

GCC generates 665 tonnes of bio-CNG at its Chetpet plant

36,726 tonnes of wet waste collected from hotels and markets was utilised at the facility, which has a 100-tonne processing capacity. The city generates 5,500 tonnes of municipal solid waste daily

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

The Greater Chennai Corporation has generated 665 tonnes of bio-compressed natural gas (bio-CNG) at its Chetpet plant by utilising waste collected from va-

rious areas.

According to a press release, Corporation Commissioner J. Radhakrishnan on Wednesday inspected the facility developed at Chetpet after the demolition of the Central Asphalt Plant. The facility has the capacity to process

100 tonnes of waste. A total of 36,726 tonnes of wet waste collected from hotels and markets was utilised to generate 665 tonnes of bio-CNG. The city generates 5,500 tonnes of municipal solid waste every day.

Mr. Radhakrishnan also inspected the bio-mining

site at the Perungudi dumpyard. Work on bio-mining of 34.02 lakh cubic metre of waste has been taken up in the 225 acres of land near the Pallikaranai marshland. He also inspected work on the recycling of debris in Perungudi, the release said.



Corporation Commissioner J. Radhakrishnan inspecting the bio-mining site at Perungudi on Wednesday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Bio-CNG

- Bio-CNG is a purified form of biogas with over 95% pure methane gas
- It is similar to natural gas in its composition (97% methane) and energy potential
- While natural gas is a fossil fuel, bio-CNG is a renewable form of energy produced from agricultural and food waste
- A typical bio-CNG station comprises a biogas purification unit, a compressor, and a high-pressure storage system
- Bio-CNG is being looked at as an environment-friendly alternative to diesel

What is Biomining?

- Biomining is **mineral processing with microbes**.
- Biomining is the process of using microorganisms (microbes) to extract metals of economic interest from rock ores or mine waste.
- Biomining techniques may also be used to clean up sites that have been polluted with metals.
- Valuable metals are commonly bound up in solid minerals. Some microbes can oxidize those metals, allowing them to dissolve in water. This is the basic process behind most biomining, which is used for metals that can be more easily recovered when dissolved than from the solid rocks.

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12/24, Muthurangan Muthali St, West Tambaram, Chennai - 600045

<https://www.evastaliniasacademy.in/>

Contact Number - +91-8678969915, +91-9940332851

+ Justice S. Vaidyanathan appointed Acting Chief Justice of Madras HC; incumbent T. Raja retires from service

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

President Droupadi Murmu has appointed Justice S. Vaidyanathan, the senior most judge of the Madras High Court, as its Acting Chief Justice (ACJ) from Thursday, since the incumbent ACJ, T. Raja, retired from service on Wednesday.

He is expected to per-

form the duties of the Chief Justice until the Centre takes a call on the Supreme Court Collegium's recommendation to appoint Bombay High Court's ACJ S.V. Gangapurwala as the Chief Justice of Madras High Court. Justice Vaidyanathan was born in Coimbatore on August 17, 1962, and did his schooling at Singaram Pillai High School in Villivakkam in

The ACJ designate was elevated as an additional judge of Madras High Court on October 25, 2013, and became a permanent judge on April 14, 2015

Chennai. He obtained a degree in economics from D.G. Vaishnav College in

1982, and studied at the Madras Law College. He got enrolled as an advocate on August 27, 1986, and practiced in the Madras High Court where his paternal grandfather L.S. Vaidyanathan had served as a Superintendent in the Copyist Section before retiring from service in 1952.

Justice Vaidyanathan's father V. Subramanian started his life as a shoe

polish-seller and grew to be a committed trade unionist and the founder-member of the Madras Commercial Employees Union, the first white-collared employees' union in 1946.

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Justice S. Vaidyanathan

Sceptre which symbolised transfer of power in 1947 to be installed at new Parliament

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will install a sceptre called the *Sengol*, which was given by the British to India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru to represent the transfer of power in 1947, in the new Parliament building that will be inaugurated on May 28, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said on Tuesday.

The sceptre, which was kept in a museum in Prayagraj, formerly Allahabad, will be installed near the podium of the Lok Sabha Speaker.

"*Sengol* makes the spirit of August 15, 1947 unforgettable and the Parliament House is the most appropriate and sacred place to install it," Mr. Shah said. "Transfer of power is not a

mere exchange of documents; it is done when the government runs according to traditions and culture. *Sengol* in new Parliament building indicates the sentiments espoused by Nehruji in 1947."

It was originally used to mark the handing over of power from one king to another during the Chola dynasty in Tamil Nadu, he said.

