

# Govt. should add millets in Public Distribution System, says Soumya Swaminathan

The MSSRF chairperson says the govt. can make available facilities like public parks for people to exercise, and the change in dietary pattern is the main reason for the increase in diabetes

**The Hindu Bureau**  
CHENNAI

**A**s the data on diabetes epidemic in India are frightening, the government can provide a more healthier and balanced basket of products in the Public Distribution System (PDS) by including millets, and make available facilities such as public parks for people to exercise, MS Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF) chairperson Soumya Swaminathan said on Friday.

She was addressing mediapersons on the international conference on mighty millets for food, nutrition and health security, to be held from August 6 to 8 at MSSRF, Taramani.

Dr. Swaminathan said some of the rice being given through the PDS should be replaced with millets and *dal*. Pointing to a high-carbohydrate diet with lack of dietary diversity and physi-



From left, E.D. Israel Oliver King, MSSRF director-biodiversity; Soumya Swaminathan, MSSRF chairperson; and G.N. Hariharan, MSSRF executive director, at a press conference on Friday.

cal exercise, she said, "Too much of rice is driving the diabetes epidemic in India. The data is frightening. The change in dietary pattern is the main reason for the increase in diabetes."

MSSRF executive director G.N. Hariharan stressed the need for strengthening the State government's initiative to supply ragi at ration shops by including more farmers.

The key attractions of the conference are the mil-

let exhibition at MSSRF campus and the Public Forum in the evening at CLRI, he said.

MSSRF director-biodiversity E.D. Israel Oliver King said the government had initiated policy interventions in the country to support cultivation and consumption of millets.

The panellists at the conference will deliberate on various policy avenues and the best practices to enhance production and sus-

tainable use of millets.

## **Innovative research**

The conference will explore innovative research and development initiatives for millets and facilitate networking and partnerships nationally and internationally. Start-ups, private companies and entrepreneurs are expected to get an opportunity to network with scientists and farmers in developing more products from millets.

# Proportion of T.N.'s own revenue to revenue expenditure slid for much of past six years

It was all downhill for Tamil Nadu between 2017-18 and 2020-21. In the two years after the COVID-19 pandemic, the situation had improved. But the State is yet to return to the 2017-18 level. A higher proportion will lessen the State's reliance on other revenue sources and lower its revenue deficit

**T. Ramakrishnan**  
CHENNAI

**T**he proportion of Tamil Nadu's own revenue to revenue expenditure has been declining for much of the last six years.

If a State achieves a higher proportion, its reliance on other sources, including borrowings, will go down proportionately and revenue deficit will be lower. (The term, 'own revenue', means the sum of the State's Own Tax Revenue (SOTR) and Non-Tax Revenue).

## Post-pandemic

Union Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary's reply to John Brittas of the CPI(M) on the revenue of the States in the Rajya Sabha on August 1 revealed that it was all downhill for Tamil Nadu between 2017-18 and 2020-21. In the two years after the COVID-19 pandemic,

## Revenue reckoner

Tamil Nadu's performance in own revenue collection

| Year    | State's own revenue (₹ in crore) | Revenue expenditure (₹ in crore) | Own revenue as % of revenue expenditure |
|---------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|
| 2017-18 | 1,07,236.17                      | 1,67,873.60                      | 63.88                                   |
| 2018-19 | 1,20,337.68                      | 1,97,200.60                      | 61.02                                   |
| 2019-20 | 1,20,350.13                      | 2,10,434.70                      | 57.19                                   |
| 2020-21 | 1,16,574.80                      | 2,36,402.20                      | 49.31                                   |
| 2021-22 | 1,33,688.48                      | 2,59,150.97                      | 51.59                                   |
| 2022-23 | 1,58,337.17                      | 2,84,188.45                      | 55.72                                   |

Note: State's own revenue is the sum of State's own tax revenue and non-tax revenue

Proportion of own revenue in revenue expenditure: How other States fare (in %)

| Year    | Andhra Pradesh | Telangana | Karnataka | Maharashtra | Gujarat | Uttar Pradesh |
|---------|----------------|-----------|-----------|-------------|---------|---------------|
| 2017-18 | 46.39          | 77.32     | 67.95     | 77.98       | 75.15   | 48.61         |
| 2018-19 | 49.06          | 77.3      | 63.49     | 76.47       | 70.78   | 50.68         |
| 2019-20 | 44.31          | 68.9      | 63.15     | 67.68       | 68.92   | 68.44         |
| 2020-21 | 39.83          | 59.05     | 59.61     | 58.02       | 53.59   | 44.13         |
| 2021-22 | 45.5           | 74.78     | 61.54     | 62.25       | 72.92   | 49.32         |
| 2022-23 | 49.03          | 70.6      | 67.37     | 66.31       | 76.03   | 53.51         |

Source: Union Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary's reply in Rajya Sabha on August 1, 2023

the situation had improved. But the State was yet to return to the 2017-18 level, when its own revenue

was 63.88% of revenue expenditure.

A comparison with six other States, including

three in the southern region, shows that during the period in question, Tamil Nadu's figure was low-

er than those of Telangana, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Gujarat, while the State fared better than Andhra Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh.

As for the declining trend after 2017-18, K.R. Shanmugam, Director of the Madras School of Economics, says the growth of the Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) declined "continuously from 2017-18 to 2020-21", affecting the State's own revenue collection and forcing the government to borrow. In the same period, the revenue expenditure growth was higher than the own revenue. Interest payments increased faster because of the high level of debts, pushing up the revenue expenditure.

