INDIAN CHRONICIA

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Medak town records heaviest rains in last 24 hours in Telangana

Medak RDO office recorded 11.9 cm rainfall while Masaipet located close to the town recorded 11.2 cm rainfall. Kulcharam, Veldurthy, Chegunta, Toopran, Manoharabad, Nizampet and other mandals also recorded heavy rains. Medak town and Masaipet were only two places to record more than 10 cm rainfall across the State. Meanwhile, Sangareddy and Siddipet districts also witnessed moderate rains during the period. The farmers, who brought harvested paddy to procurement centres, have found it difficult to save the produce. In many places paddy grains swept away with the rainwater.

Telangana Govt transfers 30 Additional SPrank officers, issues fresh postings across state

Hyderabad: The State government on Thursday transferred 30 officers of Additional Superintendent of Police (Nor Cadre) and gave them new postings.

A few officers with their postings are B Kishan (Addl SP - Operations and Crimes Warangal), A Naresh Kumar (Addl SP - Admin, Bhupapally), S Jayaram (Addl SP - TGICCC), Golla Ramesh (Addl SP Nalgonda Admin), A Laxmi (Addl DCP Traffic, L. B Nagar), V Raghu (Addl SP, Intelligence), T Govardhan (Addl DCP L&O, Warangal), K Poornachandar (Addl DCP, Shamshabad), M Sudershan (Addl DCP CCS Hyderabad) and N Shyam Prasad Rao (Addl SP CID).

PM Modi's message to Pakistan in Rajasthan's Bikaner: 'Sindoor turned into barood'

GNS News Agency, May 22

In this screengrab from a video released by PMO on May 22, 2025, Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses during the inauguration and foundation stone laying of various development projects, in Bikaner district, Rajasthan.In this screengrab from a video released by PMO on May 22, 2025, Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses during the inauguration and foundation stone laying of various development projects, in Bikaner district, Rajasthan. | Photo Credit: PMO via PTIPrime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday (May 22, 2025) asserted that the country's enemies have learnt what happens when 'sindoor' becomes gunpowder, and lauded India's armed forces for creating

such a trap that Pakistan was forced to go down on its knees.In his first public address in Rajasthan after Operation Sindoor that was launched in the aftermath of the Pahalgam terror attack on April 22, the Prime Minister slammed Pakistan, and said in response to the attack, "we destroyed nine biggest terror hideouts in 22 minutes".PM Modi: Énemies saw what happens when sindoor turns into gunpowder | Video Credit: The Hindu"The world and the enemies of the country have seen what happens when 'sindoor' turns into 'barood' [gunpowder]," he said at the public meeting in Palana here, adding, "Those out to wipe out 'sindoor' were reduced to dust". "Not blood but sindoor runs

in my veins," the Prime Minister said amid applause from the audience. In a strong message to Pakistan, Mr. Modi said that if India faces a terrorist attack, a strong retaliation will follow. The Prime Minister also asserted that there will be no talks with Pakistan."There will be neither trade nor talks with Pakistan; if talks, then only about Pakistan occupied Kashmir," he said. India carried out precision strikes under Operation Sindoor on terror infrastructure early on May 7 in response to the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack that killed 26 people. Following the Indian action, Pakistan attempted to attack Indian military bases on May 8, 9 and 10. The Indian forces launched a fierce counter-attack on several Pakistani military installations.



Supreme Court reserves interim orders in waqf case

GNS News Agency, May 22

The Supreme Court on Thursday (May 22, 2025) reserved its interim orders on three issues, including the power to denotify properties declared as "waqf by courts, waqf-by-user or waqf by deed" after hearing a clutch of pleas challenging the validity of the Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025. Follow the highlights on Waqf (Amendment) Act hearing on May 22, 2025

Before reserving the interim orders, a Bench comprising Chief Justice B.R. Gavai and Justice Augustine George Masih heard senior advocates Kapil Sibal, Rajeev Dhavan and Abhishek Singhvi on behalf of those opposed to the amended wagf law and Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, representing the Centre, for about three consecutive days.

The Centre strongly defended the Act, saying waqf by its very nature is a "secular concept" and can't be stayed given the "presumption of constitutionality" in its favour.Mr. Sibal, leading the petitioners, described the law as a "complete departure from historical legal and constitutional principles" and a means to "capture waqf through a non-judicial process". "This is a case about the systematic capture of waqf properties. The government cannot dictate what issues can be raised," Mr. Sibal said. The petitioners at the present stage sought interim orders on three key issues.

One of the issues related to the power to denotify properties declared as waqf by courts, waqf-by-user or waqf by deed. The second issue was over the composition of State waqf boards and the Central Waqf Council, where they contend only Muslims should operate except ex-officio members whereas the last one is over the provision stipulating a waqf property won't be treated as a waqf when the collector conducts an inquiry to ascertain if the property is government land. On April 25, the Union Ministry of Minority Affairs filed a preliminary 1,332-page affidavit defending the amended Waqf Act of 2025 and opposed any "blanket stay" by the court on a "law having presumption of constitutionality passed by Parliament". The Centre notified the Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025 last month after it got President Droupadi Murmu's assent on April 5. The bill was cleared by Lok Sabha with the support of 288 members while 232 MPs were against it. The Rajya Sabha saw 128 members voting in its favour and 95 against it.

Modi virtually inaugurates redeveloped all-women-operated Begumpet railway station alongside Karimnagar, Warangal stations

GNS News Agency, May 22

Hyderabad: Prime Minister Narendra Modi has virtually inaugurated the redeveloped Begumpet railway station which is an all-women-operated railway station on Thursday. Along with it, the Karimnagar and Warangal railway stations in Telangana were also opened to the public.

The Begumpet railway station has been redeveloped into a modern transit hub, reflecting the rich heritage of Telangana under the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme at an estimated cost of Rs 26.55 crore.Union Minister for Coal and Mines, G Kishan Reddy, Komatireddy Venkat Reddy, Minister of Roads and Buildings, Telangana, South Central Railway (SCR) General Manager Arun Kumar Jain and others were present. According to the South Central Railway (SCR) officials, the facelift includes a host of passenger-friendly features such as escalators, lifts, spacious waiting halls, modern toilets, and dedicated facilities for differently-abled commuters. Moreover, Telangana's state bird, the Indian Roller (Pala Pitta), has been installed as a symbolic centrepiece.

SCR officials said the station now boasts illuminated lighting, landscaped greenery, water features, and marked signage which have been designed to enhance the overall commuting experi-



IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- Yagams will be performed daily from 8:30 AM to 11:00 AM
- Special Saraswathi Navaratnamala Harathi will be performed from 6:45 PM to 7:35 PM at Saraswathi Ghat daily
- Tent city accommodation available
- Curated cultural programmes by reputed artistes will be held from 7:30 PM to 9:00 PM daily
- All arrangements ready for devotees, Free bus facility, Drinking water facility, Medical camps, Toilets, Security personnel













ALL ARE INVITED

leshwara Mukteeshwara Swamy Templ

Kaleshwaram Village, Mahadevpur Mandal, Jayashankar Bhupalpally District.





web: https://endowments.ts.nic.in | web: https://saraswatipushkaralu.com web: https://yatradham.org/saraswati-pushkaralu-telangana

Issued By: Special Commissioner, Department of Information & Public Relations, Government of Telangana

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

Collector launches Yoga Andhra-2025 drive

Nandyal: Collector G Rajakumari explained the imortance of integrating yoga into daily life for physical and nental well-being. She urged officials and the public to actively take part in the state-led Yoga Andhra-2025 ampaign.Launching the 11th International Day of Yoga elebrations at Nandyal Indoor Stadium on Wednesday, he lit the ceremonial lamp and inaugurated the monthong campaign. The Collector stated that daily yoga pracice promotes physical fitness, mental peace, and emoional balance, helping reduce stress and anxiety. She ecalled that International Yoga Day, now celebrated in over 170 countries, began after the Prime Minister's 2014 proposal at the UN. Under the Chief Minister's guidance oga Andhra-2025 will run from May 21 to June 21 Frained yoga practitioners will serve as resource persons at all administrative levels, conducting awareness and raining sessions from May 28. She announced that the Prime Minister will attend the International Yoga Day event on June 21 in Visakhapatnam, expected to draw five lakh participants. The district administration is celebrating the ampaign's launch with grandeur, involving departments ike AYUSH, Health, Panchayati Raj, and Municipal Adninistration. Officials have been directed to extend full support. Yoga enthusiasts are encouraged to train under certified instructors. DRDA and MEPMA officials have een asked to register participants on the official website. At the municipal level, two trainers will be allotted per ward r group of wards. Plans include mass yoga sessions with at least 1,000 participants at 24 tourism sites and temples. Special focus will be on involving women from self-help roups and MEPMA. Joint Collector C Vishnu Charan noted that yoga is a lifestyle and praised public involve-

KTR lends helping hand to bedridden NRI in Saudi Arabia, assists him in reaching home in Sircilla



GNS News Agency, May 22

Dubai: Manda Mahesh, a 35-year-old Telangana NRI, who was bedridden, flew back home on Thursday with the help of BRS working president KT Rama Rao

Mahesh, who was bedridden after a road mishap in Saudi Arabia, was desperate to return home and his family approached Rama Rao during his visit to their village in Mandepalli in Rajanna Sircilla district earlier this month. Rama Rao, who promised full support to the family, had contacted Indian officials and his acquaintances in Saudi Arabia, who swung into action and helped Mahesh.

Mahesh, who had migrated to the Gulf to support his wife and two young children, was travelling in a companyprovided bus to his workplace when an accident occurred near Jubail. The accident claimed nine lives, with Mahesh and another individual surviving but sustaining serious injuries to his spine and both legs. He was undergoing treatment at the Jubail General Government Hospital. As his condition deteriorated, his family reached out for help and Rama Rao responded, saying: "You are not alone. I will stand by you in this crisis."With trembling hands and a choked voice, prior to boarding from Dammam, Mahesh expressed his deep gratitude to Rama Rao for standing with him during the most difficult of times of his life. The repatriation of Mahesh was a herculean effort as he was undergoing treatment and unable to even sit properly. In between, Rama Rao kept track of his health condition and the repatriation process as well. He ensured full support to Mahesh and his wife Lakshmi, and children Nitya Sri and Harshavardhan, until he reached Hyderabad airport and subsequently a leading private hospital in Hyderabad upon arrival on Thursday. Touched by the plight of the family, the Telugu NRI community in Saudi Arabia also volunteered its support to the family.

Participated in the opening of Blue Ocean office in Sriram Nagar...



"Senior Congress party leaders Sheikh Chand Pasha""Kondapur May 22 I Chronicle Senior Congress party leaders Sheikh Chand Pasha and Blue Ocean CEO Mohammed Moinuddin participated as the chief guests in the opening of Blue Ocean office in Sriram Nagar, Kondapur division. Speaking on the occasion, Sheikh Chand Pasha said that it is a great pleasure for Blue Ocean to set up an office in the colony to provide new services like passport/ visa, online flight tickets, train tickets, bus tickets and others. Without going around the offices, one can directly go to them and apply for visa as well as use other services. Tirupati Yadav, Trilok Ram, Srinivas Chaudhary, Ganesh and others participated in the program.

Rapido Now Covers All of Telangana with 11-City Mobility Expansion



Hyderabad: Rapido, India's leading ride-hailing platform, has achieved full operational coverage across Telangana with the launch of its Bike Taxi and Auto services in 11 new cities. With this strategic expansion into Siddipet, Mahbubnagar, Sangareddy, Ramagundam, Nizamabad, Nalgonda, Bhuvanagiri, Kothagudem, Suryapet, Adilabad, and Kamareddy, Rapido now offers its app-based mobility solutions in every district of the state. This milestone strengthens its position as Telangana's go-to platform for convenient, affordable, and accessible first and last-mile travel. The move is also aligned with Rapido's larger goal of reaching 500 cities across India, underscoring its commitment to transforming local transportation. As one of India's largest contributors to the gig economy, Rapido has already

created over 9 million jobs nationwide. Through this expansion, the company is aiming to generate 1 lakh new job opportunities and empower residents with economic independence and flexible earning potential. Rapido currently facilitates close to 4 million rides daily, solidifying its position as the country's leading ride-hailing platform.

With this launch, residents can now rely on the Rapido app to book quick, affordable, and convenient rideswhether commuting to work, accessing nearby public transit hubs, or running errands across town.

"We're thrilled to introduce Rapido's services in Telangana, making dependable transportation more accessible and improving the way people move around the city. Beyond mobility, this launch is also about creating livelihood opportunities for hundreds of local youth who can now earn by joining Rapido as captains. We believe that by connecting riders with local captains, we are enhancing transportation options as well as strengthening the local economy." said Pavan Guntupalli, Co-founder, Rapido.Beyond mobility, this expansion will also unlock micro-entrepreneurship opportunities. Rapido aims to onboard thousands of new captains, creating income streams and contributing to community-level economic development. Rapido is committed to closely working with local authorities and stakeholders to ensure seamless service integration and deliver a safe, compliant, and customerfriendly commuting experience.

Vice-Chancellor Visits EAPCET-**2025 Examination Centres**

""(May 22,Indian Chronicle Rayalaseema coordinator) "" Sri Venkateswara University Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Ch. Appa Rao, on Thursday visited the EAPCET-2025 examination centres at Sri Rama Engineering College and Sri Venkateswara College of Engineering, Karakambadi. "The Andhra Pradesh Engineering, Agriculture, and Pharmacy Common Entrance Test (AP EAPCET) is conducted by Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University, Kakinada (JNTUK), on behalf of the Andhra Pradesh State Council of Higher Education (APSCHE). ""During his visit, Prof. Appa Rao inspected the arrangements and monitored the smooth conduct of examinations at both centres. He appreciated the efforts of the staff and coordinators for ensuring a fair and efficient examination process. ""The Vice-



Chancellor reaffirmed the university's commitment to supporting the successful and transparent administration of entrance exams crucial for students' academic futures.

From Vedas to the World: SVU Highlights Global Relevance of Yoga"

"(May 22,Indian Chronicle Rayalaseema coordinator) "Sri Venkateswara University today marked its commitment to promoting holistic wellness through yoga by hosting a special event at the Senate Hall as part of the Government of Andhra Pradesh's Yogandhra-2025 campaign. ""Prof. Ch. Appa Rao, Hon'ble Vice-Chancellor of Sri Venkateswara University, addressed the gathering, underscoring yoga's ancient roots in the Vedas and Upanishads and its enduring significance for physical, mental, and emotional well-being. He praised the efforts of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, whose leadership led to the United Nations declaring June 21 as the International Day of Yoga in 2014. Prof. Appa Rao highlighted that over 192 countries participated in the inaugural Yoga Day in 2015, illustrating yoga's powerful role as a global unifier. ""Registrar Prof. M. Bhupathi Naidu reaffirmed the university's proactive role in the Yogandhra-2025 initiative, encouraging faculty, staff, and students to embrace yoga as a daily practice for enhanced health and stress management. "The programme featured insightful talks by Prof. T. Damodaram, NSS Coordinator; Prof. N. Chendrayudu, Dean, CDC; Dr. Harikrishna Yadav, Assistant NSS Coordinator; Dr. P. Vivek, Cultural Coordinator; and Dr. Neeraja, Yoga Expert. Experienced yoga instructors Sri Dhananjay and Sri Amarnath demonstrated foundational yoga practices and shared their expertise with attendees.""Organized by the NSS Cell and the Cultural Wing, the event witnessed enthusiastic participation from non-teaching staff reflecting Sri Venkateswara University's unified commitment to this transformative public health initiative.



