

## E-Chip-based Passports on Cards: Telangana RPO gears up to launch

Hyderabad: Good news for Telangana passport applicants: Soon, you can fly using electronic chip-based passports. The Telangana Regional Passport Office is making necessary arrangements following the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) instructions to launch 'e-Chip Passports' in Hyderabad.

The MEA selected Hyderabad as one of the 12 centres in India under a pilot project to launch the newly introduced e-Chip Passports. The other 11 states include Chennai, Nagpur, Bhubaneswar, Jammu, Goa, Shimla, Raipur, Amritsar, Jaipur, Surat, and Ranchi.

## Certificate forgery racket busted, six arrested in Saroornagar

Hyderabad: The Rachakonda SOT officials along with the local police busted a sophisticated certificates forgery racket and nabbed six persons in Saroornagar on Thursday.The arrested persons are T Venkata Bhanu Prakash, a notary maker, his wife T Sagarika, a DTP operator, A Chandrashekhar, his son Anil, and Mohd Jaleel, agent of fake birth certificates. The absconding persons are Syed Feroz Ali, P Mallesh Goud, Praveen, Sudheer, both outsourcing municipal employees and others.According to the police, Saathwik Enterprises located opposite the Municipal Office, Saroor Nagar was raided and the suspects were found to be involved in preparation and sale of fake sale deeds, birth and caste certificates using outdated non-judicial stamp papers, counterfeit rubber stamps, and forged signatures.

## Set up underground power supply network in Future City: CM Revanth Reddy



GNS News Agency, May 16

Hyderabad: Directing the energy department to focus on modernizing the power supply network in the State, Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy ordered that an underground power supply network should be established in the Future City. There should be no electricity towers, poles and power supply lines over the ground in Future City and the entire network should be underground. Even the

high tension lines should also be relocated, he said. The Chief Minister held a review meeting with energy department officials at his residence here on Friday.

During the meeting, he said smart poles should be set up on an experimental basis within Greater Hyderabad. They should be installed at Secretariat, Necklace Road and KBR Park and other places under a pilot project, he said. "Prepare plans for solar power generation on the 160- KM stretch on the Outer Ring Road. Feasibility of solar power generation on footpaths and nalas within GHMC limits should also be explored," Revanth Reddy said.

The officials explained to the Chief Minister that the power demand had reached a record high of 17,162 MW this year. Compared to last year, the power demand had increased by 9.8 percent. It was estimated that the energy demand would increase from the existing 18,138 MW in 2025 – 2026 to 31,808 MW by 2034 -2035 financial year, they said. The officials also informed the Chief Minister that quality power was being supplied to all sections without any interruption. They briefed the Chief Minister about the establishment of advanced infrastructure for quality power supply in view of Hyderabad becoming a hub of data centers. Coordinate with HMDA on energy requirements of satellite townships and radial roads to be developed within the Regional Ring Road. Upgrade the sub-stations on par with the increasing power demand, the Chief Minister directed the officials.



GNS News Agency, May 16

New Delhi: On the occasion of Sikkim's Statehood Day, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday, extended his greetings to the people of the state, praising its serene beauty, rich cultural traditions and industrious people. "Warm greetings to the people of Sikkim on their Statehood Day! This year, the occasion is even more special as we mark the 50th anniversary of Sikkim's statehood! Sikkim is associated with serene beauty, rich cultural traditions and industrious people. It has made strides in diverse sectors. May the people of this beautiful state continue to prosper," PM Modi wrote in a post on X. Union Home Minister Amit Shah also extended his heartfelt wishes to the people of Sikkim.

Taking to social media platform X, Shah wrote, "On Sikkim Day, extending my best wishes to sisters and brothers of Sikkim. Cradled in the Himalayas, Sikkim has set benchmarks of excellence in organic agriculture and tourism with the hard work and hospitality of its people. Praying

for the state's continued prosperity." Sikkim, India's second smallest state, was granted full statehood on May 16, 1975, and has since emerged as a leader in sustainable development and eco-friendly initiatives. Joining in the celebration, Union Minister and BJP National President J.P. Nadda also conveyed his greetings through a post on X. "My heartfelt greetings to all my brothers and sisters of Sikkim on their Statehood Day. Sikkim is not only gifted with breathtaking scenic beauty but also home to hardworking and dedicated people who are contributing to the nation's progress. May Sikkim continue to script new chapters of success, and may its people be blessed with good health, happiness and prosperity," he wrote. Union Minister Piyush Goyal, also shared his warm wishes. He highlighted Sikkim's achievements in sustainable development and tourism, stating, "Warm greetings to my sisters and brothers from Sikkim on their Statehood Day. Known for its scenic beauty, rich cultural heritage, and vibrant tourism sector, Sikkim has made remarkable strides in sustainable development initiatives over the years. Wishing the people of Sikkim continued progress and prosperity." Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma marked the occasion with a message emphasising the state's environmental and social progress. "To our sisters and brothers in Sikkim, I send my best wishes on the golden jubilee of your Statehood. Nestled amidst lush greenery and affectionate people, the State has positioned itself as a model of sustainable development. Prayers for its continued growth and prosperity," he posted on X. As Sikkim celebrates its 50th year of statehood, leaders across the nation have applauded its path-breaking achievements in sustainability, eco-tourism, and organic farming reaffirming its status as a model state in India's developmental journey.

## 48-member multi-party MP delegations to launch India's global diplomatic blitz

GNS News Agency, May 16

New Delhi: In a massive diplomatic push, the government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has decided to dispatch multi-party MP delegations to key world capitals to expose Pakistan's hand in the recent Pahalgam terror attack and to build global support against cross-border terrorism. The 48-member cross-party delegation will present India's evidence against Pakistan and New Delhi's stance to foreign governments and institutions while travelling to various countries from May 22 to June 1. According to sources, the delegation will be led by Minister of Parliamentary and Minority Affairs Kiren Rijiju and will be divided into eight groups, consisting of six members each.

It is expected to include several big names from the BJP-led government and the Opposition parties, including Congress MPs Shashi Tharoor, Manish Tewari, Member of Parliament from Punjab Vikramjit Singh Sahney, Asaduddin Owaisi, etc. Sources say the move to send the delegation of MPs comes amid increasing attempts by Pakistan — and notably, remarks from US President Donald Trump — to internationalise the Kashmir issue, which India insists remains a bilateral matter. The initiative marks the first time the Modi government has deployed elected representatives from across the political spectrum as diplomatic envoys to counter Pakistan's propaganda on a global stage. The focus will be two-fold: To brief nations on the devastating Pahalgam attack in which 26 people were killed, and to clarify that India's 'Operation Sindoor' specifically targeted terror infrastructure — not civilians — within Pakistani-occupied regions.



"The aim is to break the narrative being spun by Pakistan and its sympathisers," said a senior official involved in the planning. The Ministry of External Affairs, in collaboration with Intelligence and Defence agencies, is also preparing detailed dossiers and talking points. The Indian embassies in respective countries will amplify the MPs' efforts by coordinating meetings and providing strategic ground support. The MPs are expected to spotlight how Pakistan has, for decades, used terror as a state policy to destabilise India, citing specific Intelligence on terror camps, recruitment networks, and evidence of ISI involvement. The delegations will also underscore how Pakistan's retaliatory actions after 'Operation Sindoor' only further confirm its active role in sheltering and promoting terror groups. The global diplomatic blitz is aimed not just at isolating Pakistan diplomatically, but also at strengthening India's position ahead of key international forums and bilateral engagements.

## Pak plans to give Rs 14 crore to UN-designated terrorist Masood Azhar from public funds, says Rajnath Singh

GNS News Agency, May 16

New Delhi/Bhuj: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Friday issued a clear warning against Pakistan's alleged plans to fund terrorism using taxpayers' money and international aid. Addressing troops at a military base in Gujarat's Bhuj, Rajnath Singh claimed that the Pakistan government intended to give Rs 14 crore to Masood Azhar, the UN-designated terrorist and chief of Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM). "Pakistan will spend tax collected from citizens to give Rs 14 crore to Masood Azhar, the head of the Jaish terrorist organisation, even though he is a UN-designated terrorist," Rajnath Singh said. Addressing the soldiers, the Defence Minister further stated that Pakistan will be using funds expected from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to rebuild terrorist infrastructure destroyed during Operation Sindoor — India's military response to the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack, carried out by the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT).

"The Pakistan government has also said it will give financial assistance to rebuild terror infrastructure of Lashkar and Jaish, in Muridke and Bahawalpur," Rajnath Singh added. The Defence Minister's remarks come amid India's strong objections to the IMF's proposed \$2.3 billion financial bailout to Pakistan. New Delhi has expressed concerns that the money could be misused to support terror networks.

"Any financial assistance to Pakistan is funding terror activities. The IMF should reconsider its decision," Rajnath Singh stated. "The IMF's aid to Pakistan is a form of indirect funding to terror." Despite India abstaining from the vote, the IMF proposal was passed. Last week, India had raised concerns that the aid could enable Pakistan to rebuild and support groups like JeM and LeT, which have been responsible for deadly attacks on Indian soil, including the 2019 Pulwama and 2016 Uri strikes. Earlier, Rajnath Singh said



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Friday issued a clear warning against Pakistan's alleged plans to fund terrorism using taxpayers' money and international aid, addressing troops at a military base in Gujarat's Bhuj

that Operation Sindoor was just a trailer and the Indian armed forces will show the full picture at the right time. "Operation Sindoor isn't over. What the world saw was just a trailer, and the Indian armed forces will show the full picture when the right time comes," Defence Minister Singh told the air warriors and security forces at the IAF airbase in Gujarat's Bhuj. Lambasting Pakistan for nurturing terror factories on its soil, the Defence Minister said that the rogue nation was forced to realise the power of BrahMos missile. "Just like the way, any habitual offender or a criminal with past antecedents is kept under watch, we have put Pakistan under probation. The ceasefire is not a cessation of action. If Pakistan doesn't mend its ways and engages in misadventures again, our forces will teach it a firm lesson. Again!" he said.

## Hyderabad Police Commissioner CV Anand receives international award

GNS News Agency, May 16

Hyderabad: Hyderabad Police Commissioner CV Anand, representing the H-NEW (Hyderabad Narcotics Enforcement Wing), was awarded the "Excellence in Anti-Narcotics Award" at the World Police Summit (WPS) 2025, organised by Dubai Police between May 13 and 16. At the awards ceremony held on Friday at the Dubai Police Officers Club in Dubai, UAE, Anand received the "Excellence in Anti-Narcotics Award" from the World Police Summit Committee.

This international recognition was bestowed upon him due to the proactive measures undertaken to curb drug trafficking and consumption in Hyderabad, awareness programs conducted for drug control within the students and general community in the Hyderabad Commissionerate limits and the significant achievements made in this regard in the past three years. Speaking on this occasion, the Commissioner stated that prominent police officers from 138 countries participated in the International Police Summit-2025. He expressed his immense happiness that the Hyderabad City Police's H-NEW (Narcotics Enforcement Wing) had won the "Excellence in Anti-Narcotics Award" after competing with highly efficient police forces from various continents across the globe.

He acknowledged the hard work and dedication of his



team members in achieving this prestigious award and extended his sincere gratitude to each of them. He attributed this recognition to the innovative work practices and comprehensive approach adopted by H-NEW in controlling narcotics. Later, in a panel discussion, Anand spoke on the issues of narcotics faced by India as a nation, especially after Covid, the various ways in which the narcotics are entering the country, the various gangs and peddlers nabbed, the efforts to watch educational institutions through anti-drug committees and awareness campaigns, the rehabilitation measures etc.

## 3 workers die of asphyxiation while cleaning septic tank at factory in Ahmedabad

GNS News Agency, May 16

Three workers died after they inhaled a toxic gas while cleaning a septic tank at a factory in Gujarat's Ahmedabad city on Friday (May 16, 2025), police said. The workers were cleaning an underground septic tank in a jeans washing unit in the Danilimda area in the morning, Assistant Commissioner of Police Y.A. Gohil said. He said workers Prakash Parmar, Vishal Thakor and Sunil Rathva died of asphyxiation as soon as they entered the tank.

The official said the unit had remained shut for some time, and the owner wanted to restart the facility and had hired a contractor to clean the septic tank. "Our probe revealed that one worker fell unconscious after he entered the tank, and the others followed to see what had happened to him. The trio was rushed to a hospital, where doctors declared them dead," Gohil said. He said the bodies were sent for post-mortem, and a first information report will be



registered against the contractor and unit owner for causing death by negligence, as the victims were not provided any safety equipment.

## PSLV-C61 launch: ISRO chief Narayanan seeks blessings at Tirumala shrine

GNS News Agency, May 16

Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) chairman V. Narayanan on Friday (May 16, 2025) offered prayers at the Lord Venkateswara temple, seeking blessings for the successful launch of the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV)-C61/EOS-09 mission, a remote sensing satellite mission. The launch is scheduled for May 18, 2025, at 5.59 a.m. from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota. During the VIP darshan in the early hours of Friday (May

16, 2025), Mr. Narayanan participated in the ritual and placed a miniature model of PSLV-C61 at the deity's feet, seeking blessings for the mission's success and safety. Vedic scholars offered blessings at the Ranganayakula Mandapam, while temple officials presented Tirtha Prasadam (holy water) and honoured Mr. Narayanan with a silk shawl. "This 101st mission with PSLV-C61 will mark a major milestone for ISRO, showcasing India's all-weather earth observation capabilities and reinforcing the country's commitment to space-based solutions," Mr. Narayanan told reporters.



# Indian Chronicle

English Daily

## Dhaka's dangerous drift

Bangladesh's ideological axis is shifting. There are unmistakable signs of the country slipping into a radical Islamist trap. Secularism, once enshrined in the constitution, is the most hated policy now. Under the growing influence of Jamaat-e-Islami, textbooks are being re-written to erase the legacy of the 1971 Liberation War and founder of Awami League Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and, instead, proclaim Ziaur Rahman, founder of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), as the nation's hero. The imposition of a ban on Awami League under anti-terrorism law — effectively barring it from participating in the upcoming general elections — is the latest instance of the dangerous drift. It is ironic that an unelected interim regime, headed by Muhammad Yunus, gets to pan a legally established political party with a chequered history of leading both the war of independence and the campaign to restore democracy after two decades of military rule. Despite his lofty public posturing meant for the consumption of Western audience, Yunus has readily succumbed to the pressure from Islamist elements and quietly backed off from implementing the recommendations of the Women Reforms Commission that included gender equality in inheritance and divorce, legalisation of sex work and reservation for women in Parliament. Following the ouster of the Sheikh Hasina-led Awami League regime in August last year, religious fanaticism has taken firm roots in Bangladeshi society, as reflected by a series of attacks on the Hindu minority. This dangerous slide undermines decades of the bilateral partnership founded on values of secularism, mutual trust and regional cooperation. Dhaka's silence over the dastardly terrorist attack in Pahalgam has not gone unnoticed by India. While regional partners such as Sri Lanka, Nepal and the Maldives swiftly condemned terrorism and urged regional stability, Bangladesh remained conspicuously mute, causing considerable disquiet in India's diplomatic circles.

## Massive Tiranga Rally in Tirupati Shows Solidarity with Soldiers



"May 16, Indian Chronicle Rayalaseema coordinator" "A significant Tiranga (tricolor) rally was held in Tirupati city today, demonstrating widespread public support for the nation's soldiers. The event was led by the Tirupati District BJP President Samanchi Srinivas, under the banner of the NDA coalition. "Leaders and members from the BJP, TDP, and Janasena parties, along with ex-servicemen, Muslim minorities, social activists, representatives from the textile merchants association, industrialists, people's organizations, youth, students, and women, participated in large numbers. Raising slogans of "Jai Jawan," "Bharat Mata Ki Jai," and "Jai Hind," the participants carried a massive national flag and marched from MR Palli Circle to Annamayya Circle. "Children dressed as Bharat Mata (Mother India) and Indian soldiers were a special attraction in the Tiranga procession. "Speaking on the occasion, the leaders lauded Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, stating that under his guidance, the "Operation Sindhoor" had effectively neutralized Pakistan-sponsored terrorists who had targeted the honor of women. They emphasized that India's soldiers had displayed their strength to the world through this operation. "The speakers highlighted that the 1.4 billion people of India sleep peacefully at night, knowing that the nation's soldiers are safeguarding the borders, sacrificing their lives and staying away from their families. They affirmed that through this Tiranga rally, people across the country, irrespective of caste, religion, or region, were expressing their solidarity with the soldiers, conveying the message that "the entire nation stands with you." "It was asserted that under Narendra Modi's leadership, India would not tolerate any nation that promotes terrorism, and "Operation Sindhoor" had sent a clear message to the world in this regard. "Tributes were paid to the martyred soldiers of "Operation Sindhoor" with the chants of "Johar to the brave soldiers, Amar Rahe (long live)." The children dressed as Bharat Mata and Indian soldiers remained a special highlight of the procession. "Key participants in the program included BJP leaders Bhanu Prakash Reddy, Muni Subramanyam, Chandrappa, Varaprasad, Viswanath, Naresh, Vedavathi, Naveen Kumar Reddy, Dastagiri, Prabhakar, Uma, Madhusudan, Harinath Reddy, Prudhvi, Teja Pardhu, Naveen Royal; TDP leaders RC Munikrishna, Rudrakoti Sadasivam, Krishna Yadav, Mandyam Srinivasulu; Janasena Party leaders Devara Manohar, Chandu; Corporators SK Babu, advocates, ex-servicemen, Muslim community leaders Imran, social activists, members of the textile merchants association, hotel association, industrialists, people's organizations, youth, students, and a large number of women.

## Hyderabad doctor's novel dengue awareness drive

Hyderabad: In a novel approach to routine advisories issued by public health departments against dengue and chikungunya, a doctor from Hyderabad chose a unique route to spread awareness about vector-control measures. Senior pediatrician from Hyderabad, Dr Sivaranjani Santosh, stitched together video clips of her colleagues, who were enlisted from other Indian States, urging general public to take basic precautions to avoid getting bitten by mosquitoes. In the short clips, the doctors conveyed the message 'No Water Puddles, No Dengue Troubles' in their respective local languages, including Hindi, Tamil, Kannada, Telugu and Malayalam. The video clip has arrived at an opportune time, coinciding with Hyderabad's transition from summer to monsoon. With thunderstorms already active in Hyderabad and districts for the past week, small clips of videos have started to get shared enthusiastically across multiple social media platforms.



Hyderabad, May 16, 2025 — Aristotle PG College successfully hosted the "International Conference on Entrepreneurship and Innovation for a Sustainable World", bringing together academicians, researchers, industry leaders, and students from around the globe. The event focused on the integration of entrepreneurship, innovation, and sustainable development, fostering dialogue and collaboration among thought leaders.

The inaugural function, held on the morning of May 16th, commenced with a warm welcome by Dr. L. Srinivas Reddy, Principal of Aristotle PG College. In his address, he presented a detailed report on the global reach of the conference, with a remarkable total of "296 full-paper submissions". He also outlined the college's initiatives in sustainability and innovation, reaffirming its commitment to building a future-ready academic ecosystem.

The event was further enriched by the presence of Prof. Balakista Reddy, Chairperson of the Telangana State Council of Higher Education (TGCHE), who attended as the Chief Guest. He highlighted recent reforms in higher education and emphasized the importance of nurturing entrepreneurial mindsets among Indian youth.

He advocated for the inclusion of "Applied Social Responsibility (ASR)" as part of management education to strengthen societal impact. Dr. Sree Ramulu, Dean, Osmania University, graced the occasion as Guest of Honour. He lauded the efforts of the college in organizing an event of such magnitude and noted that Aristotle PG College stands among the very few affiliated institutions under Osmania University to host an international-level conference on sustainable innovation. The Keynote Address was delivered by Mr. Mahesh Agnihotri from Skyline University, UAE, who spoke passionately about environmental challenges and the urgent need for decarbonization.

A key highlight of the event was the release of the conference souvenir by the Chief Guest, commemorating the collective academic contributions and discussions during the event. Dr. Narsaih, Vice principal also attended the program. The successful conduct of the conference marks a milestone for Aristotle PG College and reinforces its leadership in promoting global academic collaboration and innovation-driven education.

## Wage of Just 50 for Labour Work

— A Grave Injustice: Budida Ganesh. "PS Ashokan" "Indian Chronicle" "Manthani MAY, 16" "Budida Ganesh, District Secretary of the Agricultural Labour Union, visited the employment guarantee work site at Dubbapalli village in Manthani mandal on Friday. During his visit, he interacted with the labourers and listened to their grievances. "The workers expressed their deep dissatisfaction, stating that despite working from 6:00 AM to 10:00 AM under harsh summer conditions, they were being paid only ₹50 per day. Mr. Ganesh strongly condemned this, calling it a serious injustice to the poor labourers."

"He criticized the central BJP government, alleging that its policies are pushing the rural poor into deeper hardship. "Workers join these employment guarantee schemes hoping for some financial relief during summer, but if the wages are so low, how will they survive?" he questioned. "He demanded that the concerned authorities take immediate action to ensure fair wages, clear pending payments, and provide essential facilities such as drinking water, shade, and insurance at work sites. "He also urged all labourers to participate in the protest programmes being held at mandal and district headquarters on the 20th of this month to demand resolution of their issues."



