

# World Bank to fund project to create safe and smart streets across city

The second phase of the Chennai City Partnership will receive funding of \$350 million for capacity building of the Greater Chennai Corporation, the Chennai Unified Metropolitan Transport Authority and the Metropolitan Transport Corporation

**The Hindu Bureau**  
CHENNAI

**T**he World Bank will fund projects to develop walkable neighbourhoods with decongested and safe streets as part of the second phase of Chennai City Partnership.

A meeting with civic authorities was held recently for promotion of urban mobility and spatial development with the timeline of 2022-2027. The second phase of the Chennai City Partnership will receive funding of \$350 million for capacity building of the Greater Chennai Corporation, the Chennai Unified Metropolitan Transport Authority (CUMTA) and the Metropolitan Transport Corporation.

"The partnership will



Eldams Road is one of the streets to be covered under the Digital Chennai initiative of the Chennai City Partnership. B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

focus on improving Digital Chennai for e-mobility and smart parking solutions. The projects to improve bus services and suburban rail services will be implemented in the second phase," said an official.

Under public private partnership, parking, e-

mobility and transport hubs will be developed in various parts of the city. At the meeting, the officials discussed the projects to create climate resilient public infrastructure and give a city-wide facelift.

The civic body is set to create a seamless network

by planning primary streets along transit routes, integrating the network with schools and parks.

"We will identify special and unique projects in each neighbourhood, involving the stakeholders," said an official.

Of the 600 km of arte-

rial and sub-arterial roads in the city, 110 km have been identified for phase 1 of the Chennai Mega Streets Programme.

In addition to five roads such as Monegar Choultry Road, Khader Nawaz Khan Road, Guindy Race Course Road, Tiruvottiyur High Road and Washermentpet, projects for spatial development and urban mobility along stretches such as Anna Nagar Third Avenue, Dr. Radhakrishnan Salai, Pulla Avane, Taluk Office Road, Evening Bazaar Road, Eldams Road, Rattan Bazaar Road, Canal Bank Road, West Canal Bank Road and Sashtri Nagar First Avenue will be developed.

Velachery Main Road will get modern infrastructure required for a food street.

# Beware of AI-induced fake video calls seeking funds: cyber police

Scammers use AI-powered deepfake tech to target citizens; people must call the cybercrime helpline number 1930 if they come across any such activity

R. Sivaraman  
CHENNAI

**T**he Cyber Crime Wing of the Tamil Nadu Police has issued an advisory on fake video calls that are being made by scammers using artificial intelligence (AI) technology.

Deepfake technology is being used to perpetrate several types of fraudulent scams, by creating highly convincing and realistic fake content, often using AI to manipulate audio, video or images. Initially, this technology was primarily utilised for entertainment purposes, enabling filmmakers and content creators to seamlessly integrate actors into scenes or impersonate historical figures, the police said.

Sanjay Kumar, Additional Director-General of Police, Cyber Crime Wing, said: "The scam involving AI-generated deepfake video calls typically follows a series of carefully orchestrated steps, combining technological sophistication with psychological manipulation. The scamster creates a fake profile, often using stolen images or publicly-available photographs of trusted individuals like friends or family members. They then use AI-powered deepfake technology to create highly realistic video calls on social media or other online platforms and impersonate someone the victim knows, such as a friend, a family member or a



The scam involving AI-generated deepfake video calls typically follows a series of carefully orchestrated steps, combining technological sophistication with psychological manipulation.

colleague to deceive them into thinking it's a genuine conversation. Later, they create a sense of urgency and request the victim to transfer money to their bank accounts."

The police said the deepfake was carefully designed to mimic the appearance and mannerisms of the impersonated person.

In addition to the video manipulation, scammers are using AI-generated voice synthesis to mimic the voice of the impersonated person, enhancing the illusion of authenticity during the video call.