Upholding Academic Excellence in Schools is Imperative"—



DEO Madhavi Participates in Summer In-Service Teacher Training "The third day of the Summer In-Service Training Programme, organized by the Telangana School Education Department, concluded successfully, witnessing active participation from educators. The sessions focused on pedagogical strategies in Telugu and Mathematics, and provided in-depth orientation on the implementation of the NSLN (Nipuna Sanchalana Lakshya Nirdeshaka) initiative. Eminent resource persons facilitated the training, offering insights into innovative teaching-learning processes. ""As part of the programme, District Educational Officer (DEO) Smt. Madhavi visited the training venue. She meticulously observed the sessions and assessed the extent to which the teachers were comprehending and engaging with the key concepts presented.""In her address, DEO Madhavi underscored the importance of such training programmes in enhancing the quality of instruction in schools. She encouraged teachers to make the most of these opportunities and strive to uphold high academic standards. She also appealed to the teaching community to take proactive measures to increase student enrollments in government schools.""Highlighting a significant development, she announced that the Artificial Intelligence (AI)-based learning project, introduced as a pilot initiative in the previous academic year, would be scaled across all schools starting this academic year. She urged teachers to be fully

pedagogy to enrich the Supraja, Radhika, and Swapna also actively participated in

equipped to embrace this technological transformation in classroom teaching. ""DEO Madhavi further pointed out that students from government schools have been consistently outperforming their peers and securing higher eligibility in residential Gurukula institutions. She expressed satisfaction after inspecting the arrangements and the effective delivery of training modules at the centre. "Following her remarks, Educational Officer Smt. Lakshmi addressed the participants, encouraging teachers to integrate technology experience. "Distinguished resource persons who contributed to the sessions included Erram Ramesh, Eerla Ramesh, Bahut Kishore, Maddi Ramu, Loke Raj, Pawan, Boge Chandrasekhar, Kota Lakshman, and N. Naramalla Lakshman. Cluster Resource Persons (CRPs) Mallanna,

tomer balances reached ? 3,659 crore, up by 30.6% and the Gross Merchandise Value (GMV) stood at ? 3,808 billion. Airtel Payments Bank is today the third-largest mobile bank in the country by user base. For the fourth quarter ended FY25 revenues were at? 726 crore, a 34.7% increase over the same period last year, while profit stood at ? 26 crores, an increase of 138% YoY. Over the past four years, the bank has delivered a strong 44% CAGR in revenues. Anubrata Biswas, MD and CEO, Airtel Payments Bank, said, "Our strong growth this year reflects the unwavering trust of our customers, and diversified scale of our businesses. The rapid adoption of our Safe Second Account offering reflects the growing need for a secure alternate bank account for digital payments. Today we are processing one in two domestic remittances and one in every five Aadhaar-enabled payments in the country. As we continue to scale, our commitment remains on

Hyderabad: Airtel Payments Bank today announced its

results for the financial year ended March 31, 2025. For the

full year, revenue stood at ? 2,709 crores, a growth of 47.5%

year-on-year. The net profit rose to ? 63 crores, up by 81.4%,

while EBITDA increased by 64% YoY to ? 299 crores. Cus-

Airtel Payments Bank delivers

another strong performance,

posting revenue of 2,709 crores

Net profit up by 81.4%, while customer balances grow

With growing adoption of its safe second account, the bank has become a preferred choice for reliable daily digital payments. In tier-3 and beyond areas, the bank has 5,00,000 active banking points, majority of which are operated by women banking correspondents. It also sees strong demand for its RuPay NCMC On-The-Go cards, with over 2.5 million users. In the B2B space, it is seeing strong growth in omnichannel digital payments with top aggregators and enables seamless transit payments across five major metro networks, including the DMRC.Airtel Payments Bank serves Urban Digital, Underbanked, and Institutional segments with end-to-end digital banking. It processes nearly 12 billion transactions annually and extends services to three in four villages, digitizing over ?8,000 crore of cash monthly with 6,200+ corporate partners.

empowering every Indian with simple and seamless bank-

ing solutions to bridge the digital divide.'

The construction of culverts along roads should be carried out, according to District Collector Jitesh V. Patil.



""Ranjith naik Bhukya ,Bhadrachalam,May 22(Indian Chronicle): "District Collector Jitesh V. Patil has instructed officials to commence the construction of culverts along roads throughout the district. On Thursday, he held a review meeting via teleconference with relevant officials to discuss the necessary steps for building these culverts as part of the Jal Sanchey Jan Bhagi Dari program. During the meeting, the collector highlighted the numerous benefits of having culverts along every road.

He explained that rainwater seeps into the ground, which helps to raise the groundwater level, thereby addressing water scarcity and preventing water accumulation on roads that can cause damage.""He stated that photos of each constructed hole should be uploaded to the Jal Sanjay Jan Bhagidari portal. The collector expressed optimism that the district would secure second place in the Jal Sanchay Jan Bhagidari program nationwide and emphasized the necessity for large-scale construction of the holes to achieve

Training classes for surveyors from 26: District Collector Jitesh V. Patil"

""Ranjith naik Bhukya ,Bhadrachalam,May 22(Indian Chronicle): "Training classes will be held from June 26th to July 26th for those selected as license surveyors to conduct land surveys for the registration process under the Land Act, District Collector Jitesh V. Patil said. District Collector Jitesh V. Patil inspected the arrangements being made for the training of license surveyors at Kothagudem Mining College on Thursday. On this occasion, he inspected the classrooms and drawing rooms in the college. Speaking on this occasion, the collector said that training will be given to 426 candidates in 50 working days. As part of this training, field training will be conducted for the candidates at 9 am, and theory and practicals will be conducted from 10

He instructed the officials to arrange all the necessary equipment, such as projectors, boards, etc., for the training. Since the role of surveyors is crucial in the implementation of the Land Act, candidates should be given a com-



plete understanding of the Land Act in the training classes. "The Collector was accompanied by AD Srinivas, Deputy Inspector D. Srinivas, Mining College staff of the joint Khammam District, and others.

Justice Demanded for RTC Contract Bus Drivers"— Kethiri Mahesh, Akula Kiran.



""PS Ashokan"Indian Chronicle"Manthani may, "RTC contract bus drivers have urged immediate action from bus owners to address their legitimate demands. In a press conference held at the Manthani Division Media Press Club on Thursday, union representatives Kethiri Mahesh and Akula Kiran voiced their concerns. "Kethiri Mahesh, President of the Contract Bus Drivers Union, stated that as per their agreement, wages should be revised every two years. However, the bus owners have not adhered to this clause. Despite issuing three formal notices, the management has shown no intention of resolving the issue. As a result, the drivers were compelled to go on strike. "The indefinite strike, which began on the 19th of this month, has now entered its fourth day without any response from the bus owners. Mahesh emphasized that all drivers are fully qualified under RTC norms, having undergone a seven-day training program in both Karimnagar and Warangal. He raised concerns that unqualified temporary drivers are being appointed during the strike, which could endanger the safety of passengers and the general public.""The drivers' key demands include:""Monthly wages of ?25,000 for Express Karimnagar Ordinary Night Out drivers""?24,000 for BHEL, Peddapalli, Odedu, and Arenda route drivers" Provision of two uniforms per year "One month's salary as annual bonus""Travel passes covering at least 100 kilometers for each driver""Monthly salary to be paid by the 5th of each month ""Additionally, they demanded that in the case of any accident or incident, the responsibility must lie with the bus owner. If a driver is to be removed from duty, a 15-day prior notice must be served. Drivers who take buses for servicing or repairs must be paid a full day's wages along with meal expenses. ""Akula Kiran, Honorary President of the Union, remarked that in the past, agreements between owners and drivers were reached amicably. However, this time, certain owners have acted in a way that disrespects mediators, which is regrettable. While local bus owners from Manthani have shown a willingness to cooperate, those from outside have not responded positively, leading to a breakdown in negotiations."

"He criticized the aggressive behavior of some external owners, stating that it disrupted the talks. Kiran added that drivers usually issue strike notices well in advance of major events such as festivals or Pushkarams to allow time for negotiations. Despite engaging in discussions five months ahead of the upcoming Saraswati Pushkarams in Kaleshwaram, no resolution was reached due to the unyielding stance of the owners. "Akula Kiran called on the contract bus owners to abandon their rigid approach and participate in talks unconditionally. He also alleged that the RTC management is attempting to undermine the strike. He appealed to both RTC management and the bus owners to come forward and address the drivers' genuine demands.""Several union members were present at the press conference, including General Secretary K. Satish, Treasurer Md. Apsar, Vice President V. Srinivas, Joint Secretary N. Sagar, Organizers B. Rakesh and D. Shravan, Senior Advisors Md. Naeem and P. Rajayya, I. Ravi, S.K. Shakeel, A. Koteshwar, and Executive Members J. Srinivas, M. Sagar, P. Bapu, A. Sreekanth, and A. Naresh,

Gross Mismanagement of Saraswati Pushkaralu — Former MLA Putta Madhukar Blasts Administrative Apathy.





Ashokan"Indian May,22""Pushkaralu rendered ineffective by the Duddilla couple's administrative indifference""Dereliction of duty: Basic amenities denied to on-duty personnel "Ex-gratia relief of ?50 lakhs demanded for deceased tractor operator""No initiative to uphold or enhance the sanctity of Kaleshwaram temple""Former MLA Putta Madhukar undertakes Pushkara Snanam, assesses on-ground conditions ""Former Manthani legislator Putta Madhukar has vehemently denounced the state government's inability to execute the Saraswati Pushkaralu with the solemnity and grandeur befitting the sacred Kaleshwaram shrine, revered as the "Dakshina Kashi." Accompanied by his spouse, Shailaja, Madhukar performed the ritualistic Pushkara Snanam in the Godavari and paid obeisance at the revered Kaleshwara Mukteshwara Swamy temple. ""During his visit, he meticulously reviewed the infrastructural provisions allocated for personnel deployed in Pushkar-related duties and expressed profound dissatisfaction. "This is not a mere political accusation," he asserted. "The grievances articu-

lated by common devotees and spiritual leaders alike are a prevailing indictment the of mismanagement."""Madhukar pointed out that advance warnings regarding logistical shortcomings were ignored, consequently tarnishing the reputation of the sacred Kaleshwaram site. He condemned the gross negligence whereby 70 panchayat secretaries were crammed into a single school building with only one functional lavatory, calling it a disgrace to administrative ethics.""Further lambasting the arrangements, he mentioned that shamianas erected for pilgrims were decimated by windstorms, with no credible backup plan except a hasty shift to a Rythu Vedika devoid of fundamental facilities.""He accused the sitting Manthani MLA and his spouse, who serves as the Principal Secretary of the Endowments Department, of systematically eroding the spiritual integrity of the Pushkaralu. He further alleged that a Member of Parliament was publicly humiliated during the festivities and demanded accountability from the Principal Secretary.""Madhukar brought to light the tragic demise of Manthani Srinivas, a tractor driver from Gangaram Gram Panchayat, due to sunstroke while on duty, and mentioned that a police constable too suffered severe health complications. He expressed dismay that the government had yet to announce any compensatory measures. "The administration's failure to extend even symbolic financial relief is utterly reprehensible," he said, demanding an ex-gratia payment of ?50 lakhs to the bereaved family. He questioned the conspicuous silence of the local MLA, implying caste-based apathy. "Is the life of a Dalit or Backward Class worker so inconsequential to the elected representative of Manthani?" he asked. ""He further criticized the exclusion of local stakeholders from participating in the event's organizational framework, labeling such actions undemocratic and arbitrary. Madhukar accused the Principal Secretary of diminishing the prestige of Kaleshwaram rather than upholding its sanctity as a cornerstone of Telangana's spiritual heritage. ""Reflecting on past precedents, he stated, "During the BRS administration, the Godavari Pushkaralu were orchestrated with impeccable planning and reverence. Not a single devotee faced hardship. The current dispensation, however, has failed even in offering rudimentary amenities." "He concluded by asserting, "The responsibility to elevate the cultural and spiritual eminence of the Saraswati Pushkaralu was not just neglected — it was consciously undermined. The people must take cognizance of those who have desecrated the dignity

Gross Mismanagement of Saraswati Pushkaralu —



Former MLA Putta Madhukar Blasts Administrative Apathy. "PS Ashokan Indian Chronicle Manthani May,22""Pushkaralu rendered ineffective by the Duddilla couple's administrative indifference""Dereliction of duty: Basic amenities denied to on-duty personnel "Ex-gratia relief of ?50 lakhs demanded for deceased tractor operator""No initiative to uphold or enhance the sanctity of Kaleshwaram temple""Former MLA Putta Madhukar undertakes Pushkara Snanam, assesses on-ground conditions ""Former Manthani legislator Putta Madhukar has vehemently denounced the state government's inability to execute the Saraswati Pushkaralu with the solemnity and grandeur befitting the sacred Kaleshwaram shrine, revered as the "Dakshina Kashi." Accompanied by his spouse, Shailaja, Madhukar performed the ritualistic Pushkara Snanam in the Godavari and paid obeisance at the revered Kaleshwara Mukteshwara Swamy temple. ""During his visit, he meticulously reviewed the infrastructural provisions allocated for personnel deployed in Pushkar-related duties

and expressed profound dissatisfaction. "This is not a mere political accusation," he asserted. "The grievances articulated by common devotees and spiritual leaders alike are a indictment of the mismanagement.""Madhukar pointed out that advance warnings regarding logistical shortcomings were ignored, consequently tarnishing the reputation of the sacred Kaleshwaram site. He condemned the gross negligence whereby 70 panchayat secretaries were crammed into a single school building with only one functional lavatory, calling it a disgrace to administrative ethics. ""Further lambasting the arrangements, he mentioned that shamianas erected for pilgrims were decimated by windstorms, with no credible backup plan except a hasty shift to a Rythu Vedika devoid of fundamental facilities.""He accused the sitting Manthani MLA and his spouse, who serves as the Principal Secretary of the Endowments Department, of systematically eroding the spiritual integrity of the Pushkaralu. He further alleged that a Member of Parliament was publicly humiliated during the festivities and demanded accountability from the Principal Secretary. ""Madhukar brought to light the tragic demise of Manthani Srinivas, a tractor driver from Gangaram Gram Panchayat, due to sunstroke while on duty, and mentioned that a police constable too suffered severe health complications. He expressed dismay that the government had yet to announce any compensatory measures. "The administration's failure to extend even symbolic financial relief is utterly reprehensible," he said, demanding an ex-gratia payment of ?50 lakhs to the bereaved family. He questioned the conspicuous silence of the local MLA, implying caste-based apathy. "Is the life of a Dalit or Backward Class worker so inconsequential to the elected representative of Manthani?" he asked."

Bhagya Reddy Varma's services are memorable. District Collector Jitesh V. Patil."



""Ranjith naik Bhukya ,Bhadrachalam,May 22(Indian Chronicle): ""The services rendered by Dalit stalwart and social reformer M.V. Bhagya Reddy Varma are memorable, and his life is an ideal for future generations, said District Collector Jitesh V. Patil. The 137th birth anniversary celebrations of social reformer M.V. Bhagya Reddy Varma were officially organized at the conference hall of the IDOC office on Thursday under the auspices of the Scheduled Castes Development Department. Collector Jitesh V. Patil, who attended the celebrations as the chief guest, garlanded the portrait of Bhagya Reddy Varma along with Additional Collector D. Venugopal and paid tributes. Speaking on the occasion, the collector said that Bhagya Reddy Varma was



an activist and rights activist who led the Dalit movement with Hyderabad as its center. He praised him for establishing Dalit schools and campaigning against evil practices like child marriage and untouchability. He said that he established a non-violent society and laid a solid foundation for social reforms and the advancement of Dalits. He said that he made his mark in programs like prohibition of alcohol consumption and establishment of libraries. He said that his efforts for the advancement of Dalits should be remembered. CPO Sanjeeva Rao, Scheduled Castes Welfare Officer Anasuya, BC Welfare Officer Indira, AO Ramakrishna, Deputy DMHO Jayalakshmi and officials of various departments participated in this program.

Mini Mahanadu: BC Leaders Felicitate Mannur Sugunamma



""Tirupati District Representative, Praja Jyothi—"" (May 22,Indian Chronicle Rayalaseema co-ordinator) "A "Mini Mahanadu" program was grandly organized at the Telugu Desam Party office near Kapilateertham, under the leadership of former MLA and Tirupati In-charge, as well as the Chairperson of the Andhra Pradesh Greening and Beautification Corporation, Mannur Sugunamma. Senior leaders and activists of the Telugu Desam Party participated in and made the program a success. "During the event, Amudala Tulasi Das, President of the Tirupati Parliament Shalivahana, participated and lauded Sugunamma for her accessibility



to Telugu Desam Party cadres as an MLA and In-charge, earning the appreciation of everyone. He also conveyed the party's well wishes and thunderous applause for her success in the position of Chairperson of the Greening and Development Corporation, a role bestowed by the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, Nara Chandrababu Naidu. As part of the Mini Mahanadu program, she was felicitated with a bouquet and a shawl. "The program was attended by various BC leaders, including Jagannatham, State Leader of the Gandla community" Sriramulu, President of the Tirupati Parliament Vaddera Sangham" Shankara, Leader of the Raiaka Sangham

Tiranga Yatra by SR Students - Sub Operation Sindoor -

Tiranga Yatra Held at Elakathurthy"



"Warangal, May 22 (Indian Chronicle)::""Tiranga Yatra was organized under Sub Operation Sindoor by the NSS Unit of SR University, starting from Elakathurthy Police Station to Elakathurthy Circle. The event aimed to instill patriotism, promote national unity, and commemorate the valor of our armed forces.""The Chief Guest of the program was Dr. R. Archana Reddy, Registrar, SR University. Other



esteemed guests included Dr. G. Bhupal Raj, Dean of Agricultural Sciences, SR University; Dr. Avv Sudhakar, Dean of Student Welfare; Dr. K. Ravindar, NSS Coordinator; and SI Praveen Kumar from Elakathurthy Police Station. ""NSS volunteers from SR University actively participated in the yatra, marching with the national flag and raising slogans of unity and patriotism. The initiative was well-received by the local community and highlighted the role of youth in nation-building. ""The university leadership commended the efforts of the NSS team and volunteers for their dedication and discipline in conducting this impactful event.