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## Teachers should make good use of training classes

District Collector Divakara TS "Mulugu, Mahipal, Indian Chronicle : District Collector Divakara TS suggested that the students should be provided with good education by taking advantage of the in-service training program being conducted for government teachers in the district. The Collector, who visited the teacher training program being conducted at Chelvai Model School in Govindaraoepet Mandal of Mulugu district on Friday, made several suggestions. He said that teachers should develop the quality of learning by being lifelong learners and should also work for the all-round development of students. He said that since artificial intelligence and digital teaching



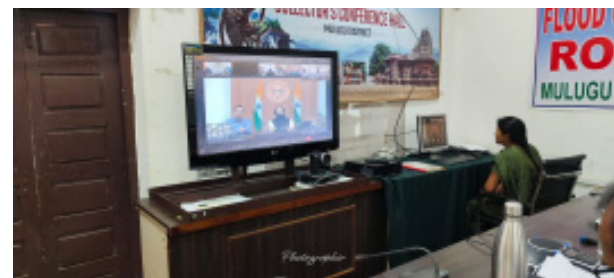
are being done in schools to strengthen government schools, the enrollment in government schools should be increased this academic year under the Badibata program. He said that teachers should work to ensure that the public and parents have

confidence in government schools. In this program, Open Schools Telangana Joint Director Somi Reddy, who was appointed as a special officer to inspect the in-service training programs being conducted in Mulugu district, and District Educa-

tion Officer G. Panini, Course Director Katam Mallareddy, Center in-charges Appani Jayadev, Arsham Raju, Gullapelli Sambaiah, Local Mandal Education Officer Gondi Diwakar, Resource Persons and Teachers participated

## Government will buy till the last grain

We will buy soaked paddy keeping in mind the welfare of farmers" - Minister Uttam reviewed the purchase of paddy, issuance of ration cards through video conference



Mulugu, Mahipal, Indian Chronicle: "Telangana's Civil Supplies Minister Uttam Kumar Reddy announced that every last grain of paddy produced by farmers in the Yasangi (Rabi) season will be procured at MSP. On Friday, the minister, along with Chief Secretary K. Ramakrishna Rao and Civil Supplies Commissioner D.S. Chauhan, conducted a video conference with district collectors from Hyderabad to review the paddy procurement process. The minister stated that the government is committed to purchasing every grain grown by the farmers at the support price. He noted that a record 57 lakh acres were cultivated with paddy this season and the government will spend around ₹17,000 crore to procure 70 lakh metric tonnes of paddy. Additionally, a bonus of ₹500 per quintal will be given for fine varieties of paddy. The minister assured that payment would be credited to farmers' accounts within 48 hours of completing the tab-based entry at procurement centers. Despite the large-scale procurement, he expressed concern that the media has not been covering it adequately and urged that negative and false news should be countered and addressed promptly. As a large volume of paddy is expected to arrive at procurement centers over the next 15 days, he instructed officials to expedite the process. He directed collectors to take proactive steps to avoid shortages of laborers and transport vehicles. He also emphasized the availability of gunny bags and tarpaulin covers at procurement centers. Collectors and senior officials were asked to hold discussions with rice millers and shift procured paddy to intermediate godowns if necessary. He stressed the need to procure even wet paddy quickly and efficiently to avoid losses to farmers due to untimely rains. He also ordered that paddy from default rice millers can be allocated during emergencies with the collectors' authorization. The minister further stated that since January 26, 2025, the government has issued 1,57,467 new ration cards, benefiting an additional 16,67,936 people. He instructed officials to process applications received through MeeSeva and Praja Palana centers and issue ration cards to eligible applicants. Chief Secretary K. Ramakrishna Rao, who participated in the video conference, said that the government has made significant financial allocations for the procurement process. He asked collectors to follow guidelines and complete the procurement systematically. He stressed that collectors should inspect procurement centers regularly and resolve field-level issues immediately. He also directed collectors to provide daily updates to the media on procurement progress and inform farmers through media if any issues arise. Civil Supplies Commissioner D.S. Chauhan reported that the government has procured 49.53 lakh metric tonnes of paddy from 7,70,477 farmers, paying ₹8,042 crore as MSP. He said that this Yasangi season has seen higher procurement compared to previous years. By May 15, the procurement stood at 25.35 lakh metric tonnes in 2022-23, 32.93 lakh metric tonnes in 2023-24, and now 49.53 lakh metric tonnes in 2024-25. He added that daily teleconferences are being held with additional collectors to monitor the process and that the procurement should be completed in an organized manner by the end of May. He urged that false narratives on social and mainstream media be countered and transport issues be resolved in coordination with collectors, RTOs, and police. Empty lorries should be fully utilized for paddy transportation. Instructions were also given to ensure timely unloading at rice mills and to avoid a shortage of laborers. District collectors were told to closely monitor the procurement process, prevent deductions under the pretext of wastage or impurities, and ensure that gunny bags are used only for storing purchased paddy and not handed over to farmers. Regarding ration cards, it was mentioned that the central government identified 1,62,777 beneficiaries under 96,240 ration cards as potentially ineligible due to reasons like not drawing rations for six months, being from other states, or being deceased. District-specific lists have been shared for verification, and collectors were asked to investigate and submit reports. District Collector Divakar T.S., Additional Collector Mahender G., Additional Collector (Local Bodies) Sampath Rao, Civil Supplies DM Rampati, and District Civil Supplies Officer Syed Shah Faizal Hussaini, along with other relevant officials, participated in the meeting.

## Case booked against Italy-based firm on MEIL's complaint

GNS News Agency, May 16

Hyderabad: A case has been registered at the Cyberabad Economic Offences Wing (EOW) police station against representatives of Italy-based Soilmech Company in connection with the alleged supply of defective machinery to city-based Megha Engineering Infrastructure Limited (MEIL). As per available information, Megha Engineering Infrastructure Limited had earlier secured a package of works as part of the construction of a railway line in Uttarakhand. According to the police, MEIL had placed an order with Soilmech for the tunnel rings required for construction purposes. However, recently, defects were found in the machinery that arrived, even after the deadline had over. When the MEIL management tried to contact the Soilmech representatives, there was no response from the latter. The MEIL representatives had initially filed a complaint at Balanagar police station alleging that Soilmech had collected Rs 13.5 crore and did not supply the correct machinery, causing a huge loss to them. "We received the complaint and registered a case based on the facts. However, since the alleged value of the fraud was high, it was transferred to Cyberabad EOW for further investigation," said T Narsimha Raju, Inspector, Balanagar.



## Sikkim 50th Statehood Day: PM Modi, President Droupadi Murmu, and leaders greet people



GNS News Agency, May 16

President Droupadi Murmu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and leaders across the political spectrum on Friday (May 16, 2025) greeted the people of Sikkim on their Statehood day and said the State has set remarkable examples of sustainable development, showcasing harmonious co-existence with nature. "I extend my best wishes to all residents of Sikkim for a future full of prosperity and well-being," President Murmu said in a post on X. "Warm greetings to the people of Sikkim on Statehood Day. Sikkim is widely admired for its boundless natural beauty, rich cultural heritage, and warmth of its people. As one of India's most environmentally conscious states, Sikkim has set remarkable examples of sustainable development, showcasing harmonious coexistence with nature," the President said. Similarly, Prime Minister Narendra Modi lauded Sikkim's strides in diverse sectors. Warm greetings to the people of Sikkim on their Statehood Day! This year, the occasion is even more special as we mark the 50th anniversary of Sikkim's statehood! Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge also wished the people of the State. "A beautiful Himalayan state, enriched with rich natural beauty, Sikkim's rich cultural heritage, traditions, and diversity are truly captivating and a

source of immense pride for its people and the nation," Mr. Kharge said in a post on X. Our warmest wishes to the people of Sikkim as they celebrate 50 years of statehood. Sikkim has flourished as our 22nd state. since its integration with India in 1975 under the stewardship of Smt. Indira Gandhi.

Congress general secretary in-charge communications, Jairam Ramesh said the 36th Constitution Amendment Bill was passed by the Lok Sabha on April 23, 1975, and by the Rajya Sabha three days later. Subsequently after the President's assent, the 36th Amendment was enacted and on May 16, 1975—exactly fifty years ago—Sikkim became the 22nd state of India with special provisions for it and its people enshrined in Article 371-F of the Constitution, he recalled. "The Republic of India has been enriched enormously by the integration of Sikkim. The state has a number of impressive achievements to its credit," Mr. Ramesh said. P.N. Dhar's book called Indira Gandhi, the 'Emergency' and Indian Democracy (2001) is the topmost insider's account of how the merger happened, he said. "My own Intertwined Lives: PN Haksar and Indira Gandhi (2018) has two fascinating notes written in the early 1970s by Haksar, who was then the PM's chief aide, which formed the backdrop to what was finally accomplished in 1975," Mr. Ramesh said on X.

UP CM Yogi Adityanath's message In a post on X, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Adityanath hailed Sikkim for being a state rich with natural beauty, diversity and on the path of development. Hearty congratulations and best wishes to the people of Sikkim on the foundation day of the state of Sikkim, rich with unique natural beauty and cultural diversity! Under the guidance of the respected Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the able leadership of the honourable Chief Minister PS Tamang Golay, Sikkim continues to move on the path of development. This is my prayer to Lord Shri Ram," Mr. Adityanath's post said.

## The yearly 'thank you' to nurses is not enough

May 12 has passed, an annual day where we honour Florence Nightingale and celebrate the unsung heroes of health care — nurses. We praised nurses on this day (International Nurses Day), but the urgency to truly empower the stars of our health-care system quickly fades. Nurses and midwives form nearly 47% of India's total health workforce, yet remain under-represented in leadership, policymaking, and autonomous clinical roles. The perception of nurses as being mere assistants to doctors still prevails, limiting their potential, despite global trends that prove otherwise. The role of Nurse Practitioners (NPs) as independent, advanced care providers capable of addressing health-care gaps has been embraced in Australia, Botswana, Brazil, South Africa, Thailand, the United Kingdom, the United States and Zambia.

NPs are advanced practice registered nurses (such as clinical nurse specialists, certified nurse midwives and certified registered nurse anaesthetists) with specialised training, usually at the master's level. They are certified to diagnose, treat, and prescribe independently in many settings. India has recognised the need for NPs, particularly to expand health-care access in underserved areas. The National Health Policy 2017 has acknowledged that mid-level providers, including NPs, are crucial to primary care. Despite the Indian Nursing Council (INC) initiating structured NP programmes, notably the Nurse Practitioner in Critical Care (NPCC) in 2017 and also the Nurse Practitioner in Primary Health Care (NPPHC), integration remains slow. Initiatives such as the NP in Midwifery programme (2002) in West Bengal and similar efforts in Telangana and Kerala have struggled in the absence of a clear legal framework, defined roles and protected titles. Although some institutions have developed in-house training for extended roles (stoma nurses, diabetes educators, stroke nurses), these positions lack regulatory backing and national recognition. India's NP education programmes are designed to focus on advanced clinical skills, diagnosis, treatment, limited prescribing authority, and community engagement. However, there are challenges, a key barrier being the absence of a clear legal framework defining the NP scope of practice, including prescriptive rights. Resistance within some in the medical community, driven by fear of losing power, complicates integration. The curriculum emphasises clinical skills but leaves regulatory frameworks, licensure clarity, and career pathways murky. Who will licence NPs? Will they be recognised legally? Will they be absorbed into public systems or left out? This ambiguity is not just administrative, but is also existential for nurses. Lessons from Australia

The NP movement in Australia is instructive, having begun with a clear goal to improve access in underserved areas and provide clinical autonomy to qualified nurses. But what made it work was more than just policy; it was politics. Nursing movements were part of the policy dialogues. Legislation protected the NP title. Licensure was formalised. Career ladders were created. Importantly, nurse-led models such as walk-in centres demonstrated that care does



not always need a physician's stamp to be effective, safe, and appreciated. Resistance to nurse autonomy in India stems not only from policy gaps but from entrenched cultural, gender, and hierarchical biases that position nurses, predominantly women, as subordinates to doctors. This mindset influences policy decisions, including opposition to NP roles by the medical community, despite global evidence of their effectiveness. There is also a crisis in the nursing education sector due to lax regulation and corruption. Although the National Nursing and Midwifery Commission Act, 2023, signals reform, its real impact remains uncertain. Compounding these challenges is the lack of strong, unified nursing movements, limiting the profession's power to engage in policy processes. NPs are formally recognised in a number of high-income, low- and middle-income countries. Ironically, while Indian nurses excel abroad in NP roles, their potential remains untapped at home. Evidence shows NP-led care matches those with physician outcomes, with high patient satisfaction and lower costs. For India, adopting a collaborative, team-based care model, where nurses practise to their full scope, is progressive and essential to delivering equitable and quality health care. Realising NP roles in India demands urgent reforms in nursing education, regulation and nursing leadership. This includes closing substandard colleges, enhancing faculty competency, bridging the theory-practice gap, and integrating ethics and leadership, and policy engagement components into nursing curricula. Legal recognition of NPs, with defined licensure and accountability, is crucial. Clear career pathways, fair pay and advancement opportunities must replace the stagnation in nursing roles. Addressing the gender-based undervaluation of nursing is also essential.

Critically, nurses must lead nursing reforms through sustained policy engagement. Given their lived experiences, nurses are uniquely positioned to advocate change and challenge medical hierarchy. To achieve this, grassroots nursing movements that are bolstered by strategic alliances and driven by courage, commitment, and the capacity to speak truth to power are needed. A yearly "thank you" is not enough. India needs a health system that sees nurses not just as caregivers but also as leaders. Honouring them means confronting hard truths about power and privilege. Meena Putturaj is an Assistant Professor, DBT/Wellcome Trust India Alliance Fellow at the Institute of Public Health Bengaluru

## Six terrorists killed in two major operations in south Kashmir

GNS News Agency, May 16

After the April 22 Pahalgam attack, security forces turned the focus of their anti-terror operations to specific areas in south Kashmir and eliminated six terrorists in the past three days, officials said on Friday (May 16, 2025). "The security agencies reviewed their strategy according to the situation in the wake of terror activities in the last one month and our intensified focus was on operations," said V.K. Birdi, Inspector General of Police (IGP), Kashmir. The IGP was addressing a press conference with General Officer Commanding, Victor Force, Major General Dhananjay Joshi at the headquarters of the Victor Force here in south Kashmir's Pulwama district. Mr. Birdi said that due to the intensified focus and coordination between various security agencies, two successful operations were conducted in which six terrorists were killed. He termed their elimination "significant achievements". "These successful operations were possible because of the coordination and synergy among the security and intelligence agencies. We are duty-bound to end any terror activity in Kashmir and we are always ready to stop such acts," the IGP said. The encounters took place in the Keller area of Shopian and the Nadar area of Tral in Pulwama on Tuesday and Thursday, respectively. Three terrorists each were killed in the two operations. Victor Force GOC Major Joshi said immediately after the Pahalgam terror attack, which claimed 26 lives, the security forces designated several areas as focus areas. "We had intelligence

inputs that terrorists had moved to the higher reaches after the melting of snow. Keeping that in mind, our domination parties had continuously been deployed in the higher reaches, mountainous areas and forests," he said. The security agencies received an intelligence input about the presence of terrorists in the Keller area of Shopian on the night of May 12, Major Joshi said. "So the domination party that was deployed there for some time, relocated itself and in a focused way closed in on the area. They challenged the terrorists who fired at them, leading to an encounter in which three terrorists were neutralised," he said. About the Tral encounter, the GoC said the operation took place in a different terrain. "We had inputs and cordoned off the village. The terrorists took positions in different houses and fired. Our challenge was the safe evacuation of innocent civilians including children. Then systematically searches were conducted one by one in the houses and the three terrorists were neutralised in separate places," he added. The successful conduct of both the operations shows that the security forces will find terrorists wherever they are and neutralise them, Major Joshi said. Of the six slain terrorists, the main one was Shahid Kuttay, who was involved in major attacks. The attacks included one on a sarpanch in Heerpora, Shopian on May 18 last year and the firing incident at Danish Resort on April 8 last year in which two German tourists and a driver were injured, the officer said. "Kuttay was also involved in fundraising and other activities," he added.

## Adani Airport Holdings ends partnership with Turkish firm Celebi Aviation for Mumbai, Ahmedabad airports



Adani Airport said it has terminated the ground handling concession agreement with Celebi at Mumbai and Ahmedabad airports with immediate effect and has asked it to handover all ground handling facilities for seamless service at these airports. In a statement on behalf of Mumbai & Ahmedabad Airports a spokesperson said, "Following the Government of India's decision to revoke Celebi's security clearance, we have terminated the ground handling concession agreements with Celebi at Mumbai's Chhatrapati

Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA) and Ahmedabad's Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport (SVPIA)." It also said that Celebi has been directed to immediately hand over to the company all ground handling facilities to ensure uninterrupted operations. The decision to terminate these concession agreements was taken after the Union government revoked the security clearance of the Turkish aviation firm. It said Adani Airport Holding owns and operates the Mumbai and Ahmedabad airports, as well as the Mangalore, Guwahati, Jaipur, Lucknow, and Thiruvananthapuram airports. "Accordingly, Celebi has been directed to immediately hand over to us all ground handling facilities to ensure uninterrupted operations," a spokesperson for Adani Airport Holdings said in a statement. The company said it will continue to provide seamless service to all airlines without disruptions through new ground handling agencies selected by it. "All existing employees of Celebi at CSMIA and SVPIA will be transferred to the new ground handling agencies on their existing terms and conditions of employment," the company said. "Ground handling operations at our airports will remain unaffected. We are fully committed to upholding the highest standards of service and national interest," the spokesperson added.

## Justice Bela M. Trivedi, eleventh woman Judge in Supreme Court history, bids adieu

GNS News Agency, May 16

Justice Bela M. Trivedi, who was the eleventh woman Judge to be elevated to the Supreme Court in its 75-year-old history on Friday demitted office after spending three-and-a-half years on the Bench. Justice Trivedi, who had the rare distinction of being elevated to the top court after starting out as a trial court Judge in Gujarat in July 1995, was part of the top court's several landmark judgments. "It was a happy coincidence that her father was already working as the Judge, city civil and sessions court when she was appointed. The Limca Book of Indian records has recorded the entry in their 1996 edition that 'Father - daughter Judges in the same court'." Justice Trivedi's profile on the apex court website said. She was elevated as a Judge of the apex court on August 31, 2021 when a record nine new Judges, including three women, were administered oath of office. On Friday, Justice Trivedi sat in the ceremonial Bench headed by Chief Justice B R Gavai as a tradition marking the exit of a top court Judge.

She was part of a five-Judge Constitution Bench, which by a 3:2 majority, in November 2022 upheld 10 per cent reservation introduced in 2019 for economically weaker sections in admissions and government jobs that excluded the poor among the SC/ST/OBC categories. A seven-Judge Constitution Bench, which Justice Trivedi was part of, in August 2024 by a 6:1 majority held that states are constitutionally empowered to make sub-classifications within the Scheduled Castes, which form a socially heterogeneous class, for granting reservation for the uplift of castes that are socially and educationally more backward among them.

Justice Trivedi, in her 85-page dissenting verdict, said it is only Parliament which can include a caste in the SC list or exclude it, and states are not empowered to tinker with it. A Bench comprising Justice Trivedi in November 2021 said touching genitals of a child or any act involving physical contact with "sexual intent" amounts to sexual assault under Section 7 of the POCSO Act as the most important ingredient is sexual intent and not skin-to-skin contact. It quashed the controversial "skin-to-skin" judgments of the Bombay High Court in two cases under the POCSO Act.



Justice Trivedi penned a verdict holding that the moratorium imposed under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code does not prohibit the attachment of properties under the Maharashtra Protection of Interest of Depositors Act. A Bench headed by Justice Trivedi on May 15 paved way for a Uttar Pradesh government scheme to develop the Shri Banke Bihari Temple corridor in Mathura for the benefit of scores of devotees. Born on June 10, 1960 at Patan in north Gujarat, she practised as a lawyer in the Gujarat High Court for about 10 years. She was appointed as a Judge, city civil and sessions court at Ahmedabad, on July 10, 1995. She had worked on different posts like registrar vigilance in the high court and law secretary in the Government of Gujarat. She was elevated as a Judge of the Gujarat High Court on February 17, 2011. Justice Trivedi was transferred to the Rajasthan High Court where she worked since June 2011 till she was repatriated to the parent high court in February 2016.

## CJI disapproves of Bar council's refusal to hold official farewell for retiring SC judge Bela Trivedi

GNS News Agency, May 16

Chief Justice of India Justice B.R. Gavai on Friday (May 16, 2025) praised Justice Bela M Trivedi for her career trajectory from the subordinate judiciary all the way up to the Supreme Court, where she became the eleventh woman judge to be appointed in its history. The CJI lauded the outgoing judge for her "fairness, firmness, hard work" aside from "dedication and spirituality".

The efforts and commitment of Justice Trivedi, who was elevated to the apex court on August 31, 2021 and spent over three years, were hailed by members of the bar, Attorney General R Venkataramani and Solicitor General Tushar Mehta. Though Justice Trivedi would have demitted office on June 9, 2025, Friday marked her last day owing to a personal commitment. In line with its tradition, a ceremonial bench of the top court comprising CJI Gavai and Justices Trivedi and Augustine George Masih assembled in her honour. The CJI, however, deplored the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) for deciding not to hold an official farewell ceremony to bid her farewell this evening. As a matter of practice, the SCBA holds farewell functions for retiring apex court judges and an exceptional decision was taken in Justice Trivedi's case. "There are different types of judges. There are some who give relief. There are others who do not give relief. Judges are ultimately human beings. Everybody has different views. We could all be together as a family, and therefore I'm grateful to the people, and certainly also that both of them (SCBA president Kapil Sibal and other office bearers) are here," the CJI said. The CJI went on, "But the stand taken by the association (SCBA), I must deprecate openly, because I believe in being plain and straight. Such a stand ought not to have been taken by the association, and therefore I openly appreciate that despite the resolution of the bar body, they (Sibal and other office bearer) are here." The CJI noted despite the resolution, the presence of SCBA office bearers reaffirmed the "traditions and respect for the judiciary transcend differences". "Strangely enough, as has already been expressed by the chief (CJI), I feel sorry, but I must say that traditions need to be followed, and they are to be respected. I am sure good traditions should always continue," Justice Masih said. Justice Gavai then traced Justice Trivedi's journey underscoring her early inspiration from her father, a judge, to her elevation to the highest court in the country. "Her journey is a compelling story of perseverance, integrity, and dedication. Her rich experience in the district judiciary and administrative roles gave her a distinctive edge. Whether as a judicial officer, a law officer, or a Supreme Court judge, she displayed exceptional legal insight, fairness, and management skills," the CJI said.

The CJI praised her for being instrumental in the es-

tablishment of Gujarat National Law University and showered accolades for her commitment to uphold judicial integrity. Recalling her unwavering dedication during challenging personal times, he added, "Even when her father was ailing, she would travel to Ahmedabad over the weekends and be back in court on Monday mornings." Referring to her meteoric rise through the ranks, the CJI said, "She is the only sitting judge of the Supreme Court who rose from the district judiciary, a rare and inspiring feat. Her dissenting opinion in the recent seven-judge bench decision on sub-classification among Scheduled Castes showcased her independent thinking and courage." A poised Justice Trivedi shared, "For 30 years, I have spoken only through my judgments. Today, let me pronounce the last operative part of this long journey it has come to an end." She spoke of listening to her conscience most of all and expressed contentment in having served the institution with sincerity and fairness. Reflecting on the unique dynamics of the Supreme Court, she emphasised the value of "polyvocality" judicial pluralism that reflects democratic ideals, even if it sometimes leads to divergence in legal reasoning. "Ultimately, what matters most is institutional integrity, which sustains national integrity," she said. Justice Trivedi concluded her address with heartfelt gratitude to her family, colleagues, staff, and the institution. She added, "From the civil court to the Supreme Court, the journey has been smooth, fulfilling, and above all, guided by my inner conscience. I leave with immense satisfaction and gratitude." Mehta hailed her for invoking the "word of the Constitution". "In every court, your ladyship has gone, there is one common thread in every court which is always available and all of us know, that there are certain individuals who feel that my words should be the last word in law. That never happened in your ladyship's court. The last word was the word of law and word of the Constitution even at the expense of displeasing some people," he said. Senior advocate Sibal praised Justice Trivedi for being one of the few women judges elevated to the Supreme Court in its over seven-decade-old history and said, "Within 75 years of this country, it means one lady judge was appointed every seven odd years. That itself is a great milestone." Additional Solicitor General S V Raju called her "a towering and eminent judge". Born on June 10, 1960 at Patan in north Gujarat, Justice Trivedi was appointed as a Judge, City Civil and Sessions Court at Ahmedabad on July 10, 1995. It was a happy coincidence that her father was already working as the Judge, City Civil and Sessions Court when she was appointed. She was elevated as the judge of the Gujarat High Court on February 17, 2011 and later transferred to the Rajasthan High Court. She was repatriated to the parent high court at Gujarat in February 2016 and remained there till her elevation to the top court.