Mr. Kumar said: "Though no complaint has been received in this regard so far in the State, we wish to alert citizens to be aware and to be vigilant about such frauds. People should stay informed about the latest scams, including those involving AI technology, and be cautious when receiving video calls from unexpected sources."

When receiving a video

call from someone claiming to be a friend or family member, make a phone call to their personal mobile number to verify their identity before transferring any money, said the ADGP.

## Sharing data

The advisory asks citizens to limit the amount of personal data shared online and adjust privacy settings on social media platforms to restrict access to information and to consider using multi-factor authentication and other identity verification measures to protect accounts from unauthorised access.

The Cyber Crime Wing said if anyone suspects that they have been a victim of a deepfake video call fraud or have come across suspicious activity, it is crucial to report the incident by calling the cyber crime toll-free helpline number 1930 or by registering a complaint at [www.cybercrime.gov.in](http://www.cybercrime.gov.in).





### **'Weighing unit made of crystal quartz unearthed in Keeladi'**

"A weighing unit made of crystal quartz was found in the ninth phase of the excavations in Keeladi," said R. Sivanandam, joint director, Department of Archaeology. It was the first time a crystal quartz had been unearthed in Keeladi, he said, adding that it was found at a depth of 175 cm in the quadrant XMI9/3. "It is somewhat spherical in shape with the top and the base cut off, making it flat. It has a smooth surface and is transparent." With a diameter of 2 cm, it is 1.5 cm high and weighs 8 gm. This antiquity was found along with terracotta hopscotch, iron nail, black-and-red ware and red slipped ware. The excavation also yielded a fragment of a snake figurine made of terracotta. The eyes and mouth of the snake were intricately carved. This handmade earthen figure has a red slip with a rough surface and is 6.5 cm long, 5.4 cm wide and 1.5 cm thick.

## **Chief Minister unveils logo of the recently formed T.N. Wildlife Crime Control Bureau**

**The Hindu Bureau**  
CHENNAI

Chief Minister M.K. Stalin on Tuesday unveiled the logo of the Tamil Nadu Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB), a unit formed recently to prevent wildlife crimes in the State.

Over 190 offences have been detected by the WCCB, as per an official release. These include the sale of ivory, ivory products, tiger skins and their parts and possession of snakes, parrots, sea conch and sea shells. While the WCCB can detect and intercept wildlife crimes, it has

no legal authority to book an offence.

The WCCB operates in four zones – Chennai, Coimbatore, Madurai and Ramanathapuram – with 118 frontline forest workers across the State. As per the Forest Department, the unit's main objectives are gathering information and intelligence on wildlife crime, preventing the illegal sale of wildlife and wildlife products and collaborating with global organisations.

It will also establish standard guidelines related to wildlife crime, and collect and map data on wil-

dlife crime hotspots.

#### **Federated database**

Experts call for a federated database to record and analyse crimes. A. Shankar Prakash, an independent conservation criminology researcher, said it was important for the WCCB to have officials trained in investigating crimes. A centralised database for recording and analysing wildlife crimes and a system for different agencies such as the Customs, Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, and police to exchange information is crucial, he said.



Chief Minister M.K. Stalin unveiled the logo of the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau on Tuesday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

## T.N.'s elephant population stands at 2,961, an increase + from 2,761 logged in 2017

The Hindu Bureau  
CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu has 2,961 elephants as per the Forest Department's synchronised elephant population estimation done from May 17-19 in the four southern States. This is an increase from the figure 2,761, recorded in the survey done in 2017.

This survey was conducted in 26 forest divisions of Tamil Nadu, among which elephants were sighted in 20 divisions using the block count method. Six forest divisions (Madurai, Theni, Salem, Tirupattur, Vellore, and Tiruvannamalai) did not report elephants, as per the report. A total of 2,099 persons, including department staff and volunteers, were involved in the study, covering a distance of 8,838.4 km.

