

Coimbatore serial bomb blasts, a 'dark' and painful day' in India's history: V P

CHENNAI, FEB 14: The 1998 Coimbatore serial bomb blasts was a “dark and painful” chapter in the nation’s history and left deep scars on countless families, Vice President C P Radhakrishnan said on Saturday.

Paying his “heartfelt” homage to the innocent lives lost in the tragic Coimbatore serial bomb blasts on February 14, 1998, he said it was “a dark and painful chapter in our nation’s history.” “On that fateful day, when L K Advani was visiting the city, a series of horrific explosions shook Coimbatore and left deep scars on countless families. The atmosphere of fear, grief, and uncertainty that prevailed then remains deeply etched in my memory,” he said.

“I had a narrow escape in one of those blasts,” Radhakrishnan, who hails from Coimbatore said.

“Those dreadful moments, when we struggled to save the injured and rushed the critically wounded to hospitals, remain the most painful periods of my life,” the Vice President said in a post on



the social media platform ‘X.’ He expressed solidarity with the bereaved families whose loss could never be replaced.

“Let us reaffirm our collective resolve to stand united against terrorism and to uphold peace, harmony, and national integrity,” the Vice President said in his message that was posted in English and Tamil.

Paying his homage to the victims, Union Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting L Murugan described the incident as the “black day” of Coimbatore.

not yet been erased from the minds of the people.

“Let us resolve that such atrocities should not be committed again due to religious hatred in India, which values and protects unity and brotherhood,” Nagenthran said in a post.

Former state president of BJP K Annamalai said, “the blasts carried out by terrorists on the same day in 1998, during the DMK regime, claimed 58 lives and left over 200 people injured. The ‘unhealed scar’ still remained in our minds.” He accused the DMK of allegedly “betraying” the innocent people who lost their lives by releasing the Coimbatore bomb blast culprits before their sentences were served. “Even today, it is calling the suicide attack near the Kottai Easwaran temple as a cylinder blast,” he said on ‘X.’ The car blast in front of the Kottai Eswaran temple in Coimbatore’s Ukkadam on October 23, 2022, on Diwali eve, claimed one life.

The case was transferred to the National Investigation Agency. (PTI)

466 cancer care centres functional across country: Govt

NEW DELHI, FEB 14 : More than 450 Day Care Cancer Centres are functional across the country, reflecting a steady expansion and strengthening of district-level chemotherapy services, Union Health Ministry sources said.

The government, in the Union Budget 2025-26, had announced the establishment of Day Care Cancer Centres (DCCCs) in district hospitals across the country over the next three years, with 200 centres to be set up during the current fiscal.

This initiative was introduced in response to the rising burden of cancer and the need to strengthen the public health system so that chemotherapy services are available closer to patients’ homes.

“The objective is to decentralise routine cancer treatment and reduce dependence on tertiary hospitals for scheduled chemotherapy,” a source from the health ministry said.

Elaborating on it, the source said that cancer treatment typically requires multiple hospital visits over several months. Regular follow-ups and timely chemotherapy cycles are essential for effective outcomes.

For many patients, especially those in rural areas or belonging to economically weaker sections, travelling repeatedly to tertiary hospitals in cities can be financially and physically demanding, he said.

Expenses related to travel, accommodation, food, and loss of daily wages add to the burden.

Additionally, patients undergoing chemotherapy are often weak and require a companion or caregiver during hospital visits. This means that both the patient and the caregiver incur travel costs and often experience wage loss, increasing the overall financial strain on households, the source said.

“By making chemotherapy services available at district hospitals, DCCCs significantly reduce travel distance, indirect expenditure, and disruption to family income, thereby easing the socio-economic impact of treatment,” he said.

Sources in the ministry said that before sanctioning new centres, a detailed gap analysis was undertaken in consultation with states and Union Territories based on the cancer burden, patient load, infrastructure readiness, etc.

“Capacity building has been a central element of the programme. To ensure safe and standardised chemotherapy services, medical officers and staff nurses from identified districts underwent structured hands-on training for four to six weeks at mentor institutes identified by the respective state governments,” another source informed.

These institutes included government medical colleges, regional cancer centres, state cancer Institutes, and tertiary cancer hospitals with adequate oncology expertise.

Training included chemotherapy administration, patient assessment, dose calculation, management of side effects, emergency response, infection control, safe handling of cytotoxic drugs, biomedical waste management, counselling of patients and caregivers, and referral coordination.

This systematic preparation has strengthened district-level clinical competence and ensured uniform standards of care, he added.

He further said that free provision of essential chemotherapy drugs at public health facilities is another key component of the initiative.

Since medicines account for a major share of cancer treatment costs, ensuring their availability through government supply systems significantly reduces out-of-pocket expenditure, the source said.

Patients are initially diagnosed, and treatment plans are formulated at Tertiary Care Cancer Centres (TCCC), State Cancer Institutes (SCI), or other higher oncology facilities, sources in the ministry said.