## In Surat, to prevent drowning deaths, entry into 78 waterbodies banned



GNS News Agency, May 16

Keeping in mind the upcoming monsoon season and rise in the cases of deaths due to drowning, Surat District Additional Collector Vijay Rabari has issued notification banning entry into 78 water bodies like lakes, ponds, river, canals, and sea in all parts of the district except those coming under Surat police commissioner's jurisdiction. The notification stated that the Home Department has encountered incidents of deaths due to drowning in different water bodies like rivers, lakes, canals, and seas across the state, and that the local authorities should identify such water bodies and issue a notification banning people's entry. Rabari issued a notification on May 8 that states that violators will be strictly punished. The ban will on the entry into the waterbodies will remain till June 7.

The 78 "dangerous places" identified are in Surat's

Kamrej, Palsana, Bardoli, Mahuva, Umarpada and Olpad talukas. Tapi river ovaras have been identified in villages like Bhaliyawad, Machhiwad, Thana, Gaypagla, and Galteshwar Mahadev temple; lake areas in villages like Umber, Khandupur, Orna, Segwa, Sarbhon, Vankheda, Itarwa, Mamadev villages, Shanker talavdi, Anaval, Sunsavel, Dholkui, Maya, Kalibel, Verthi, Tadkeshwar, Nigama, Vadod, Areth. Besides, Tapi river banks in villages like Vaghecha, Bagumra, Uva, Tain, Allu, Mandvi nagar Palika area, Balavarthi, Nanichair, Moti Chair, Rataniya, Tarsada, Vaghnera, Rupan, Kakvada, Khedpur, Devghat, Varjakhn, Jakhla, Kosadi, Unn, Umarsadi, Kamalpor, Gavchhi, Pipariya, Paatna, Vareli; Ambika river banks in Kumbhkot and Bamaniya villages; Kaveri river banks in Sukhleshwar, Anaval and Umra; Vareh river banks in Picharvan, Amli, soli, Karvali, Kimdungra, Phoolwadi, Goddha, Salaiya, Moritha, Valargadh, Godsamba, Amalsadi, Nandpor, Pipariya, Bori, Godawadi, Karoli, Bori Gavchhi are also in the list. Sea beach areas in Dabhari, Morbhagwa, and Dandi villages in Olpad Taluka, and the riverfront causeway in Haripura village have also been marked "dangerous".

Talking to The Indian Express, Rabari said, "After getting the notification from the state Home Department, we took note of the deaths of people in the water bodies in different villages in the district. We have banned human entry in such notified water bodies based on the casualties. Some places in these 78 locations are too dangerous. The ban will be in effect till June 7. Further decisions will be taken later."

## Mumbai-Gandhinagar Vande Bharat Express increases capacity by 312 seats, to ferry 936 more passengers daily

GNS News Agency, May 16

In an initiative to address passenger demand on one of India's busiest business routes, Western Railway has introduced four more permanent AC chair car coaches in the Mumbai Central-Gandhinagar Capital Vande Bharat Express. The services with added coaches began on Saturday, May 11. With this upgrade, the overall capacity of the train running six days a week will be enhanced by 312 seats per journey. The additional seating capacity will now be 468, or 936 (for up and down journey) per day, considering the 150 per cent capacity utilisation of the Vande Bharat Express. In a week, this amounts to 5,616 extra passengers, and in a month, 22,464. In a year, the train will transport an estimated 2,69,568 additional passengers. The train earlier had 16 coaches: two 104-seat executive chair (EC) cars and 14 1,024-seat AC chair car coaches, translating to a 1,128-passenger carrying capacity. The 20-coach rake now has 2 EC coaches and 18 AC chair car coaches, taking the passenger capacity up to 1,440 seats. "Mumbai-Ahmedabad corridor has consistently high demand, and the Vande Bharat Express runs at 150 per cent capacity utilisation. The permanent addition of coaches is a forward-looking measure to address increasing commuter demand without compromising the high standards of speed, comfort and ser-



vice this train is renowned for," a Western Railway spokesperson said. Started as India's first Vande Bharat route, the Mumbai-Gandhinagar train has become popular with its efficient timings, new-age amenities, and luxury onboard experience. With increased coaches, authorities expect to increase the accessibility of the train for business and recreational travellers between Gujarat and Maharashtra. Railway authorities said the move comes amid regular passenger feedback and riding patterns. The step is also part of the Railways' overarching strategy to enhance capacity on high-demand routes and make semi-high-speed riding more accessible and inclusive.

## Maharashtra CM Devendra Fadnavis chairs high-level security meeting, seeks to improve coordination between govt, forces

GNS News Agency, May 16

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis chaired a high-level security review meeting on Monday during which he emphasised the need for better coordination between the state government and defence forces considering the continued need for alertness across the state and its coastal areas in the wake of India-Pakistan tensions. Deputy chief ministers Eknath Shinde and Ajit Pawar were also present at the meeting with defence officials held at Varsha, the chief minister's residence in Mumbai, amid the ceasefire between the two nations. Addressing the meeting, Fadnavis lauded the role of the Indian armed forces in Operation Sindoor. "All three forces, the Army, Navy and Air Force, performed outstandingly in their roles. We salute them," he said. "Mumbai city is very crucial. It is the financial capital of India... Even in the past when terrorists attacked Mumbai, it was to show that they could attack the country's economic capital," he said, emphasising that it was vital to share information, besides taking extraordinary care to tackle threats to cybersecurity.

In a statement, the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) said, "At the meeting, notes were exchanged on information, adoption of advanced technology, and precautions required ahead." Fadnavis also sought the views of the armed forces and their expectations from the state administration and



government, besides discussing various steps necessary to strengthen coordination. Lieutenant General Pawan Chadha, Colonel Sandeep Seal, Rear Admiral Anil Jaggi from the Indian Navy, Naval Commander Nitesh Garg, Air Vice Marshal Rajat Mohan represented defence forces at the meeting, while state chief secretary Sujata Saunik attended along with officers from the police, state administration and the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC).

Representatives from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (JNPT), Mumbai Stock Exchange, National Stock Exchange (NSE), Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS), and Home Guard were also present.

## India extends financial support to Maldives through rollover of \$50 million Treasury Bill

GNS News Agency, May 16

India has extended crucial financial support to the Maldives through the rollover of the \$50 million Treasury Bill for one more year, a move the Maldivian government said will support its ongoing efforts to implement fiscal reforms for economic resilience. At the request of the Maldivian government, the State Bank of India (SBI) has subscribed, for one more year, a \$50 million Government Treasury Bill issued by the Ministry of Finance of Maldives, the Indian High Commission in the Maldives said in a statement on Monday (May 12, 2025).

Since March 2019, the Indian government has been facilitating subscription of several such Treasury Bills by the SBI and rolling them over, annually, interest-free to the Government of Maldives, it said. "This has been done under a unique Government-to-Government arrangement, as emergency financial assistance to the Maldives," the statement said. The Maldives is India's key maritime neighbour and an important partner in India's 'Neighbourhood First' policy and Vision 'MAHASAGAR' i.e. Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions, the statement said. India has assisted the Maldives in times of need and the subscription of this Treasury Bill, along with, the Government of India's decision earlier this year to ex-



tend the special quota for export of essential commodities for the Maldives, reflect India's continued support to the Government and the people of the Maldives, it added. Abdulla Khaleel, the Maldives' Minister of Foreign Affairs, expressed gratitude to India and External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar for extending crucial financial support to his country. "This timely assistance reflects the close bonds of friendship between #Maldives & #India and will support the Government's ongoing efforts to implement fiscal reforms for economic resilience," he said. Bills (T-bills) "rollover" refers to the practice of reinvesting the proceeds from a maturing T-bill into a new T-bill, effectively extending the investment term.

## Pakistani actor Iftikhar Thakur's attempt to 'clarify' anti-India remark backfires: 'No dearth of talent in Punjab'



Days after facing backlash from the Punjabi film industry over his anti-India comments, Pakistani actor Iftikhar Thakur has landed in yet another controversy after an attempt to clarify his previous statement led to further outrage and calls to boycott him. Music director and singer Ravinder Singh Ranguwal said, "With such repeated statements, I don't think he can ever make a comeback in the Punjabi film industry. It's time to stop acknowledging him. His every clarification is more inflammatory than the last. Who is he to speak about India and Punjab like this? We are proud Indians." Speaking on a podcast, Thakur said, "I want to clear one confusion — I don't consider Charda Punjab (Punjab in India) as part of India. Eastern Punjab is like my elder brother. That is one Punjab, this is another, but it is all one Punjab. A big brother is a fatherly figure," he said. "I heard many of them from Charda Punjab even abused me, but I accept all that from a big brother wholeheartedly," he added, and referred to a saying about how a father's scolding and ghee splashes are both intense but ultimately not hurtful. Thakur said his previous statement was aimed at the Indian government, particularly over threats of cutting off Pakistan's water supply. "The war is still on," he said, adding that Muslims are the flag-bearers of humanity. The clip began circulating widely on social media on Sunday. Noted literary figure and former president of the Punjabi Sahitya Academy, Gurbhajan Gill, said, "Who is he to talk about Charda Punjab like this? Punjab is very much

a part of India and a matter of national pride — just as Lehnda Punjab (Western Punjab) is for Pakistan. Artists should remain neutral. For them, the sky is the limit." Following the Pahalgam terror attack that claimed 26 lives, Thakur—who is known for his roles in Punjabi films like Chal Mera Putt—sparked outrage on May 2 after he appeared on Pakistani TV show and made a remark directed at India: "If you come through air, you'll be bombed in the air. If you come by sea, you'll be drowned in the water. If you come through the ground, you will be buried under it." was swiftly condemned in India, particularly by members of the Punjabi film industry. Prominent actors like Binnu Dhillon and Gurpreet Ghuggi criticized Thakur, emphasising that artists should be messengers of peace, not war. Ghuggi remarked, "I don't think any producer or director will ever cast him now. He has closed doors not just for himself but for many Pakistani actors." Reacting after Thakur's latest statement, veteran folk singer and former MP Mohammad Sadik said, "It's fine to stand with your country, but no one has the right to make inflammatory remarks against ours. Just like he supports his country, we are with ours—and proud of our forces." He may have worked in Punjabi films and earned his livelihood from them, but artists must realise they have fans on both sides of the border. Their words reflect their character. Let him speak — it only exposes his poor mindset. The Punjabi film industry must now decide whether such artists deserve a place anymore. There's no dearth of talent in Punjab," Sadik said. He added, "The wars are of the two countries... governments play role in that... it is not a war of the public or artists. Many acclaimed Pakistani artists like Ghulam Ali Khan, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan have earned so much respect in India and will continue to get that... as they were focused on their work and not any controversy." Pakistani actors, including Nasir Chinyoti, Naseem Vicky, and Zafri Khan, have also been seen in Punjabi films, appearing only in scenes shot outside India. Since the 2019 Pulwama attack, Bollywood has imposed an unofficial ban on Pakistani actors but the Punjabi industry in the country has continued to offer them roles that are mostly shot outside India.

## India-Pakistan clash | ISRO Chief V Narayanan says, at least 10 satellites working to ensure safety and security of India

GNS News Agency, May 16

Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) Chairman V. Narayanan said that at least 10 satellites are continuously working round-the-clock for the strategic purpose to ensure the safety and security of the citizens of the country. Addressing the 5th convocation ceremony of the Central Agricultural University (CAU) in Imphal on Sunday (May 11, 2025), ISRO chief highlighted the organisation's effort to ensure the country's safety amid the tensions with Pakistan. "At least 10 satellites are continuously working round-the-clock for the strategic purpose to ensure the safety and security of the citizens of the country," the ISRO Chairman said. "You all know about our neighbours. If we have to ensure the safety of our country, we have to serve through our satellites. We have to monitor our 7,000 km seashore areas. We have to monitor the entire Northern part continuously. Without satellite and drone technology, we can't achieve that," Mr. V. Narayanan said. Following the chaos and all the skirmishes that had kept the areas along the northern and western International Borders (IB) up during the night for the past few days, the region has largely remained peaceful during the intervening night of May 11 and May 12, the Army stated. According to the Army, the region of Jammu and Kashmir and other areas along the IB were calm, and no incidents of the violation of the cessation of hostilities were reported.

The Army noted that this marked the first calm night in recent days following the cross-border firing, heavy artillery shelling and drone attacks by Pakistan in response to India's Operation Sindoor, launched in retaliation for the April 22 terror attacks, which dismantled major terror sites in Pakistan and in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK). For the past few days, the border regions in Jammu and Kashmir, Rajasthan, Punjab and Gujarat witnessed Pakistan's heavy shelling and attempted drone attacks, which were aimed at disrupting peace along the region. However, the attacks from Pakistan were largely neutralised by the Indian air defence system. In retaliation, the Indian Armed Forces confirmed the destruction of 11 air bases inside Pakistan and inflicted significant damage on their military capabilities. At a joint press conference on Sunday, Lieutenant General Rajiv Ghai (Director General Military Operations), Vice



Admiral A.N. Pramod (Director General Naval Operations), and Air Marshal A.K. Bharti (Director General Air Operations) jointly revealed the major outcomes of India's Operation Sindoor. Lieutenant General Rajiv Ghai apprised about his conversation with his counterpart, which resulted in cessation of cross-border firing and air intrusions by both the neighbouring countries, saying that the Pakistan Army violated these understandings after a couple of hours after the cessation of hostilities. "My communication with the Pak DGMO was conducted at 15:35 hrs yesterday and resulted in cessation of cross-border firing and air intrusions by either side with effect from 17:00 hrs, May 10, after he proposed that we cease hostilities. We also decided to further speak on May 12 at 12:00 hrs to discuss the modalities that would enable the longevity of this understanding," Lt. Gen. Ghai told reporters in a press conference on Sunday. He said that the violation of the agreement reached between the two DGMOs was responded to robustly by India. "However, disappointingly, expectedly, it took only a couple of hours for the Pakistan Army to violate these arrangements by cross-border and across the Line of Control (LoC) firing, followed by drone intrusions last night and in the early hours of today. These violations were responded to robustly," Lt. Gen. Ghai added. The Indian Armed Forces launched Operation Sindoor on May 7, targeting nine terror sites in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir (PoK). Operation Sindoor was a retaliatory response to the April 22 terror attack in Pahalgam.

## Indus Waters Treaty to be kept in abeyance as Pakistan resorted to cross-border terror: source

India will keep the Indus Waters Treaty in abeyance as Pakistan had resorted to cross-border terrorism, a highly placed government official told The Hindu here on Sunday (May 11, 2025). Operation Sindoor, which targeted nine terror camps inside Pakistan, had created a "new normal" under which India will hit "harder, bigger, stronger" inside Pakistan if cross-border terror attacks continued, the source said. The source, who was part of the decision-making process behind Operation Sindoor, said that despite the "understanding" of May 10, the Indian counter-terror campaign had not ended, and New Delhi was unwilling to engage in a dialogue with Pakistan as, "There is nothing to discuss at the moment even at a neutral location." The Indus Waters Treaty has to be modified to "make it suitable for the 21st century requirements of the Indian state", the senior official said, and there would be rapid infrastructure development works in the rivers that were a part of the treaty. "The Indus Waters Treaty was signed in 1960 as a sign of goodwill between the two countries. But Pakistan has actually placed goodwill in abeyance with its use of terrorism against India," the senior official said, adding that the decisions concerning the treaty would be part of a new, uncompromising orientation towards Pakistan. "There is a new normal now. It is based on this understanding that if you hit us, we will hit you, and we will hit Pakistan harder, bigger, and stronger in response to terror attacks. We have maintained from the beginning that India did not escalate this matter and that it was Pakistan that started it [the escalation of hostilities] with

the brutal attack in Pahalgam," the source said. The source argued that the "understanding" between the Directors General of Military Operations (DGMOs) of India and Pakistan that was reached on May 10 came against the backdrop of India hitting eight airbases scattered across Pakistan's Punjab and Sindh which, the official added, prompted Pakistan to reach out to a some international stakeholders, and ultimately led to the DGMO of Pakistan contacting his Indian counterpart, seeking the pause in firing, and military action. India has accused Pakistan of violating the "understanding" soon after it was announced by External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar in a post on social media platform X. Officials described the selection of targets for 'Operation Sindoor' as a message for the Pakistani deep state and Inter-Services Intelligence, with Bahawalpur, Muridke, and Muzaffarabad seen as "symbols of the Pakistan deep state's ties to cross-border terrorism". These three locations, and most importantly Bahawalpur, have been active for decades, and Indian security establishment has watched Bahawalpur grow into a hub of training and indoctrination for terrorism since the days of Afghan jihad in the 1980s. Recognising its long history of terrorism against India, the Jaish-e-Mohammed's headquarters in Bahawalpur was hit "with the most potent weapon available with the Indian Air Force". The source emphasised that India did not consider the May 10 "understanding" as a ceasefire, arguing that Pakistan had been violating the DGMO-level ceasefire of 2021 repeatedly, rendering the exercise unsuccessful.



# US and China reach deal to temporarily slash tariffs, easing slump fears



GNS News Agency, May 16

GENEVA, May 12 (Reuters) - The United States and China have agreed to temporarily slash reciprocal tariffs in a deal that surpassed expectations as the world's two biggest economies seek to end a damaging trade war that has stoked fears of recession and roiled financial markets. The U.S. will cut extra tariffs it imposed on Chinese imports in April this year to 30% from 145% and Chinese duties on U.S. imports will fall to 10% from 125%, the two sides said on Monday. The new measures are effective for 90 days. The Reuters Tariff Watch newsletter is your daily guide to the latest global trade and tariff news. Sign up here.

The dollar rose and stock markets lifted following the news, which helped allay concerns about a downturn triggered last month by U.S. President Donald Trump's escalation of tariff measures aimed at narrowing the U.S. trade deficit. "Both countries represented their national interest very well," U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said after talks with Chinese officials in Geneva. "We both have an interest in balanced trade, the U.S. will continue moving towards that." Striking a conciliatory tone towards China, Bessent was speaking alongside U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer after the weekend talks in Switzerland in which both sides hailed progress on narrowing differences. "The consensus from both delegations this weekend is neither side wants a decoupling," Bessent said. "And what had occurred with these very high tariffs ... was the equivalent of an embargo, and neither side wants that. We do want trade." The tariff dispute had brought nearly \$600 billion in two-way trade to a standstill, disrupting supply chains, sparking fears of stagflation and triggering some layoffs.

The Geneva meetings were the first face-to-face interactions between senior U.S. and Chinese economic offi-

cials since Trump returned to power and launched a global tariff blitz, imposing particularly hefty duties on China. Bessent said the deal did not include sector-specific tariffs and that the U.S. would continue strategic rebalancing in areas including medicines, semiconductors and steel where it had identified supply chain vulnerabilities. The accord went further than many analysts had expected following weeks of confrontational rhetoric on trade. "This is better than I expected. I thought tariffs would be cut to somewhere around 50%," said Zhiwei Zhang, chief economist at Pinpoint Asset Management in Hong Kong. "Obviously, this is very positive news for economies in both countries and for the global economy, and makes investors much less concerned about the damage to global supply chains in the short term," Zhang added. Since taking office in January, Trump had hiked the tariffs paid by U.S. importers for goods from China to 145%, in addition to those he imposed on many Chinese goods during his first term and the duties levied by the Biden administration. China hit back by putting export curbs on some rare earth elements, vital for U.S. manufacturers of weapons and electronic consumer goods, and raising tariffs on U.S. goods to 125%. was the biggest gainer in Europe, up more than 12%. It warned last week that container volumes between the U.S. and China had plunged due to the dispute. U.S. planemaker Boeing did not respond to requests for comment on how the deal would affect deliveries of aircraft to Chinese customers. In April, it said it was looking to resell potentially dozens of planes locked out of China by tariffs. Wall Street stock futures climbed as the talks boosted hopes a global recession might be averted. Trump gave a positive reading of the talks before they had concluded, saying the two sides had negotiated "a total reset... in a friendly, but constructive, manner." The president levied the tariffs in part after declaring a national emergency over fentanyl entering the United States, and Greer said conversations over curbing the deadly opioid were "very constructive" though on a separate track. U.S. and Chinese officials met over two days at the Swiss U.N. ambassador's gated villa overlooking Lake Geneva. Greer said many of the most challenging issues were settled outside, sitting on patio furniture beneath the shade of a tall tree.

"Having this setting, as opposed to ... a sterile hotel conference situation or conference rooms, I think, let us develop personal relationships with our counterparts and lead to the successful conclusion," he said. Reporting by Emma Farge and Olivia Le Poidevin; Additional reporting by Andrew Silver in Shanghai and Lisa Barrington in Seoul Writing by Dave Graham and Emelia Sithole-Matarise; Editing by Sharon Singleton

# Hamas set to free U.S.-Israeli hostage, Israel says no ceasefire

JERUSALEM, GNS News Agency, May 16 Hamas will release Israeli-American hostage Edan Alexander from Gaza on Monday, the Palestinian militant group said, although Israel's prime minister said there would be no ceasefire and plans for an intensified military campaign would continue. Fighting will pause to allow for Alexander's safe passage, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said. Three Palestinians in Gaza told Reuters early on Monday afternoon that there had been calm since midday, with no sound of drones or warplanes. The Reuters Tariff Watch newsletter is your daily guide to the latest global trade and tariff news. Sign up here. Israel was told on Sunday of Hamas' decision to free the last surviving U.S. hostage in Gaza as a goodwill gesture to President Donald Trump. "Edan Alexander, American hostage thought dead, to be released by Hamas. Great news!" Trump wrote in capital letters on his social media platform on Monday. The release, after four-way talks between Hamas, the United States, Egypt and Qatar, could open the way to freeing the remaining 59 hostages held in the Gaza Strip, 19 months after Hamas' attack on Israel on October 7, 2023. Netanyahu said Israel had agreed only to allow safe passage for Alexander, and its forces would continue recently announced preparations to step up operations there. "Israel has not committed to a ceasefire of any kind," his office said, adding that military pressure had forced Hamas into the release. "The negotiations will continue under fire, during preparations for an intensification of the fighting." An Israeli strike had earlier killed at least 15 people sheltering in a school housing displaced families in Jabalia in northern Gaza, local health authorities said. Israel's military said it had targeted dozens of Hamas militants at the site who it said were preparing an attack on Israeli forces. Hamas said it had been talking to the U.S. and had agreed to release Alexander. Arab mediators Qatar and Egypt called it an encouraging step towards a return to ceasefire talks.