Hanuman Jayanti Celebrations Grandly Held at Sri Shakti Peetham with Abhishekam of Lakh Betel Leaves and Bananas"



"May 22,Indian Chronicle, Rayalaseema coordinator""The Hanuman Jayanti celebrations were held with immense grandeur at the Sri Shakti Peetham

Mahakshetram, located on the Rayala Cheruvu bund in

Tirupati district. A mesmerizing "Shat Sahasra Nagavalli Dalarchana" (worship with one lakh betel leaves) was performed for Sri Malayala Hanumantu, who is revered for fulfilling devotees' wishes."This was followed by a "Shat Sahasra Kadali Phalamulu" (offering of one lakh bananas) as a grand Mahanaivedyam (sacred offering). Adorned with one lakh bananas and one lakh betel leaves, the deity appeared as "Bhaktajana Vallabhudu" (beloved of devotees). Subsequently, the "Sri Tapasa Manyur Pashupatha Panchavaktra Hanumat Homam" was performed with great devotion."After the puja, the revered Swamiji and Pujya Mataji distributed fruits to the devotees with their sacred hands. A large number of devotees participated in the program and received the blessings of Gurudev. The remaining fruits were distributed to orphanages, government hospitals, and the destitute in and around Tirupati city.

Heavy to very heavy rainfall likely in parts of Telangana for next 24 hours: IMD Hyd

Hyderabad: Several districts of Telangana are expected to receive heavy to very heavy rain accompanied by thunderstorms, lightning and gusty winds for the next 24 hours. The India Meteorological Department – Hyderabad on Thursday issued an orange alert of heavy to very heavy rainfall for Kumram Bheem Asifabad, Mancherial, Nizamabad and Jagtial districts.

Shashi Tharoor on being named part of multi-party delegation for diplomatic outreach: when national interest is involved, will not be found wanting



GNS News Agency, May 22

With the Government nominating him to lead a diplomatic outreach delegation after Operation Sindoor, Congress MP Shashi Tharoor on Saturday (May 17, 2025) said that when national interest is involved and his services are required, he will not be found wanting. Tharoor also said he is honoured by the invitation of the Government to lead an all-party delegation to five key capitals to present the nation's point of view on recent events. His remarks came after the Government announced that it will send seven all-party delegations to key partner countries, including members of the U.N. Security Council, later this month to convey India's message of zero tolerance against terrorism following the Pahalgam terror attack and Operation Sindoor."I am honoured by the invitation of the government of India to lead an all-party delegation to five key capitals, to present our

nation's point of view on recent events," Mr. Tharoor said on X."When national interest is involved, and my services are required, I will not be found wanting. Jai Hind!" the chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs said. The Government has made a careful selection of leaders who will head the delegations as they come from parties across the political divide and are considered articulate voices. BJP MPs Ravi Shankar Prasad and Baijayant Panda, Congress MP Shashi Tharoor, JD(U) MP Sanjay Jha, DMK's Kanimozhi, NCP (SP) MP Supriya Sule, and Shiv Sena's Shrikant Shinde will be heading a delegation each. While four of them are from the ruling National Democratic Alliance, three are from the opposition INDIA bloc.A statement issued by the Parliamentary Affairs Ministry earlier on Saturday said, "The all-party delegations will project India's national consensus and resolute approach to combating terrorism in all forms and manifestations. They would carry forth to the world the country's strong message of zero tolerance against terrorism." "In the context of Operation Sindoor and India's continued fight against cross-border terrorism, seven all-party delegations are set to visit key partner countries, including members of the UN Security Council later this month," it said. In a post on X, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju said, "In moments that matter most, Bharat stands united. Seven All-Party Delegations will soon visit key partner nations, carrying our shared message of zero-tolerance to terrorism." Sharing the Ministry's statement, he said, "A powerful reflection of national unity above politics, beyond differences." Each delegation may visit around five countries, sources said.

State Level Bankers' Committee, Telangana 45th Quarterly Review Meeting for March 2025 & Launching of Annual Credit Plan for FY 2025-26 State Bank of India, LHO, Bank Street, Koti, Hyderabad.



State Level Bankers' Committee (SLBC), Telangana has convened its 45th **Quarterly Review** meeting today i.e., on 22.05.2025, at Hotel Marigold. Hyderabad and reviewed the performance of the Banks in Telangana State, for the quarter ended March 2025 and launched Annual Credit Plan of Banks in Telangana State, for the FY 2025-26. The meeting was attended by:

- Sri Bhatti Vikramarka Mallu garu, Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister & Minister for Finance, Planning, Energy, Telangana State
- Sandeep Kumar Sultania, IAS, Principal Secretary (Finance), Govt. of Telangana
- 3. Sri N Sridhar, IAS, Principal Secretary, Scheduled Castes Development Dept, Govt. of Telangana
- Sri A Sarath, IAS, Secretary, Tribal Welfare De-
- partment, Govt. of Telangana 5. Sri E Sridhar, IAS, Secretary, BC Welfare Depart-
- ment, Govt, of Telangana
- 6. Sri Chinmoy Kumar, Regional Director, RBI,
 - 7. Sri Uday Bhaskar, CGM, NABARD, Hyderabad
 - Sri Rajesh Kumar, DMD, SBI, Hyderabad Circle Sri Prakash Chandra Baror, GM, SBI & Convenor,
- SLBC, TelanganaSenior Officials from the line departments of Govt of Telangana, Government of India, executives from Public Sector Banks, Private Sector Banks, RRBs, SFBs, Payments Banks, representatives of various Federations of Agriculture and MSME etc., Sri Rajesh Kumar, DMD, SBI, Hyderabad Circle presented the performance of the banks in Telangana during the Financial Year 2024-25 as
- Total Deposits of the banks grew by Rs. 60,477 crores during the FY 2024-25 and the total deposits were at Rs.8,40,430 crores.
- Ø Total Advances with Banks grew by Rs. 1,02,302 crores and the advances of all banks were at Rs. 10,81,361 CD ratio continues to be above 100 per-Crores Ø cent and it has gone up from 125.53 % to 128.67 % during
- Ø During the Year, Banks have disbursed Short ing sector. Term Production Loans amounting to Rs.73,105 crores achieving 80.52% of the annual targets.
- Ø Banks have disbursed Rs.64,241 crores as Investment Credit to Agri. Allied, Agri. Infra and Agri. Ancillary activities, achieving 104.87% of the targets.
- Ø Banks have disbursed Education loans amounting to Rs.580 Crores and Housing loans amounting to Rs.3,433 Crores under Priority Sector during the financial
- Ø For Micro, Small & Medium enterprises (MSME) segment, Banks have disbursed Rs.1,21,343 crores, achieving 93.60% of the targets.Ø Under Pradhan Manthri Mudra Yojana Scheme, Banks have sanctioned Rs.13,472 crores achieving 97.37% of the annual targets Ø Banks together have disbursed an amount of Rs. 2,67,452 crores to various sections of borrowers under Priority Sector, recording an achievement of 89.61% of targets.

On the Financial Inclusion front;

a) Banks in the State have 126.52 lakh PMJDY accounts in their books and 105.28 lacs i.e., 83.20% of the PMJDY accounts are seeded with Aadhar. RuPay cards are issued to 87.16 lacs i.e 68.89% of the PMJDY accounts. b) As far as the social security schemes are concerned, Banks have covered 192.76 lakh customers under Pradhan Manthri Suraksha Bheema Yojana (PMSBY) and 93.39lakh customers under Pradhan Manthri Jeevan Jyothi Beema Yojana (PMJJBY). 23.29 lakh customers have subscribed for Atal pension Yojana scheme.c) Under PM Svanidhi Tranche 1, Banks have sanctioned 4,27,273 applications and disbursed loans to 4,26,226 Street Vendors. Under

Tranche 2, Banks have sanctioned 2,22,764 applications and disbursed loans to 2,20,670 Street Vendors. Under Tranche 3, Banks have sanctioned 74,747 applications and disbursed 73,404

Ø Under Agriculture Infrastructure Fund, banks have sanctioned Rs.3,373 crores against a cumulative target of

On this occasion, the Annual Credit Plan of Banks in Telangana State for FY 2025-26 was launched by Shri Bhatti Vikramarka Mallu, Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister,

The Highlights of the Annual Credit Plan are presented by Shri Prakash Chandra Baror GM SBI & Convenor SLBC

- Credit Disbursement for the Financial Year 2025-26 is projected at **Rs.8,58,100 cr** with an increase of 31.67%, over previous year,
- Ø Disbursals under Priority Sector Advances for the Financial Year 2025-26 are projected at Rs.3,85,855 cr
- with an increase of 29.28% Ø Disbursals under Agricultural Sector for the Fi-
- nancial Year 2025-26 projected at Rs.1,62,946 cr, with an Ø Short Term Production Credit (incl. WC for
- allied activities): An amount of Rs.93,884 cr is projected with an increase of 3.40% Ø Investment Credit (Agriculture Term Loans): An amount of Rs.45,659 cr projected under the Credit Plan
- for the year 2025-26 under Agri. Term Loans with an in-Ø Agriculture Infrastructure: An amount of Rs.

7,251 cr projected under the Credit Plan for the year 2025-

- 26 with an increase of 19.96%. Ø Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSME):
- An amount of Rs. 2,03,565 cr is projected for disbursals under the sector for the year 2025-26 an increase of 57.03% over previous year.
 - Ø Other Priority Sectors:
 - An amount of Rs. 10,493 cr is allocated for Hous-
- o An amount of Rs. 2,486 cr is allocated for Education Loanso An amount of Rs. 5,753 cr is allocated for other sectorsShri Bhatti Vikramarka Mallu, Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister, while applauding the efforts of Banks in achieving various targets, sought the Banks to continue achieving the targets set for current Financial Year as well. He advised Banks to achieve commercial goals along with Social goals with human touch. He appealed to the Banks to be magnanimous in focusing more on extending credit to agriculture, weaker sections and SHGs. He further sought the support from all Banks in expediting the process of applications received under Rajiv Yuva Vikasam scheme, within the timelines. Further, he conveyed that more and more micro enterprises are to be credit linked, which will generate large scale entrepreneurial and employment generation. He asked the Banks to focus on Horticulture, Palm Oil activities, Agriculture Infrastructure Fund credit. He mentioned about "Indira Giri jala Vikasam" scheme launched by State Government and sought the support from Banks. Also, he stressed upon the need to focus on extending credit to SHGs for income generating activities, While speaking on the occasion, Shri Sandeep Kumar Sultania, IAS, Principal Secretary (Finance), Govt. of Telangana, emphasised the need to focus more on Priority Sector lending and Education loans. Further, he appealed to the Banks for extending all needed support to Rajiv Yuva Vikasam scheme of Govt. of Telangana. Shri N Sridhar, IAS, Principal Secretary, Scheduled Castes Development Dept, Govt. of Telangana, Sri Uday Bhaskar, CGM, NABARD, Hyderabad, Sri Chinmoy Kumar, Regional Director, RBI, Hyderabad, also spoke on the occasion. The meeting concluded with vote of thanks by Shri Prashant Kumar Bariyar, DGM (FI & SLBC), SBI Telangana.

Mumbai airport, Taj Hotel get bomb threat over Afzal Guru hanging



GNS News Agency, May 22

Mumbai bomb threat, Mumbai police alert, Taj Hotel bomb threat, Mumbai is already on alert after the India-Pakistan tension escalated in the recent days. Security agencies conducted mock drills in many parts of the city. The Mumbai police have received a threat email warning of bomb blasts at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport and the iconic Taj Mahal Palace Hotel, claiming that the death sentence for the Parliament attack mastermind Afzal Guru was unjust. The police examined the premises of the two vital establishments and found nothing suspicious.

The city is already on alert after the India-Pakistan tension escalated in the recent days. Security agencies conducted mock drills in many parts of the city. The Mumbai

police have also registered a case against the user of the said email account and are trying to trace the email's digital

Last week, the disaster control room of the Maharashtra Secretariat and the police had also received an email threat of a bomb blast. The Taj Hotel was targeted by the Pakistan-born Lashkar-e-Taiba terrorists on November 26, 2008, in which 167 people were killed and more than 250 were injured. The popular five-star hotel is one of the most iconic hotels in the country and has been on the terrorists' top target list. The hotel has round-the-clock external as well as internal security cover. Mumbai airport is also a sensitive spot that sees a heavy influx of domestic and international passengers daily. The Mumbai police have started an investigation to trace the email sender. The email sender mentioned "unjust hanging of Afzal Guru and Savakku Shankar" as the reason for launching the attack on the Taj Mahal Palace Hotel and airport. However, the mention of the execution of Savakku Shankar, a former lower division clerk in the Directorate of Vigilance and Anti-Corruption who gained notoriety for exposing corruption, is factually incorrect. Shankar, is a YouTuber and social activist who recently filed a public interest litigation before the Madras High Court seeking a CBI probe into the alleged illegalities in the implementation of entrepreneurship schemes for manual scavengers.

Probe into Bengaluru gold smuggling case indicates possible links to proclaimed offender in 2013 Delhi airport case

GNS News Agency, May 22

Investigations into a gold smuggling racket involving Kannada actress Ranya Rao alias Harshavardhini Ranya, 33, have revealed possible links between a hawala dealer arrested in the case and a proclaimed offender in a major gold smuggling case detected at the Delhi international airport in 2013. Sources indicated that hawala dealer Sahil Sakariya Jain, 27, who is accused of being the receiver of 49.6 kg of gold worth over Rs 40 crore smuggled from Dubai by the actress from November 2024 to February 2025, is linked to a man who was arrested in 2013 at the Delhi air port for smuggling 36.56 kg of gold in the baggage of a UAE embassy official. On March 11, 2013, a Delhi-based jewellery businessman Komal Jain, aged around 50, was detained at the Indira Gandhi International airport in Delhi on the basis of intelligence gathered by the DRI on his alleged involvement in gold smuggling using an UAE embassy official as a courier. The businessman, who arrived on a flight from Singapore, was found to be in possession of documents for the purchase of over 30 kg of gold jewellery while checks conducted by DRI officials on the baggage of a UAE embassy official who arrived on the same flight revealed the presence of 36.56 kg of gold worth Rs 9.79 crore at the time. The next day, DRI arrested Komal for smuggling gold while the UAE official, who enjoyed diplomatic immunity from arrest, was sent back to Dubai by the UAE authorities. Subsequently, on June 11, 2013, Komal was detained under the Conservation of Foreign Exchange and Prevention of Smuggling Activities Act (COFEPOSA) on the basis of an order issued by the central government's Department of Revenue. While Komal was held in preventive detention under COFEPOSA, a habeas corpus petition was moved in the Delhi High Court for his release by his son, who identified himself as Sahil Jain. "Petitioner Sahil Jain has approached this Court for issuance of a writ of habeas corpus for release of his father Komal Jain, who has been ordered to be detained and kept in custody in the Central Jail Tihar by an order dated 11 06 2013 issued under Section 3 (1) of the COFEPOSA Act by the Joint Secretary to the Govt of India," the court noted in a November 13, 2013, order for the release of Komal Jain.

DRI sources said that the Sahil Jain who filed the habeas corpus plea is in all probability the same person who has now been detained under COFEPOSA for being the receiver of the gold smuggled from Dubai by Ranya Rao.In the records of the Bengaluru case involving Ranya Rao, the hawala dealer Sahil Jain arrested on March 26, 2025, has been identified as the son of one Mahendra Kumar Jain. a businessman from Bellary in Karnataka. However, sources said, "There is the possibility of a different name being used."Incidentally, the gold smuggling suspect Komal Jain disappeared following his release from detention under COFEPOSA in November 2013. The DRI case and a money laundering case filed against him by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) are still pending with the Patiala House Courts in Delhi. "NBWs issued against the accused (Komal Jain) were received back unexecuted with report of Assistant Enforcement Officer that he visited the address of accused, where Mr Sahil Jain, son of accused, met them and stated that accused is not staying there and has not visited the said address for the last three/four years and he does not know the whereabouts of the accused," a special court for ED cases noted in its order on September 24 2018. The missing Komal Jain was declared a proclaimed offender by a special court for DRI cases in Delhi on January 27, 2020, and is yet to appear in court for the pending trial in the case. Komal Jain was also accused in a 2009 gold smuggling case by the customs authorities after he allegedly used the front of a gold jewellery business at Noida SEZ to bring in finished gold jewellery from big firms instead of exporting it after importing impure gold.