The figure 2,961 was arrived at by averaging the lower limit of 2,772 and the upper limit of 3,150 elephants. Among the five elephant reserves, the Nilgiris Eastern Ghats (Nilgiris) reserve had the highest estimated density followed by Nilambur Silent Valley (Coimbatore) reserve, Anamalai elephant reserve, Srivilliputhur elephant reserve and the Agasthyamalai elephant reserve.

For every male elephant, there are approximately two female elephants. The four major classes of age considered were calf (less than a year old and 120 cm in height), juvenile (1-5 years old; 121-180 cm tall), sub-adults (5-15 years old; 181-210 cm tall for female and 181-240 cm for male) and adults (15 years; more than 210 cm tall for female and more than 240 cm for male). Of the total elephants estimated,

### Jumbo watch

The Forest Department has released a wild elephant survey report as per which there are 2,961 elephants in Tamil Nadu



Division	No. of elephants	Division	No. of elephants
The Nilgiris	21	KMTR-Wembai	116
Kodakkanal	25	ATR-Pollachi	126
Dindigul	28	Dharmapuri	144
Tirunelveli	37	Erode	158
Kanniyakumari	49	Coimbatore	190
SMTR-Megamalai	62	ATR-Tiruppur	211
KMTR-Kalakadu	71	STR-Hassanur	272
Gudalur	80	MTR-Masinagudi	346
SMTR-Srivilliputhur	80	STR-Sathyamangalam	396
Hosur	105	MTR-Udhagai	444

Notes: SMTR: Srivilliputhur-Megamalai Tiger Reserve; STR: Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve; MTR: Mudumalai Tiger Reserve; KMTR: Kalakad Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve; ATR: Anamalai Tiger Reserve

ed, 27% are adult female, 13% are adult male, 21% are sub-adult female, 12% are sub-adult male, 8% are juvenile female, 5% are juvenile male, and 14% are calves.

"There is a good mix of elephants of all age groups. If the age-wise distribution was skewed, it means something was wrong with the ecosystem. But we can see a healthy mix," said Srinivas R. Reddy, Chief Wildlife Warden. He further said that the increase of 200 elephants from the 2017 survey indicated that the population was stable. "...We might have missed out on some elephants, but we definitely don't have fewer than 2,961 elephants."

The Forest Department used two methods to estimate the elephant population - direct sighting using 'sample block count' and indirect estimate using line transect (dung count).

Each forest division was divided into several small blocks (up to 5 sq. km) and a team of three to four persons covered each block. "Upon sighting elephants, care was taken to count all individuals first and then age-sex them wherever possible," said the report. In each block, a transect of 2 km was laid across and walked on once to enumerate dung piles for estimating their density. This dung density was then converted into elephant density through calculations.



## Villagers living near Neyveli, Cuddalore power stations facing health issues: report

Report by Poovulagin Nanbargal and Manthan Adhyayan Kendra flags environmental and pollution issues caused by two thermal power stations and a mine in these areas

The Hindu Bureau  
CHENNAI

**P**oovulagin Nanbargal and Manthan Adhyayan Kendra have come out with an environmental study highlighting the various health hazards caused by the operation of two thermal power stations and a mine in Neyveli and Cuddalore.

The report, titled 'POWERRing Pollution - The Environmental Impacts of Thermal Power Stations and Mining Operations in Neyveli and Parangipettai', was released at a press meet in the Chennai Press Club on Tuesday.

While the NLCIL operates five thermal power stations of 3,640 megawatt (MW) capacity, comprising Neyveli TPS II, Neyveli I Exp, Neyveli II Expn, Neyveli New and TAQA Neyveli, the IL&FS Tamil Nadu Power Company Ltd. (ITPCL) operates a 1,200 MW seawater-based power plant in Cuddalore.

Shripad Dharmadhikary of Manthan Adhyayan Kendra, who was one of the authors of the report, said the findings from 20 locations in Neyveli, where the NLCIL (formerly Neyveli Lignite Corporation) operates huge thermal power plants and mines, showed that drinking water sources were severely contaminated with high levels of mercury, selenium and fluoride.