Trump is due to visit Gulf states on a trip that does not include a stop in Israel but special envoy Steve Witkoff, who helped arrange the release, is expected in Israel on Monday, two Israeli officials said. Alexander's family thanked Trump and Witkoff, saying in a statement that they hoped the decision would open the way for the release of the other remaining hostages. "We urge the Israeli government and the negotiating teams: please don't stop," they said. CRITICISM U.S. officials have tried to calm fears in Israel of a growing distance between Israel and Trump who last week announced an end to U.S. bombing of Iran-backed Houthis in Yemen, who have continued to fire missiles at Israel. Israel's government has faced criticism over a deal which laid bare the priority given to hostages able to rely on the support of a foreign government. Einav Zangauker, whose son Matan is among 21 hostages still believed to be alive, said Netanyahu was choosing his political survival over ending the war. Addressing Trump in a statement she read with other hostage families, she said: "The Israeli people are behind you. End this war. Bring them all home".

U.S. Ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee has said Trump wants all hostages freed but his "primary responsibility" as president is to secure the release of the Americans. Netanyahu, who is due to testify on Monday in the latest session of his trial on corruption charges that he denies, has faced pressure from hardliners in his cabinet not to end the war. Last week, he announced plans to step up the operation in Gaza, which officials said could be seized entirely by Israeli forces. Following a ceasefire agreement that halted fighting in Gaza for two months and allowed the exchange of 38 hostages for Palestinian prisoners and detainees in Israeli jails, Israel resumed its operation in the enclave in March. Since then, it has extended its control of the territory, clearing around a third as what it has described as a "security zone" and blocked off the entry of aid into Gaza, leaving the 2 million population increasingly short of food. Huckabee last week outlined plans for a new system of aid deliveries by private contractors that would not be



run by Israel but many details are unclear, including on funding. German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier told visiting Israeli President Isaac Herzog on Monday that humanitarian aid in Gaza needed to resume immediately. Herzog said the new aid mechanism would reach civilians, not Hamas, and urged the international community to help implement it. Israeli forces invaded Gaza in retaliation for the Hamas-led assault on Israel in October 2023 that killed 1,200 people and saw 251 taken hostage, according to Israeli tallies. Since then, more than 52,000 Palestinians have been killed, Palestinian health authorities say, and large swathes of the enclave have been devastated.

# Why Nassar broke down in tears after listening to the script of ‘Tanvi the Great’

GNS News Agency, May 16 Mumbai: Veteran actor Nassar was moved to tears after hearing the script of Tanvi the Great, the upcoming film directed by Anupam Kher.

In a recent post, Kher revealed that Nassar found the story so emotionally stirring that he couldn't hold back his emotions—highlighting just how impactful the film promises to be. On Monday, Anupam Kher shared the first-look poster of Nassar as Brig. Rao, along with a heartfelt note in which he praised the Baahubali star's acting journey.

In the caption of the post, the 'Special 26' actor revealed that he had envisioned only Nassar in the role of Brig. Rao, a key character in his upcoming film. What moved him most was Nassar's immediate agreement to join the project — without even hearing the full script. Anupam wrote, "Actors of Tanvi The Great: Even though #NasserSir is younger than me, it is because of his legendary film career that the 'SIR' comes out automatically when I am referring to him.

His acting graph and his list of films are an actor's dream. Thengar Magan, Bombay, Anne Sivam, Nayakan, Bahubali. ... I can go on and on. The list is endless. 552 and counting. But it is The Person that makes him The Tallest man. He is an Outstanding actor, highly respected and generous!" (sic)

"I wanted only him to play Brig. Rao in Tanvi The Great! Without listening to the details, he said he is doing the film. It is only when I shot with him on the first day that I narrated him the script and his role in detail. He had tears in his eyes, and I had the character on the sets. Thank you, Nasser Sir, for your Magnanimity, large-heartedness, and a BRILLIANT performance. Your helping Shubhangi (Tanvi) during the shoot was priceless. You make the perfect Brig. Rao. Jai Hind," he added.

# Israeli strike on school-turned-shelter kills 16 people in Gaza



GNS News Agency, May 16

Deir al-Balah: An Israeli strike on a school-turned-shelter in the Gaza Strip killed at least 16 people early on Monday, mostly women and children, according to local health officials. At least five children and four women were among those killed in the strike on a school in the Jabaliya area, the Gaza Health Ministry's emergency service said. It also said that a number of people were wounded. The Israeli military says it only targets militants and blames civilian deaths on Hamas because its fighters operate in densely populated areas. There was no immediate comment on the latest strike. The attack came as US President Donald Trump is heading to Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates this week. After ending a ceasefire two months ago,

# Zelenskyy hopes for ceasefire with Russia, challenges Putin to meet him in Turkiye 'personally'



GNS News Agency, May 16 Kyiv: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Sunday challenged Russia's President Vladimir Putin to meet him personally in Turkiye on Thursday, the latest move in a weekend-long exchange of proposals from both sides on the next steps in the US-led peace effort. Zelenskyy said that he still hopes for a ceasefire with Russia starting Monday, and that he will "be waiting for Putin" in Turkiye "personally" after US President Donald Trump insisted Ukraine accept Russia's latest offer — to hold direct talks in Turkiye on Thursday.

Ukraine, along with European allies, had demanded Russia accept an unconditional 30-day ceasefire starting Monday before holding talks, but Moscow effectively rejected the proposal and called for direct negotiations instead. It was not clear if Zelenskyy was conditioning his presence in Turkey on the Monday ceasefire holding, and there was no immediate comment from the Kremlin on whether Putin would go. In 2022, the war's early months, Zelenskyy repeatedly called for a personal meeting with the Russian president but was rebuffed, and eventually enacted a decree declaring that holding negotiations with Putin had become impossible. "We await a full and lasting ceasefire, starting from tomorrow, to provide the necessary basis for diplomacy. There is no point in prolonging the killings. And I will be waiting for Putin in (Turkiye) on Thursday. Personally. I hope that this time the Russians will not look for excuses," Zelenskyy wrote on X on Sunday. Trump said in a social media post earlier Sunday that Ukraine should agree to Putin's peace talks proposal "IMMEDIATELY." "At least they will be able to determine whether or not a deal is possible, and if it is not, European leaders, and the U.S., will know where everything stands, and can proceed accordingly!" Trump wrote, adding: "HAVE THE MEETING,

NOW!!!" French President Emmanuel Macron, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz and Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk met with Zelenskyy in Kyiv on Saturday and issued a coordinated call for a 30-day truce starting Monday. The plan has received backing from both the European Union and Trump. The leaders pledged tougher sanctions on Russia if Putin did not accept the proposal. Putin in remarks to the media overnight effectively rejected the offer and proposed restarting direct talks with Ukraine in Istanbul on Thursday instead "without pre-conditions." He did not specify whether the talks on Thursday would involve Zelenskyy and himself personally. He said a ceasefire might be agreed on during the negotiations — but stressed that the Kremlin needs a truce that would lead to a "lasting peace" instead of one that would allow Ukraine to rearm and mobilise more men into its armed forces. Zelenskyy said on X on Sunday morning that it was a "positive sign that the Russians have finally begun to consider ending the war," but insisted on a ceasefire first. Putin and Zelenskyy have only met once — in 2019. After repeated unsuccessful calls for a personal meeting with the Russian leader early on in the war, and following the Kremlin's decision in September 2022 to illegally annex four regions of Ukraine, Zelenskyy enacted a decree declaring that holding negotiations with Putin had become impossible. Macron said Sunday that Putin's offer of direct negotiations with Ukraine is "a first step, but not enough," signaling continued Western skepticism toward Moscow's intentions. "An unconditional ceasefire is not preceded by negotiations," Macron told reporters at the Polish-Ukrainian border, according to French media, adding that Putin is "looking for a way out, but he still wants to buy time." Moscow presses on with peace talks offer.

# Madrassa students to be used as 'second line of defence', says Pakistan Defence Minister

Islamabad: Pakistan's Defence Minister Khawaja Asif continues to be in the news for all the wrong reasons. From his bold statements and claims on an American news network citing social media content as proof to calling madrassa (religious schools) students as the second line of defence to safeguard the country, Asif's out-of-the-box statements and unique positioning on sensitive topics has surprised everyone in Pakistan, who are now forced to question his credentials to be a defence minister of the country. In the most recent statement that even forced his party members to take a step back in shock and amazement, Khawaja Asif, while addressing a session of the National Assembly, said that students of madrassas will serve as the country's second line of defence, whenever needed. "As far as madrassas or madrassa students are concerned, there's no doubt they are our second line of defence, the youngsters who are studying there. When the time comes, they will be used as needed 100 per cent," said Khawaja Asif amid escalating tensions with India.

The statement left many thinking on why would the country's defence minister even consider madrassa students as the second line of defence, or for that matter the country's security. The statement has raised many eyebrows. "There would be no one in the parliament who would not have taken this statement in a bad taste. It dam-

ages the already perceived image of Pakistan to the world which sees the unlimited spread of religious seminaries in the country as a place where young brains are brainwashed in the name of Jihad and so-called freedom struggle," said Tahira Abdullah, a rights activist. "It's impossible to imagine that our defence minister would say such a thing, especially at a time when the country is taking on its neighbour India and accuses its government for towing the Hindutva supremacy agenda and being anti-Muslim," she added. Another human rights activist, criticised Khawaja Asif for playing the Hindu-Muslim divide line in his speech, deliberately segregating madrassa children from others, seeing them as the most suited to be used as an asset and transform any conflict into a fight between Muslims and Non-Muslims thereby injecting the religious mix into politics. Khawaja Asif's statement clearly shows his mindset of being a religious hardliner who sees jihadists in madrassa children and intends to use them against his territorial opponents like India in the name of difference in religious beliefs," said Saeeda Diep, Founder of the NGO Centre for Peace and Secular Studies (CPSS). "It is because of such mindsets that Pakistan has been labelled as a safe haven for religious extremists and religious madrassas as terror factories instead of religious schools of teaching," she added. Notably, in a recent interview with a leading British network,



# When the North of India plunged into darkness



As the conflict between India and Pakistan escalated with the launch of Operation Sindoor on May 7, after the fateful Pahalgam terror attack on April 22, the past few days have been marked with uncertainty, turbulence, scrutiny and strife for people in North India. The Government had instructed blackouts for the first time since the Indo-Pak war of 1971 and even though the “stoppage of firing”, which many are calling a ceasefire, announced on May 10, brought in some respite that lasted only a few hours, the situation remains grim and as unpredictable.At my home, in Chandigarh, everyone was jubilant, preparing for a vacation with their first grandchild. My sister and her four-month-old were visiting the city from Canada and had planned a trip to the Golden Temple, Amritsar, Dehradun and Mussoorie. On May 6, we had left for Amritsar, but soon, on May 9, we had to return to Chandigarh for safety.Attending to the call of blackout in Punjab, Chandigarh and other regions of North India, the men of the house were guided to bring their black turbans, which were to be used as makeshift curtains. My father, uncles and brother were pressing drawing pins on the top corners of the wooden window fixtures of our house, while the ladies cut and stitched the black turbans into curtains. “Just leave the ends of the thread loose for them to wound around and knot to the drawing pins and quickly make the pleats with a running stitch. Hurry up!,” my mother ordered.

As we obeyed, my father ascended the staircase that leads to the rooftop and examined the neighbourhood. “Ah, the lights in a couple of houses are still switched on. It’s 7pm already. This is beginning to remind me of 1971,” he said.At this moment, the black curtains were put up as an additional barrier. All the lights were switched off at dinner time. “We were living in the Air Force quarters back then, in 1971, and I remember how young boys had made squads to do a recce of the area. If they spotted any light switched on in any house, they would break the windows by throwing stones at the house. We had also dug up a six-by-four-foot trench in the backyard of our house. Every time the sirens were sounded, we would go and sit in the trench,” he recalled. My mother added, “In Amritsar, we were served dinner by 5pm and would put black curtains, just like the ones now, on all windows. That time, my father had dug out a tunnel in the backyard and made a small bunker. In case the firing became loud or one heard the sound of too many jets, we would run to the tunnel and hide in the bunker.”

Unlike Amritsar, Chandigarh offered some respite from the continuous buzzing sounds and sonic booms until the clock struck 1.22am on May 9. The blaring sirens woke up my little nephew from his deep sleep and as he started bawling, my sister snuggled closer to him and started to pray. My uncle, father and I woke up too but remained in our beds until the roaring sound (of probably jets) shook us. I ran out of the room, so did my uncle. My father, on the first floor, stood close to the door. “Don’t open the doors. Stay inside. Stand closer to the walls. Hide the baby under the bed if you hear the sound again,” he said.I looked at my phone for updates, but saw several messages of concern that poured

into my inbox from friends and colleagues. With darkness all around, these messages were like a ray of hope, kindness and human spirit that brightened my darkest hour. Soon, everyone’s phones started ringing. My curiosity was beguiled by Air Commodore Harkamal Jeet Singh Sokhey (retired) of the Indian Air Force, my father’s childhood friend. “We last saw such blackouts in December 1971. We saw shelling in Ferozepur; my dad, a garrison engineer, was posted there. Some shells were going across our house. We could also hear firing and the sounds of jets in the sky, which we later came to know were dog fights. We could spot tracer bullets too. It was actually these experiences that later motivated me to join the armed forces,” he shared.The sleepless night and Harkamal’s experience made me wonder what it would possibly be to live in the border areas, just few kilometres from Pakistan. So, I spent the rest of my time calling friends in Kashmir. One of them, who prefers to stay anonymous, said, “The Pahalgam terror attack was the first of its kind attack on tourists in Kashmir. We have been experiencing blackouts and are following all instructions, but I hope the war ends soon.”

On May 10, when Donald Trump’s tweet on X stated a “full and immediate ceasefire” between India and Pakistan, it brought joy to most people living on the borders. Nasir Khuehami, a student at Jamia Millia Islamia and national convener of Jammu and Kashmir Students Association (JKSA), who has been in Kashmir for the past few days, said, “We didn’t sleep for three days. In my 27 years of life, I’ve never witnessed such a terrifying atmosphere, complete blackouts, powerful explosions, drone attacks, and the deafening response of air defence systems countering them in real time. For the past four–five days, the situation has been nothing short of horrifying. The fear and helplessness stemmed largely from the fact that both countries involved are nuclear powers. The escalation was rapid and relentless, first came the strikes, then intense shelling along the border, followed by a barrage of drones, loud blasts shaking the ground, and fighter jets roaring across the sky. At one point, it truly felt like a full-scale war had begun and that it could very well be the end of our lives. We clung to hope, but the fear was overwhelming. Every moment was filled with dread, and we didn’t know if we would live to see the next day,” he said.He was joined by a friend whose family in Poonch weathered the blows of war. Ahjaz Mir, who is now in Jammu, preparing for the Civil Services Examination, said he has been fretting over the situation in Poonch where his family stays. “In Poonch, even those places have been targeted that have never been targeted before, from schools to madrasas. People shifted to Surankot (about 40 kilometres from the Indo-Pak border) for safety, but even there, one girl was injured. The area has Pahari and Gujjar communities. They don’t even have basic infrastructure, leave alone bunkers. However, things have been much better after the call for ceasefire,” he added.I am not much of a believer, but with every blackout and with every sonic boom I heard, I made a silent wish for the safety of my family, friends, colleagues and those brave soldiers who were guarding our lives with their lives. Amidst the crippling sound of blaring sirens, videos and memes on social media, and the rants of prime-time television news anchors, who went on to make claims like “Indian Navy had attacked Karachi port” and that there could be a “fidayeen attack”, I found myself battling with technology for credible information.Call me old fashioned, but I ditched my urge for instant information through TV, reels or gram and trusted the printed word in the newspaper instead. They say, a war is won with many battles and though this conflict may have come to an end for now with a call for ceasefire, there still is an uneasy calm that lingers, as we battle fake news, propaganda, trolls and war hysteria.

# Remains of 30 people believed killed by IS militants found in Syria in a search by Qatar and FBI

GNS News Agency, May 16

The remains of 30 people believed to have been killed by the militant Islamic State group have been found in a remote Syrian town in a search led by Qatari search teams and the FBI, according to a statement from Qatar

The Qatari internal security forces said the FBI had requested the search, and that DNA tests are currently underway to determine the identities of the people. The Qatari agency did not say whom the American intelligence agency is trying to find.Dozens of foreigners, including aid workers and journalists, were killed by IS militants who had controlled large swaths of Syria and Iraq for half a decade and declared a so-called caliphate. The militant group lost most of its territory in late 2017 and was declared defeated in 2019.

Since then, dozens of gravesites and mass graves have been discovered in northern Syria containing remains and bodies of people IS had abducted over the years.American journalists James Foley and Steven Sotloff, as well as humanitarian workers Kayla Mueller and Peter Kassig are among those killed by IS. John Cantlie, a British correspondent, was abducted alongside Foley in 2012, and was last seen alive in one of the extremist group’s propaganda videos in 2016.The search took place in the town of Dabiq, near Syria’s northern border with Turkiye.IS released videos in 2014 and 2015 of the beheadings of Foley, Sotloff, and Kassig. A similar video was released of two abducted Japanese aid workers who were beheaded by the extremists in a similar way.A masked man who was doing the killings and speaking in English on the videos was later identified as Mohammed Ernwazi, a British citizen of Kuwaiti



origin from London, known as “Jihadi John.” He was killed in November 2015 in a targeted U.S. and British drone strike.Mass graves have also found in areas previously controlled by Syrian President Bashar Assad who was ousted in a lightning insurgency last December, ending his family’s half-century rule. For years, the Assads used their notorious security and intelligence agencies to crack down on dissidents, many who have gone missing.American journalist Austin Tice, abducted in 2012 in a contested area in western Syria, is among the most prominent cases of the missing. He was last seen a video weeks later, showing him being taken captive by armed men. The U.S. administration in December said he is still believed to be alive, though Washington admitted at the time it had no direct evidence of Tice’s wellbeing. Washington had for years maintained that Tice was held by Syria’s now-former authorities.The United Nations in 2021 estimated that over 130,000 Syrians were taken away and disappeared during the uprising that began in 2011 and descended into a 13-year civil war.

# Flight disruptions continue amid India-Pak tensions

New Delhi: Air India and IndiGo have announced the cancellation of flights to and from several key cities near the India-Pakistan border for Tuesday. Air India confirmed the cancellation of two-way flight operations to and from Jammu, Leh, Jodhpur, Amritsar, Bhuj, Jamnagar, Chandigarh, and Rajkot.IndiGo similarly suspended services to and from Jammu, Amritsar, Chandigarh, Leh, Srinagar, and Rajkot.“In view of the latest developments and keeping your safety in mind, flights to and from Jammu, Leh, Jodhpur, Amritsar, Bhuj, Jamnagar, Chandigarh and Rajkot are cancelled for Tuesday, 13th May. We are monitoring the situation and will keep you updated,” Air India posted on X.

IndiGo issued a similar statement, saying the cancellations were made “in light of the latest developments and with your safety as our utmost priority.” The airline added,

# The view from India newsletter Taking stock of the India-Pakistan clashes



After four days of aerial combat, India and Pakistan reached an “understanding” on Saturday (May 10) to stop firing and other military activities. According to Director-General Military Operations (DGMO) Lt.-Gen. Rajiv Ghai, he received a message from Pakistan’s DGMO Maj. Gen. Kashif Abdullah at 3.35 pm on Saturday on the hotline. “Since our initial aim was to strike terror camps and all our actions in the subsequent days were in response to the intrusions and violations by the Pakistan Air Force and Pakistan Army, it was decided that I would indeed speak with the Pakistani DGMO,” said Lt. Gen. Ghai. The understanding to stop firing was agreed in the subsequent DGMO level talks.

morning, India had carried out massive retaliatory strikes in Pakistan, targeting several military bases, including the high-profile Nur Khan base in Rawalpindi. “India has fired air-to-surface missiles with its jets,” Pakistani military spokesperson Lt. Gen. Ahmad Sharif Chaudhry told reporters on Saturday morning. In response, Pakistan launched Operation ‘Bunyanun Marsoos’. Pakistan carried out strikes using drones, missiles and unmanned combat aerial vehicles targeting civilian and military locations across the western border. India’s air defences shot down most of the incoming threats while Indian armed forces also launched counter-strikes on military installations in Pakistan, said military officers.

But there is more to the story. On Saturday, the ceasefire was first announced by U.S. President Donald Trump. “After a long night of talks mediated by the United States, I am pleased to announce that India and Pakistan agreed to a full and immediate ceasefire. Congratulations to both countries on using common sense and great intelligence,” Mr. Trump wrote in a social media post. Secretary of State Marco Rubio also announced that India and Pakistan agreed to “an immediate ceasefire and to start talks on a broad set of issues at a neutral site”. Minutes later, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri made a short announcement in New Delhi saying both sides agreed “to stop all firing and military action on land, air and sea with effect from 1700 hours IST”. While the Pakistani leadership acknowledged the American role, India remained tight-lipped. But on Sunday (May 11), Mr. Trump wrote another post, saying the U.S. played a part in helping both countries “to arrive at this historic and heroic decision”. He said the aggression between India and Pakistan “could have led to the death and destruction of so many, and so much”. Further, he offered to work with India and Pakistan “to see, if after ‘a thousand years’, a solution can be arrived at concerning Kashmir”. In effect, Mr. Trump took credit for the ceasefire, re-hyphenated India and Pakistan and offered to mediate between the two on Kashmir — all against India’s standard position on Kashmir and Pakistan.After the ceasefire announcement was made on May 10, CNN carried a report saying the U.S. got “alarming intel” about the conflict, which prompted Vice-President J.D. Vance to pick up the phone and talk to Prime Minister Narendra Modi. While the report, based on American sources, doesn’t say what the intel was, it says there was a “high probability for dramatic escalation” of the conflict. Mr. Vance outlined to Mr. Modi “a potential off-ramp”, says the report, without offering any details on what the off-ramp was. Indian military officials say India’s objective was to hit terror infrastructure inside Pakistan in

response to the April 22 Pahalgam massacre and India met those objectives on May 7 when it hit 9 locations inside Pakistan, including Bahawalpur and Muridke in Punjab. But the Pakistani military, commanded by Gen. Asim Munir, decided to widen the conflict by launching drone and missile attacks. Pakistan initially denied carrying out attacks in India even when hundreds of Pakistani drones intruded into the Indian air space. But on May 10, after Indian strikes targeted Pakistani bases, including Nur Khan (Chaklala, Rawalpindi), Murid (Chakwal) and Rafiqui (Shorkot in Jhang), they acknowledged launching “counterattacks”.