A DRI search at a business unit called Vee Ess Jewellers Pvt Ltd, operated by Komal Jain in New Delhi in 2009, led to the seizure of 41.31 kg of gold jewellery worth Rs 5.57 crore at the time. The DRI had accused Komal and others of a conspiracy to smuggle high-end gold jewellery into India from Dubai, Sharjah and Singapore in the guise of duty-free import of raw materials to an SEZ unit for the manufacture of gold jewellery for exports. The 2009 case against Komal, however, did not sustain in the courts. In the current gold smuggling case in Bengaluru, the DRI has identified Sahil Jain, 27 - who has gold smuggling cases registered against him in Mumbai and Kolkata during 2019-2022 as a key operative in a larger smuggling network. The agency has stated in court filings that Sahil is part of a "highly sophisticated gold smuggling network" which needs to be further investigated.Ranya Rao, co-accused Telugu actor Virat Konduru alias Tarun Konduru, and Sahil are under detention for a year under COFEPOSA after the Union government issued an order on April 22 for their detention to prevent involvement in further gold smuggling activities. According to DRI sources, Sahil's father (Komal Jain/Mahendra Kumar Jain) is currently not being sought by the agency in the Bengaluru gold smuggling case. Advocate C V Siju, who has been appearing for Sahil Jain in the current gold smuggling case in Bengaluru, said DRI did not question Sahil's father in the Bengaluru case. The Sahil Jain arrested in Bengaluru was also allegedly involved in a major gold smuggling racket operating out of Kolkata in 2019-2020 and was named in a DRI prosecution complaint in Kolkata in 2022, the agency has stated in court.

In the 2019-2020 period, the DRI received intelligence that a smuggling syndicate operating from Kolkata, Mumbai and Raipur was smuggling foreign-marked gold from Bangladesh through the Indo-Bangladesh borders of North 24 Parganas in West Bengal. Based on the intelligence, the DRI carried out operations to recover the smuggled gold and intercepted persons carrying smuggled gold in Kolkata, Raipur and Mumbai, leading to the recovery of 41.64 kg of gold.Initially, one of the gold carriers who was found with 6.98 kg of gold in Mumbai in December 2019 reported that the intended receiver of the gold was Sahil Jain, who was living in Mumbai at the time. Jain was arrested by the DRI and found to be a key player in the smuggling racket.In Bengaluru, the DRI has stated that Sahil Jain was the intended receiver of 14.2 kg of gold valued at Rs 12.56 crore that was found on the person of Ranya on March 3 at the Bengaluru airport on her arrival from Dubai. The smuggling of the 14.2 kg of gold would have resulted in customs duty evasion of Rs 4.83 crore, the DRI has stated.

Prior to Ranya's arrest, the hawala dealer Sahil Jain was involved in receiving 49.6 kg of smuggled gold valued at Rs 40.13 crore from the actress following visits to Dubai between November 2024 to February 2025, the DRI has stated. The hawala dealer has claimed that he only received a commission of Rs 55,000 for every consignment of smuggled gold he received from the actress in Bengaluru and for facilitating the transfer of funds from the sales to

SCR's Cyber Cell handles 123 missing phone complaints in a month

GNS News Agency, May 22

Hyderabad: The South Central Railway (SCR) RPF Cyber Cell has received and handled a total of 123 mobile phone missing complaints across the zone in the last one month. The Railway Protection Force has intensified its efforts under 'Operation Amanat' by effectively leveraging digital tools to trace and recover lost mobile phones. Railway officials said access to the Central Equipment Identity Register (CEIR) portal was granted to the RPF CyberCell in April this year. The RPF is authorized to facilitate the recovery of lost devices only when the incident is reported and registered through 'Rail Madad' app, and no FIR has been lodged by the complainants in the case.

The CEIR portal, developed by the Department of Telecommunications, enables IMEI-based tracking and blocking of lost or stolen devices. However, it is the RPF's dedicated Cyber Cell that has been driving the recovery opera-



tions across the zone. The first complaint was registered from the Vijayawada Division. Since then, the RPF Cyber Cell has handled a total of 123 complaints across the zone. In addition

Kolkata Corporation drafts rules for uniform standards for conservation, management of heritage structures in city



KolkataIn 1997, the Government of West Bengal formed an expert committee to identify heritage structures within the Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) limits. Kolkata city's right architectural legacy stands poised for consistent preservation, as the civic body has recently drafted a set of updated rules to ensure uniform standards for the conservation and management of all listed heritage structures in the city.

The Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) has forwarded the draft guidelines to the West Bengal government for approval so that the architectural relics are conserved through enforceable preservation rules. Experts feel that this step would significantly bring in a comprehensive system to protect the heritage structures dotting Kolkata city de-

spite decades of identification and documentation. Despite having a structured approach, the existing conservation rules and grading system formulated by a team led by historian Prof Barun De had left many buildings vulnerable to alterations, neglect, and demolition. "We have prepared a detailed draft that can truly change the way heritage is preserved in Kolkata. What Kolkata needs now is not just admiration for its past, but commitment to its future. These rules are a start—but only if they're allowed to take effect, said an official from the Heritage Conservation Committee. "But until the government clears it, our hands are tied," he added. Prof Barun De-led subcommittee was tasked with reviewing and refining the list of heritage buildings compiled in 1998, as many entries were found to be either inaccurate, outdated, or lacking historical significance. The revised document grouped 611 buildings under Grade I, which stipulated no structural changes, 197 buildings under Grade IIA that allowed minor additions in open spaces, and 109 structures under Grade IIB that permitted minor modifications under supervision. In 1997, the Government of West Bengal formed an expert committee to identify heritage structures within the Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) limits. By 1998, a detailed list was submitted, and the KMC Act was amended to include a section dedicated to heritage protection. Although KMC acknowledged the revised list, the lack of proper regulatory support meant conservation efforts remained largely symbolic.

Delhi HC refuses anticipatory bail to lawyer, says 'all are equal in eyes of law'

GNS News Agency, May 22

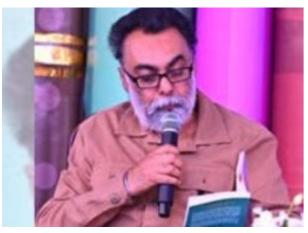
Refusing to grant anticipatory bail to a lawyer accused in a road rage incident, the Delhi High Court noted that "all are equal in the eyes of law" and said that granting relief to the accused would "malign the noble profession of advocacy". Justice Girish Kathpalia, dealing with the anticipatory bail plea of the accused advocate Raj Kumar Chaudhary, took note that apart from Chaudhary, the other accused was one Gajraj, president of Bajrang Vahini Dal, both of whom had allegedly assaulted a software professional in a road rage incident, leading to serious injuries to the victim, including head injuries.

In an order on May 15, Justice Kathpalia recorded, "One of the assailants being president of a political organisation and the other being an advocate (the accused/applicant) were responsible members of the society, so must have ensured not to take law in their hands...Granting anticipatory bail in the broad daylight violence of the present nature at a public place would send wrong signals across the society that the aggressor took law in hands and walked free just because he happens to be an advocate. All are equal in the eyes of law and none can be treated as more equal. Such relief, if granted to the accused/applicant would also malign the noble profession of advocacy." Justice



Kathpalia also emphasised that "road rage is not mere road rage", elaborating that "it has wide-ranging ramifications in the form of not just physical injury but the psychological dent caused on the victim". "Quite often, it is seen that road rage leads to loss of human lives as well. The damage caused gets aggrandized when one of the aggressors is a lawyer while the other is a president of a political organization...one has to watch those footages of CCTV to fully understand the magnitude of the broad daylight violence in the public place, committed by the accused/applicant and his brother, both powerful persons of the society," the court said.

What led Chandigarh-based author Khushwant Singh to turn his book 'Maharaja in Denims' into 'India's first AI feature film'



GNS News Agency, May 22

When author and former state information commissioner of Punjab, Khushwant Singh, wrote Maharaja in Denims, it immediately caught Bollywood's attention. And why not? Maharaja in Denims has all the makings of a larger-than-life feature film — a work of fiction that follows the journey of a young boy who believes he is the reincarnation of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, founder of the Sikh Empire.

Through regression therapy, he finds himself transported into key moments in history, including the Partition of 1947, the anti-Sikh riots of 1984, and eventually the 26/ 11 Mumbai terror attacks. But when no deal materialised and the book was no longer tied up in any rights agreements, Singh's cousin — tech guru Gurdeep Singh Pall offered an alternative.Pall, known for his long tenure at Microsoft, most recently as corporate vice-president overseeing business Al projects, suggested they stop pitching the book and instead spend two years turning it into India's first full-length Al-generated feature film. "It's a period drama. The biggest hurdle was the budget — it would have required hundreds of crores. And post-pandemic, it has become increasingly difficult to draw enough people to theatres to justify such an expense," Singh, who is based in Chandigarh, told The Indian Express during his visit to Mumbai for the debut edition of the World Audio Visual Entertainment (WAVES) Summit. "Gurdeep suggested we make it as an Al film, which meant we no longer needed to spend crores on elaborate sets or casting an A-lister as the lead."

In 2023, Pall and Singh co-founded Intelliflicks and set up a team in Chandigarh. "There are seven of us, including Balpreet Kaur, who translated the novel into a script and is also leading the screenplay and direction. The rest are experts in software engineering and Al," said Singh. Using tools such as Runway, Midjourney, and Clink, the team generated the visuals and video content through a combination of prompts and software. Singh played us nearly 10 minutes of footage — the environments and characters, barring a few inconsistencies, looked surprisingly lifelike. "We have already stitched together about 30 minutes of footage. We are targeting a total runtime of around 100 minutes," he said. "We had dubbing artists lend their voices, but cutting-edge lip-sync technology was not publicly available

until after the US elections - likely due to concerns over

deepfake manipulation. Continuity was also tricky because the same prompt can yield different results each time. But we have figured out ways to manage that, and when the film releases, you will see how the visuals are hyperrealistic."Al- generated film, Khushwant Singh, Mumbai "Using tools such as Runway, Midjourney, and Clink, the team generated the visuals and video content through a combination of prompts and software," said Khushwant Singh. (Al Generated)Is Singh worried, given that he has invested his own money? He quoted his cousin Pall: "Even if it's not the most entertaining or gripping film, it will still be a breakthrough — India's first Al feature."He added, "Someday, if the Cannes Film Festival introduces a category for Al films, we want India to have a nomination in it."

Bengaluru cab driver who robbed luxury items from unlocked car at Cubbon Park held

GNS News Agency, May 22

Bengaluru-Police-Cab-Driver-Robbery-CaseThe Bengaluru police tracked down the accused to the Ganesh Block in Mahalaxmi Layout in West Bengaluru on May 13 based on CCTV footage near the crime scene.

A cab driver who robbed luxury items worth Rs 24 lakh from an unlocked car belonging to a morning walker at Bengaluru's Cubbon Park on May 11 has been arrested by the Bengaluru central division police based on analysis of CCTV footage of the incident, the police said on Saturday. The arrested suspect has been identified as Raj Mohammed Mastan, 45, a resident of North Bengaluru.

According to the police, the alleged robbery occurred at the Cubbon Park on May 11 after a morning walker who travelled from Koramangala in south-east Bengaluru left her car near the Queens Road bus stop around 8 am without securing the lock of the car.

When the woman, a professional dancer, returned at around 9 am, she found that a bag she had left behind in the car was missing. In her police complaint, the woman said the bag contained a double-band diamond ring with a solitaire worth 10 lakh, a diamond ring worth 4 lakh, a Rolex watch worth 9 lakh, a Bottega wallet worth 75,000, and airpods worth 20,000.

The Bengaluru police tracked down the accused to the Ganesh Block in Mahalaxmi Layout in West Bengaluru on May 13 based on CCTV footage near the crime scene. "The person was interrogated and confessed to the crime," the police said. "The accused does not have a prior history of crime. He used the opportunity of seeing the car being parked by the victim without locking to carry out the robbery," Bengaluru Police Commissioner B Dayananda said on Friday.It is our request to the public to be wary of valuable goods being stored in cars and to ensure that cars are locked in the event of the car containing valuable items," the commissioner said.

BJP MP Jyotirmay Mahato writes to Calcutta HC, requests it to take suo motu cognisance of 'police brutality' amid teachers' protest



GNS News Agency, May 22

BJP MP Jyotirmay Singh Mahato wrote to the Calcutta High Court Chief Justice on Saturday requesting the court to take suo motu cognisance of the alleged police brutality during the teachers' protest in front of Bikas Bhavan in Kolkata on Thursday.Mahato's letter highlighted "excessive use of force by the police, resulting in severe injuries to numerous teachers, as well as police inaction during attacks on the protesters by certain Trinamool Congress (TMC) leaders" amid the protest.

Teachers who lost their jobs following a Supreme Court order over allegations of irregularities in recruitment clashed with police during their protest and broke open the main

gate of Bikash Bhavan, the West Bengal Education Department headquarters in Salt Lake. Over 1,000 sacked teachers, who were allowed to return to schools until December. were staging the sit-in against the School Education Department and the School Service Commission (SSC) for filing a review petition in the apex court, allegedly without consulting them. "The actions of the police appear to have violated several provisions of Indian law, particularly under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), and have raised serious concerns about the protection of fundamental rights and the rule of law," the letter stated. Mahato added, "...over 30 teachers sustained critical injuries, including head wounds, broken limbs, eye injuries, and a reported stroke. Reports indicate that the police targeted sensitive areas such as the head and private parts, and male officers manhandled female teachers, dragging them and using foul language, actions that suggest a disproportionate and unwarranted use of force."The MP also alleged that certain TMC leaders actively participated in attacking the protesting teachers and the police present at the scene failed to intervene or protect the teachers from these attacks, acting merely as spectators. Terming it gross dereliction of duty on the part of the police, Mahato said it raised serious questions about the impartiality of law enforcement in West Bengal.Leader of Opposition Suvendu Adhikari visited the protesting teachers at Bikash Bhavan late on Friday evening and assured them of his unconditional support.

How the history of Pune's Khadki is intertwined with that of a 149-year-old church

GNS News Agency, May 22

St Ignatius Church in Pune's Khadki is on the cusp of a significant milestone, reaching 150 years since its current structure was blessed in 1876. The approaching anniversary in 2026 highlights a rich history deeply connected to the socio-political changes of the region. Tracing its journey from a simple chapel to its vital role as a spiritual and communal centre in Khadki, parish priest Father V Louis shares the compelling story of the church.