The findings from 20 locations showed that drinking water sources were severely contaminated with high levels of mercury, selenium and fluoride. REPRESENTATIONAL IMAGE

Mr. Dharmadhikary said the mercury content in a borewell water source in Tholkappiar Nagar of Vadakuvellur, was found to be 250 times above the permissible limit. In the same village, drinking water was found to contain high turbidity and selenium, resulting in kidney problems and respiratory and skin issues. Health hazards were also caused by the dumping of fly ash from TPS and coal dust from mines, which polluted the air, besides the discharge of effluent directly from the TPS and the mines, he added.

### No access to hospital

The report also mentions the lack of adequate medical facilities to treat the villagers affected by the presence of the TPS and the mines. The NLCIL authorities were not allowing the

villagers to use their hospital for providing treatment, it said.

The study, carried out in the villages around ITPCL TPS, also showed contamination of air, soil and natural water resources, severely affecting the health of the people and their livelihoods. The coal storage, coal transportation, fly ash and coal dust from the TPS had hit the cultivation of paddy crop and destroyed the fertility of the soil, it added.

The survey team found visible deposition of pollutants of coal dust and fly ash in houses, causing respiratory issues, kidney disease, hairfall and skin problems among residents. The team also found that the water from the borewell at Karikuppam village was contaminated. It was turbid, hard and had alkaline properties. The fluo-

ride, iron, calcium and magnesium content exceeded the permissible limits. The traditional route being taken by fishermen had been blocked by the plant, thereby reducing their income.

The report urged the NLCIL to take remedial steps to discharge effluents from the coal mines and the TPS, stop the dumping of fly ash in local waterbodies and carry out desilting of streams that carry fly ash from the TPS. It also called for efficient monitoring of the operation of NLCIL by the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board (TNPCB) and the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC).

It recommended free health camps twice a year for the residents; access to NLC General Hospital for villages with health issues; construction of groundwater recharge structures; building a greenbelt around the mine to arrest coal dust pollution; and fulfilling the 16 demands of the committee formed during the acquisition of lands by the NLCIL.

The report was released in the presence of Manithaneya Makkal Katchi president and MLA Jawahirulah, soil biologist Sultan Ismail, Tamizhaga Vazhuvirimai Katchi president and MLA Velmurugan and Poovulagin Nanbargal Sundarrajan.

# Should Constitution be amended to make Article 370 permanent, asks CJI

Petitioners' counsel Kapil Sibal argues that Parliament and the Union government diluted Article 370 'unilaterally'; the relationship between the Union government and the State of Jammu and Kashmir was 'purely federal', he adds

Krishnadas Rajagopal

NEW DELHI

**C**hief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud on Tuesday said that as a constitutional democracy, India seeks its public opinions through established institutions such as Parliament and not through Brexit-type referendums.

The Chief Justice, heading a Constitution Bench examining the challenge to the dilution of Article 370 of the Constitution annulling the special status of Jammu and Kashmir, was reacting to a submission by senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for the petitioners.

#### People's will

Mr. Sibal was arguing that Parliament and the Union government had diluted Article 370 "unilaterally",



You cannot envisage a Brexit-type referendum... But within a Constitution like ours, there is no question of a referendum

D.Y. CHANDRACHUD  
Chief Justice of India

without making an effort to understand the will of the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

"When you want to sever such a special relationship with Jammu and Kashmir, you had to ultimately seek the opinion of the people. The will of the people was central to this decision. It should have been a political decision... What happened in Brexit? There was no constitutional provision for a referendum. Yet, they asked for public opinion," Mr. Sibal submitted.

But Chief Justice Chandrachud said a Brexit situation could not be envisaged in India.