The five-feet-long intricately carved, unbending gold-plated silver sceptre, with a finial of Nandi (bull deity), was specially commissioned by the then Thiruvavaduthurai Adheenam (pontiff) and was handed over to Nehru. The Thiruvavaduthurai math is located in Mayiladuthurai district of Tamil Nadu, at the heart of the erstwhile Chola kingdom, in the delta



Chola connect: Union Home Minister Amit Shah addressing a press conference on the installation of *Sengol* (seen on the backdrop). ANI

area of the Cauvery.

Sengol is derived from Tamil word *semmai*, which means righteousness. When a new king is crowned, he would be presented with a *Sengol* during the coronation by the high priest. The *Sengol* reminds the recipient that he has the *aanai* (order or de-

cree) to rule justly.

It was freedom fighter C. Rajagopalachari who approached the Thiruvavaduthurai math head seeking help in the making of the *Sengol*. The seer then tasked the craftsmen from Vummidi Bangaru, a jeweller in Madras, with the work.

Mr. Shah said the sceptre was accepted by the first Prime Minister of India at his residence on the night of August 14, 1947 in the presence of several leaders. "Even after 75 years of Independence, most of the people in India are not aware of this event. Nehru received the *Sengol* from the Adheenams of Tamil Nadu, who had specially arrived for the occasion," the Union Minister said.

"All 20 Adheenam presidents will also be present to shower their blessings in reminiscence of this sacred ritual. I am glad that 96-year-old Vummidi Bangaru Chettyji, associated with its construction, will also participate," Mr. Shah said. (With inputs from Sai Charan N. in Mayiladuthurai)

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New species of gecko identified in Pakkamalai Hills in Villupuram district

The new species is named as *Hemidactylus pakkamalaiensis* after the hill where it has been recorded. The gecko measures 104 mm from snout to vent (10.4 cm) and is light brown in colour

S. Prasad
VILLUPURAM

A team of researchers have identified a new species of rock dwelling large-bodied gecko from the Pakkamalai Hills near Gingee in the southern Eastern Ghats in Villupuram district. This is said to be the first ever sighting of this gecko and the new species has been named as *Hemidactylus pakkamalaiensis* after the hill where it was recorded.

A team of researchers led by V. Deepak, Surya Narayanan, P. Christopher, K. Raman, S. Vimalraj, Prabh N. Ponnudi, N. Mukherjee and M. Lenin, discovered the gecko during an expedition on the hills. The findings have been published in *Vertebrate Zoology*, an international journal.

The gecko measures 104 mm from snout to vent (10.4 cm) and is light brown in colour. The genus *Hemidactylus* *goldfuss* has 188 species, of which 54 are known from India. Members of this group are primarily known to inhabit gigantic boulders.

The new species can be easily distinguished from other geckos in the region by its large size and prominent tubercles on the body.



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Of the 54 species recorded from India, as many as nine species are restricted to the Western Ghats, while the rest are distributed throughout peninsular India. The species discovered off Gingee now increases the total number of species of *Hemidactylus* in India to 55.

According to V. Deepak, a herpetologist and scientist of University of Wolverhampton who was part of the expedition, "We first spotted the gecko in 2022. This was followed by months of study, which included analysing the morphological features of one of these three undescribed lineages, utilising fresh materials from the

Gingee hills in the southern Eastern Ghats, followed by molecular analysis."

He said, "The new species is altogether different from other large-bodied congeners (organisms of the same genus) by several non-overlapping morphological characteristics. Although *Hemidactylus pakkamalaiensis* is genetically related to *H. easai* and *H. graniticus*, it differs significantly from these closely related species by having fewer femoral pores with a count of 19-21 as compared to 24-28 in the two latter species."

"The Gingee hills are characterised by a significant presence of gigantic

rock boulders that provide a suitable micro-habitat for rock-dwelling geckos. This combination of vegetation and the microhabitats availability likely provided an ambient microclimatic condition that facilitated the diversification of this species. However, our survey found that *H. pakkamalaiensis* was present in all types of habitats. This species is also nocturnal," said R. Surya Narayanan, a researcher from Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology, and the Environment (ATREE).

'Ecological significance'

According to S. Vimalraj, a naturalist, "The Pakkamalai Hills boasts a rich tapestry of rare and endangered flora and fauna and the recent discovery of the gecko further contributes to its ecological significance. The region is an ecological treasure and should be conserved."

According to K. Raman of Indigenous Biodiversity Foundation (IBF), a Puducherry-based non-profit organisation, "Several endemic, endangered and critically endangered flora and fauna have been recorded in Pakkamalai Hills over the years, which shows the abundant biodiversity in the region."