The story begins with the origin of the town's name. "The name 'Kirkee' comes from the Marathi word khadak, which means rock," says Father Louis. The area gained historical importance due to a battle on November 5, 1817, when 2,800 East India Company soldiers (2,000 Indian and 800 British) under Lieutenant-Colonel Burr defeated the Marathi army of 18,000 cavalry and 8,000 infantry. "This victory," Father Louis notes, "effectively broke the power of Peshwa Baji Rao II, the last of the Peshwas, and marked the beginning of the final Maratha War, leading to the British annexation of Pune by 1820. Following this, a military cantonment was established in Kirkee."The early Catholic community in this new cantonment was instrumental in establishing the church. "Within this newly established cantonment, there was a notable presence of Irish Catholic soldiers serving in the Company's armies. Soon after, there was an increase in the number of Goan and Tamilian civilians who also settled in the area," says Father Louis."It is remarkable to note that the initial place of worship, a chapel, was built around the year 1833 through the collective financial contributions of these Catholic soldiers and civilians. At that time, Father Conceicao, who was of Goan origin, served as the visiting chaplain for this growing community. The chapel itself was a simple structure, measuring 81 feet in length and 25 feet in width, and it did not have a steeple," he adds. Historical records from 1872 placed this early chapel near the present All Saints Church. The parish's first permanent leader arrived in January 1847. "For a considerable period in the early years, there was no priest permanently residing in Kirkee," says Father Louis, "Father Conceicao was eventually succeeded by another Goan priest, Father Leituao, who served under the authority of the Vicar Apostolic. Father Leituao officially became the first parish priest of Kirkee in January 1847." Before his appointment, all the vital religious ceremonies such as baptisms, marriages, and burials for the Catholics in Kirkee were recorded at St Patrick's Church in Poona. The very first entry in the official register of the Kirkee parish is the record of the baptism of Elisabeth Jane James on January 24, 1847. In that initial year, only three baptisms were recorded in



Kirkee. To provide a sense of the parish's later growth, the highest number of baptisms recorded in a single year in the Kirkee register was 184, which occurred in 1947. Maintaining the early church structures proved challenging. The Catholic community endured a period of waiting, using a temporary and inadequate space. "While they awaited the construction of their new church, the Catholic congregation was provided with the use of a dilapidated old barracks. This inadequate structure had to serve as their church for a considerable period, until 1876," Father Louis continues. The construction of the new church, approved in 1856, only began in June 1864 due to delays partly caused by the 1857 mutiny. Eventually, the church was completed. "Bishop Meurin blessed the church on January 23, 1876, and dedicated it in honour of the soldier-saint, Ignatius of Loyola. The total cost of this restoration work amounted to approximately Rs 6,000. The government later sanctioned an additional Rs 3,265 in June 1876 to furnish the renovated church," he says. Over the subsequent decades, St Ignatius Church saw further growth and development. A presbytery was built in 1877. Statues and religious items were added over the years through donations and community efforts. Education became a key focus with the establishment of St Joseph's Anglo-Tamil School in 1935 by the Bon Secours Congregation. The parish also navigated sensitive social issues, including a challenge to the burial rights of Indian Christians in government cemeteries, which was eventually resolved after protests.

Bombay HC seeks BMC's reply to plea against 'unhygienic' Tardeo fish market



GNS News Agency, May 22

The Bombay High Court recently sought an affidavit from the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) in reply to a PIL by residents of housing societies in south Mumbai's Tardeo area, alleging that a new fish market run within the residential area was affecting their health and religious sentiments. The court asked the BMC to ensure hygiene conditions are maintained in the fish market. A bench of Chief Justice Alok Aradhe and Justice Makarand S Karnik on May 8 was hearing a PIL by Megha Agarwal, Vikram Jogani, Laxmichand Gala, and Mahendra Jain from Tulsiwadi area in Tardeo.

The petitioners, through advocate Deepa Pohuja, claimed that the fish market, which opened in March this year on the ground floor of the municipal building in the area, did not maintain any hygiene norms and the water with foul odour would come in the basement and compound of the petitioners' housing societies and on the Tulsiwadi Main road. The petitioners also claimed that the runoff water filled the road with "maggots", and while there were three to four stalls in the market at present, there would be 50-50 more stalls in the future. The petitioners argued that the said fish market was in a residential area having over 19 buildings and four temples. The PIL claimed that the market had been "gravely affecting the lives of those living in the locality" and the residents' religious sentiments. The petitioners claimed that the same caused health problems to children, senior citizens and other residents. Moreover, the PIL alleged that inconvenience was caused to devotees who visit temples, including a Jain temple in the nearby area. The residents also claimed that there were no fixed timings for transporting goods from the fish market, and the said vehicles parked in the narrow lane cause traffic congestion in the vicinity. Advocate Chaitalee Deshpande for the BMC submitted that the civic body would ensure that the fish market was run following the guidelines applicable to BMC-run fish markets. The high court issued notices to the respondents, the state government and the BMC authorities, including its assistant commissioner, markets, and directed them to file affidavits in reply within four weeks, after which it will hear

Telangana Jagruthi announces key organisational appointments

GNS News Agency, May 22

Hyderabad: Telangana Jagruthi has announced new appointments across different wings of the organisation to strengthen its operations and further its objectives.

The newly appointed convenors are expected to play a vital role in strengthening the organisation and advancing its vision. Their appointments take effect immediately.

The new appointments include Maripelli Madhavi as State convenor of Telangana Jagruthi Women's Federa-

Edurugattu Sampath Goud as State convenor of Telangana Jagruthi Youth Federation, Appala Narendra Yadav as State convenor of Telangana Jagruthi Legal Cell, J Ramu Yadav as State convenor of the Telangana Jagruthi Student Federation and Prakala Manoj Goud as convenor of Telangana Jagruthi Youth Federation (Hyderabad Wing).

Russia demanded Ukraine cede more territory at Turkey talks, Ukrainian source says



ISTANBUL, GNS News Agency, May 22- Russian negotiators at peace talks in Istanbul demanded Ukraine pull its troops out of all the Ukrainian regions claimed by Moscow before they would agree to a ceasefire, a senior Ukrainian official familiar with the talks told Reuters. That demand, along with others the Ukrainian official said were made at Friday's talks, went beyond the terms of a draft peace deal that the United States proposed last month after consultations with Moscow. The Reuters Tariff Watch newsletter is your daily guide to the latest global trade and tariff news. Sign up here. The talks in Istanbul, the first direct contacts between the two sides in three years, ended with agreement for a prisoner exchange but failed to agree to a ceasefire. A Ukrainian source had said on Friday the Russians had made conditions he described as "non-starters", without giving details. At a briefing with reporters on Saturday, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov was asked about the terms that, according to the Ukrainian official, Moscow put forward, but he declined to comment, saying the discussions need to take place behind closed doors. The

Ukrainian official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to reveal details of the talks, said Russian proposed the following terms for a peace deal:* The withdrawal of Ukrainian troops from the Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia, Kherson and Luhansk regions of Ukraine, only after which there can be a ceasefire. The regions are largely or partially controlled by Russian forces, but Ukrainian troops are still fighting to hold on to the remaining parts of the regions. There was no such demand in the draft deal prepared by the United States.* International recognition that five parts of Ukraine - the Crimea peninsula annexed in 2014, as well as the Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions -are Russian. The U.S. draft had proposed only U.S. de jure recognition for Crimea, and U.S. de facto recognition for Russian-controlled parts of the other regions.* Ukraine becomes a neutral state, has no weapons of mass destruction, and Kyiv's allies will not station any of their troops on Ukrainian soil. This demand was absent from the U.S. proposal.* All sides in the conflict renounce their claims to receive compensation for war damages. The U.S. proposal that Ukraine compensation. According to the Ukrainian official, Russian negotiators transmitted those demands verbally, and did not share any document containing their terms. Ukraine has already said the Russian negotiating position in Istanbul showed it was not serious about peace. Kyiv's European allies are now pressing U.S. President Donald Trump to impose new sanctions on Russia. The head of the Russian delegation at the talks expressed satisfaction with the meeting, and said Moscow was willing to keep talking to Kyiv. The U.S. draft peace proposal from April was prepared after Trump envoy Steve Witkoff flew to Moscow for rounds of talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin. Kyiv and European allies drafted an alternative proposal, which stated there should be a ceasefire first so negotiations could start, and deferred any discussion of territory until later.

Israeli strikes kill 146 Palestinians in Gaza in 24 hours, local health authorities say

JERUSALEM/CAIRO, GNS News Agency, May 22-Israel's airforce killed at least 146 Palestinians in new attacks on Gaza over the past 24 hours and injured many more, local health authorities said on Saturday, as the country appeared set to press ahead with a new ground offensive. Israeli strikes since Thursday have seen one of the deadliest phases of bombardment since a truce collapsed in March. The latest strikes came as U.S. President Donald Trump ended his Middle East tour on Friday with no apparent progress towards a new ceasefire. The Reuters Tariff Watch newsletter is your daily guide to the latest global trade and tariff news. Sign up here. "Since midnight, we have received 58 martyrs, while a large number of victims remain under the rubble. The situation inside the hospital is catastrophic," said the director of the Indonesian Hospital in northern Gaza, Marwan Al-Sultan, Local health authorities said 459 people had been injured in Israeli strikes in the past 24 hours. Israel's military said on Saturday it was conducting extensive strikes and mobilizing troops as part of preparations to expand operations in the Gaza Strip and achieve "operational control" in areas of the Palestinian en-

The Gaza health system is barely operational with hospitals hit repeatedly by the Israeli military during the 19-month war and medical supplies drying up as Israel tightened its blockade since March. The escalation, which includes the build-up of armoured forces along the border, is part of the initial stages of 'Operation Gideon's Wagons', which Israel says is aimed at defeating Hamas and getting its hostages back. An Israeli defence official said earlier this month the operation would not be launched before Trump concluded his visit to the Middle East. "We are gradually increasing forces; Hamas remains defiant," the military said on Saturday. United Nations experts warn that famine looms in Gaza after Israel blocked aid deliveries to the strip 76 days ago, with UN aid chief Tom Fletcher asking the Security Council this week if it would act to "prevent genocide".

Trump on Friday acknowledged Gaza's growing hunger crisis and the need for aid deliveries, as international pressure grows on Israel to resume ceasefire talks and end its blockade of Gaza.A U.S.-backed foundation aims to start distributing aid to Gazans by the end of May, using private U.S. security and logistics firms, but the U.N. has said it won't work with the foundation because it is not impartial, neutral or independent.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on May 5 that Israel was planning an expanded, intensive offensive against Hamas as his security cabinet approved plans that



could involve seizing the entire Gaza Strip and controlling aid.On Friday Israel's military ordered Gazans to move south after heavy strikes in the northern town of Beit Lahia and the Jabalia refugee camp. Residents, however, said tanks were advancing towards the southern city of Khan Younis. Israel's declared goal in Gaza is the elimination of the military and governmental capabilities of Hamas, which attacked Israeli communities on October 7, 2023, killing around 1,200 people and seizing about 250 hostages. Its military campaign has devastated the tiny, crowded enclave, pushing nearly all its 2 million inhabitants from their homes and killing more than 53,000 people, according to Gaza health authorities.NBC News reported on Friday, citing five people with knowledge of the matter, that the Trump administration is working on a plan to permanently relocate as many as one million Palestinians from the Gaza Strip to

Palestinians, including Hamas, and the rival authority of President Mahmoud Abbas reject any displacement of people outside their land. An award nominated Reuters reporter with experience working on high profile, agenda setting stories in a fast paced, real time news environment. Committed to producing fair and accurate stories that give all parties an opportunity to have their say. Currently responsible for covering high impact events in soft commodities and agricultural commodities more broadly, analysing industry trends and uncovering developments that drive the market. In this role, I have produced market moving investigative stories covering topics like commodity trade flows, corporate strategy, farmer poverty, sustainability, climate change and government policy. A senior correspondent with nearly 25 years' experience covering the Palestinian-Israeli conflict including several wars and the signing of the first historic peace accord between the two sides.

Ukraine, Europe urge more pressure on Russia after drone kills nine

GNS News Agency, May 22

KYIV, May 17 (Reuters) - Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy called on Saturday for stronger sanctions on Moscow after a Russian drone killed nine bus passengers in northeastern Ukraine just hours after the two countries held their first peace talks in three years of war. The meeting of Russian and Ukrainian officials in Turkey on Friday failed to broker a temporary ceasefire. It was the first direct dialogue between the two sides since the early months of the war that Russia launched in February 2022. The Reuters Tariff Watch newsletter is your daily guide to the latest global trade and tariff news. Sign up here. Commenting on the drone strike in the Sumy region, Zelenskiy said on X: "All the deceased were civilians. And the Russians could not have failed to understand what kind of vehicle they were targeting. This was a deliberate killing of civilians."

Ukrainian police posted photos of a dark blue passenger van nearly destroyed, with the roof torn off and the windows blown out."Pressure must be exerted on Russia to stop the killings. Without tougher sanctions, without stronger pressure, Russia will not seek real diplomacy," Zelenskiy said. He said Russia had sent to Istanbul "a weak and unprepared" delegation without a meaningful mandate while real steps were needed to end the war. "We are expecting strong sanctions against Russia from the United States, from Europe, and from all our partners. Diplomacy must start working," Zelenskiy stated.U.S. President Donald Trump, who has been pushing Moscow and Kyiv to hold peace talks, said before the two countries' negotiators met in Istanbul that "nothing could happen" until he had met directly with Russia's President Vladimir Putin. Speaking to Reuters in Pakistan's capital Islamabad on Saturday, British foreign minister David Lammy accused Moscow of obfuscating after the Istanbul talks, which ended in less than



two hours."Yet again we are seeing obfuscation on the Russian side and unwillingness to get serious about the enduring peace that is now required in Ukraine," Lammy told Reuters in Pakistan's capital Islamabad. "Once again Russia is not serious.""At what point do we say to Putin enough is enough?"French President Emmanuel Macron also said the talks in Istanbul had been fruitless."Today, what do we have? Nothing. And so I tell you, faced with President Putin's cynicism, I am sure that President Trump, mindful of the credibility of the United States, will react," he said during a joint press conference with Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama. Zelenskiy had challenged Putin earlier in the week to meet him in person, an offer the Russian leader ignored, but according to the Ukrainian delegation in Istanbul this possibility was discussed during Friday's talks.Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Saturday that Russia considered such a meeting was possible, but only as a result of work between the two sides to "achieve certain results in the form of agreements". "At the same time, when signing documents that the delegations are to agree upon, the main and fundamental thing for us remains who exactly will sign these documents from the Ukrainian side," Peskov added. Peskov did not elaborate on that remark.

Lammy says UK, US working to ensure enduring India-Pakistan ceasefire, dialogue



GNS News Agency, May 22

ISLAMABAD, May 17 (Reuters) - Britain is working with the U.S. to ensure a ceasefire between India and Pakistan endures and that "confidence-building measures" and dialogue take place, foreign minister David Lammy said on Saturday. Pakistan has said Britain and other countries, in addition to the United States, played a major role in de-escalating the worst fighting in decades between the nucleararmed South Asian rivals, which erupted last week. A rapid diplomatic effort to broker the ceasefire succeeded on May 10, but diplomats and analysts say it remains fragile. The Reuters Tariff Watch newsletter is your daily guide to the latest global trade and tariff news. Sign up here."We will continue to work with the United States to ensure that we get an enduring ceasefire, to ensure that dialogue is happening and to work through with Pakistan and India how we can get to confidence and confidence-building measures between the two sides," Lammy told Reuters in Pakistan's

capital Islamabad at the end of a two-day visit.

Pakistan and India fired missiles onto each other's territory during weeks of tensions after a deadly attack on tourists in the contested region of Kashmir that New Delhi blames on Islamabad. Pakistan denies involvement.U.S. President Donald Trump said after the ceasefire was struck that talks should take place in a third-country venue but no dates or location for the talks have been announced. "These are two neighbours with a long history but they are two neighbours that have barely been able to speak to one other over this past period, and we want to ensure that we do not see further escalation and that the ceasefire endures," Lammy said.

Asked about India's suspension of the Indus Water Treaty, potentially squeezing Pakistan's water supply, Lammy said: "We would urge all sides to meet their treaty obligations. "Delhi said last month it had "put in abeyance" its participation in the 1960 pact, which governs use of the Indus river system, a move Pakistan says it would consider an act of war if it disrupted access to water in the agriculturally dependent nation.Lammy said Britain would also continue to work with Pakistan on countering "terrorism", saying that it is "a terrible blight on this country and its people, and of course on the region."'OBFUSCATION' BY RUSSIA ON UKRAINELammy accused Moscow of obfuscating after talks between Ukraine and Russia on a possible ceasefire ended in less than two hours and Trump said "nothing could happen" until he had met directly with Russian President Vladimir Putin. "Yet again we are seeing obfuscation on the Russian side and unwillingness to get serious about the enduring peace that is now required in Ukraine," Lammy said. "Once again Russia is not serious."

Kremlin says Putin could meet Zelenskiy if certain agreements are reached

GNS News Agency, May 22

MOSCOW, The Kremlin said on Saturday that Russian President Vladimir Putin could meet Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelenskiy, but only if certain agreements were reached. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov did not specify what agreements would be required from Russia's point of view. Putin and Zelenskiy have not met since December 2019. The Reuters Tariff Watch newsletter is your daily guide to the latest global trade and tariff news. Sign up here.

President Zelenskiy had challenged the Kremlin leader to meet him in Turkey this week but Putin instead sent a team of aides and officials to meet Ukrainian negotiators on Friday for the first bilateral, face-to-face talks since March

Ukraine said it had raised the issue of a Putin-Zelenskiy meeting at the talks. Peskov said Russia considered such a meeting was possible, but only as a result of work between the two sides to "achieve certain results in the form of agreements". He added: "At the same time, when signing documents that the delegations are to agree upon, the main and fundamental thing for us remains who exactly



will sign these documents from the Ukrainian side. "Peskov did not elaborate on that remark. Putin has previously challenged Zelenskiy's legitimacy as president because his elected term of office expired last year. Ukraine, under martial law as it defends itself against Russia, has not set a date for a new election.