#### Public opinion

"In a constitutional democracy, seeking the opinions of the people should be through established institutions. Any recourse to public opinion has to be sought through the established institutions. You cannot envisage a Brexit-type referendum... That was a political decision taken by the then government in the U.K... But with-

in a Constitution like ours, there is no question of a referendum," the Chief Justice observed.

Mr. Sibal argued that the Union government had diluted Article 370 through a series of "executive acts", starting with the dissolution of the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly and the State government, the subsequent imposition of President's Rule in the erstwhile State and the tweaking of the proviso to Article 370(3) to side-step the pre-condition of getting the recommendation of the now-defunct Jammu and Kashmir Constituent Assembly before declaring Article 370 inoperative.

"You [Indian government] played a fraud on the Constitution," counsel said.

Mr. Sibal said that the relationship between the Un-

ion government and the State of Jammu and Kashmir had been "purely federal", and not quasi-federal as in the case of other States.

The consent of the State and its people had been necessary for diluting Article 370.

#### Permanent nature

At one point, the Chief Justice asked how it could be assumed that Article 370 had assumed a permanent character in the Constitution.

"Was a constitutional amendment required in the Indian Constitution to drop the 'temporary' nature of 370 and make it permanent or can it be deemed permanent merely on the basis that the Jammu and Kashmir Constituent Assembly did not abrogate it before dissolving in 1957," he asked.

# More students using smartphones for entertainment than study: survey

Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan launches report based on responses of 6,229 parents of schoolchildren in rural communities across 21 States; 49.3% of students have access to gadgets but only 34% of that number use them for studies

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

**A** pan-India survey of 6,229 parents of schoolchildren aged six to 16 in rural communities across 21 States revealed that more children used smartphones for entertainment rather than for studies.

The State of Elementary Education in Rural India report, released by Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan here on Tuesday, is based on a survey conducted by the Development Intelligence Unit (DIU), a collaboration between Transform Rural India and Sambodhi Research and Communications.

## Access to gadgets

The survey revealed that 49.3% of students in rural India have access to smartphones. However, among parents whose children have access to gadgets, 76.7% said the latter primarily used mobile phones to play video games.

Of the students with access to gadgets, 56.6% used the devices for download-

ing and watching movies, while 47.3% used them to download and listen to music, the survey said. Only 34% use the gadgets for downloading study material, and 18% accessed online learning through tutorials.

Of the 6,229 parents surveyed, 6,135 had school-going children, 56 had children who dropped out of school, and 38 had children who had never enrolled in school.

At least 78% of the parents of girls and 82% of

the parents of boys wanted to educate their children to the level of graduation or above.

Students in Class 8 and above had more access to smartphones (58.32%), while students in Classes 1 to 3 also had access

## Aspiring for higher education

The table shows parental expectations of a child's educational attainment. About 78% of parents aspire for their girls to attain graduation or higher degrees



**Dropping out:** Parents of a section of girls said their daughters dropped out of school to help out in the family's earnings R. RAGU

Expected level of education of child	Boy (%)	Girl (%)	Total (%)
Up to elementary	4.4	3.9	4
Up to secondary	2.4	2.8	3
Higher secondary	11.1	15.2	13
Graduation	49.6	50.3	50
Postgraduation/Ph.D.	32.5	27.8	30

■ About 80% of parents aspire for their children to become graduates or attain higher degrees

■ The survey included responses of 6,229 parents across 21 States of India.

Source: State of Elementary Education in Rural India report

**40% of the surveyed parents have conversations with their children around learning in school every day**

(42.1%).

Questions on the learning environment at home revealed that 40% of the parents said that age-appropriate reading materials, other than textbooks, are available at home.

## Parent participation

The survey showed that only 40% of parents have conversations with their children around learning in school every day, while 32% have such conversations with their children a few days a week.

The survey also sought to know the reasons for children dropping out of school from a subset of 56 respondents.

As much as 36.8% of the parents of girls who had dropped out said it was because they were needed to help out with the family's earnings.