The first cycle of chemotherapy will be administered at the mentor institute. Once stabilised and the chemotherapy regimen is finalised, subsequent cycles are administered at the district-level cancer centres, they added.

In case of complications or need for advanced intervention, patients are referred back to the higher centre. This coordinated referral mechanism ensures continuity, safety, and appropriate care at every stage.

The initiative also strengthened existing infrastructure, as functional DCCCs were upgraded with improved facilities, equipment, trained manpower, and drug supply systems, while new centres were added in identified districts.

Sharad Pawar keen to contest Rajya Sabha polls; merger of NCP factions unlikely: Raut

MUMBAI, FEB 14: Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut on Saturday claimed that NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar wants to contest the upcoming Rajya Sabha polls, and the opposition bloc Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) will hold discussions about it.

Talking to reporters, Raut also said it is unlikely that the NCP (SP) and the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), which late deputy chief minister Ajit Pawar headed, will unite.

“I had a discussion with Sharad Pawar saheb. I asked his opinion about this (whether he will contest the Rajya Sabha polls. He told me that he will contest the Rajya Sabha polls. He has told me,” Raut said.

Raut, who is also a member of the Upper House of



Parliament, said Pawar (85) is a senior lawmaker in the country with nearly 60 years of legislative experience.

Pawar has informed his position to the Congress that he wants to contest the Rajya Sabha polls, Raut said. NCP (SP), the Congress and Uddhav Thackeray-led Sena (UBT) are the partners in the MVA.

“Now the MVA (leaders) will sit together and have discussions on this,” he said.

Seven members, including Pawar, are retiring from the Rajya Sabha in April. MVA can potentially send one candidate to the Rajya Sabha

due to its depleted strength.

Pawar has had an uninterrupted presence in either of the two Houses of the Maharashtra legislature or in Parliament since 1967.

Raut also claimed that the chances of the two NCP groups merging are slim.

Following the death of Ajit Pawar in a plane crash in Baramati in Pune district on January 28, Sharad Pawar had claimed that it was his late nephew’s wish to unite both NCP factions.

Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis had virtually dismissed Sharad Pawar’s claim, saying if the merger talks were really in progress, then Ajit Pawar would have shared details with him. NCP leaders have indicated that such a unification is a remote possibility. (PTI)

'Shocked And Disgusted': Arundhati Roy Pulls Out Of Berlinale Over Gaza Comments By Jury

NEW DELHI, FEB 14: Booker prize-winning author Arundhati Roy has announced that she will not attend the Berlin International Film Festival due to the “unconscionable statements” made by the members of the festival jury about “the genocide in Gaza”.

Roy was scheduled to attend the festival for the screening of her 1989 film “In Which Annie Gives It Those Ones” under the Classics section.

According to a statement published in The Wire on Friday, the “The God of Small Things” author said that “to hear the jury say that art should not be political is jaw-dropping”.

“This morning, like millions of people across the world, I heard the unconscionable statements made by members of the jury of the Berlin film festival when they were asked to comment about the genocide in Gaza.

“To hear them say that art should not be political is jaw-dropping. It is a way of shutting down a conversation about a crime against humanity even as it unfolds before us in real time – when artists, writers and film makers should be doing everything in their power to stop it,” Roy said in the statement.

This year’s jury is headed by German filmmaker Wim Wenders and includes American director-producer Reinaldo Marcus Green, Japanese filmmaker Hikari,



Nepalese director Min Bahadur Bham, South Korean actor Bae Doona, Indian director-producer Shivendra Singh Dungarpur, and Polish filmmaker Ewa Puszczyńska.

At a press conference ahead of the festival’s formal opening on Thursday, jury president and German director Wim Wenders was asked about his views on “Germany’s support of the genocide in Gaza” and the selective treatment of human rights”, to which he said filmmakers “have to stay out of politics”.

“If we made movies that are dedicatedly political, we enter the field of politics. But we are the counterweight to politics. We are the opposite of politics. We have to do the work of people and not the work of politicians,” the “Perfect Days” director said.

Puszczyńska, who was the

first to respond, said that the question was “a bit unfair.” “Of course, we are trying to talk to people – every single viewer – to make them think, but we cannot be responsible for what their decision would be to support Israel or the decision to support Palestine,” she said.

“There are many other wars where genocide is committed, and we do not talk about that. So this is a very complicated question and I think it’s a bit unfair asking us what do you think, how we support, not support, talking to our governments or not,” Roy, in her statement, criticised the “genocide of the Palestinian people by the State of Israel”, while calling the US and Germany “complicit in the crime”.

“Let me say this clearly: what has happened in Gaza, what continues to happen, is a genocide of the Palestinian

people by the State of Israel. It is supported and funded by the governments of the United States and Germany, as well as several other countries in Europe, which makes them complicit in the crime,” Roy added.

“If the greatest film makers and artists of our time cannot stand up and say so, they should know that history will judge them. I am shocked and disgusted. With deep regret, I must say that I will not be attending the Berlinale,” the 64-year-old said.