U.S. considering reality TV competition for citizenship



GNS News Agency, May 22

The United States Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is considering taking part in a reality TV show in which immigrants would compete for American citizenship, the department confirmed Asked about the reported idea, DHS responded with a statement that said the pitch "has not received approval or rejection by staff," and that "each proposal undergoes a thorough vetting process prior to denial or approval."

"We need to revive patriotism and civic duty in this country, and we're happy to review out-of-the-box pitches," Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs Tricia McLaughlin said in the statement. The Wall Street Journal reported that the proposed show -- which was pitched by a Canadian Ameri-

can named Rob Worsoff -- would see contestants face off to prove they are the most American. "This isn't The Hunger Games for immigrants," the newspaper quoted Worsoff as saying -- a reference to a dystopian novel and subsequent movie about children lorced to kill each other in a televised competition for survival. "This is not, 'Hey, if you lose, we are shipping you out on a boat out of the country," he said. The Journal reviewed a 36-page slide deck from Worsoff's team about the proposed program, which would see contestants compete in one-hour episodes. This could include a gold rush competition to see who can retrieve the most precious metal from a mine, or one in which contestants would work in teams to assemble the chassis of a Model T car, according to the newspaper. The show would start with an arrival at Ellis Island -- the traditional entrance point for immigrants to the United States -- and would see one contestant eliminated per episode.

The news comes as former reality show star President Donald Trump's administration has moved to end temporary protected status (TPS) for various groups of immigrants it had shielded them from deportation. Federal law permits the government to grant TPS to foreign citizens who cannot safely return home because of war, natural disasters or other "extraordinary" conditions. Since taking office, Trump has sought to strip TPS protections from citizens of countries including Afghanistan, Haiti and Venezuela as part of his broader crackdown on immigration.

Chinese national held for in-flight theft, suspected to be part of global syndicate

A Chinese national, suspected to be a member of an organised global in-flight theft syndicate, has been arrested for allegedly stealing debit and credit cards from fellow passengers during a flight from Hong Kong to New Delhi, police said on The accused, 30-year-old Benlai Pan, was arrested upon arrival at the Indira Gandhi International (IGI) Airport on May 14 following complaints from multiple passengers aboard Air India flight AI-315, they said in an official statement

Pan was travelling with three other Chinese nationals -51-year-old Meng Guangyang, 42-year-old Chang Mang, 45-year-old and Liu Jie — all of whom were detained and questioned, officials said. According to authorities, the group is suspected to be operating together as part of an international in-flight theft racket."Air India's security team alerted the IGI Airport police about suspicious activities involving four Chinese nationals on the flight. One of the passengers, Prabhat Verma, who was seated at 12C, reported that a credit card had gone missing from his bag," Additional Commissioner of Police (IGI) Usha Rangnani said in an official statement."Verma also pointed out suspicious behaviour by a passenger seated at 14C, who was ticketed for seat 23C," the statement said. The missing credit card was later recovered from beneath seat 14C, where Pan was found seated, she said. Another passenger, Prashi, reported that her mother's debit card had also gone missing. A third passenger, Nafeez Fatima, provided a video showing Pan allegedly opening overhead bins and rummaging through cabin baggage during the flight, the officer said. During in-



terrogation, Pan confessed that they booked long-haul international transit flights to target sleeping passengers and access unattended cabin luggage. The group spread themselves across the cabin to avoid suspicion and discarded stolen cards after attempting to use them, she added. A case has been registered under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) at the IGI Airport police station, police said. Mobile phones, wallets, and other belongings of the suspects have been seized for forensic examination. International coordination is underway to investigate their possible involvement in similar incidents globally, they further said.While Benlai Pan has been arrested, the roles of his three associates are under scrutiny. Immigration authorities across the country have been alerted, and liaison has been established with embassies and global law enforcement agencies, police added.

Trump Effect: Opportunities for internationalisation of Indian universities



As per the Government of India, the number of Indian students pursuing higher education in foreign universities has gone up steeply by 47% in the last two years, from about 907,000 in 2022 to 1,330,000 in 2024. In the last three months, however, policy measures taken by the U.S. President Trump administration are discouraging students to go to the U.S. for higher studies. Governments at destinations like the U.K., Australia, and Canada placing restrictions on student visas and caps on admission of foreign students presents an excellent opportunity for India to attract more foreign students, besides retaining some Indian students back home. This article analyses the factors affecting international students' mobility and opportunities for internationalisation and suggests strategies to tap the emerging market by Indian universities.

U.S. and Canada, attractive destinations for higher studies for Indian students

According to Government of India statistics on Indian students studying abroad in 2024, Canada comes on top, with 427,000 Indian students, followed by the U.S. with 337,630, the U.K. with 185,000, Australia with 122,202, and Germany with 42,997. The U.S. and Canada have been the hot spots for higher studies because of the quality of education, fee waivers offered, availability of career opportunities, post studies and exposure to global work environment. Canada's popularity surged due to easier Permanent Residency (PR) pathways and work permits. The students that go to the U.S. on student visa (F1) are allowed to work full-time or part-time in the U.S. for a limited period of time as a part of the Optional Practical Training (OPT) scheme. In study fields like Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM), needed by IT industry, OPT could be extended for an additional 24 months, from one year. This enables the students to pay back the loans availed for the studies during this period. Subsequently, they could secure regular jobs, after obtaining H1B Visa and build a lucrative career there. U.K. saw good growth in foreign student enrolments, after reintroducing the Post-Study Work Visa (Graduate Route) in 2021.

About 40% of the students who go to the developed countries for higher education pursue post-graduation in Engineering, followed by 25% in Management. It is estimated that over 75,000 Indians study MBBS in East and Central Asian countries like China, Russia, Georgia, Uzbekistan, the Philippines, Kyrgyzstan, and Ukraine (before the war with Russia), as it is recognised worldwide, more affordable and easier to get admission .Radical policy shift in the U.S. higher education

After the re-election of Donald Trump as the President of the United States, in January 2025, things have changed. Trump's administration introduced significant policy changes in higher education, particularly in the realms of immigration, visa issuance, and revoking student visas. Federal funding support was drastically cut to major U.S. universities for research and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives, thereby reducing the scholarships and hiking the program fees steeply. The 24-month extension for STEM OPT is likely to be removed. It is proposed to set a cap on international student visas at top public universities to prioritise domestic students. With more U.S. employers preferring to recruit locals, job opportunities for international students are expected to come down steeply. Recent visa withdrawals and suspension of international students in some of the U.S. universities have created uncertainty on security and safety of the students. On May 12, 2025, the U.K. Prime Minister, Keir Starmer, announced measures to cut migration, including restrictions on skilled worker visas and tightening citizenship rules. Canada, Australia, and some European nations are also in the process of tightening visa restrictions and setting enrolment caps for international students, including Indian students, citing concerns on immigration growth, housing shortages, and other social and economic factors. These changes will limit the influx of international students, seeking to study abroad in these countries. Diplomatic standoff between Canada and India, coupled with new student visa regulations introduced in 2024, witnessed a 41% drop in students going to Canada in the last year. The decline was about 27% for the U.K. and 12-13% for the U.S. and Australia, as per the Bureau of Immigration data

This presents a good opportunity for Indian Universities to scale up international admissions. Several Indians who wanted to pursue higher education abroad earlier are now keen to stay back. Considering the huge global demand for IT professionals, India, with its large IT industry, coupled with the capacity for quality engineering education, is well placed to attract foreign students in IT and allied disciplines. Besides, areas like Indian Traditional Knowledge Systems, like Yoga, Ayurveda, Vedic Literature, and Buddhist studies, are of interest to some of the international students. Indian HEIs can offer quality education at 25% of the cost of comparable institutions in the west, with home comforts and good industry exposure. Salary levels in India are comparable to the ones abroad, when compared on Purchasing Power Parity (PPP). As per the OECD study on international students' mobility (March 2025), affordability, university reputation, language, cultural ties, research excellence, and employment prospects are key

factors in attracting international students. A survey, conducted in April 2025 of 27,400 prospective students, representing over 195 countries, revealed that for the first time, China has emerged among the top 10 global destinations for international students and is ranked overall eighth, third for university rankings, and twelfth in the world for achieving career goals. It is estimated that currently, over 450,000 foreign students are studying in China, including over 50,000 from South Korea, 23,000 from India, and 21,000 from the US. Programs preferred in China include Medicine, AI, Data Sciences, FinTech, Luxury Management, International Business, China studies (Chinese Law, Chinese Culture, China Global affairs etc).

How did China make it happen?

Over a period of time, China was able to ramp up foreign students studying in its institutions through a combination of policy interventions, enhancement of quality of education, branding, industry linkages, and post-studies employment. Over 50,000 students are admitted through fully funded seats annually by way of Belt and Road scholarships. Besides, universities are paid an incentive of \$3,000 per foreign student enrolled. Digital platforms like Alibaba are used to recruit students. Over 500 global centers of Confucius Institutes are used as feeder systems. Companies like Huawei Tech offer guaranteed internships for top students. Automatic work permits are given in Free Trade Zones like Shanghai to foreign students that graduate in China. Foreign students in India – current status

In the last two years, the number of foreign students in India grew by 35% from about 48,000 in 2022 to about 65,000 in 2024. Out of them, 40% are from Nepal, with the balance being from Afghanistan, Africa and Middle East. Over 32% of the students are studying Engineering (including Computer Sciences), 31% Medicine and 14% Business Management. There is an immense potential to double the number of foreign students in the next three years. Policy initiatives by Government of India to attract foreign students

The New Education Policy 2020 advocates for the internationalisation of education in India through various measures. During May 2022, the UGC formulated regulations for academic collaboration between Indian and foreign Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) to offer Twinning, Joint Degree and Dual Degree Programmes. Twinning is an arrangement whereby students enrolled with an Indian HEI may undertake their studies partly in India and partly, typically a semester, abroad. In a joint degree programme, the degree is awarded jointly by the Indian university and the foreign university. In a dual degree programme, the degrees is conferred by the two universities, separately and simultaneously, upon completion of requirements of both the institutions. HEIs are allowed to create up to 25% additional seats for international students, over and above of their sanctioned seats

What is being done by Indian HEIs?

As of now, 13 Indian universities (Three public - IIT Madras, IIT Delhi, and IIM Ahmedabad, and 10 private) have set up campuses abroad, 11 of them in the Middle East and two in Africa. It is expected that 20 more HEIs will join them in the next 12 months. Three foreign universities (Two from Australia - Deakin and University of Wollongong and one from the U.K. University of Southampton) already set up campuses in India. Two more from the U.K. (Queen's University Belfast and University of Surrey) are planning to set up their Indian campuses by January 2026. It is significant to note that four of the above five universities preferred GIFT City in Gujarat, which is emerging as India's first international education hub, with world-class facilities, favourable legislation, and tax breaks. A number of Indian HEIs, which include IITs as well as private universities like Ashoka University, ISB, Manipal, Shiv Nadar University, Chitkara, OP Jindal, and more, signed joint ventures for academic collaboration with foreign universities in Australia and U.S. and have been offering joint programs, with semesters abroad. Four Indian business schools, IIM Calcutta, IIM Indore, ISB Hyderabad, and SPJIMR hold the distinction of "Triple Crown" of international accreditations from AACSB, AMBA, and EQUIS, whereas over 25 B-Schools have at least one of the three accreditations. Challenges to attract international students

Regulations, though liberalised to some extent in the recent past, continue to be a constraining factor for signing up with foreign universities and introducing joint programs. International students look for physical infrastructure befitting their lifestyles so that they feel at home. Besides quality education, the students expect post studies work opportunities.

What more can be done?

India signed cross-border education agreements with Australia and the U.K. for mutual recognition of qualifications and promotion of mobility of students. There is a need to sign more such agreements with countries in South Asia. Going by the success of GIFT City, more such education Special Economic Zones may be set up. The student visa regime needs to be simplified and extended to provide poststudies work opportunities in IT companies and GCCs. Besides IT related programs, interdisciplinary programs in emerging areas like Sustainability, Indian traditional Knowledge Systems may be offered. Digital Universities may be set up to offer online programs as well as blended delivery programs for international students. As per the UNESCO, there are over seven million internationally mobile students. India is well-positioned to be the Asian hub for education, as it can be the value leader, offering lvy League-quality education at Asian costs. Protectionist measures, being taken by the developed countries in the recent past, offer an excellent opportunity for the Indian universities to attract more international students. To tap the opportunity, it needs concerted efforts, which include policy initiatives, more internationally recognised universities, with congenial infrastructure and post-studies work opportunities. It is equally important to promote the national brand "Study in India".

MG Motors launch 'Windows EV Pro' with 52.9 kWh battery pack, ADAS

Hyderabad: With the increasing demand for electric vehicles, MG Motor India launches the 'Windows EV Pro,' an upgraded variant of its popular electric MPV that offers enhanced features and improved designs. The newly unveiled Windows EV pro is equipped with a 52.9 kWh battery pack, delivering a claimed range of 449 km on a single charge. This is a significant improvement over the previous 38 kWh battery which offered a range of approximately 331 km.

The Pro Variant which is launched in three new colours Celadon Blue, Glaze Red, and Aurora Silver, retains its signature AeroGlide design but introduces new dual-tone 18-inch alloy wheels. The car's interior enhancements include providing more space with a lighter Ivory leatherette upholstery.



The car is equipped with an Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS)suite which features blind spot detection, traffic sign recognition mechanism, driver attention alert, and 360-degree camera system with parking sensors

Why laws fall short in combating the surge in cyber-bullying cases



In the aftermath of the Pahalgam terror attack, Himanshi Narwal, the wife of slain Navy Lieutenant Vinay Narwal, issued a heartfelt appeal for peace and firmly rejected the vilification of Muslims and Kashmiris. Soon after, the grieving newlywed became the target of a vicious trolling campaign on X (formerly Twitter). Anonymous accounts hurled slurs at her, questioned her loyalty to her late husband, and even called for the cancellation of her pension.

However, Ms. Narwal was not alone in facing such online vitriol. Following Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri's announcement on May 10 that India and Pakistan had reached an understanding to halt military hostilities, his account on Xwas inundated with abusive comments, some of which targeted even his daughter. Mr. Misri was eventually compelled to lock his account, as several diplomats and politicians condemned the toxic trolling culture in unequivocal terms. Emboldened by the anonymity of the internet, faceless trolls have turned into virtual vigilantes, punishing those who dare to question dominant narratives. What regulatory reforms, then, are necessary to ensure that such depravity is no longer met with impunity?

A range of terms has emerged to describe contemporary forms of cybercrime, including cyberbullying, stalking, hate speech, and doxxing. Doxxing, short for "dropping dox" (documents), involves the unauthorised online disclosure of private information, often with malicious intent. This may include home addresses, phone numbers, or sensitive images, leaving victims vulnerable to harassment and tangible real-world threats. Studies show that such abuse disproportionately targets women and minorities, suggesting that these attacks are often driven by organised political motives. The consequences can be severe, frequently escalating to rape and death threats. India lacks a dedicated law specifically aimed at tackling online hate speech and trolling. Instead, a limited number of provisions under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2003, and the Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000, cover certain aspects of cyberbullying. The BNS contains provisions applicable to electronic communications, such as Section 74 (assault or criminal force against a woman with intent to outrage her modesty), Section 75 (sexual harassment), Section 351 (criminal intimidation), Section 356 (defamation), and Section 196 (promoting enmity between groups). The IT Act supplements these offences with provisions like Section 66C (identity theft), Section 66D (impersonation fraud) and Section 67 (publishing or transmitting obscene material electronically).

"The existing regulatory framework is functional but far from complete. No provision squarely criminalises sustained online abuse that does not qualify as 'obscene,' 'threatening,' or 'fraudulent.' Stalking under the BNS is gender-specific—limited to men targeting women—and hinges on intent to engage personally, failing to capture the collective harassment that defines much of online trolling. While cyberbullying may sometimes be shoehorned into offences like criminal intimidation or defamation, these require proof of threat or reputational harm and are ill-suited to counter the rapid, anonymous abuse unleashed by online mobs," Apar Gupta, advocate and founder-director of the Internet Freedom Foundation, t

Moderation or censorship?