Additionally, 31.6% of parents mentioned their child's lack of interest in studies, while 21.1% believed that their daughters had to take care of household chores and siblings.

For boys, as per the survey, the key reason for dropping out from school was the child's lack of interest in studies.

As much as 71.8% of respondents cited this reason, while another 48.7% said the boys were required to help out in the earnings for the family.

On parent participation, the survey revealed that 84% of parents stated that they regularly attend parent-teacher meetings at school.

The top two reasons for parents not attending meetings were short notice and a lack of willingness.



## What is the Jan Vishwas Bill, 2023 proposed by Centre?

Why has the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2023 kicked up a furore among various stakeholders? What are its advantages? In what ways are it going to cost the common man?

**Bindu Shajan Perappadan**

**The story so far:** The Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2023 was passed in Parliament recently. Introduced by Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal, the Bill aims at giving further boost to ease of living and ease of doing business. It proposes to amend 183 provisions to be decriminalised in 42 Central Acts administered by 19 Ministries/Departments.

**What is the Jan Vishwas Bill about?** The Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2022 amends 42 laws, across multiple sectors, including agriculture, environment, and media and publication and health. The Bill converts several fines to penalties, meaning that

court prosecution is not necessary to administer punishments. It also removes imprisonment as a punishment for many offences.

Covered under the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2023 are changes in the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940, the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 and the Pharmacy Act, 1948. This has evoked heated debate about its pros and cons among health care activists, experts in the field of pharmacy and patient-welfare groups.

Among these, the changes proposed to the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 have been the most contentious. The Act regulates the import, manufacture, distribution and sale of drugs and cosmetics in the country.

Currently, the Act defines four categories of offences – adulterated drugs, spurious drugs, mislabelled drugs, and

Not of Standard Quality drugs (NSQs) – and lays out degrees of punishment (a combination of prison time and fine) based on the degree of offence.

**What are the pros and cons of the amendments?**

The amendments have brought in sharp criticism from health activists. Prashant Reddy, lawyer and co-author of *The Truth Pill: The Myth of Drug Regulation in India*, said that the Bill is detrimental to public health on two counts.

First, it allows manufacturers of Not of Standard Quality Drugs (NSQ) drugs to escape significant penalties despite the fact that these drugs can have an adverse effect on the patient.

“For example, drugs that lack the adequate active ingredient or fail to dissolve will not cure the disease it is meant to and that will result in a poor

treatment outcome for the patient. Second, the Bill also reduces penalties for owners of pharmacies who violate the terms of their licence,” he said.

“The Indian pharmaceutical sector, manufacturing and pharmacies included, are already subject to extremely lax regulation as evidenced by the explosion of scandals recently across the world linked to ‘Made in India’ medicine. The government should be tightening the regulatory screws, not giving the industry a literal ‘get out of jail’ pass,” he said.

Vijay Vojhala, a former medical representative and health activist, said that laws shouldn’t become a cost-to-operation component for companies but should install in them the greater sensibilities and responsibilities towards the society. But, in majority of the cases it’s seen as missing.

**What is the government’s argument in favour of the Bill?**

Responding to the concerns raised by various groups on the Bill, more industry friendly Health Minister Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya said: “India is the pharmacy of the world and we have to work towards ensuring that the best medicines are provided while reasonable benefits are offered to business. Rationalising laws, eliminating barriers and bolstering growth of businesses are important.”

### THE GIST

▼ The Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2023 proposes to amend 183 provisions to be decriminalised in 42 Central Acts administered by 19 Ministries/Departments.

▼ Among these, the changes proposed to the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 have been the most contentious. The Act regulates the import, manufacture, distribution and sale of drugs and cosmetics in the country.

▼ Activists fear that the government, under the guise of ease of doing business, have proposed the amendments which seek to dilute the punishment by doing away with prison terms for a lot of offences and converting fines to penalties.