The Pakistanis say they gave a “befitting reply” to India. On May 7, Pakistan claimed to have shot down “five Indian fighter jets”, including Rafael, without providing any evidence. India hasn’t confirmed the Pakistani claims, but on May 11, while asked about loss of assets, Air Marshal A.K. Bharti said in a press conference that “losses are part of combat”, without providing details. We are in a combat scenario, losses are a part of combat. The question you must ask us is... have we achieved our objective of decimating the terrorist camps? And the answer is a thumping yes,” he said. “As for the details, what could have been... how many numbers... which platform did we lose... at this time I would not like to comment on that because we are still in a combat situation. If I comment on anything, it will be only advantage adversary,” the Air Marshal said, adding that, “all our pilots are back home”.There are still unanswered questions. The opposition is asking the government to clarify whether it has accepted third party mediation on Kashmir — an offer Mr. Trump has made. It is also unclear whether India got any assurances from Pakistan in tackling terror when it accepted the ceasefire. On its part, Pakistan is selling its performance as “a victory” to its public. By launching attacks inside Pakistan in response to the Pahalgam terror attack, India has sought to establish a new normal in its dealings with Islamabad — Pakistan’s continued support for terror groups would not go unpunished. Any future act of terror in India will be considered an “act of war” against the country and will be responded to accordingly, unnamed government officials said on May 10. This is a doctrinal change. But by widening the conflict, Pakistan has sought to make India’s new doctrine costly for New Delhi as well. This also means that the understanding to stop firing now (New Delhi doesn’t call it a ceasefire) is in essence a pause not a conclusion of hostilities.The terrorist organisations, driven by Islamist ideology and anti-India sentiment, have close ties with Pakistan’s military-security establishment, and have carried out multiple attacks inside India over the years, writes Suchitra Karthikeyan.

2. How will India’s military response be assessed under international law?

An emerging rule in international law allows states to use force extraterritorially in self-defence against non-state actors if the host state is ‘unwilling or unable’ to take measures to neutralise the threat, writes Aaratrika Bhaumik.

3. A new normal in India-Pakistan ties

Until 2016, India’s strategy for dealing with terror attacks linked to Pakistan largely relied on three measures: diplomatic efforts to isolate Pakistan internationally, economic penalties related to terror financing, and pressure on Islamabad to crack down on terror networks. This approach saw limited success, writes Stanly Johny.

4. What will be impact of India-U.K. trade deal? | Explained

How long was the free trade agreement in the works? When is it expected to be signed and implemented? Which are the sectors likely to benefit apart from textile and automobiles? What are the challenges for agriculture and medium and small enterprises? writes Saptaparno Ghosh.

5. Pope Leo XIV | The bridge-building pontiff

The first U.S. pope now faces the monumental task of transcending his national origin to unify a divided Church and navigate a complex world, writes Franciszek Snarski.

# The educational landscape, its disconcerting shift

Education has historically been regarded as the cornerstone of societal advancement — a realm where critical thinking, free inquiry, and the pursuit of knowledge could flourish. At its best, higher education had always cultivated intellectual independence, nurtured dissent, and inspired progress across disciplines and societies. The boundaries of human understanding were continually pushed through unfettered dialogue and academic exploration.Yet, in recent decades, the educational landscape, especially within universities, has undergone a profound and disconcerting shift. Institutions once celebrated for fostering independent thought now appear increasingly constrained by bureaucratic controls, external mandates, and ideological gatekeeping. Rather than serving as laboratories of innovation and resistance, the Canadian thinker, H.A. Giroux, sees universities becoming engines of conformity, prioritising managerial efficiency and market alignment over academic freedom and intellectual integrity. Indocctrination, intimidation and intolerance become the central ingredients of education.From independence to centralisation

A particularly disquieting development in this decline is the unyielding centralisation of academic curricula. In the past, universities enjoyed considerable autonomy to craft syllabi tailored to their students’ needs, faculty expertise, and the shifting contours of intellectual inquiry. Today, however, this independence is steadily eroding. Centralised agencies — be they governmental bodies such as the University Grants Commission (UGC) or frameworks such as the National Education Policy (NEP) — increasingly dictate the structure and content of academic programmes. These prescriptions are often influenced not by academic merit or pedagogical philosophy, but by economic agendas or partisan leanings.The UGC, originally intended to coordinate academic standards, has mutated into an instrument of control. It dictates appointments, interferes in administration, and shapes curricula, often with scant regard for academic judgement, thereby becoming the long arm of a state increasingly intolerant of independent or critical thinking. Let us be clear: this is not about standards — it is about submission. Under the guise of regulation, the UGC has eroded the autonomy of Indian universities to the point of extinction. The promise of self-governance has been replaced with bureaucratic tutelage. An institution that is stripped of autonomy in faculty selection, research direction, and protection of dissent ceases to be a university in any meaningful sense.The consequences of this centralisation are far-reaching. It undercuts not only academic autonomy but also produces compliant drones, regiments intellectual discourse, and marginalises alternative perspectives. When syllabi are standardised across regions and institutions, the intellectual ecosystem becomes mono-

lithic — devoid of diversity, nuance, or radical innovation. This intellectual flattening not only stifles creativity but also discourages the interrogation of dominant narratives and received assumptions.Pressures on the academic climateHistorically, campuses have played a vital role in catalysing social change — whether in anti-colonial movements, civil rights struggles, or pro-democracy uprisings. By exerting control over what is taught and how it is taught, policymakers and administrators ensure that universities remain compliant rather than confrontational. Suppressing critical perspectives ensures that higher education does not produce citizens who question authority or imagine alternatives to the status quo. Take, for instance, a research scholar who gives a reference to Noam Chomsky’s views on the decline of democracy or talks about nationalism and human rights. There is every chance that the student and his supervisor will be reprimanded by the state, a preposterous intervention indeed.Take, for instance, the resurgence of reactionary politics that has led to increasing interference in academic affairs. Scholars whose work critiques systemic injustice, discriminatory politics, corporate exploitation, or nationalist rhetoric often find themselves marginalised, defunded, or even expelled or deported. Entire disciplines, especially in the social sciences and humanities, are being defunded or dismissed as politically awkward.Such pressures have had an unsettling effect on academic life. Teachers, wary of professional reprisals, begin to engage in self-censorship. Controversial research topics are sidestepped not out of disinterest, but out of fear. Students, too, internalise this climate of caution, refraining from engaging critically with contentious issues, apprehensive about academic penalties, peer backlash, or threats to their future careers. The outcome is a smothering intellectual climate where fear of dissent trumps inquiry, and conformity is mistaken for collective wisdom, resulting in the decline of public intellectuals.This erosion of academic freedom is compounded by the increasing corporatisation of higher education. Universities are no longer viewed as public institutions dedicated to knowledge and social advancement. Instead, they are treated as businesses, expected to generate profit, attract investment, and enhance their brand image. The logic of the market now governs the priorities of educational institutions, reshaping both what is taught and why it is taught. The corporate corruption of higher education and the wrecking of the university is indeed apparent.Consequently, disciplines that promise immediate financial returns — such as technology, business, and engineering — receive substantial funding and institutional support. Meanwhile, fields that emphasise critical thought, ethical reflection and historical understanding — such as philosophy, literature, and the arts — are sidelined as unproductive or irrelevant.



# Treatment in limbo for months, patients with rare diseases still wait for relief — despite Delhi HC order



Delhi High Court directed that the Centre establish a National Fund for Rare Diseases and allocate Rs 974 crore for 2024-25 and 2025-26. This was to be approved and transferred in 30 days.

From a seven-year-old in Srinagar to a 16-year-old in Delhi suffering from “rare diseases”, a recent Delhi High Court verdict on ensuring uninterrupted treatment for patients like them came as a ray of hope. Since their diagnosis, patients of rare diseases — defined by WHO as a debilitating, lifelong condition that affects 1 or fewer people in 1,000 — and their kin faced challenges in accessing life-saving medication, whose cost runs into lakhs, and issues with its supply. A total of 104 petitions were finally moved in court, with over 100 patients seeking relief.

On October 4, the Delhi High Court directed that the Centre establish a National Fund for Rare Diseases and allocate Rs 974 crore for 2024-25 and 2025-26. This was to be approved and transferred in 30 days. It also said “treatment for all eligible... patients, as per an AIIMS report dated July 21, who are before the court in these batches of petitions shall commence in 45 days as per the NRDC (National Rare Diseases Committee) recommendations.” The court directed NRDC to hold its first meeting in the week beginning October 21, where directions were to be issued about ensuring procurement of rare disease drugs at reasonable prices, etc. It said “on the said date, cases of all petitioners shall be placed before the NRDC for approval and commencement of treatment”. However, a committee member, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the meeting has not been held yet with no notification issued for it. When contacted, Dr Madhulika Kabra, Professor, Division of Genetics, Department of Pediatrics at AIIMS New Delhi, who is part of the NRDC, said she would be unable to comment as she is on the panel. A month on, The Indian Express speaks to four families stuck in limbo as they wait for treatment to resume. ‘Only hope I have is for the trial to be completed’. Father of 16-year-old, diagnosed with Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy in 2018 When the boy turned 10, his father noticed subtle changes in how he walked — he would flail or fall over midway, and climbing a short flight of stairs became a task. The father then took him to AIIMS. In 2018, the boy was diagnosed with Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy (DMD), a rare disease that causes muscle weakness and degeneration. “At the time, doctors at AIIMS Delhi said there was no cure, no medicines were available, and it could only be managed through physiotherapy, supplements, and steroids. We also went to Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, where we were told the same thing,” says the father, 39, a resident of Delhi’s Patel Nagar. The boy went to school till Class IV before his ailment started taking over his life. Now wheel-chair bound, he cannot even lift a glass of water by himself, says his father. “Till Class IV, his school principal had made arrangements for him to attend classes on the ground floor but gradually, it became difficult...” “Steroids prescribed for his treatment had side effects, making him gain weight and affecting his growth. His father rues that the drug that can help manage his son’s muscle degradation is still under trial internationally.

In 2023, the boy moved the Delhi HC — through his father — “in the hope that the court shall direct faster trials” which, in turn, can help him win the race against time, says the father. In a 2021 study, a systematic review of mortality in DMD patients pegged it at 22 years. The father, however, says the recent HC verdict does not make much of a difference to his boy. “The drug that can help him is under trial internationally and there has been no direction in that regard. I’ve been making rounds of AIIMS since 2018 but each time, I’ve been told it is not in their hands.” The sole earner in the family — he works with a courier service company in Patel Nagar — his son’s diagnosis has meant adjustments, shouldering mounting expenses, and knocking on every door possible. “AIIMS had recommended a physiotherapy clinic, but it charged Rs 150 an hour per day. I did not have the means to pay that much. So I asked them to teach me instead so I could do my son’s physiotherapy at home. I now do it twice a day.” He resorted to alternative medicine as well. “I took him to an Ayurveda clinic in Rajinder Nagar where I was spending Rs 3,000 a month for a year, but his condition did not improve. I also went to an ashram in Haridwar for Ayurvedic treatment; that too did not help. I got defrauded as well... someone promised me an ayurvedic oil that would cure him if massaged all over his body, in exchange for Rs 50,000. In my desperation, I paid up — it did nothing,” he says. “At this point, the only hope I have is for the trial to be completed at the earliest so my son can access the medicine like other DMD patients,” says the father, who also has a 10-year-old daughter. Dr Ratna

# Antibiotics during infancy linked to early puberty in girls

Seoul: Girls given antibiotics during their first year of life, especially in the first three months, are more likely to enter puberty at an earlier age, according to new research. The research, presented at the first Joint Congress between the European Society of Paediatric Endocrinology (ESPE) and the European Society of Endocrinology (ESE), found that the likelihood of early puberty was also higher among those exposed to a greater variety of antibiotic classes.

The findings highlight the importance of using these medicines in infants appropriately and how early-life drug exposure could shape future health outcomes. Early puberty, also known as central precocious puberty (CPP), is a condition characterised by the early onset of secondary sexual development in children. In girls this means before age 8 and, in boys, before age 9. Early puberty mostly affects girls and often has no obvious cause, while it is less common in boys. Over the past few decades, early puberty has been on the rise and researchers are continuously investigating the potential contributing factors.

In this study, researchers from Hanyang University Guri Hospital and Hanyang University Medical Center analysed data on the antibiotic intake of 322,731 children,

Puri, senior consultant for genetics at Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, says indigenous drug development for treating rare diseases is underway in India. “Development recently started... after the National Policy for Treatment of Rare Diseases, 2017, our funding agencies have been encouraging researchers and companies towards development of indigenous therapies,” she says. It’s been three months since her last dose, says grandfather ‘Bimaar hu, dard ho raha hai (I’m sick, it’s aching),” says the child, when asked what she is doing over a telephone call on a Thursday evening. At the age of four months, she was diagnosed with Gaucher’s disease, a rare genetically inherited lysosomal disorder where fat buildup, especially in the liver and spleen, can lead to anaemia and musculoskeletal disorders. She has been prescribed the Enzyme, Cerezyme Imiglucerase, every fortnight. The cost of the drug? It can go up to Rs 57.55 lakh a year. The amount has been covered by the government’s fund so far, but it’s been three months since she took her last dose. “She received her first injection in December 2022 and there was significant improvement. She started going to school as well,” says her 60-year-old grandfather. Three months ago, AIIMS told them it does not have the drug anymore, he said. The girl has now missed around 18 doses, says her family. A few weeks ago, her condition took a turn for the worse. “She has been throwing up and fainting. She has almost stopped eating, she says she does not have an appetite. She is severely weak and anaemic so going to school is not an option anymore,” says her grandfather. “We don’t know what to do...,” he adds. Her father is the only earning member; he used to drive an auto but has now switched to a sales job in a pharma firm in Srinagar. She has an eight-year-old brother. Even for her first injection, it took nearly four months for the family to get the medicine after AIIMS requested funds from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. “Our finances are drained... we’ve been making the rounds of AIIMS Delhi from Srinagar since 2017... we have to bear the costs of travelling and staying in Delhi every time we go for her treatment. Till last year, she was receiving five doses a month. This year, it was upped to six doses a month,” says the grandfather. It was in 2022 that the child, through her father, moved the HC seeking access to treatment and drugs after waiting for five years. “We would meet other patients of Gaucher’s disease at the AIIMS clinic and they were getting the drugs at the time. They told us there are a bunch of people who have moved the HC seeking access to the drug, which is when we came in touch with advocate Ashok Agarwal.” Agarwal has represented a large chunk of the patient-petitioners of rare diseases seeking relief before the Delhi HC. The injection for the child started after court orders. “It is thanks to the HC’s orders earlier that we got access to the drugs and it was for free. With the latest judgment, we thought it would help us. It’s been a month, but there is no headway,” the grandfather laments.

‘She lost her hearing when treatment was stopped earlier’: Father of six-year-old girl, diagnosed with Gaucher’s disease in 2018 Within days of her birth, the child was diagnosed with the disease. In 2020, following the HC’s order, she got access to the drugs. She is undergoing enzyme replacement therapy at AIIMS Delhi and the drug, Cerezyme, costs Rs 1.1 lakh per vial. She has been prescribed four vials a month. But her father, an Okhla resident, says since the start, there has been an interruption every two to three months because of the drug’s non-availability. This time, treatment stopped in August and is yet to resume. “I went to AIIMS earlier this week to check on the status of the drugs and was told the government has not released funds yet. There is a marked deterioration if she remains without therapy for five-six months... her spleen and liver get affected, leaving her prone to infections,” he says. “Then we had to move court to resume her medication. The only demand we have from the government is to not stop or interrupt her therapy, she already lost her hearing when it was stopped earlier... now she has to undergo a cochlear implant surgery which will cost Rs 4-4.5 lakh. I can’t afford that money and I don’t know how to arrange for it,” cries the 43-year-old. He has already lost four children to suspected inherited rare diseases — a son, diagnosed with Mucopolysaccharidosis-1 (MPS I), died at the age of eight. A daughter and two sons succumbed to Gaucher’s at the age of 14, 16 and 18 months. “For my fourth child... we were told the drugs were available and he got the first dose. Before he could take the second one, he died. We wanted to file a case in court over the unavailability of the drug and came in contact with advocate Ashok Agarwal,” says the father. The HC too recorded a stoppage in the six-year-old’s treatment in January 2023 after AIIMS exhausted the funds. Before that, the court issued orders on December 14, 2021, and February 1, 2022, directing the Centre to release funds for her treatment. Explaining how intermittent or disrupted therapy can affect patients with rare diseases, Dr Puri, says, “It varies on the disease as well as the stage at which a patient was started on such therapy... For genetic disorders, if treatment starts early, it has a better impact on the patient. For DMD, if the muscles have already atrophied, giving the most expensive therapy is not likely to reverse muscle damage. Published data to this effect is still lacking. But if we start therapy early in the course of the disease, then it is beneficial; interrupting treatment for long periods will impact the benefit achieved due to the therapy.” The impact of stopping therapy would ultimately vary on a case-to-case basis, assessed on multiple parameters, she adds. “



aged 0–12 months, in South Korea. They followed these children until the girls turned 9 years old and the boys were 10, and found that girls who were prescribed antibiotics before 3 months of age were 33 per cent more likely to start puberty early. The risk was 40 per cent higher in girls who received antibiotics before 14 days of age, and overall, the earlier the antibiotic exposure, the greater the risk of early puberty.

# Invitation to a Scruffy Way of Life



What if we could be comfortable with our dark, dusty and threadbare corners that we hide from each other? What if we could be comfortable with our dark, dusty and threadbare corners that we hide from each other? Sona had recently moved back to Delhi from abroad and invited some friends home to reconnect and catch up. After the meal, she was left with a sense of disappointment though she could not figure out what was missing. “I had planned everything perfectly,” she said, “for friends I love and who matter so much to me.” I was very curious about what she meant by the word, “perfectly”. She sat still for some time and then with a sigh, wondered, “Maybe that is the problem, I was trying too hard to make it perfect.”

Sona explained how she had worked for days in micro-planning the meal, rearranging the furniture and hiding the shabby stuff. “I was so busy performing and perfecting that there was no time to connect,” she reflected. I wondered if she could remember times with her friends from the past that she cherished. With a tender smile on her face, she remembered how they would gather spontaneously, over “a potluck meal and have addas where the only thing that mattered was togetherness.” I asked her what was different in those gatherings and she replied, “All of us welcomed all of us.” I was reminded of this conversation while listening to a podcast in which the writer Oliver Burkeman talked about the concept of “scruffy hospitality,” (attributed to a priest Jack King) which honours, “If we only share meals with friends when we are excellent, we aren’t truly sharing life together.”

Growing up, I lived in a socially bustling household. My parents loved to have family and friends over all the time. Unlike me, they were happily oblivious to the mess in the house. As soon as I learned that someone was visiting the house, I would go around tidying up. It was a joke that people would hide their stuff before I hid them in an obscure corner never to be found. This pattern continued into adulthood. If friends would call to say that they would be dropping in an hour’s time, rather than looking forward to a good time, I would be rushing around pummelling the cushions, burying the scruffy bits in the cupboards and hiding any evidence that humans lived in our home. This frenzied commando-worthy operation would build up until the bell rang when I would dive into the bathroom to make myself presentable. Sounds familiar? No wonder having friends over seemed more of an ordeal than something to enjoy. We have been indoctrinated into thinking that we have to present the

# The paradox of stagnant rural wages

The Indian economy has grown at an average annual rate of 4.6% from 2019-20 to 2023-24, and 7.8% in the last three fiscal years (April-March) alone. The farm sector’s growth has averaged 4.2% and 3.6% for these respective periods. However, these macro growth numbers are not reflected in rural wages. The Labour Bureau compiles daily wage rate data for 25 agricultural and non-agricultural occupations, collected every month from 600 sample villages spread over 20 states. The accompanying charts show year-on-year growth in wages, taking a simple all-India average rate for rural male labourers across all occupations, from April 2019 to August 2024. rural wages Note: Nominal wages are simple arithmetic all-India average for rural male labourers across 25 agricultural and non-agricultural occupations. Source: Labour Bureau

The wage growth has been estimated in both nominal (current value) and real (after deducting annual inflation based on the consumer price index for rural India) terms, and for all rural as well as agricultural occupations. The latter includes ploughing/tilling, sowing, harvesting/threshing/winning, picking of commercial crops, horticulture, animal husbandry, watering/irrigation, and plant protection operations. rural wages For real wages, the Consumer Price Index (Rural) has been used. Source: Labour Bureau The average nominal year-on-year growth in rural wages during the five years ended 2023-24 worked out to 5.2%. It was higher, at 5.8%, for only agricultural wages. But in real inflation-adjusted terms, the average annual growth was -0.4% for rural and 0.2% for agricultural wages during this period. Even for the current fiscal (April-August), overall rural wages have risen only 5.4% year-on-year in nominal and 0.5% in real terms. The corresponding growth rates in agricultural wages have continued to be higher, at 5.7% and 0.7% respectively. It raises the ob-

vious question: Why are real rural wages stagnant, if not negative, when the country’s GDP and even farm sector growth have been decent-to-good in recent times? One explanation has to do with rising Labour Force Participation Rates (LFPR) among women, especially in rural India. LFPR is the percentage of the population aged 15 years and above that is working or seeking/ willing to work for a relatively long part of a particular year. The all-India average female LFPR was only 24.5% in 2018-19. It rose to 30% in 2019-20, 32.5% in 2020-21, 32.8% in 2021-22, 37% in 2022-23 and 41.7% in the latest official Periodic Labour Force Survey for 2023-24 (July-June). Even more impressive has been the increase in the rural female LFPR: From 26.4% in 2018-19 to 33%, 36.5%, 36.6%, 41.5%, and 47.6% in the following five years. During this period (2018-19 to 2023-24), the male LFPR has gone up only marginally, from 75.5% to 78.8% for all-India and from 76.4% to 80.2% for rural India. The Finance Ministry’s Economic Survey for 2023-24 has attributed the sharp jump in the rural female LFPR (21.2 percentage points since 2018-19) mainly to the Narendra Modi government’s schemes such as Ujjwala, Har Ghar Jal, Saubhagya, and Swachh Bharat. These flagship programmes, the survey claims, have not just substantially expanded household access to clean cooking fuel, electricity, piped drinking water, and toilets. They have also freed up rural women’s time and ef-



fort that went into fetching water or collecting firewood and dung. Being able to cook faster using LPG cylinders or even electric mixer grinders has enabled them to deploy their energies towards more productive outside employment, instead of only mundane household tasks. The above freeing up of women’s time and rise in female LFPR have, however, also ended up significantly boosting the aggregate size of the rural workforce. The resultant rightward shift of the labour supply curve — more people willing to work at the same or lower rates — has then exerted downward pressure on real rural wages. While the rural female LFPR has soared between 2018-19 and 2023-24, so has agriculture’s share in the employment of this workforce — from 71.1% to 76.9% over this period. Thus, although more women are entering the rural labour force, they are working in greater numbers on farms. The movement is from home to field, not to factory or office. That, in turn, has probably to do with the nature of GDP growth. The economy may be churning out more goods and services but that process is becoming increasingly capital-intensive and labour-saving as well as labour-displacing. If growth is coming from sectors or industries requiring fewer workers for every unit of output, it translates into a rising share of income generated from that accruing to capital (i.e. profits of firms) as against labour (wages/ compensation of employees). It is not surpris-

ing, therefore, that the new entrants into the labour force, specifically women, are mostly finding employment in agriculture. This is a sector where marginal productivity (output per worker) is already low; the supply of more labour would only further depress wages. The fact that rural non-agricultural wages have grown even less — actually fallen in real terms — shows a worse picture for non-farm labour demand. Capital-intensive, investment-led growth is good for cement, steel, and infrastructure-developing companies such as L&T, Adani Ports, KEC International, Bharat Forge, Finolex Cables, Kalpataru Projects, PNC Infratech, and NCC Ltd. But it isn’t that good for fast-moving consumer goods, home appliances, durables, and two-wheeler makers. They benefit more from growth that is labour-intensive and consumption-led. Their sales and profits get impacted when jobs and incomes do not exhibit growth commensurate with wider GDP measures — as is the case now. The one mitigation factor here, however, has been the income transfer schemes of both the Centre and state governments. According to Neelkanth Mishra, Chief Economist at Axis Bank, 13 states — Andhra Pradesh, Assam, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Himachal Pradesh, Delhi, Maharashtra, Jharkhand, Odisha, Haryana — and also Jammu & Kashmir are currently implementing or have announced such schemes targeting women.