Mounting domestic and international pressure to curb disinformation and hate speech has compelled social media giants to moderate and remove harmful content. While many advocate for "self-regulation," where platforms enforce their own community guidelines, this model has largely failed and faces growing scrutiny. Last year, Telegram founder and CEO Pavel Durov was arrested by French authorities for allegedly failing to moderate criminal activity on the platform, including the circulation of child sexual abuse material and fraudulent content. Telegram later amended its privacy policy to permit the disclosure of users' IP addresses and phone numbers to law enforcement upon receipt of "valid legal requests." The challenge is further exacerbated by the gradual erosion of content moderation policies in favour of monetisation. In a damning re-

port released earlier this month, the Centre for the Study of Organized Hate found that X had become a "high-velocity distribution channel" for hate speech and conspiracy theories, particularly targeting British-Pakistani men as well as other South Asian and immigrant communities. An analysis of 1,365 posts generating more than 1.5 billion engagements revealed that the platform played a central role in weaponising the "grooming gang" discourse to scapegoat Muslims in the U.K., despite police data showing that most offenders were white men.In India, Section 69A of the IT Act empowers the government to issue blocking orders on grounds aligned with constitutionally permissible restrictions on speech, such as national sovereignty, friendly relations with foreign States, and public order. Platforms that fail to comply risk losing safe harbour protection under Section 79, which ordinarily shields intermediaries from liability for user-generated content. However, experts have warned that these provisions are increasingly being used as tools for online censorship. In recent years, the Union Government has frequently taken down content without notifying affected users — a practice that contravenes the Supreme Court's 2015 ruling in Shreya Singhal v. Union of India. While the court upheld the constitutionality of Section 69A, it underscored that blocking orders must be accompanied by cogent reasons to enable judicial scrutiny. Following the Pahalgam attack, X disclosed that it had been directed to block more than 8,000 accounts in India, but said the government had not specified which posts violated the law in most cases. In March, the company filed a lawsuit in the Karnataka High Court challenging the government's reliance on Section 79(3)(b) to issue takedown orders, arguing that it bypasses the procedural safeguards under Section 69A Unlike Section 69A, Section 79(3)(b) neither defines what constitutes an "unlawful act" nor provides for any review mechanism. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting recently informed a Parliamentary Committee that it is reconsidering safe harbour protections for social media platforms in a bid to combat "fake news." X has received executive orders from the Indian government requiring X to block over 8,000 accounts in India, subject to potential penalties including significant fines and imprisonment of the company's local employees. The orders include demands to block access in India to...In February last year, the Delhi High Court directed X to remove tweets revealing the personal and professional details of a woman who had reportedly posted a critical comment about Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. The post triggered a wave of online harassment, with details of her workplace, residence, and photographs being widely circulated. Although these disclosures raised privacy concerns, Justice Prathiba Singh ruled that the incident did not constitute doxxing, as the information was already publicly available.

However, the judge acknowledged that while doxxing is not yet a statutory offence in India, it poses a serious threat. She observed that it infringes upon the right to privacy and that courts could invoke tort law to offer redress Accordingly, X was directed to disclose subscriber information associated with the offending posts. This case highlights the contested nature of what qualifies as public information. The Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023, exempts from its ambit personal data that is made "publicly available", either through voluntary disclosure by the individual or by entities under a legal obligation. However, this exemption is riddled with ambiguity, as the law offers no clear definition for what qualifies as "publicly available data."This lack of clarity may inadvertently enable cybercrimes such as doxxing, especially given the ease with which fragmented data from multiple platforms can be easily aggregated and used for harassment or intimidation. Experts underscored that enforcement, or rather the lack of it, often determines whether victims can access remedies."All laws are only as effective as their enforcement. While posts and accounts are promptly removed when government directives are issued, the same urgency is rarely extended to ordinary users reporting harassment or abusive content " Mishi Choudhary, tech and digital rights advocate, told The Hindu. She pointed out that for victims of gendered online abuse, legal recourse is typically a last resort. "Survivors are often disbelieved or, worse, blamed for the abuse they face. The lack of awareness and institutional support has a profoundly detrimental impact, forcing many to navigate an uphill battle in their quest for justice," she said.Mr. Gupta agreed, highlighting challenges such as perpetrator anonymity, cross-jurisdictional hurdles, and limited cybercrime training. "While the BNS has modernised terminology and broadened the scope of online offences, gaps in legal clarity and enforcement persist. Merely creating new offences is insufficient and may even endanger journalists and rights defenders, especially given India's weak rule of law framework," he cautioned.

Is your blood pressure out of control? Understanding resistant hypertension and what can help

GNS News Agency, May 22

High blood pressure is a common concern in India But what happens when standard treatments don't work? This is the reality of resistant hypertension, a condition requiring specialised care. According to the World Health Organisation, approximately only 1 in 5 adults (21%) with hypertension have it under control. A secondary analysis of the National Family Health Survey-5 data found that almost 36.8% of Indian women and 49.5% of men with hypertension in India don't have the condition under control despite being on medication. This isn't just high blood pressure it's a resistant form that remains uncontrolled despite standard treatment and requires a more specialized approach. What is resistant hypertension? Resistant hypertension is defined as blood pressure that remains above 140/90 mmHg despite adherence to a regimen of three or more antihypertensive medications, including a diuretic, all at optimal doses. Unlike standard hypertension, which usually responds to medications and lifestyle modifications, in resistant hypertension, the BP remains elevated despite adherence to recommended treatment. Resistant hypertension may affect more people than you think. Despite the growing burden of this condition however, hypertensive disorders are still not looked at with the urgency they deserve. Many people view high blood pressure as a manageable part of life, unlike conditions such as cancer, which evoke far greater concern. This lack of awareness means that many patients continue to live with uncontrolled hypertension for years, risking severe complications such as heart failure, stroke, and kidney damage. The emotional toll can also be significant, with patients feeling frustrated, anxious, or disheartened by their inability to bring their blood pressure under control. For those dealing with resistant hypertension, a diagnosis involves ruling out factors that can mimic resistance, such as inaccurate blood pressure readings or interactions with other medications. Once confirmed, identifying the underlying cause is key. Resistant hypertension is driven by one or more underlying causes. According to the American Heart Association, these can include hormonal imbalances that affect blood pressure, plaque buildup in the arteries supplying the kidneys, and sleep-related disorders such as sleep apnea. Ambulatory BP monitoring, hormonal testing, imaging of the kidneys, sleep studies, and a detailed review of the patient's medication and medical history can all help uncover the root cause of the problem.In recent years, treatment options for resistant hypertension have expanded beyond medication alone. One of the most promising advances is a minimally invasive procedure known as renal denervation (RDN). This technique uses radiofrequency energy to disrupt the overactive sympathetic nerves around the renal arteries. By targeting these nerves, RDN helps reduce and regulate the sympathetic drive that keeps blood pressure elevated in many patients with resistant forms of the condition. While the idea of undergoing a procedure for hypertension may initially seem excessive, especially given how the condition is perceived, this mindset is beginning to shift. RDN is gaining recognition for its potential to provide sustained blood pressure control and reduce the long-term risk of organ damage. For patients who have exhausted conventional treatment options, RDN offers renewed hope, particularly when combined with ongoing lifestyle support and medical care. According to a study in TheLancet study, it complements both medication and lifestyle changes, but unlike medications, RDN maintains blood pressure reductions consistently over a 24-hour period. Resistant hypertension is not just a more stubborn version of high blood pressure—it is a distinct medical condition that requires deeper investigation, targeted treatment. and a shift in how both patients and clinicians approach it. With greater awareness, timely diagnosis, and innovative therapies like RDN, it is possible to bring even the most unrelenting cases of high blood pressure back under control-and protect long-term health in the process.(Dr. Y. Vijayachandra Reddy is a senior consultant & interventional cardiologist at Apollo Main Hospitals, Chennai

Exodus under a blistering sun in Rayalaseema



In Byluppala village of Kurnool district, four-year-old Nandini and five-year-old Harshavardhan scampered around their house, their excited shrieks drowning out their grandmother Malakka Hanumanthamma's gentle reprimand for playing under the blistering summer sun. At 80, Hanumanthamma struggles to care for the two children as well as her ailing husband, Timmaiah, alone, but it can't be helped. Her three sons and daughters-in-law work in Hyderabad as labourers and won't be back until after June, when the monsoon is well under way.

It's the norm in Byluppala, where 40-odd families leave behind their young children and elderly parents every summer to migrate to various parts of the State and beyond in an age-old tradition known as "Suggi", which persists in the parched land of Rayalaseema. The practice is especially prevalent in the drought-prone Adoni and Pathikonda divisions of Kurnool district. "Even I used to migrate, but now I am too old to work, so I stay back in the village with the children," says Hanumanthamma. Nandini and Harshavardhan are the children of Hanumanthamma's youngest son. The money her sons send and the monthly social security pension keep the household afloat, but loneliness is taking a toll on the elderly couple. "I can only hear my sons [over mobile phone], but not see them," she says, in a voice heavy with grief. When unwell, she goes to a nearby Primary Health Centre (PHC). "If I can't even go that far, somebody [neighbours] will take care of me. If I need money, my sons transfer it to someone in the village or the doctor treating me," she adds.

Suggi is driven primarily by Rayalaseema's dependence on rain-fed agriculture. Land, traditionally regarded as the cornerstone of stable life, fails to make an impact here. Hanumathamma's family, too, has a few acres, but her sons can only cultivate it between the monsoon period of June to September, and even that depends on the rainfall. The only crop they can grow is cotton.

"We can only use the variety that requires less water, but the yield is much lower than that of the varieties grown in irrigated areas," she says. While an acre of irrigated field yields cotton worth over ?1,00,000, the family's rain-fed fields produce just enough to fetch around ?30,000-?40,000 an acre, she adds. With jobs lacking, people are forced to

choose between migration and the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Scheme (MGNREGS), which pays a modest ?307 a day but often delays payment by 2-3 months.Project Director (Kurnool), District Water Management Agency (DWMA), P. Venkara Ramanaiah says the agency, which implements MGNREGS in the district, employs one lakh people a day and gives work to whoever comes forward. Though he acknowledged the complaints regarding low wages, he noted that it is fixed by the Centre. A senior official of the agency, who sought anonymity, says that delay happens in the payment of wages because it take time for the Centre to release payment for the bills of the works executed. Migrant work, on the other hand, pays a person significantly higher than MGNREGS, making Suggi a preferred option for the villagers. Fifty-five-year-old P. Maddileti from Bandimeeda Agraharam in Gonegandla mandal says they can make a reasonable sum working in chilli fields in Guntur during summer. "The amount depends on the contract. Some farmers engage us for daily wages, while others task us with harvesting chillies from two or three acres. The whole family pitches in to complete the work as early as possible and move on to other fields. On average, a family member earns ?800-?1,000 a day," he adds. Years ago, agents used to visit the villages, pick up people and transport them to Guntur, Hyderabad, Bengaluru and even as far as Mumbai. Now, however, people get in touch with farmers directly, and four or five families leave for the work in groups, he points out. A walk through Byluppala village shows the scale of the migration. Most houses are either locked or have only elderly people and young children. "Over half the villagers have migrated," says Malakka Rangamma, another elderly resident in the village with a story similar to that of Hanumanthamma.

Malakka Rangamma standing outside one of the locked house in Byluppala village. The residents have left for Hyderabad in search of jobs . Rangamma's three sons, along with their families, have also migrated to other places.

Malakka Rangamma standing outside one of the locked house in Byluppala village. The residents have left for Hyderabad in search of jobs . Rangamma's three sons, along with their families, have also migrated to other places. | Basavappa, an old-timer in the same village, says that even someone with 30 acres in these areas has to migrate. "Who would want to leave behind the place they grew up in, their young children and elderly parents and go off to distant lands if they have a choice?" he asks.

Bannur in Aspari mandal looks deserted. Sitting under a large banyan tree is 65-year-old Mangali Venkateswarlu. "I have 10 acres, which deprives me of a social security pension, but the land is useless. Where is the water to cultivate it? Sinking a borewell is futile," he says. Over half the villagers, including his three sons, have migrated to Telangana for work. "Some leave the village soon after Sankranti and return for Ugadi, only to leave again later. This time around, some didn't even turn up for Ugadi," he adds. According to sources, most of the children in these families are enrolled in social welfare residential schools while their parents migrate to far-off places. Because the region doesn't get much rain, Kurnool and other parts of Rayalaseema cannot rely on tanks to ensure year-round water availability. So, when summer peaks, tanks and ponds in the region dry up, leaving families in dire water shortage. In Pathikonda, Adoni and Aspari mandals, people trek kilometres together to fetch water. Motorcycles and pushcarts laden with plastic pots filled with water trundling along dusty country roads are a common sight during these

Why educational institutions must engage students in community service

Educational institutions are generally built to serve society through teaching, research, and leadership in the communities that they serve. They are morally accountable to create value for society through engaging their students, teachers and resources in the process of social transformation. Nonetheless, community engagement across India is not much seen or practised. This is owing to the enormous pressure on schools and colleges that confines them to routine teaching and learning processes of the subjects and contents in the curriculum.

Why it's importantThe impulse to get benefits out of mapping educational goals with community engagement is poor among students and educators, despite the repeated attempts from regulatory bodies and governments to ensure their participation in the community's well-being. The National Service Scheme (NSS), a traditional method of connecting students with the community, has been lost due to the coaching culture gaining importance. Students are exhausted from routine learning and coaching and seldom think of oth-

Community engagement is a systematic process by which the youth become involved with and constructively contribute their time, energy, and efforts to their environments with a sense of purpose. Students and educational institutions must believe that an issue that affects society impacts their lives in some way and work with public, govern-



ment, and non-government organisations to create sustainable visions for the future. Involving students can help them understand and address issues that affect people's well-being and achieve sustainable outcomes, and equitable decision-making processes that deepen relationships and trust between the educational institutions and communities. What can be doneEducational institutions should evolve different approaches for community engagement. Students individually or with their teachers-can conduct research to ascertain community needs and involve themselves in assessing and developing ideas for inclusive and sustainable development. Students can develop material to educate communities about their socio-economic issues and improve their employment skills. Student volunteers can assist the government's literacy drive and help the public be aware of human and constitutional rights. They can help

small vendors and micro and small-scale entrepreneurs improve their business skills and train the community in energy saving environment conservation. Much can be done to educate the community to access health insurance schemes of both the state and union governments. Students can also engage with migrant labours and help them be aware of their health status, and the availability of health facilities in and around their workplace. Educational institutions can offer public access to their libraries free of cost, as is done by many U.S. universities. Community engagement helps students develop empathy, a sense of belonging and empowers them to take action. Research has shown that students who are involved in community activities are able to adapt easily to diversity, develop leadership skills, and engage in critical self-reflection. They become socially responsible, compassionate, and disciplined. Beyond the benefits to indi-

vidual students, such activities offer educational institutions greater acceptance among the public, build goodwill and reputation. The UGC Guidelines for Institutional Development Plan 2024 and Social Responsibility and Community Engagement in India 2.0, 2022, respectively call for aligning academic values with social expectations, ensuring relevance and existence. Nonetheless, a well-tailored manual facilitating community engagement is the need of the hour, to execute programmes in a systematic manner. For successful implementation, the support of managements and teachers is indispensable. Educational institutions should establish an Office of Community Engagement (OCE) to plan and implement impactful activities that bring positive changes and help attain the UN SDGs.The writer is Professor and Principal Faculty of Manage-Sciences, Sri ment Ramachandra Institute of Higher Education and Research. sjesiah@gmail.com

Why engineering graduates from tier-2, tier-3 colleges struggle: The skill gap few talk about



When Saif (name changed to protect anonymity) graduated from a private engineering college in Madhya Pradesh, he dreamed of a career in Civil Engineering. Although he had done well in college, scoring high marks and completing a reputable internship, he was unaware of the skills required to get a job. "I was ahead of most of my classmates, but I didn't even know what the 'skills' companies looked for were called," he said.

To secure a job that paid on a par with his IIT or NIT friends, Saif had to upskill through online courses and his master's degree - efforts he believes could have been avoided with better institutional support at the undergraduate level. After completing his Bachelor's, Saif felt compelled to pursue a Master's degree, not by choice, but by necessity; he lacked industry-relevant skills, exposure, and career guidance. He mentioned that the curriculum at his tier-3 college was outdated and disconnected from current market or trend needs. "I realised I had to learn the skills myself this time and not depend on the college," he said. Saif's story isn't an outlier. It is a familiar situation faced by thousands of engineering graduates from tier-2 and tier-3 colleges across India. Despite holding the same degrees as their IIT or NIT counterparts, many find themselves locked out of core industry jobs.