## Debt takeover

K. Shanmugam, former Chief Secretary, who was the Finance Secretary during 2010-19, points out that one of the compo-

nents that contributed to the rise in the revenue expenditure was the government's decision in 2017 to take over ₹22,815 crore in debts of the Tamil Nadu Generation and Distribution Corporation (TANGEDCO) and have it converted into grants for five years, with an annual instalment of ₹4,563 crore. Another factor was the lag effect of the implementation of the Pay Commission's recommendations, effective October 2017. He acknowledges that the growth of SOTR was not in tune with that of GSDP.

As for the ever-rising revenue expenditure, Mr. Shanmugam cites Tamil Nadu's "consistent focus" on welfare schemes, a feature which may not be there in many other States. A Finance Department official says that in the past two years, there has been an improvement in the proportion of SOTR to GSDP.



## Giant flying squirrel electrocuted + in the Nilgiris in 4<sup>th</sup> such death

**The Hindu Bureau**  
UDHAGAMANDALAM

A fourth Indian giant flying squirrel (*Petaurascia philippensis*) died of electrocution in recent months within Udhagamandalam town on Friday.

The animal, which is rarely spotted because of its being a nocturnal species, is usually seen in plantations and Shola forests in the Upper Nilgiris and is more difficult to spot than its counterpart, the Malabar giant squirrel, in the Nilgiris.

On Friday, local residents noticed the carcass of the animal near Hill Bunk in Udhagamandalam and informed the Forest Department, which took possession of it.

A post-mortem was conducted on the remains of the animal. Residents and Forest Department workers said this was the fourth death of a squirrel due to electrocution in Udhagamandalam over the last few months. Flying squirrels are prone to electrocution as they



The giant flying squirrel that was found electrocuted near Hill Bunk in Udhagamandalam on Friday.

M. SATHYAMOORTHY

glide into power lines running close to reserve forests and wooded areas.

Local conservationists said the deaths highlighted the impact of power infrastructure on the wildlife in the biodiverse areas.

"Only when larger animals, such as elephants or leopards, get ensnared in infrastructure for the electricity grid, does it make for news. However, smaller animal species, including flying squirrels and flying foxes,

**The deaths highlight the impact of power infrastructure on the wildlife in biodiverse areas, say conservationists**

are often more affected by such infrastructure," said a Nilgiris-based conservationist.

Power lines should be fixed at suitable distances from the wooded or forest areas or moved underground to have a minimal impact on the wildlife, he added.

"There have been directions to move power lines underground in the ecologically sensitive areas such as the Great Indian Bustard habitats. Given that over-ground, power infrastructure continues to pose a risk to elephants, tigers and small mammals in the Nilgiris, a biodiversity hotspot, the government should consider such efforts here as well," said the conservationist.



**Spot study:** A team from the Archaeological Survey of India arrives at the Gyanvapi mosque premises in Varanasi on Friday. PTI

## SC upholds ASI study at Gyanvapi mosque

**Krishnadas Rajagopal**  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday refused to stop the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) from continuing with its "scientific investigation" of the Gyanvapi mosque premises at Varanasi, though it asked the expert body to stick true to its assurance to use only "non-invasive methodology" for its survey. There should not be any excavation on the premises nor any damage to any structure, the court said.

The ASI had already started the survey at Varanasi on Friday by the time the case came up for hearing in Delhi, before a Bench headed by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud.

On Thursday, the Allahabad High Court had given its nod for the ASI to go ahead with the survey ordered by the Varanasi District Judge on July 21.

**CONTINUED ON**  
» PAGE 16  
**EDITORIAL**  
» PAGE 14

## SC upholds ASI study at Gyanvapi mosque

Senior advocate Huzefa Ahmadi – representing the Anjuman Intazamia Masjid committee, which manages the mosque, and had filed the appeal against the Allahabad HC order – said the survey was merely "salami tactics".

"One slice at a time," Mr. Ahmadi said. He submitted that the survey was a breach of the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act of 1991, which was enacted to guard fraternity and secularism through protection of the religious character of religious places.

Mr. Ahmadi said that the ASI survey had been ordered when there were still "serious doubts" about the maintainability of the suit filed by four Hindu women seeking a declaration of their right to worship their deities at the premises of the mosque. The suit, and the appeal against its maintainability, are still pending adjudication.

The Chief Justice, however, said the issues raised by Mr. Ahmadi were open for arguments when the suit came up for a final hearing, noting that the order for an ASI survey was only an "interlocutory one". The Chief Justice recalled how, in the Ayodhya case, the ASI survey report was not accepted in full.

Senior advocate Madhavi Divan, for some of the Hindu women plaintiffs in the suit, said that the survey did not prejudice the pending case.

Ms. Divan submitted that there had been continuing worship by Hindus at the mosque premises for a long time, until it stopped in 1993. The survey would clear the air on the religious character of the place.

The survey, meant to determine whether the 17th century mosque had been constructed over a pre-existing Hindu temple, began around noon on Friday, amid tight security arrangements. Apart from the ASI's own surveyors, three experts from the Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur have also been appointed to conduct the survey. (With inputs from Mayank Kumar in Lucknow)

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### SC appoints former Delhi HC judge as DERC interim chief

The Supreme Court on Friday nominated former Delhi High Court Judge Justice Jayant Nath as *pro tem* chairperson of the Delhi Electricity Regulatory Commission (DERC) after the Delhi government and the Lieutenant-Governor (L-G) failed to reach a consensus on a name. A three-judge Bench said the L-G and the Chief Minister in consultation with Justice Nath would notify his honorarium. The court was compelled to intervene as the DERC had remained headless for months due to a deadlock between L-G V.K. Saxena and the government. It clarified that the person it nominated would only discharge the functions of a chairperson on an *ad hoc* basis.

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