them."It turned out to be a cultural melting point. Locals, as well as people from other regions in the country participated wholeheartedly. That is what made the effort a great success," he added.

Chennai has about 8-10 prominent Durga Pujas organised by the Bengali community.The scale of the festivities draws people from the state to participate.Durga Puja is primarily celebrated in a big way in the country's eastern states, comprising West Bengal, Odisha, Bihar, Jharkhand, and the Northeastern states of Assam and Tripura.

There are subtle variations across the states, though the primary theme remains intact."By organising the Durga Puja for the first time on campus, the students, teachers, and staff have paved the way for an integration of culture. At the same time, Bengali students and families living on campus get a feel of being at home during this festive occassion," the professor noted."The event was not only about religion, but an exchange of culture," he said.

People got to learn of the traditional offerings made to the Goddess, such as the concept of Bhog.They got to learn about the significance of rituals like Sandhi Puja."People got to know how the Goddess is treated as a daughter during Durga Puja.

Tomorrow, they will witness her send-off, as she sets off for Lord Shiva's abode in Mt. Kailash with her children," the teacher said.

PMK urges govt to allocate adequate funds for rural employment scheme

Chennai

PMK president Anbumani Ramadoss on Wednesday urged the Tamil Nadu government to allocate sufficient funds for the rural employment guarantee scheme, calling the state's recent allocation of Rs 100 crore an ineffective gesture that falls drastically short of what is required to provide additional work days.

In a statement, the PMK leader stated that while the Tamil Nadu government's objective to provide 150 days of employment annually under the Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-G RAM G) scheme is commendable, the funds earmarked for the initiative are grossly inadequate. "Although the initial announcement of providing 150 days of work featured in the TVK election manifesto, the central government recently modified the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) to increase guaranteed work from 100 to 125 days per year," he said, adding, "to cover the remaining 25 days, the state government issued an order allocating Rs 100 crore."

Anbumani questioned the feasibility of implementing the poll promise with such a "minuscule" fund.Stating that 81.08 lakh families in Tamil Nadu have registered under the scheme, with 69.11 lakh families actively seeking and receiving work, Anbumani said the breakdown of daily expenses per worker includes a direct wage of Rs 271.38, material and skilled labour costs of Rs 208.64, and administrative costs of Rs 53.

"Together, the daily cost per beneficiary amounts to Rs 532.02, shared by the central and state governments," he said and claimed that to provide employment for 69.11 lakh active families across the state, the government requires Rs 367.68 crore per day. Pointing out that since the additional 25 days of employment are a state initiative, the entire financial burden must be borne by the Tamil Nadu government, he said providing 25 days of extra work would require at least Rs 9,192 crore, making the allocated Rs 100 crore merely 1.08 per cent of the required budget, which is a sum insufficient to fund even a single day of work for all beneficiaries.

The former union minister called upon the state government to hold negotiations with the Centre to secure the required funds while simultaneously increasing its own budget allocation to uplift rural livelihoods.

Chennai Corporation's first food court delayed, opening pushed to 2027

Chennai

RESIDENTS will have to wait until 2027 to visit the Greater Chennai Corporation's first food court, with construction of the Rs 4.24-crore facility at Indira Nagar Third Avenue in Adyar progressing well behind its original schedule.

Only about 40 per cent of the project has been completed, more than a year after it was announced. Initially scheduled to welcome visitors during Pongal 2026, the food court missed that deadline and a subsequent opening target in August. The Corporation is developing the facility on land occupied by an unused shopping complex belonging to the civic body. A portion of the old complex was demolished to make way for the project, with foundation and structural work beginning earlier this year. The food court will accommodate 30 shops in two sizes. Smaller outlets will measure 110 square feet each, while the larger units will cover 220 square feet.

Announced on July 7, 2025, the project was expected to bring food outlets together at a single Corporation-owned location. However, the slow pace of construction has repeatedly pushed back the date on which residents can use the facility. Corporation officials attributed the delay to the 2026 Assembly election and the subsequent change in government. Structural work on the shops is now expected to be completed by December, according to a senior GCC official. Completion of the buildings, however, will not immediately pave the way for opening the food court. The Corporation must also select an operator through a tender process scheduled to begin in January 2027. The civic body has decided to adopt a revenue-sharing arrangement under a public-private partnership model. Instead of directly renting individual shops to restaurant brands, franchises or other food businesses, it will lease the entire facility to a single operator.

Political repression, says BJP chief on NTK leader Karthika's arrest

Chennai

TAMIL Nadu BJP president NainarNagenthran has condemned the arrest of Karthika, the Naam Tamilar Katchi (NTK) candidate in the recent Dharapuram Assembly by-election, accusing Chief Minister Vijay's government of using the police to settle political scores.

In a post on X, Nagenthran alleged that the early-morning arrest on Tuesday of Karthika and other NTK functionaries amounted to political repression. He said retaliatory action against opponents was incompatible with healthy politics and strongly condemned attempts to silence women participating in public life.

Karthika, who contested the Dharapuram bypoll on behalf of the NTK, was arrested in connection with cases reportedly registered during the election period. The action has drawn criticism from opposition parties, which have accused the ruling TVK government of targeting political rivals.

Questioning the circumstances of the arrest, Nagenthran alleged that police entered Karthika's residence around 5 a.m. He asked why such an operation was necessary against a woman who is the mother of two daughters.

"What kind of terrorist is Karthika that the police had to enter her house at five in the morning to arrest her?" he asked.The BJP president questioned why the police could not have issued a summons and asked her to appear before investigators instead of taking her into custody in this manner.

He also alleged that the operation violated restrictions governing the arrest of women between sunset and sunrise. His post did not indicate whether police had obtained judicial permission for the early-morning arrest or explain the precise charges against her.

Nagenthran asked whether the treatment of Karthika reflected the respect the Vijay government extended to women in public life. He described the action as harassment and an attempt to suppress women who express political opinions. He further accused the government of concentrating on alleged wrongdoing by opposition members while overlooking allegations involving ruling-party functionaries.

Referring to allegations of sexual offences and drug-related activities involving party members, he claimed that political hostility was diverting the government's attention from its responsibilities.Nagenthran urged the Chief Minister to stop using the law according to personal preferences and political dislikes and instead ensure that law enforcement agencies prioritised public safety. His criticism followed the AIADMK's condemnation of Karthika's arrest, adding to opposition pressure on the government over its handling of election-related cases against political opponents.