'Magilchi' helps police personnel de-stress, overcome anger issues

The psycho-social support programme was launched in June 2022 to engage mental health professionals for the personnel of the Greater Chennai Police. The aim is to reduce substance-addiction and gambling

R. Sivaraman
CHENNAI

A 38-year-old constable faced disciplinary action after he beat up a member of the public. During the inquiry, officers analysed the circumstances that led to the act and found him having had resentment against his superiors. He was a habitual drinker and had abdominal pain and diabetes. He had struggled with public interaction and had anger issues.

Noting his abnormal behaviour, the senior police officers referred him, as an inpatient, to a private hospital for rehabilitation under a new programme. Though he made excuses to avoid admission, he was admitted to the hospital. The therapists there created a safety net to protect him from self-harm. After treatment, he recovered from alcohol addiction. He has been performing his duty without any complaint.

Likewise, when a 37-year-old female constable was irregular, senior officers found that she had matrimonial disputes and suicidal tendencies. She was given counselling by a panel of therapists arranged by the Greater Chennai Police under a psycho-social support programme. She was cured of depression. She is



Police personnel taking part in a group session. So far, 1,781 personnel and family members have benefited from counselling. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

being monitored regularly with medications and individual counselling.

The psycho-social support programme, 'Magilchi' (Maximizing Ability Growth, Ideal Life Choices Independences), was launched in June 2022 to engage mental health professionals for the personnel of the Greater Chennai Police. "We have introduced the programme to reduce substance-addiction, predominantly alcohol among the personnel, gambling and online addiction...", Greater Chennai Police Commissioner Shankar Jiwali said.

The personnel are screened for alcohol and substance dependence; suicidal

ideation; stress; misbehaviour with the public or colleagues; and chronic illness. The case history of the personnel, along with family dynamics, is assessed by the therapists and the details are submitted to the consultant psychiatrist. After a treatment procedure is formulated, regular clinical follow-ups are done through therapists.

Initial assessment

"After screening, a 21-day programme is held. On the first day, an initial assessment is made to know the treatment needs of the personnel individually. Based on the assessment, 10 days of detoxification, coupled with

counselling, is given at a hospital. This is followed by exclusive counselling for personnel and family members for 10 days at a special centre at Velachery," Mr. Jiwali said.

"Accommodation, food and other facilities are provided at the hospital. A multi-speciality team will treat those having medical co-morbidity," he said. So far, 1,781 police personnel and family members have benefited from counselling. The programme has yielded good results, he added.

K. Sekar, professor of the National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS), said initially many personnel avoided joining 'Magilchi' to avoid stigma. "We are giving individual counselling, motivation counselling, group counselling and de-addiction therapy. Telephone psychiatric consultations are also being given to improve drug and treatment adherence. On seeing the results, many are coming forward to attend the programme." Police personnel who are under stress can contact +91-6380977682 for relief.

(Assistance for overcoming suicidal thoughts is also available on the State's health helpline 104, Tele-MANAS 14416, and Sneha's suicide prevention helpline 044-24640050.)

Independence of judiciary is part of basic structure of Constitution: SC

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has held that the independence of district judiciary is part of the basic structure of the Constitution and judicial independence from the executive and the legislature requires the judiciary to have a say in matters of finances.

"The independence of the district judiciary must also be equally a part of the basic structure of the Constitution. Without impartial and independent judges in the district judiciary, justice, a preambular goal, would remain illusory. The district judiciary is, in most cases, also the court which is most accessible to the litigant," a three-judge



Judiciary must possess the power to compel payment of money which is necessary to carry out its mandated responsibilities

SUPREME COURT

Bench of Chief Justice D.Y. Chandrachud, Justices V. Ramasubramanian and P.S. Narasimha observed in a judgment.

The judgment, based on a petition filed by the All India Judges Association, gave a series of directions to amend the service rules of the district judiciary and for payment of arrears of pension, additional pen-

sion, gratuity and other retiral benefits.

The directions were based on the recommendations made in the report of the court-appointed Second National Judicial Pay Commission headed by Justice P.V. Reddi (retired) as its chairman with senior advocate R. Basant as its member.

Crucial role

The judgment records the crucial role played by the district judiciary in the justice administration system by recording the submissions made by its *amicus curiae*, advocate K. Parameshwar, that "on a single day, the district judiciary handled nearly 11.3 lakh cases".

Justice Narasimha said

the district judiciary was the backbone of the judicial system. "Vital to the judicial system is the independence of the judicial officers. To secure their impartiality, it is important to ensure their financial security and economic independence," the top court noted.

The judgment highlighted the doctrine that the "judiciary must possess the inherent power to compel payment of those sums of money which are reasonable and necessary to carry out its mandated responsibilities".

"This doctrine is only the logical conclusion of separation of powers and ensures that the independence of the judiciary is secured," the court said.