A childbirth education class can help you

Why are cancer cases rising in India?



New Delhi: Pregnancy is joyful and a blessing. Women experience many changes in their body during the course of a pregnancy. Morning sickness, lathery, vomiting, fatigue, gradual weight gain, swelling on their feet, ache and pains on muscles and joints. Things which one could do easily do without any help before becoming pregnant, can become a difficult task post pregnancy, this changes gives a lot of stress to a pregnant women.

Stress can be brought on by things like submitting reports before deadline, organising the household, job changes, financial burden etc. these can become overwhelming during pregnancy.

- Pregnancy related stress can be due to:
- Physical body changes due to pregnancy

Dealing their pregnancy with complication like bleeding in the 1st Trimester, severe hyperemesis, need for bed rest during early pregnancy

Previous miscarriage

Fear for miscarriage

Worried about Baby's wellbeing inside the womb

Fear of Childbirth and worried if she can take good care of baby

Previously anxiety or Depression issues

Effect of Stress during Pregnancy on a Woman and her unborn child:

Stress during Pregnancy can have a lot of unwanted effects on a mother and baby. Maternal stress is also associated with maternal high blood pressure, fetal Low Birth weight and Preterm birth. Lilliecreutz, C., Laren, J., Sydsjo, G. et al. Effect of maternal stress during pregnancy on the risk for preterm birth. Concluded that Approximately 20 per cent of the preterm birth in the study were estimated to be due to maternal stress exposure during pregnancy as an attributed risk. Identifying the stressor or the cause of stress is important to reduce stress during pregnancy.

Overall simple things which can help reduce stress are as follows :

Attending regular antenatal exercise session: Regular antenatal exercise helps in maintaining healthy weight gain,

stronger muscles, gives you more confidence, reduces pregnancy related musculoskeletal complains. Exercise improve your mood due to secretion of hormone called Endorphin, it induces relaxation and helps you sleep better

Having a good support system, family or close friends where you can share your doubts and fear.

Attend Childbirth Education Classes with your childbirth partner – A childbirth partner can be your best friend, sister, mother or your husband. Childbirth Education helps pregnant women to approach Pregnancy, Childbirth, post-delivery and new born care with confidence with the information and support given on Childbirth Education Classes

Try new hobbies or engage in your favourite activity: By starting new hobbies like sewing, cross-stitch, crochet, baking, reading, writing etc will also help you more connected with your baby and new hobbies are good distraction from your stress and worries.

Attending Antenatal Childbirth Education class helps a Women by reducing stress and dealing with pregnancy:

Lamaze childbirth Education is one of the renowned and widely appreciated worldwide. Lamaze has been in this world for 6 decades. Evolving with latest evidence base research. The goal of Lamaze is to give women confidence on their ability to give birth naturally.

Why attending Lamaze childbirth Education class is important:

In Lamaze Class you will learn new interesting things about pregnancy, labor and post-delivery care. Learning how to connect with your baby and partner.

Helps you understand, learn and discover the simple way to cope labor, techniques like positioning, relaxation, movements, massage, breathing, tension release, visualization and use of simple tools.

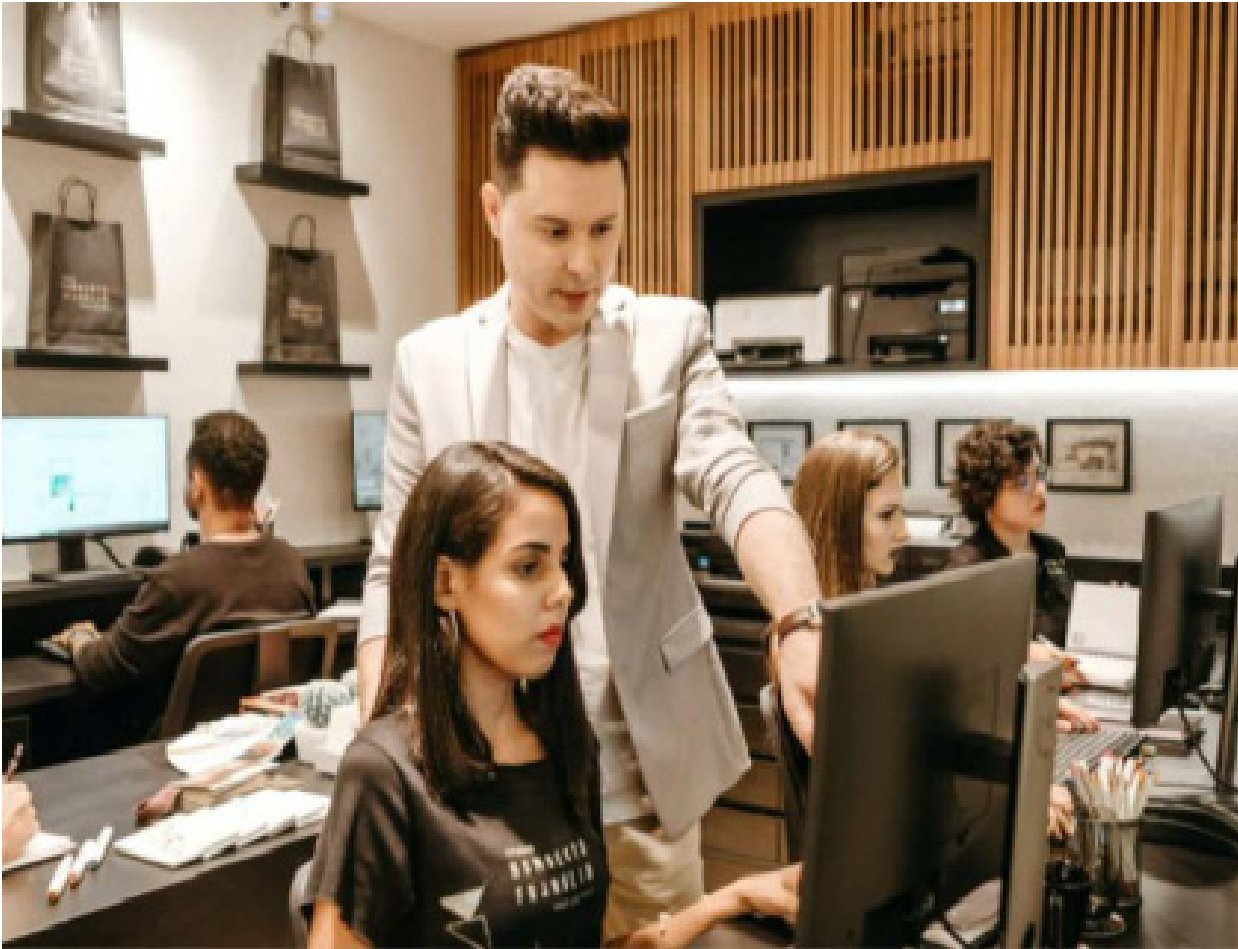
Lamaze class gives you time to address and discuss the different types fear and concerns – addressing fear and anxiety during the class aids in understanding. A childbirth educator will answer with evidence based research findings .They have been trained on how to address your fears and doubts. Women who discuss their fears and concern have more confidence during pregnancy and their labour.

Fun learning about new born care and the role of partner after the delivery for better bonding with your baby and debunking myths about pregnancy and childbirth are all collectively discussed.

Lamaze Childbirth education class can be in a group, individualized session, off line or online interactive class. Class can be 1-2 hrs, once in a week or twice in a week, for a month. It can be 6 hours of 2 days class. Childbirth Education is encouraged in the third trimester, but it's wise to attend the sessions from the 2nd Trimester.

With all the information and interactive sessions a pregnant women can address her worries and learn how to relax for a healthy pregnancy.

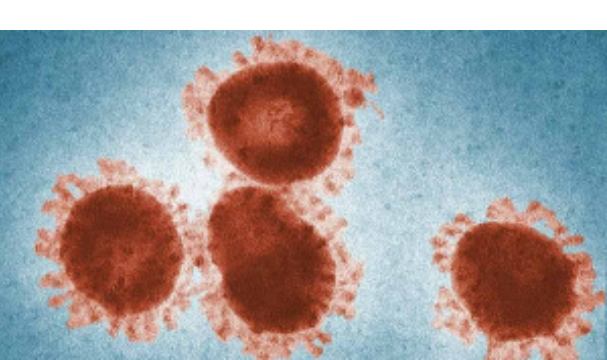
Study finds women are more reluctant than men to ask for deadline extensions



Washington: A new research has found that women are less likely than men to ask for more time to complete projects with adjustable deadlines at work or school. The findings of the study were published in the journal 'Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences'. Compared to men, women were more concerned that they would be burdening others by asking for an extension, and that they would be seen as incompetent, the study showed.

Prior research has shown that women feel more time stress than men do, and feeling uncomfortable about asking for more time to complete projects may be one important reason why, said Grant Donnelly, co-author of the study and assistant professor of marketing at The Ohio State University's Fisher College of Business. "Women understandably feel like they have too many things to do and not enough time to do them. We found that not asking for more time to complete tasks undermines women's well-being and also their performance. But we also found a possible solution: Women were as likely to ask for deadline extensions as men when organisations had formal policies on making deadline extension requests," Donnelly said. Donnelly conducted the research with Ashley Whillans, Jaewon Yoon and Aurora Turek of the Harvard Business School. The research involved nine studies with more than 5,000 participants, including online panels of working adults and undergraduate students. Donnelly said that for him, one of the most compelling of the nine studies was one conducted in his own class. He assigned a discussion paper that was worth 20 per cent of the grade to 103 students in an undergraduate business course. All students were given one week to submit the paper but were told they could email Donnelly to request an extension without penalty. Male students were more

than twice as likely as female students to request an extension for the assignment (15 per cent of female vs. 36 per cent of male students). Not asking for an extension could hurt students, the findings showed. A teaching assistant who rated the papers gave better scores to those who had asked for an extension. (The assistant did not know who wrote the papers and whether they asked for extensions or the purpose of the study.) "What we found is that when students requested an extension, they made good use of that time and performed better on the task. Women may hurt themselves by not requesting additional time," Donnelly said. Several other of the nine studies by the researchers involving working adults showed that women's focus on other people and their needs played a big role in why they were uncomfortable asking for deadline extensions. In these studies, participants imagined they were assigned to submit a proposal for an upcoming event that was due the next day but needed more time. In this scenario, they could ask for an extension from their supervisor. Participants were asked a variety of questions about how asking for an extension might affect themselves and their team, and how it might affect how they were viewed by others. Results showed that women believed they would be seen as less competent if they asked for an extension. But that wasn't the main reason that women were reluctant to request more time. "It was their concern about burdening their team and manager with more work that most strongly predicted women's discomfort with asking for more time on adjustable deadlines. Perceived burden and emotions like shame, embarrassment and guilt explained why women experienced more discomfort with asking for extensions than men did," Donnelly said. And these feelings have real-life implications.



New Delhi: Although India has, for a long time, battled the incidence of cancer, latest estimates pegs them to be rising at significantly higher rate. Once thought of as an old age disease, cancer is now a cause of concern also among the youth and children. National Cancer Awareness Day is observed every year on November 7 in India, to increase awareness about cancer prevention and the need for its early detection.

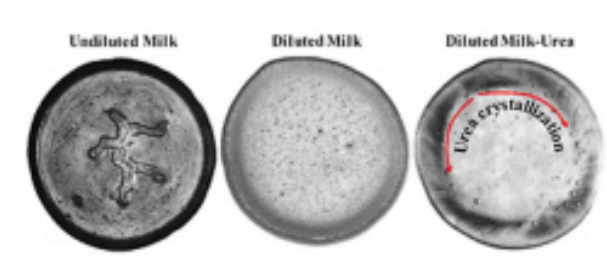
According to the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), there will be an estimated 12 per cent rise in cancer cases in India in the next five years.

Longer life expectancy is a major contributor to the overall cancer incidence. As people grow old, their bodies have longer time to allow faults to build up and the body accumulates more of these faults in the genes, considerably increasing the risk of cancer.

"Larger proportion of older individuals is the first cause of increased cancer numbers. The higher the proportion of older age in the population, the higher is the chance of cancer," Wesley M Jose, Clinical Associate Professor, Medical Oncology, Amrita Hospital, Kochi, told IANS.

Further, males (52.4 per cent) are more prone to the risk of all cancer cases compared to females (47.4 per cent). Tobacco use is the major reason — comprising 48.7 per cent of cancers among males and 16.5 per cent among females. A recent report states that the number of cancers associated with tobacco use in 2025 would be 4,27,273 — contributing to 27.2 per cent of India's total projected cancer cases. Initiation of tobacco, known to contain at least 69 cancer-causing agents, in the youth is a contributory factor

New method for detecting adulterants in milk



New Delhi: Researchers at the Bengaluru-based Indian Institute of Science (IISc) have developed a low-cost and effective method to detect adulterants in milk, by merely analysing the deposition patterns after evaporation. The team used the method to test for the presence of urea and water, the most common adulterants, and suggest that the technique can be extended to other adulterants also. Adulteration of milk is a pressing concern in developing countries like India, where a

significant portion of supplied milk fails to comply with the standards set by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India. Water is frequently added to increase the volume of milk, along with urea, which makes the watered-down version whiter and foamier — this can potentially endanger the normal functioning of the liver, heart, and kidneys. In their study, the researchers looked at evaporative deposition patterns — those that emerge when a liquid mixture like milk completely evaporates, causing volatile components to dissipate and solids or non-volatile components to arrange themselves in distinctive patterns. Milk with and without water or urea showed very different evaporative patterns. In unadulterated milk, the evaporative pattern consisted of a central, irregular blob-like pattern. Water was found to cause distortion or complete loss of this distinctive pattern, depending on how much of it is added. Urea also completely erases the central pattern. Being a non-volatile substance, it does not evaporate but instead crystallises, starting at the interior of the milk drop and extending along

The Ethical conundrum in genetic testing

In the age of extraordinary scientific advancement, the ability to decode our genetic blueprint has brought us face-to-face with profound ethical dilemmas. Genetic testing, once confined to research labs and rare clinical cases, is now a household conversation. Ultrasound technology could be a new home for Alzheimer's disease and other neurological disorders. Companies like 23andMe and AncestryDNA have transformed complex genetic science into an accessible consumer product, while hospitals and clinics deploy genetic screening to predict, diagnose, and manage diseases. But as our knowledge of the genome expands, so do the moral, social, and philosophical questions: How much should we know about ourselves, and at what cost? The promise of genetic testing is dazzling. Imagine a world where a simple test could alert you to your predisposition to cancer, diabetes, or Alzheimer's disease. Parents-to-be can test for hereditary conditions, enabling informed decisions about family planning. In medical contexts, genetic testing is driving the revolution in precision medicine, offering treatments tailored to an individual's unique genetic code. For families burdened with the uncertainty of undiagnosed disorders, genetic insights can provide answers — and sometimes even hope. Yet, as enticing as these promises are, genetic testing also illuminates the fine line between knowledge and overreach. The first ethical conundrum lies in the sheer power of this information. Knowing that you have a high probability of developing a debilitating condition may allow you to take preventive measures, but what if no preventive measures exist? What does it mean to live under the shadow of a genetic predisposition, knowing the clock is ticking but unable to stop it? While this can lead to groundbreaking research, it also opens the door to potential misuse. What's to stop insurers from demanding access to genetic data and using it to deny

to the increased burden of cancers associated with tobacco use in India.

"Tobacco cessation will reduce the cancer burden by about 25 per cent. The major contributing factor being tobacco and ghutka consumption that directly accounts for 27 per cent of cancers in India," Murad E. Lala, Oncologist at P.D. Hinduja Hospital & MRC, Mahim, Mumbai, told IANS.

"We all know that oral and lung cancer that affects our male population to the maximum can be prevented by curbing smoking and tobacco consumption. We need to start thinking of some unhealthy foods similar to what we think about tobacco — unnecessary, addictive, and harmful," said Anil Heroor, Director-Advanced OncoSurgery Unit, Fortis Hospitals Mumbai. Apart from tobacco, alcohol, obesity, a sedentary lifestyle and environmental factors also contribute to the increase in cancers.

"The overall living circumstances of the Indian population have improved and that have also led to a larger sedentary workforce, which has access to a high-calorie diet. These factors indirectly have affected the rise in numbers," Jose said. "Nearly six types of cancers are linked to obesity and are slowly on the rise among people under 50. These are cancers of the colon or rectal, pancreas, kidney, gall-bladder, uterine (also called endometrial cancer), and multiple myeloma. These Cancers are often not discovered in younger people until the disease is advanced and harder to treat," Heroor said. Childhood cancer is also seeing an increasing trend, mainly of leukemia and lymphomas. Childhood (0-14 years) cancers constitute 7.9 per cent of all cancers, according to ICMR.

"The common types of cancers in children are leukemias, lymphomas, CNS tumours, retinoblastomas and Wilms' tumours. While most of the childhood cancers are curable if detected early and treated appropriately, children in India have limited access to tertiary centres that treat childhood cancers. This delay in treatment causes the survival rate to drop," Jose said. The cancer burden in the country can be reduced by strengthening the government health systems, making universal health coverage, health education, treatment compliance, and early detection centres at the community level. Besides, vaccination for virus-related cancer like liver and cervix, and improved physical activity, stricter tobacco and alcohol laws can also help, the experts suggested.

the periphery.

Current techniques such as lactometers look for changes in the freezing point of milk to detect the presence of water, but they have certain limitations. For instance, the freezing-point technique can detect water only up to 3.5% of the total milk concentration. In addition, although biosensors with high sensitivity are available to test for urea, they are expensive, and their accuracy tends to decrease with time. The IISc team, on the other hand, was able to detect water concentrations as high as 30% and urea concentrations in diluted milk as low as 0.4% using pattern analysis. The technique was designed by Dr. Virkeshwar Kumar, a postdoctoral researcher, and

Susmita Dash, Assistant Professor in the Department of Mechanical Engineering at the

Institute. They have published a report on their work in the journal ACS Omega. The test does not require a laboratory or any other specialised process. "It can be done in any place. It can be easily adapted for use even in remote areas and rural places," said Dr. Kumar. He and Dr. Dash believe that this technique can potentially be extended to test for adulterants in other beverages and products too. "The pattern that you get is highly sensitive to what is added to it. So, I think this method can be used to detect impurities in volatile liquids. It will be interesting to take this method forward for products such as honey, which is often adulterated", Dr. Dash said. They noted that the simplicity of this method may also lend itself to easy automation, once the patterns for adulterants and their combinations are standardised. These could be fed into image analysis software, for example, which would compare a photo — even one taken with a mobile phone — of the sample's evaporative pattern with other standard patterns to accurately detect the adulterants present. "The next step that we are looking at is to test for adulterants, such as oil and detergents that form an emulsion resembling milk. We plan to continue work in this direction, creating a repository of patterns corresponding to various concentrations of different adulterants," Dr. Dash said.

coverage or hike premiums? For many, such knowledge becomes a psychological burden, eroding quality of life rather than enhancing it. Even more troubling is the question of consent. It's one thing for an individual to willingly undergo testing, but the data doesn't exist in isolation. A person's genetic information is, by its very nature, familial. Your genome is 50% identical to your parents' and siblings', which means that when you learn about your own risks, you're also unveiling information about your family members, often without their consent. For instance, if a woman discovers she carries the BRCA1 mutation associated with a high risk of breast cancer, her siblings and offspring may be impacted by that knowledge. Should she share the results with them? Does she have a moral obligation to do so? And what if they don't want to know? Another contentious arena is the rise of prenatal genetic testing. On the one hand, it can be a gift to parents, enabling them to prepare for a child with specific health challenges. On the other hand, it can lead to a slippery slope where genetic 'perfection' becomes the unstated goal. Some parents might feel pressured to terminate pregnancies based on probabilities rather than certainties, creating a moral quagmire about whose lives are deemed "worth" living. In countries like Iceland, where prenatal genetic testing for Down syndrome is common, the birth rate of children with the condition has plummeted, a fact that some celebrate and others view as eugenics by another name. The ethical challenges extend beyond the individual and familial to the societal and systemic. Genetic testing is inherently tied to data, and data is currency. Who owns the information contained in your DNA? Many direct-to-consumer companies reserve the right to share anonymised genetic data with third parties, including pharmaceutical companies. While this can lead to groundbreaking research, it also opens the door to potential misuse.



# US and China agree to slash reciprocal tariffs in de-escalation of trade war



GNS News Agency, May 16

File Photo of US President Donald Trump with Chinese President Xi Jinping. The two countries have finalised a trade deal and a tariff cut is likely round the cornerFile Photo of US President Donald Trump with Chinese President Xi Jinping. The two countries have finalised a trade deal and agreed for a trade tariff cut.The United States and China have agreed a deal to slash reciprocal tariffs in an effort by the Washington and Beijing to de-escalate a trade war that has kept the global markets on edge, news agency Reuters reported.