She added that getting the film, a college satire written by Roy and directed by Pradeep Krishen, screened at the Berlinale had “something sweet and wonderful” about it for her.

Even though she had been “profoundly disturbed” by the German government’s position on Palestine, Roy said she received political solidarity from German audiences.

“Although I have been profoundly disturbed by the positions taken by the German government and various German cultural institutions on Palestine, I have always received political solidarity when I have spoken to German audiences about my views on the genocide in Gaza. This is what made it possible for me to think of attending the screening of Annie at the Berlinale,” she said. (Agencies)

NISAR to deliver 100m soil moisture data every 13 days across India: ISRO

BENGALURU, FEB 14: ISRO on Saturday said that NISAR is systematically imaging the Indian landmass in S-and L-bands to deliver high-resolution and wide swath data with a repetivity of 12 days.

This data has been effectively utilised to demonstrate the generation of soil-moisture products at a high resolution of 100m, it said.

Being a key indicator of crop health, irrigation needs and drought risk, soil-moisture plays a vital role in India’s agriculture and water management, the space agency said.

According to a ISRO statement, the soil-moisture products, demonstrated using both S-and L-bands data, provide consistent estimates



across India’s diverse agro-climatic regions – from irrigated plains and rainfed farmlands to semi-arid and high-rainfall zones.

The physics-based soil moisture retrieval algorithm, developed at Space Applications Centre (SAC-ISRO), ensures scientific robustness, reliability, and operational accuracy, it said.

“With the ability to deliver two observations every 12 days, NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar (NISAR) enables near-real-time tracking of soil moisture dynamics.

This frequent monitoring supports irrigation planning, drought preparedness, agrometeorological advisories, and regional water resource management at scales relevant to districts and farming communities,” ISRO stated.

The space agency explained that to support national operations, the 100m Level-4 operational soil moisture products with two observations every 12 days will be systematically generated at National Remote Sensing Centre (IM-GEOS/NRSC) and disseminated through the Bhoonidhi Portal, ensuring seamless access for farmers, planners, researchers, government agencies and Non-Government Entities (NGEs) across the country. (PTI)

Telangana local body poll win endorsement of Cong govt's people-first policies: Rahul

NEW DELHI, FEB 14: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday said the party’s victory in the local body elections in Telangana was an endorsement of the government’s people-centric policies that focus on social justice, dignity and inclusive growth.

Gandhi said the Congress is committed to its vision of creating a “Prajala Telangana” where progress reaches every family in the state.

Party president Mallikarjun Kharge has also hailed the party’s victory in the local body elections in Telangana as an endorsement of the government’s people-centric policies that focus on social justice, dignity and inclusive growth.

Gandhi said the Congress is committed to its vision of creating a “Prajala Telangana” where progress reaches every family in the state.

In a boost to the A Revanth



Reddy-led government, the Congress in Telangana on Friday scored an emphatic win in the municipal elections, while the BRS and the BJP too made their presence felt.

Of the total 2,582 wards in 116 municipalities where elections were held on February 11, the Congress

bagged more than 1,300 wards, followed by the BRS (about 700 wards) and the BJP (about 275 wards).

In a post on X, Gandhi said, “The Telangana local body polls win is a clear endorsement of Congress government’s people-first policies rooted in social justice, dignity, and inclusive

growth.” “Heartfelt thanks to every Congress worker and leader.

This victory belongs to you and to the people of Telangana.

“Our vision of a Prajala Telangana – where progress reaches every family remains unwavering,” the leader of opposition in the Lok Sabha said.

Hailing the poll results, party president Kharge said the government remains resolute in its “solemn affirmation of a ‘Prajala Telangana’ – a state where social justice, economic empowerment and continuous progress are assured for all its 3.8 crore people.

Telangana local body poll win endorsement of Cong govt's people-first policies: Rahul

NEW DELHI, FEB 14: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday said the party’s victory in the local body elections in Telangana was an endorsement of the government’s people-centric policies that focus on social justice, dignity and inclusive growth.

Gandhi said the Congress is committed to its vision of creating a “Prajala Telangana” where progress

reaches every family in the state.

Party president Mallikarjun Kharge has also hailed the party’s win, saying it reflects the trust of people in the Congress.

In a boost to the A Revanth Reddy-led government, the Congress in Telangana on Friday scored an emphatic win in the municipal elections, while the BRS and the BJP

too made their presence felt.

Of the total 2,582 wards in 116 municipalities where elections were held on February 11, the Congress bagged more than 1,300 wards, followed by the BRS (about 700 wards) and the BJP (about 275 wards).

In a post on X, Gandhi said, “The Telangana local body polls win is a clear endorsement of Congress

government’s people-first policies rooted in social justice, dignity, and inclusive growth.” “Heartfelt thanks to every Congress worker and leader. This victory belongs to you and to the people of Telangana.

“Our vision of a Prajala Telangana – where progress reaches every family remains unwavering,” the leader of opposition in the Lok Sabha said.