After talks with Chinese officials in Geneva, US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent told the media that both the sides had reached an agreement to halt the measures for

90 days and that reciprocal tariffs would come down by 115 per cent. “We would like to see China more open to US goods,” Bessent added.calculations based on China commerce ministry statement, China is all set to fix tariffs on US goods at 10 per cent while suspend additional 24 per cent tariffs for next 90 days and junk additional 91 per cent tariffs.

This comes after US had in place a 145 per cent tariff on Chinese imports, while China slapped a retaliatory 125 per cent tariff on the US, alongside restrictions on exports of “rare earths” to the US. This was akin to an outright trade embargo between the top two economies of the world, and was untenable in the long run.In a move to break the stalemate, Bessent and China’s vice-premier He Lifeng had been engaged in closed-door discussions over the last weekend. Vice Premier Lifeng said the talks were “in-depth” and “candid”.

Meanwhile, the trade tensions between the two countries had started benefiting India, as US buyers began turning to Indian suppliers following the imposition of steep tariffs by the US on Chinese goods. These tensions have also improved India’s prospects for deeper economic integration with Western nations.The data from China’s Ministry of Commerce showed that while China’s exports to the US fell by over 20 per cent in April, its overall exports rose by 8.1 per cent year-on-year, buoyed by strong performance in the ASEAN region and other markets indicating limited impact of US tariffs.

# Trading activity by individuals in equity derivatives stays high; Sebi re-examining

Despite tightening of regulations in equity index derivatives, the trading activity of individuals in the segment continues to remain high. Concerned over higher participation of individuals in the segment, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) is re-examining the trading activity, sources said.

It could be noted that in October 2024, the Sebi had announced a set of six measures to strengthen the equity index derivatives, also known as equity futures & options (F&O), framework, which included recalibration of contract size for equity derivatives, rationalisation of weekly index derivatives products and increase in tail risk coverage on the day of options expiry. The new measures were announced following an exponential surge in trading volumes in the segment, with the majority of investors incurring losses.Post the new set of measures announced last year in the segment, Sebi analysed the trading activity in the equity derivatives segment for the period from December 2024 to March 2025.“Number of individuals trading in equity derivatives is down 12 per cent year-on-year (YoY) and up 77 per cent from two year ago,” as per the findings. The Sebi analysis showed that on a year-on-year basis, index options volume of individuals is down by 5 per cent (in terms of premium) and 16 per cent in notional terms. However, compared to two year ago, index options volume is up by 34 per cent (in premium) and 99 per cent (in notional terms).Sebi continues to monitor the activity and will re-examine the trading activity of individuals in index options from an investor protection and systemic stability perspective,” said a source.The source said even after tightening of rules last year, India continues to see the highest level of trading in the equity derivatives segment, particularly in index options, in relation to the size of its cash market. It could be noted that Sebi, in its efforts to enhance trading conve-



nience, strengthening risk monitoring and investor protection, had proposed a set of measures in February this year, aimed at aligning risk metrics in the derivatives segment with actual market exposure. The consultation paper recommended moving to a Future Equivalent (FutEq) measure to measure positions in the market. According to sources, the public feedback on the proposals recommended by the consultation paper has been largely positive. The regulator has made some changes in the proposals after getting the feedback from the public.The Sebi has relaxed the position limits for index options and index futures to Rs 1,500 crore on a net basis and Rs 10,000 crore on a gross basis (each side), with no intra-day limit, the sources said. This will enable the market participants to carry out their activities smoothly.“Concomitantly, intra-day and end-of-day (EOD) surveillance systems would be bolstered to ensure that any manipulative activities are appropriately addressed,” sources said.The regulator is going to continue monitoring the activity in index options and, if warranted, would be examining the feasibility of any further actions in this regard, after due consultations with market participants, sources said.

# ‘India-UK FTA historic, serves as template for discussions with US, EU’: CII President

India’s recently signed free trade agreement (FTA) with the United Kingdom is “historic” and could serve as a “gold standard” for similar discussions with other regions like the United States and Europe, said Sanjiv Puri, President of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII). In an interview with Aggam Walia and Soumyarendra Barik, Puri also spoke about how the private sector in India needs to substantially increase its R&D spends for national development, why private capex is only a part of the overall economic development agenda, and whether India needs to revisit its trade relationship with China.It’s a historic agreement, and real credit to the Commerce Minister and his team, they really put in a lot of hard work. We have been, as part of the delegation, witness to how much hard work was put in for it. This is a historical deal. We have never signed such a comprehensive deal that covers 99 per cent of the tariff lines. It touches manufacturing, services, agriculture. 95 per cent of agriculture tariff lines are getting benefit out of the FTA. It’s a gold standard for all other FTAs. It has also dealt with labour and sustainability issues. We do not know the fine print but it has addressed all of them. It is also a very strong signal to the world that India is serious and ready to take bold steps. And it’s also hopefully setting the tone and pace for two other important FTAs which are in the pipeline which are the EU and the US.

Some sectors like the liquor industry have concerns that the FTA will open it up to a lot of competition. Do you think many of our industries are ready for such competition that will happen due to the FTA?

Let’s look at the benefits of the FTA first. One is that it will open a lot of opportunities for bilateral trade in some very important sectors like labour intensive ones such as textiles. These are sectors that are very important for India because that’s where jobs get created. These sectors may not be material when you count private capex, but on the ground they are more material because the number of jobs, economic multipliers are much much higher. Also, to participate in global value chains, FTAs are very important enablers. It is opening up some part of that. Other FTAs will make it more effective. The world is looking for supply chain resilience, alternatives. This sets the base for alternate new value chains to be developed. On the services side, the Double Contribution Convention makes us competitive, and it covers several sectors, even EPC. It’s a big boost to services.Indian liquor industry has its own strengths. There are certain areas that the UK (does better). Both will coexist, thrive, find their own spaces, and play to their strengths.In the US trade deal, there is expectation that they will push for market access to US farm goods like soybeans. How would that interplay with our own farm policies here?The sensitive sectors have been kept out of the UK FTA. I expect a similar situation to happen with the US. But negotiations with the UK, and the US might be of a very different nature given the leadership.I assume so, but I think that sensitivity will still be taken care of from an agriculture

perspective. There are some areas to be cognisant of and watchful about. Dairy is one example, soya you mentioned. I think solutions can be worked out because it does not impact too many lines.

Dumping from China has become a real concern. What do you think the government’s strategy should be in countering that?

The laws for safeguard measures are all there, the government is cognisant of it and is doing its best to bring in the safeguard measures. What the industry will always want is how fast the process can be. But having said that, let me say the government is also very cognisant of it and keen to address it because they have to also take care of certain regulations that have to be followed with the WTO. The only point to see is how we can make it more agile and it will have to be done case by case, not general.What is important is that the rules of origin, and digital systems for traceability should be very clear. These are important tenets of any effective bilateral trade agreement.Since 2020, we have adopted a largely protectionist trade stance towards China. Do you think it is time to revisit that relationship?

We have to look at it from the perspective of what is important for national development. We have to deal with it on a case by case basis, and selectively. We have to also be cognisant of national security concerns, and whatever is helpful and works to our advantage, those are the areas we should focus on.Private capex being sluggish has been a cause of concern for a long time now. When will it pick up?For India’s growth, we need jobs, including in labour intensive areas. Agriculture is also an important sector which is going to remain a dominant source of growth. Capex is another pillar apart from these two.Private capex announcements are three times more than what they were pre-Covid. Corporate balance sheets are fine, there is enough liquidity. So the environment is all right for investments.only uncertainty is on account of the global environment, which may be creating some hesitation so there could be a shifting of investments. Things are getting better on the consumption front and there is now the benefit of personal income tax as well. There is also going to be the benefit of the cumulative impact of public capex picking up in the second half of last year. Private capex was soft during the election period but has since picked up.And of course, the more progress is made on the reform agenda, ease of doing business, how fast can you set up manufacturing, buy the land, get all the approvals, all of these make us more competitive.The Commerce Minister recently urged businesses to focus more on R&D. Most Indian companies spend a small fraction on research work. How can we ever be competitive globally if that remains the case?I agree that the R&D spend in the economy needs to go up.The private sector needs to certainly do more and if you want to benefit from all the FTAs and the opportunities, we will have to invest in R&D, there is no doubt about it.The industry needs to create the culture, create the mindset

# Diet, sleep and exercise advice for free: How doctors are going beyond just treating the disease



Mayur Vihar resident Ghanshyam Kushwaha finds it difficult to find a bench for his father in the out-patient (OPD) building of Delhi’s Safdarjung Hospital, barely managing to hold on to him. The old man can hardly balance himself, wracked as he is by a sharp pain and swelling in his leg. As father and son try to make it to the line, the registration counter closes. That’s when the guard suggests they go to the clinic on the first floor, which is open for all and does not require registration. This is a preventive health clinic and little does Kushwaha know that the pain is not just topical but indicative of a larger problem.

The doctors took note of my father’s symptoms, listed all his health issues and not just those of his leg. They tested his blood sugar to see if the swelling was related to it. Then they told us how to manage his diet, lifestyle and sleep patterns to keep all his faulty parameters in range,” says Kushwaha.patient can walk into this preventive health clinic to manage their condition better, halt disease progression and get an education in what has become a key pillar of health — lifestyle management. “People visit doctors for follow-ups after a prescribed dose of medicines. But they do not know that they have the agency to self-monitor their conditions, improve them and even strengthen their immune systems against diseases. Here we follow a holistic approach,” says Dr Jugal Kishore, professor of community medicine and the head of the clinic.The team of doctors here believes in good old history taking, a systematic process of gathering information from a patient to understand their health concerns and develop a diagnosis. It involves asking questions, making observations, and conducting a physical examination to collect relevant data. This process is crucial for accurate diagnosis, effective medical care and sustaining the recovery.At first, patients take a random glucose level test. The doctors then take a detailed history on whether they have been diagnosed with any chronic conditions, whether they have family history of such conditions, whether they are on any medication, or whether they have undergone any surgery. The doctors also record their height, weight, body fat percentage and blood pressure.

They gather every detail about their smoking and drinking habits as well as their physical activity levels. “Let’s take diet. We ask patients how many meals they have in a day, how many fruits and vegetables they consume, do they have animal or plant foods, how frequently do they have fried stuff, and how much salt do they consume. To better gauge their eating habits, the doctors also ask how frequently they consume specific foods such as pickles, papad, pakora, chutney, namkeen, chips, samosa or buttermilk. There is attention to micro details,” says Dr Kishore.One of the doctors asks a patient about how many hours he spends sitting at work and how many hours he sleeps. Once the note-taking is done, the doctor makes some side notes on a white, A4-sized card, before recommending changes in behaviour.

, a diet counsellor demonstrates how to balance one’s thali with all food groups and lower carbohydrates. He demonstrates the amount of protein that can be had in every meal with lentils in different bowls and swapping them according to the needs of each patient.Thirty-four-year old Anil” walks into the clinic with a complaint of erectile dysfunction. The doctor engages him in conversation and just when some sort of trust is built, Anil recalls that his problems had begun ever since he caught his wife cheating on him with his brother. Once the session is over, Dr Kishore says, “His problem is psychological. He doesn’t need pills, he needs to understand and process his emotions,” says Dr Kishore.The set of questions that every patient in the clinic is required to answer also includes one about their occupation. “Most cases of stress, backaches and pains are related to the work a patient does. So, it is extremely important to ask people about that aspect,” says Dr Kishore.Take for example, the case of Sanjay”, who was prescribed anti-tuberculosis medicines twice but reported recurrence of the disease. A simple question about his occupation held the clue to his diagnosis.“He had been working as a painter for more than 15 years and the fumes from the paint had damaged his lungs. That’s the reason his chest x-rays were always found to be positive for TB but the pathogen was never detected in his sputum samples,” says Dr Kishore.Doctors can administer three adult vaccines in the clinic itself — hepatitis B, influenza, and tetanus. They can also suggest supportive devices like arched footwear for patients. “Some patients need footwear with better arch support to prevent back and leg pain. We can put them in touch with a manufacturer who makes these specialised shoes at a lower cost,” says Dr Kishore, emphasising the need for such clinics at all tertiary care hospitals. While he is drawing up a template for similar facilities elsewhere, he also has a surprise. “All patients — and even their relatives who might not be suffering from any health condition — can come to the clinic to learn about healthy habits and lifestyle modifications that can keep chronic diseases at bay,” he says. This can minimise the need for expensive treatments and surgeries later in life, leading to cost savings for individuals and healthcare systems.

# Ananya Pandey’s gut cleanse diet: What should you eat ideally?

Actor Ananya Panday has said that she feels more energetic after switching over to a gut cleanse diet a couple of months ago. “It has made a huge difference in my life. I’ve been very good with my meals and make sure to have my last meal by 7 pm. I don’t eat after that. It has been a good change,” she said.“She may have benefitted more from changing her dietary routine and being mindful of her eating window but clinically there is nothing called a gut cleanse diet. Gut is considered to be the second brain with the gut microbiome, the community of bacteria and other micro-organisms, communicating with the brain. So to maintain a healthy gut-brain axis, we must not unnecessarily depend on gut cleanse as there is no scientific evidence so far in its favour,” says Mukta Vashist, consultant dietician at Sir Gangaram Hospital, Delhi. A gut cleanse is rather a process to reset your digestive system. “And that can be done by having a proper balanced diet and hydration to flush out toxins. Our gut is fully equipped to rid itself of toxins,” she adds.

What is gut cleansing?

Clinically, dieticians don’t go by this concept at all. When we talk about gut cleanse, we generally bowel cleanse and colonic wash. Colonic flushing, as reported in a 2009 review of the American Journal of Gastroenterology, mentioned anecdotal evidence of users saying it improved their digestion and liver function. There is still no data from trials to show that such colon cleanses are indeed beneficial.

What then is the diet for improving gut health?

If you want to rid your gut of toxins and waste, you need to ensure regular bowel movements. For that you need a diet full of fibre, prebiotics and probiotics, which means including fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, leafy greens and curd regularly. Our fibre intake should be 14



gm/1000 calories. High-fibre foods encourage gut bacteria diversity and add bulk to stools, making them easier to pass and avoid constipation. Whether you have a regular bowel movement daily or not is responsible for day-to-day weight fluctuations. Do include fermented foods as they help populate your gut with beneficial bacteria.

Is colon cleanse a better option?

No. The good and bad bacteria living in your gut must be balanced for nutrient absorption and immune system function. Regular colonic cleanses could upset this balance.If you go on a liquid diet, then it affects the balance of major food groups.

there alternative routines for gut cleanse?

Exercise regularly, sleep well and practise stress management. These may sound cliché but are more effective than any fad diet. Regular exercise stimulates bowel movements by improving gut motility. Chronic stress disrupts the gut-brain axis. Stress reduction methods like meditation or deep breathing can help regulate the nervous system, allowing the digestive system to function optimally.

# Is KJo, SRK’s One-Meal-a-Day for you? Here’s the reality behind Bollywood’s latest diet trend

An endocrinologist at one of Mumbai’s premier hospitals asked me to help with a revival diet for the third patient he had seen that week with heart palpitations and hormone imbalances. All of them were inspired by Bollywood stars to follow the OMAD or “One Meal A Day” diet for over three months.First actor Shahrukh Khan, then Raveena Tandon and now filmmaker Karan Johar say this diet led to their weight loss transformation. However, this extreme approach, while effective for curated lifestyles, is not for everybody.

What Is OMAD and How Is It Different?

OMAD is a form of intermittent fasting where all daily calories are consumed in a single meal, typically within a one-hour window. This is far more restrictive than other time-restricted eating patterns that give a wider eating window.The Biological Paradox No One DiscussesWhile celebrities showcase endless energy despite minimal eating, many forget that they complement them with supplements and health coach regimes. During extended fasting periods, the body activates stress hormones like cortisol to maintain blood glucose levels. This creates a physiological state mimicking chronic stress. So there is a temporary period of euphoria, mental clarity and energy many experience before the crash. This explains why so many believe the diet works miracles. Thyroid Disorders: Extended fasting

signals the body to conserve energy by reducing conversion of T4 to active T3 thyroid hormone, potentially triggering hypothyroid (low thyroid) symptoms even in those previously stable on medication.Autoimmune Conditions: Initial anti-inflammatory benefits from fasting often give way to severe flares as stress hormones rise.

Blood Sugar Regulation: Diabetics face dangerous blood glucose fluctuations. More troubling, previously non-diabetic individuals develop insulin resistance following extended OMAD periods. Medication Effectiveness: Certain medications require specific food timing for proper absorption, a fact conveniently absent from celebrity interviews.Mental Health Impact: Perhaps most insidious is the psychological toll. Psychiatrists report alarming increases in food obsession, anxiety and social isolation among OMAD practitioners.What nobody tells you is that celebrity diets are project-specific, not lifelong practices. A celebrity nutritionist friend told me, “The actor raving about OMAD in March may be following a completely different protocol by June.”Even more revealing: Many stars claiming strict OMAD actually follow modified approaches, including strategic pre-workout nutrition, “free meals” twice weekly, protein supplementation throughout fasting periods, and recovery periods.Who Should Never Attempt OMADMedical professionals unanimously identify high-risk groups who should avoid OMAD entirely.



# Virat Kohli retires: He never gave up until one day he did



GNS News Agency, May 16

Within days of Rohit Sharma calling time on his Test career, Virat Kohli too followed suit and retired before next month's tour to England. Was he quick to read the room after the abrupt end to Rohit's Test innings? With talk of Shubman Gill's early coronation at 25 did he sense palace intrigue and a subtle signal to him? Or was it the case of the 36-year-old father of two no longer having that famous drive in him to deal with the demons in the head that mess up your muscle memory?Informing the world about his decision to quit on social media he wrote: "The quiet grind, the long days, the small moments that no one sees but that stay with you forever. As I step away from this format, it's not easy — but it feels right. I've given it everything I had, and it's given me back so much more than I could've hoped for."Five Tests in England can be daunting for a batsman who these days isn't sure where his off-stump is – he got out poking at the ball 7 times in his last five-Test series in Australia – and had barely survived the same trauma in the past. Was it why he gave up and did the first, and probably the last, un-Kohli act of his glittering career littered with many moments of incredible mental strength and undying conviction in his skills.Not really. The batting great can't be judged so harshly. It is those good old Kohli days that will define his legacy and get talked about for generations.This England miss, actually a judicious 'well left', is just another grim reminder to the reality of aging and the finite problem-solving capacities of the human mind. Virat still has a sculpted body. Those six-packs that send every young cricketer to the gym these days are still in place. Even in his mid-30s, he is a Bolt between wickets. But the fittest too can get jaded, the driven too slow down and even Kings call it a day.

Kohli has retired, but he hasn't given up. He never does, it's just that every great story has an end. Once he signs up for a cause he never backs out. That was the original narrative around the Delhi boy when he first hit headlines as an 18-year-old.In his opening first-class season, his commitment to cricket would get embossed in bold on his calling card. It was an incredibly cold December day of 2006 when he landed at Kotla in a Delhi Ranji Trophy jersey hours after his father died. In the dressing room, he broke down but quickly splashed his eyes with water to play a match-saving knock. He left early and lit his father's pyre.It was after the sun had set on the toughest day of his life, he would tell his elder brother: "I am going to play this game at the highest level and there is nothing that can distract me from doing that." That was not to be a sentimental promise made to a distressed family ready to clutch at any straw of optimism thrown at them. It was a life-time undertaking that he remained committed to for the next two decades. Kohli didn't just play at the highest level but will finish as one of the greatest the game had seen. With ODIs still interesting to him, Kohli can further glorify his legend.

From his under-19 days he never doubted himself or let intimidation overwhelm or undermine him. In the initial round of the Under-19 World Cup in Malaysia he would swagger around the team hotel where most teams stayed,

like he owned the place. Once when a tall well-built English player crossed him and gave him a look of disapproval, Kohli was unfazed. With a poker face and steely blank eyes, he just raised his eye-brows and head twice and said: "Why you staring?" The boy blinked and sheepishly snuck away. "Arre inko dikhaana padta hai (One needs to show these guys) who's the boss," he would say.By the end of the tournament, he would make sure that the rest of the teams conceded that he was the boss. The junior India triumph would be followed by his graduation to the senior team and a phase where he lost focus. By his own confession he got caught in leading the 'cool life' – partying, eating unhealthy and taking cricket for granted.Realising that he was drifting from his goal, he would take the challenge of being his old self. He changed his routine and diet. He starved. "One night I was so so hungry that I had thoughts of chewing up the bedsheet," he had once said. The linen was spared nor was the room service approached, Kohli's resolve didn't break. The will to take the tough road remained unbreakable.That would be the recurring theme to the Kohli story. In 2014, he was in a free-fall on the England tour. He thought he had forgotten batting and would not get his touch back. The promise to his brother, his own pride, ego and image – everything that he valued was broken. He couldn't sleep and when he finally did, he didn't wish to get out of the bed. Depressing is how the doctors would identify the problem. Kohli would reach out to Tendulkar and that would start his rehabilitation. Once he ironed the flaws, trusted his game, he got back his purpose in life.

Runs would flow, he would get proclaimed as cricket's GOAT but fame and fortune would bring bigger challenges. It is around the Covid-19 period, roughly 2022, Kohli would face existential problems.When the world called him King Kohli, Superman, Chasemaster, he was confused about his own identity. "Who am I as a human being? – He would ask himself. "With your professional identity, somewhere you start losing perspective as a human being," he would articulate. To live up to the hype around him, Kohli would "fake his intensity". The world wanted the scowly, shouting Kohli even when he wasn't in a mood to express those emotions. These candid confessions about his inner self, he would share with the world after he would return from a rare cricket break, something he had never even done in his life.Even on his return, Kohli would find it tough to meet the staggering standards he had set for himself. From January 2022 to January 2025, he would just score 4 Test hundreds. None memorable, none with gravitas. Kohli the Test batsman was wilting but he wasn't giving up. He would train hard, even take philosophical inputs from guru Babas. He kept exploring the world, kept trying to keep the promise he had made, not realising that he had done so many times over.If there was one cricketer who could have still bounced back in England it had to be Kohli. But he had had enough, it seems. Recently, he had spoken about how the meaning of cricket had changed for him. "You start with wanting to hit the ball and later you go through this whole journey of being someone and dealing with expectations. But then finally again you reach a point ... and say I am here to hit the ball," he had said in an RCB podcast in the middle of his dream IPL run.He seemed to be enjoying "hitting the ball", the same way in which he would do when he would swagger in team hotels like he owned them. Going to England would again mean "being someone and dealing with expectations."On that magical April night in 2011, after India's World Cup win at Wankhede, Kohli had beautifully expressed his emotions after carrying Sachin Tendulkar sitting on his shoulder on a victory lap. "Tendulkar has carried the burden of the nation for 21 years, it was time we carried him," he said.He would go on to do a Tendulkar, be a legend after two decades of high-level batting. Now it is for others to do a Kohli.

# Why Virat Kohli is a unique Indian batting great in Test cricket in the company of Tendulkar, Dravid and Gavaskar



GNS News Agency, May 16

For twelve years, Virat Kohli filled the most unfillable void in Indian cricket. Of Sachin Tendulkar. Now, he leaves Indian cricket with a fresh vacuum. Of Virat Kohli. Across 123 Tests, 210 innings, 9230 runs, 30 hundreds, and numerous match-winning feats in an era when India became a force abroad, he was the soul and spine of India's batting, its sustainer and destroyer.Those were the best days of his life and the lives of many others too, which gave them meaning. As with Tendulkar, he was a hero of the masses, the one who was more than a batsman or a sportsman; an idol and an emotional investment, the numbers next to his name capable of both captivating and crushing the nation.

His legacy, as a Test batsman, is straightforward. He is one of the greatest that strode to bat for his country. A prolonged slump during the pandemic diminished his numbers, denying the once unstoppable fate of him conquering every batting peak in the game and breaking every possible record. The threads of fate work in strange ways, but Kohli bids goodbye as his country's fourth-highest run-getter, behind Tendulkar, Rahul Dravid, and Sunil Gavaskar. The placing is a precise and hierarchical reflection of his stature in Indian cricket. Not the GOAT, but one of the GOATs.A definite set of common virtues binds them all at this level—grandeur of stroke-making, firmness of technique, resolve of the mind, all-condition adaptability, and problem-solving knack. But in the middle, when the persona reflects as much as the style of batting, each one is unique. Gavaskar exuded unreal peace; Dravid was all inscrutable intensity; Tendulkar exhibited irreproducible masterfulness. Kohli emanated pure energy, unrehearsed and untrammelled, from the bottom of his heart, a vibe that filled the audience with a positive rage. Tendulkar generated love, Gavaskar awe, Dravid admiration, and Kohli an undulating buzz. He was the most mortal among them, a relatable, expressive and transparent man. He was without masks and pretences. The man you see was the man he often was.

He thus is a unique Indian batting great, more Javed Miandad than Tendulkar. He was not the stereotypically reserved and placid oriental great, but swaggering and hubristic, a true product of his times, uncompromising in his convictions and never taking a backward step or resting on past laurels. He once revealed the essence of his batting to Nasser Hussain in a Sky Sports interview: "As cricketers and as sportsmen, we limit ourselves without even knowing how much we can do. I've never put any limitations on my life. If I get three hundreds in three innings, the fourth one is another opportunity."The audience could sense that energy when the squarish frame of sculpted perfection bristled out from the tunnel to the grass. His eyes were vibrant, the limbs restless to stamp their authority on the bowlers; he never ambled or strolled, but jogged or walked with short, fast strides. His batting conformed to the first law of thermodynamics, that energy could not be destroyed but transferred from one form to the other. From his eyes

and limbs, it transmitted to the bat, to the sphere of leather and then towards the grass. The flow of energy—he let it rip, and not hide—reflected his mind and mood. There were days in recent times when it had seemed he was running on empty fuel tanks. A punishing self-critic, he could no longer take the feeling that he was not himself, that he was not feeling and feeding off that irresistible and organic energy.

His career was about harnessing and channeling that raw, wild energy. Unlike Tendulkar, he was not predestined for greatness; unlike Gavaskar, he didn't soar into cricket's collective consciousness in his first series; unlike Dravid, he didn't marvel with technical purity. Rather, he built his career in blocks, step by step, moving closer to the best version of himself he could be. First came Kohli of uncontainable enthusiasm but with glitches, then appeared Kohli of the shredded abs but not entirely condition-proof, and then sprung the world-beater who surmounted everything he could in a five-year phase of luminescence.The phase from late 2014 to late 2019 was the milieu of Kohli. Everything could be measured in the Kohli timeline. In just 90 outings, he stroked 5347 runs, more than half his overall numbers, composed 21 of his 30 centuries and maintained an average of 63.65. Hundreds arrived everywhere and every situation, against spin and seam. He defeated the devils of swing, reeled two hundreds against James Anderson and Co, repeatedly vanquished the Australian quicks and surfaces with five centuries and kept a 54-plus average in every country he had toured. The upward curve, unavoidably, plateaued. There was no late-career rebirth like Tendulkar—which probably cost him the claim to be considered an all-era great—but the five-year period was the best phase of Indian cricket this century, the pinnacle being the first series win in Australia. Some of his finest knocks were etched during this time, like the 153 in Centurion, the twin hundreds in Adelaide, or the 149 in Birmingham. Australia and South Africa were his favourite overseas locales. His average of 49.50 in the Rainbow Nation is better than Tendulkar and Dravid; he tops the tally of hundreds in Australia by his countrymen too.In the fixation with the overseas statistics, it's convenient to forget how exemplary he was in India, where he was infallible at times. He averaged 55.58 to Tendulkar's 52.67 and Dravid's 51.35. He was the axis of India's home invincibility from 2012 to 2024, a period of utter supremacy when they brushed adversaries aside.He was not quite Tendulkar, but he was the closest India got to Tendulkar after his adieu. The pair differed in a lot of aspects, Tendulkar was more perfect and classical, kept evolving through the years and refined his game to such a consummate level that he made batting look utterly frictionless and routine, creating a sort of humdrum perfection. With Kohli, it was always a battle between his quest for perfection and the flaws that refused to die, a fascinating tussle in itself. There were fundamental deficiencies that could have revolted against him, like the bottom-handed cover drives, uncertainty outside the off-stump against the moving ball. But through practice and purpose, he ironed out the cracks that would have shaken the foundations of his batting and shoved him to the realm of imposters.The burden on his shoulders were different; Tendulkar was thrust with the expectations of a developing, aspirational cricketing nation; Kohli bore the brunt of a powerhouse that was mercilessly intolerant to setbacks and stumbles, when the sensibilities were more modern and dynamic.In the end, it might have come to a point where he was not getting that vibe, the energy and the buzz that turbocharged his career. It was the way he played and the way he was, soaring and gliding and carrying you. The burden of being Tendulkar's heir could have been suffocating, just as the pressure of being Kohli's heir would be in the coming years.

# World Squash Championships: Indian challenge ends in second round

GNS News Agency, May 16

India's campaign ended in the ongoing PSA World Squash Championships on Sunday as all four Indian players lost their respective matches in the second round of the tournament.In the women's section, India's lone representative Anahat Singh lost 1-3 to Fayrouz Aboelkheir of Egypt.After losing the first game 7-11, Anahat came back strongly and won the second game 11-8 and leveled the tie 1-1. However, Fayrouz was unstoppable in the last two games winning 4-11 and 3-11 cutting short Anahat's debut at the World Championships.Earlier in the first round, Anahat defeated Marina Stefanoni of USA in a thrilling encounter. After losing the first game 10-12, she came back to win the second game 11-9, lost the third game 6-11, and then clinched the final two games 11-6, 11-6, securing a 3-2 victory.World number 63 Anahat booked her berth for the championship last month at the Asian Qualifying tournament becoming only the second player to qualify for women's singles after Joshna Chinappa in the past six years.

The 17-year-old Anahat, ranked 62nd in the world, had earlier beaten world No. 28 American Marina Stefanoni in the opening round.It was a disappointing day in men's singles as all three Indian players crashed out.Abhay Singh was



no match to world number 13 Youssef Ibrahim of Egypt, losing 0-3 (6-11,6-11,9-11) while Chotrani showed some fight against top seed Ali Farag of Egypt.Chotrani stunned Farag in the first game winning it 11-7 but the experienced Egyptian have Chotrani no chance winning the next three game 7-11, 3-11, 10-12.Experienced player Ramit Tandon went down fighting to eighth seed Marwan Elshorbagy of England.After losing the first two games 9-11 and 7-11, Tandon came back strongly to win the next two games 11-5 and 11-8. However in the deciding set, he lost 8-11 to end his campaign in the tournament.

# It's different kind of welcome initiative

Hyderabad: The Simply Period Kiosks, a joint initiative of the Bihar State Sports Authority (BSSA) and Simply Sport Foundation (SSF) during the Khelo India Youth Games 2025 Bihar, drew young athletes, coaches, support staff and sports fans, eager to know, engage and take part in a survey.SSF Research Lead Manasi Satalkar said the aim was mainly to sensitise coaches and support staff about menstrual health issues, period products and hygiene-related concerns that female athletes face."We also collected data to get a sense of the ground reality and of the opinions of different groups like athletes, coaches and support staff," she said. Elaborating on the survey, Manasi Satalkar said SSF collected data around five major themes.

"We focused on hygiene, infrastructure, period management in sport, communication about menstrual health and period-product knowledge and acceptance of products like tampons and cups," she said.

She was happy that nearly 800 responses were collected over the first week. "We plan to release the findings of the survey along with the BSSA so that everyone knows the major concerns around the subject and the recommen-



dations going forward," she said.The participants in the survey were given period-care kits by the hygiene partner but, Former India women's Rugby team captain Neha Pardeshi, now Secretary of Delhi Rugby and doubling up as the girls team that won bronze here, nodded in appreciation."This is a very good initiative and we need more of this at all levels, not just in National events," she said. Manasi Satalkar said that based on the initial feedback from Rajgir.



## Ibrahim Ali Khan says he has a hearing disability since birth that impacted his speech: 'It is still not perfect, working hard at it'



Saif Ali Khan and Amrita Singh's son Ibrahim Ali Khan faced a lot of scrutiny after the release of his debut film Nadaaniyan. While trolls were quick to judge him, not many know about his struggle with a speech impediment. In a recent interaction, Ibrahim opened up about having difficulty with speech since childhood and revealed that he still has to work 'really hard' on it. During an interview with GQ, Ibrahim shared that a serious case of jaundice at the time of his birth affected his speech and hearing abilities. He revealed, "Soon after I was born, I

had very bad jaundice and that went straight to my brainstem. I went on to lose quite a bit of my hearing and that impacted my speech." Sharing that he has worked extensively over the years to improve his speech and continues to do so, he said, "My speech is something that I've had to work hard on since I was a child, with coaches and therapists. It's not perfect; I'm still working really hard on it." Despite his speech challenges, Ibrahim's parents did not hesitate to send him to boarding school in England. The actor admitted that while it was difficult to fit in initially, the experience helped him grow tremendously as a person. "Being Indian, it was hard to fit in, but I had the best four years of my life. I played sports, made new friends and learnt a lot. My speech issue was so bad back then, and the move placed me in this new space where I had to survive," he said. Conscious of not sounding like a 'rich brat,' Ibrahim clarified that he was left to deal with many things on his own. "I don't mean to sound like some rich kid whining, but when you're 14 and on your own, boarding school isn't easy. It's very strict. Yet, it shaped my character and changed my perspective on life," he said. Ibrahim is Saif Ali Khan's eldest son. Before marrying Kareena Kapoor, Saif was married to Amrita Singh from 1991 to 2004. They had two children — Sara Ali Khan and Ibrahim. After Saif and Amrita parted ways, Saif married Kareena, and the couple has two sons — Taimur Ali Khan and Jehangir Ali Khan.

## Kantara Chapter 1 actor Rakesh Poojary dies of heart attack at 33, collapsed during a mehendi ceremony: report



Kannada and Tulu actor Rakesh Poojary, popularly known as the winner of Comedy Khiladigalu 3, passed away on Monday midnight after suffering a heart attack. The 33-year-old actor's tragic demise happened during a mehendi ceremony in the Udupi district. As per a report in India To-

day, Rakesh collapsed late last night. The TV actor had shared a story on his Instagram from the mehendi ceremony; he also posted a birthday wish for his sister. Both of these last stories on Instagram have gone viral.

According to a report in Deccan Herald, Rakesh was at his friend's place in Miyar, where he collapsed while talking to his friends. He was rushed to a hospital soon after he collapsed, however, he was declared dead. The cause of death is suspected to be a cardiac arrest. Reportedly, a case of unnatural death has been registered at the Karkala Town Police Station. Reacting to the news of his demise, a judge from Comedy Khiladigalu, Rakshitha wrote on social media, "The ever-smiling Rakesha...my fav Rakesha...the sweetest kindest loving person... Namma Rakesha...will miss you munge." Rakesh, who was set to star in Kantara: Chapter 1, had also shot for the film on May 11 before he headed to the mehendi function. His portion in the film has been completely shot, and as per reports, Rakesh was playing an important role in the film. Before collapsing, the actor complained of fatigue. Rakesh had become a household name in Karnataka after he won the show in 2020. The actor rose to fame in 2014 after he participated in a Tulu reality show called Kadale Bajil. Rakesh also featured in some Kannada and Tulu films like Ammer Police, Umlil, etc. Rakesh also starred in various Karnataka-based reality shows and was also active in the theater circuit.

## Ibrahim Ali Khan says Saif Ali Khan walked into hospital with a knife stuck in him after attack, recalls weeping at his first words: 'You would've beaten that guy'



The night Saif Ali Khan was attacked with a knife at his home in Bandra, Mumbai, left the entire nation rattled. The actor had to undergo surgery to remove a knife fragment lodged in his spine. In a recent interaction, Saif's elder son, Ibrahim Ali Khan, recalled that traumatic night and shared that he was informed about the stabbing nearly three hours after the incident occurred. He also remembered his father's first words to him after coming out of surgery. Speaking to GQ, Ibrahim said, "I was shooting a night shift. He was stabbed around 2:30am and I was informed at 5:30am. I hadn't slept that night and I rushed to see him. He had just come out of the ICU after surgery. He opened his eyes, spoke to Sara for a bit, and asked for me. I was so happy."

Recalling his first interaction with Saif post-surgery, Ibrahim shared, "I said, 'I'm right here, dad.' And then he said, 'If you were there, you would've beaten that guy up.' That made me weep. I wish I had been there. At one point, when I heard he got stabbed, I started to think of the worst-case scenario. That's a very scary feeling." After the incident, several rumours began circulating. Some even claimed that it was Ibrahim who drove Saif to the hospital after he suffered grave injuries. However, Ibrahim set the record straight and said, "And it was bad; it was very scary. To everyone saying I drove him to the hospital with my baby brother, I would like to clarify that my dad walked into the hospital himself. He walked in with a knife stuck in him and said, 'I need help.' "The Nadaaniyan actor admitted that the horrific episode brought him much closer to his father. "I feel a lot closer to him now. If someone in your immediate family has a near-death experience, you don't take them for granted. You become more present in the relationship," he said. January, Saif Ali Khan was violently attacked by an intruder at his Bandra home in Mumbai. The

attacker was later identified as Mohd Shariful Islam Shehzad. The intruder had broken into Saif's house and entered the room of his youngest son, Jehangir Ali Khan, with the intention of theft. When a female member of Saif's household staff spotted the intruder and raised an alarm, Saif intervened to protect his son. During the scuffle, the intruder stabbed Saif multiple times in the back before fleeing the scene. He was later apprehended by the police. Following the attack, Saif underwent two surgeries.

## Tamil actor Vishal collapses on stage during an event, rushed to hospital

Tamil actor Vishal faced a health scare in Monday, May 11, as he suddenly collapsed on the stage during a public event in Villupuram, Tamil Nadu. He was immediately rushed to a nearby hospital for emergency treatment and is stable now. The unexpected turn of events worries fans present at the event and many attendees even expressed their concern on social media. Was present as the chief guest at a cultural in Koovagam village. As a part of the Tamil month festival, a beauty pageant called Miss Koovagam 2025 was organised on Sunday night for the transgender community. While the celebrations were going on, Vishal unexpectedly lost consciousness and fell on the stage. The event organisers and fans provided instant first aid and he regained consciousness. Former minister K. Ponmudi, who was also attending the event, assured Vishal's transfer to the hospital for medical treatment.

This incident has left everyone stressed about the actor's health as it followed another health scare, after his recovery from dengue in January, this year. During the pre-release event of his film Madha Gaja Raja, Vishal's health didn't look best to fans. Despite suffering from a viral fever, he attended the event, looking visibly unwell and requiring help to even stand straight. A clip from the event surfaced on social media and went viral, showing him trembling while holding Vishal addressed these concerns and shared that he had been suffering from a fever, reassuring fans he is doing well now. "I recently had a common fever, and I'm completely recovered now. There were false rumors claiming I wouldn't be able to work for three or six months, but none of it is true," he said, in his statement.

## 'I was extremely bitter about dad Raj Babbar, mom Smita Patil,' Prateik recalls growing up with 'shame': 'Na main maa ka, na baap ka'



Prateik Smita Patil has been making headlines lately, after he broke ties with his father Raj Babbar and didn't invite him to his wedding. The actor, who adopted his mother and late actor Smita Patil's name, has now opened up about his complicated relationship with his parents and building his own identity amidst the difficult family situation. He also recalled his drug addiction phase and how people treated him because of the same. In an interview with Zoom, Prateik shared the challenges he had to face while growing up and said, "The nature of the situation was a little more intense because my parents were famous people. My mother is still a legend, very much celebrated. So it was different as my life was an open book since childhood, so that was the constant reminder. And seeing them not around kind of made me bitter about them both — extremely bitter."

"So that was the tug of war — whether to accept them or not, whose fault is it? Then finally I'm at peace with everything. I mean, you still have to heal because

these kinds of situations, these kinds of circumstances, are tough to overcome completely. You go through healing your entire life," he added. During the candid conversation, Prateik Smita Patil also revealed the emotional reason behind adopting his mother's surname, "I didn't know whose identity I wanted. 'Na main baap ka hoon na maa ka, main khud ka hu,' this confusion I had all my life. But now, finally, I've embraced my mother's name fully. I'm now called Prateik Smita Patil, and it's got a very beautiful ring to it. It sounds like music to my ears. I owed it to her to embrace her wholly and solely. She gave her life for me — she deserves it. A mother gave her life for her child, the least I could do is embrace her entire name," he shared. During the same interview, Prateik also opened up about his drug addiction back in 2013. He said, "Drug addiction is a disease. We have to talk about it and get help. Mental health is a real thing." The Sikandar actor further explained how he was embarrassed and felt shameful during childhood, because of his family and substance abuse. "Shame is something that I felt during my childhood days. I was ashamed of my family situation. I was ashamed of not having parents. Har jagah jaata tha toh sabke parents aate the, but mere saath mere grandparents aate the. Kabhi kabhi maid aur nanny bhi aa jaati thi. Mujhe bahut sharam aati thi," he revealed. Prateik continued, "Embarrassment is not a nice feeling. I am proud of myself, as I have gone through all these adversities at a very young age. I had overdosed a few times, but my guardian angel was protecting me. I am proud of myself. It was tough. You get boycotted and labelled. You also get outcast." On the professional front, Prateik Smita Patil was last seen in Telugu crime thriller, HIT: The Third Case. It hit the theatres on May 1.

## Johnny Depp's ex-wife Amber Heard welcomes twins, opens up about her 'fertility challenges': 'I am eternally grateful'



Hollywood actress Amber Heard shared good news on Mother's Day as she revealed she welcomed twins — a daughter named Agnes and a son named Ocean. On Sunday, she took to Instagram and penned a heartfelt post accompanied by a picture of the little ones' feet. "Mother's Day 2025 will be one I'll never forget," she captioned the snap.

"This year, I am elated beyond words to celebrate the completion of the family I've strived to build for years. Today, I officially share the news that I welcomed twins into the Heard gang. My daughter Agnes and my son Ocean are keeping my hands (and my heart) full," Amber added. The actor said she had chosen motherhood "responsibly and thoughtfully" and "couldn't burst with more joy." "When I had my first baby girl, Oonagh, four years ago, my world changed forever. I thought I couldn't possibly burst with more joy. Well, now I am bursting times three!!! Becoming a mother by myself and on my own terms, despite my own fertility challenges, has been the most humbling experience of my life. I am eternally grateful that I was able to choose this responsibly and thought-

fully," she wrote. Amber also gave a shout-out to all mothers out there. "To all the moms, wherever you are today and however you got here, my dream family and I are celebrating with you. Love always, A x," she concluded.

Amber became a mom for the first time in April 2021. She waited two months to publicly announce daughter Oonagh's arrival via surrogacy in an Instagram upload, as per Page Six. "Four years ago, I decided I wanted to have a child. I wanted to do it on my own terms," the new mom told her followers in June 2021. "I now appreciate how radical it is for us as women to think about one of the most fundamental parts of our destinies in this way," she continued. "I hope we arrive at a point in which it's normalised to not want a ring in order to have a crib." Heard called the newborn, who is named after her late mother, the "beginning of the rest of [her] life." While it is unclear whether Heard is currently dating anyone, she was most recently romantically linked to filmmaker Bianci Butti. She was married to actor Johnny Depp from 2015 to 2016. After they parted ways, the pair accused each other of domestic abuse and engaged in high-profile defamation cases.

## Mika Singh declares he will 'slap' Kamaal R Khan in public after KRK releases video dissing him: 'I love him, but...'

The rift between Mika Singh and Kamaal R Khan (KRK) doesn't seem to end. After Mika's comments on KRK in a previous interview with The Lallantop, KRK released a clip dissing Mika. Now, Mika has reacted to KRK's video, declaring that he would slap KRK whenever he sees him next.

Speaking to Shubhankar Mishra on his YouTube channel, Mika shared that he called KRK on New Year's to confront him for releasing the video against him. The singer said that he wished KRK a Happy New Year first on the call to make sure he didn't have his family around. When he was sure that KRK was alone, he blasted him. He said, "I told him, 'Gadhe tune phir mujhe galiya dedi. Tu pagal hai kya (Donkey, you again abused me. Are you mad?). Listen, I love you, but when you come to Mumbai next time, I will definitely slap you. Tell this to whoever you want. Whenever you meet me next, I will slap you, whether in front of the media or alone and will tell you your mistake.'"

Earlier, in an interview with The Lallantop, Mika recalled that he and Honey Singh went to KRK's home in Dubai and behaved very rudely to him because they were upset with the tone he took in his videos. "KRK had said something about Honey. He was very upset and told me, 'paaji yeh aisa aisa bolta hai.' Ayushmann Khurrana and Kapil Sharma were also very upset with KRK. So, I told Honey, 'We'll go to him, visit him in Dubai, and talk. We'll act as if both of us are drunk. He will abuse us, but you do whatever you want with him.' We were very rude to him. The next day, KRK told us that we had behaved very badly with him. And I told him that I don't remember anything because we were drunk. Apparently, we pulled his hair..." After the Dubai episode, KRK had released a video dissing Mika and said, "Mika is a donkey. He is uneducated, uncouth, and still calls himself a singer. He said that I met him in Dubai and that he misbehaved with me. The next day, he told me he didn't remember what happened."