The barriers can be numerous; a lack of practical, upto-date skills due to rigid or outdated curricula, as Saif mentioned; lack of confidence in expression and communication; or lower motivational levels in students. Alaf Azam Khan, Senior Product Manager at Increff in Bengaluru who has interviewed 1000+ top tier engineering students for his company, noted a sharp difference in student behaviour between pre-COVID and post-COVID batches. "Our company offers Pre Placement Offers early during internships, and we used to invest significant time training interns. But with the batch just after COVID, we had to revoke PPOs because many students lacked initiative and were unwilling to learn or contribute ideas."Siva Prasad, a retired IIT professor, highlights a key challenge that students from tier-3 engineering colleges face during the hiring process is poor communication skills. While many are technically competent, they often struggle to express their ideas clearly during interviews or group discussions.

English or professionalism can be a problem if a student who comes from a rural background joins a tier-3 in an urban or semi-urban college. Thus the lack of fluency in English, hesitation while speaking, and difficulty structuring responses can cause even skilled and talented students to be overlooked in favour of more confident speakers, he added. This communication gap is often the result of limited exposure to soft skill training, internships, and peer-learning (group-learning) opportunities. In many tier-3 institutions, the academic focus tends to be on rote learning and theory, with little emphasis on building confidence, public speaking, or professional etiquette.

Mr. Alaf also mentioned that recruitment drives in India often disproportionately favour students from top-tier engineering institutions, more from NITs in his company's case, as they are significantly polished, confident and even well prepared for interviews. The ecosystem in these premier institutes often includes access to active alumni networks, regular workshops, industry and market exposure, which makes a well-structured environment that gives them a significant edge during placements. Varadarajan Sridharan, an EdTech researcher currently pursuing a Master's at UCL, London, and formerly associated with organisations such as Microsoft, Cognizant, and NTTF, says campus placements have increasingly become a public relations tools for the institution rather than a true indicator of academic or professional capability. Many colleges use full-page advertisements to lure students and their families, promising guaranteed jobs at the end of the four-year course. This, he noted, is often presented as a marker of the institution's

However, the focus in such cases shifts away from building capable, curious learners to merely producing graduates who have to be hand-held to land their first job. In reality, he argued, what is needed today is not just placements but an ecosystem that first nurtures learnability. "If there is a sense of purpose built in students in their early career, then they will learn superfast," he said.

With the current cutbacks on hiring, tier 2 and 3 students are getting squeezed out more. And the cutbacks have affected the top institutions as well. The 364th report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education tabled in March highlights a sharp decline in placements at India's top engineering institutions, including IITs, NITs, and IIITs. Between 2021-22 and 2023-24, 22 of the 23 IITs recorded a drop in placements, with 15 IITs seeing a decline of over 10 percentage points. Imbesat Ahmad, CEO at Filo, instant tutoring platformand an IIT Kharagpur alumni, said that the rise of AI tools has reduced the need for large entry-level teams and AI tools that able to do 10x more work in terms of productivity with just five engineers. "The work which was earlier done by a team of 20+, AI is taking away mediocrity."Shashank Malhotra, Senior Vice President (FRM) at Swiss Re, Bengaluru and an IIT Kanpur alumnus, observed that students, whether in tier-1 or tier-3 colleges, have wide access to study material and online courses. but those in tier-3 often lack proper guidance to pursue these resources effectively. He emphasised that peer and senior groups in the field can foster discussions, both, offline and online, helping students understand how to improve their odds, participate in competitions just to test the waters, and make informed decisions. He added, "The system may well take a long time to improve. Meanwhile, students should focus on the things that are under their control."The advice fits well with Saif's experiences. Poor training and lack of

professional exposure in his undergraduate years pushed him to pursue a Master's degree from Maulana Azad National Institute of Technology, Bhopal in order to stand on equal footing with his peers. He worked on 71+ government projects as a civil engineer for six years.

Today tier 2 and 3 college students can benefit from skilling programs over and beyond the college and the curriculum. Government-led skill development schemes such as PMKVY (Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana) and NASSCOM's FutureSkills initiative, which is a government-industry partnership aimed at reskilling and upskilling India's IT workforce in technologies like AI, cybersecurity, cloud computing, and data science. Simultaneously, edtech platforms like Coursera, NPTEL, Scaler, and UpGrad are transforming how students access knowledge beyond the classroom curriculum. These platforms provide structured learning paths, expert instruction, mentorship, and in some cases, career support.

Some engineering colleges are now beginning to embrace innovation more proactively. Several tier-2 institutions have started setting up incubation cells, inviting startups for placements, and encouraging student-led projects or entrepreneurship. These initiatives can demonstrate that even within conventional academic structures, meaningful change is possible when institutions prioritise experiential learning and industry alignment. At the same time, a few innovative startups and institutions have stepped in to bridge the gap left by traditional colleges. EngineersConnect, a communitv-driven platform founded in 2022 and recognised by the Ministry of Education, helps engineering students from smaller towns build relevant projects, join hackathons, and network with startups and recruiters. "This is a platform for everyone in the ecosystem like students, from first year to last, alumni, and recruiters." says Bhushan Gaikwad, Founder and CEO of the startup. Engineers Connect is a "discovery and showcase platform for both skills and talent" that offers tools like scoring systems to help students understand where they stand and how they can improve. "This is a platform for everyone in the ecosystem like students, alumni, and recruiters and provide them the opportunities that are often out of reach in traditional college settings," he added.Bhushan experienced this gap firsthand as a student at Wadia College of Engineering. The platform's idea popped up in his mind when he experienced no campus placements, limited mentorship, and a lack of exposure to like-minded people. He noticed his peers and himself in a space where real skills were often overlooked during hiring because they didn't belong to a top college or have

tute in Bengaluru, that is redefining how technical education is delivered to aspiring professionals from diverse backgrounds especially those without access to tier-1 institutions. Masai's core model is outcome-oriented and based on the principle that students should not have to pay for education there (Pay After Placement (PAP) structure), until they are gainfully employed. With its PAP structure, students pay nothing until they land a job with a minimum salary, making it a low-risk, high-impact option for learners from tier-2 and tier-3 colleges who may not have the financial flexibility. Masai focuses on practical skills with intensive, bootcamp-style courses in Full Stack Web Development, Data Analytics and more. The school's rigorous curriculum prioritises hands-on learning, real-world projects, and professional development, enabling students, even those from non-computer science backgrounds to transition into

Masai School, for instance, is a new-age career insti-

Govt to develop digital platform for e-filing of documents in trade remedy probes

New Delhi: The government is developing a digital platform to enable the electronic submission of documents in trade remedy investigations with a view to further promoting transparency, efficiency, and ease of access for all stakeholders, an official statement said on Saturday.

These investigations are carried out by the commerce ministry's arm Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR). Since 1995, India has initiated over 1,200 trade remedy investigations and recent interventions have protected domestic sectors, including solar energy and advanced materials, such as solar cells and copper wire rods, from unfairly priced imports and subsidised goods.

"Looking ahead, the government is developing a digital platform to enable the electronic submission of documents in trade remedy investigations," the commerce ministry said in the statement.

The platform is expected to go live soon, offering enhanced transparency, efficiency, and ease of access for all stakeholders, it said. The main objective of the directorate is to protect sensitive sectors against the adverse impact of trade liberalisation, like dumping and subsidies from any exporting country, by way of carrying out investigations in a time-bound manner. The main functions of the DGTR include conducting anti-dumping, anti-subsidy/CVD (countervailing duty), and safeguard investigations. The finance ministry takes the final decision to impose these duties.

'Digital arrests': Now you see me, now you don't



Over the past three months, Ruchi Garg, 44, a stay-at-home mother of two in Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh, has preferred offline transactions to digital ones. In August, a 13-minute WhatsApp audio call changed the way she uses the Internet and social media. Like many others in her circle, Garg used to spend up to eight hours on her phone on various social media apps, especially WhatsApp.One morning, after her second son had gone to school and her husband to office, Garg got a WhatsApp call from a number displaying the photo of a police officer in uniform. "I couldn't understand why a police officer would be calling me," she says.

"The man spoke quickly, saying that my elder son, who is studying engineering in a college in Vellore [in Tamil Nadu], had been arrested in a major scam. He told me that if I wanted to save his reputation, I would have to pay ?80,000," she says. The money, he said, was to prevent her son's photograph from being widely circulated. "He didn't let me hang up. He insisted that if I wanted to consult my husband, I should call him from another number," says Garg. She panicked and sent the money to the Unified Payments Interface number the scammer had given her. "I could hear my son's screams in the background," she recalls. "Maybe they used AI to generate his voice." When the caller asked for more money, something felt odd, and she called her son from another number. "He said he was in class. I understood that I had been scammed and hung up," she says.

Garg is overwhelmed by what happened to her; shocked that the scammer had profiled her, and knew where and what her son was studying. There is fear of being scammed again. "I verbally informed the Senior Superintendent of Police in Vellore as I was worried about my son, but they did not pursue the case as the [scammer's] number was from Pakistan," she says. Garg is among thousands of Indians who have been the target of a scam known colloquially as 'digital arrest'. From January 1 to November 15 this year, as many as 92,323 'digital arrests' have been reported across the country with people collectively being cheated of ?2,140.99 crore, as per the Indian Cybercrime Coordination Centre (I4C) that operates under the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and is the nodal body for monitoring, analysing, and investigating cybercrime trends. There are many more like Garg who have not filed police complaints. On October 27, Prime Minister Narendra Modi cautioned people against the new cybercrime. He described what Garg and others like her have gone through. Criminals collect personal information and make phone or video calls to prospective victims. They pose as officials from various law enforcement agencies, and at times from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), and extort money by creating an atmosphere of fear. 'Digital arrests' are just one of the many large-scale organised cybercrimes in India. According to I4C, Indians are likely to lose over ?1.2 lakh crore, roughly 0.7% of the GDP, over the next year due to cyber frauds. Through 2024, until November 11, financial fraud in the country reported via MHA's cybercrime portal, cybercrime.gov.in, stood at ?19,888.42 crore. The 1930 helpline to report such fraud recorded 14.41 lakh calls. In 2023, up to 15.56 lakh calls were received and India's total cybercrime financial fraud was reported at ?921.59 crore. As per I4C, cybercrimes witnessed an increase of 113% from 2021 to 2022 and 60% from 2022 to 2023.

Held hostage digitallySunita Mehta (name changed upon request), a 57-year-old Central government employee, was travelling on work on May 24 this year during the Lok Sabha election. Back home in Delhi, her husband was alone. "As soon as I left, my husband, Rajesh (name changed to protect identity), received an automated call stating that his parcel was stuck in the Customs Department. But we were not expecting any parcel," Mehta recalls. The call was then forwarded to a person who claimed that banned items had been found in the parcel and that the call was being transferred to the Crime Branch.

The caller instructed Rajesh to download Skype. Once he did, a person in a police uniform appeared on screen and informed him that documents pertaining to his identity were being misused for money laundering. The caller showed him a photograph of a Minister in jail and alleged that four bank accounts in Rajesh's name were used by someone involved in financial crimes. "Another person in a police uniform appeared on screen and showed Rajesh a letter bearing the logos of the Crime Branch, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), and other probe agencies. They told him that RBI rules stipulated he would need to transfer 96% of his money to a government bank account for verification. They said after verification, the money would be returned," Mehta says.

The call continued for more than 24 hours as the scammers said they needed to monitor Rajesh 24x7, Mehta says. They even asked him to show them the bathroom before he entered in order to check if anyone else was around. "The moment he paused, another person would appear on the video and start talking. They terrorised him. They claimed to be watching our home with drones and warned him that if he turned off the video, the police would arrest him," she says. The next morning, Rajesh went to a bank near his home in south Delhi's Saket with the Skype video still on. He transferred ?5.68 lakh to a so-called surveillance bank account of the government. When he questioned the scammer about it being a savings bank account, the scammer assured him that it was done intentionally so that money launderers would not be alerted. At one point, Rajesh said he would speak to his lawyer. The caller grew angry and warned him that all his money would be seized, and that he would be sent to jail. "They assured him that the money would be returned within 20 minutes. However, after 2-3 hours, when the money didn't come back, we immediately called the cybercrime helpline," Mehta says. She adds that the police only placed the account under surveillance on May 30. "By then, the money had been transferred through several bank accounts." Mehta says when they took the case to court, "the bank argued that the money remaining in the account belonged to other victims and our funds had already been moved to other bank accounts". In court, it was revealed that on the same day at least 30 people had been given that account number to transfer funds to.On August 20, around 550 km from Delhi, a physician in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, fell victim to an identical crime.

He was held hostage digitally for 48 hours and lost ?48 lakh. On November 14, U.P. Police's Special Task Force (STF) arrested five persons from Gurugram, Haryana, who had cheated the physician. "While investigating, we found that the money from the Lucknow doctor was deposited in two bank accounts and subsequently transferred to 178 other bank accounts," says Vishal Vikram Singh, Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP), STF, U.P. Police. The main accused was identified as Pankaj Surela, 28, a graduate and resident of Alwar, Rajasthan.

Singh says Surela had gone to work in a 'scam compound' in Cambodia in March. The outfit was owned by five or six Chinese nationals, with staff hired from Pakistan, Nepal, and India. "They received training in how to cheat people by posing as CBI, police, Crime Branch, and narcotics department officials," the ASP says. The suspects were arrested on charges of cheating, forgery, and criminal conspiracy under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and Section 66 of the Information Technology Act, 2000.

The I4C has identified 'scam compounds' in Asian countries such as Cambodia, Myanmar, Laos, and Azerbaijan that resemble call centres. These compounds used to be casinos that shut down during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to a United Nations report from October, Indian youth are being recruited with offers of IT or administrative work, often based in Thailand. On arrival, they are met by agents who transfer them to counterparts, who take them across the border into Cambodia, Myanmar, and Lao PDR. Around 1,300 Indians have been rescued from 'scam compounds' between May and August this year.On January 3, Rajesh Kumar, chief executive officer of I4C, said at a press conference that around 50% of cybercrime complaints on the national helpline every day have their origin in China and pockets of Cambodia and Myanmar. Surela told the STF that the 'scam compound' operators have local conduits in India. He was working for Chinese operators after returning from Cambodia, where he stayed for 15-20 days. "Up to 30% of the commission is assured to the holder of the bank account where the money is parked. It is not only mule accounts; people are also renting their accounts out,' Singh says. According to I4C, about 4,000 mule bank accounts are identified every day by investigating agencies. Over the past year, over seven lakh mule bank accounts have been blocked. Officials say the defrauded money may be used for terror financing and money laundering, and is often pushed out of the country in the form of cryptocurrencies. "They exploit a person's inner fear. If the victim shares their Aadhaar number, they misuse the information and convince the person that they are involved in a crime. If you appear weak, they play with the mind and the person succumbs to the fraud," Singh says. The golden hour for reporting the crime is within 24 hours. The helpline and the portal run by the I4C are linked to State police apparatuses in addition to over 300 financial intermediaries, banks, and wallets. Real-time alerts are sent to banks and payment wallets by I4C after a financial fraud is reported, asking them to block or freeze the amount.

However, data from I4C show that out of the ?11,269 crore that was reported to have been defrauded in the first six months of the year, ?1,361 crore was blocked by banks, but only ?11.97 crore was returned to the victims. Until June, I4C had asked Microsoft to block 1,500 Skype IDs involved in digital frauds. Fraud alertOn October 28, the I4C issued an alert against illegal payment gateways facilitated by mule bank accounts following raids by the Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh police forces. Visakhapatnam Commissioner of Police Shanka Brata Bagchi says the police identified the main accused who brought the scam from China to India. The illegal set-up was running from a flat in the city in the guise of a cosmetics company. "The extent of the scam can be uncovered only when the masterminds, who are hiding in the U.S and Taiwan, are caught. All of them have Chinese passports," Bagchi says. Five persons, including four women, were arrested in Visakhapatnam. Two primary suspects — Sairam and Girish — had hired people for ?25,000 each. Bagchi suggests that a certain percentage of police hirings should be reserved for cybersecurity experts.Meanwhile, in Chennai, C. Jebaraj, 75, a retired university professor, and his wife Shanthi, 71, almost became victims of a 'digital arrest' on November 5. "We were on a video call with men who initially claimed to be from the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India," says Shanthi, a home-maker. "Then they told us that my husband's name had appeared in a major money laundering scam involving politicians and policemen, and that we needed to cooperate to save him. One of the callers was even wearing a police uniform," she adds. After the call went on for a couple of hours, their daughter, who also lives in the city, called Jebaraj. He told her that they couldn't speak and briefly explained what was happening. "She rushed home. When she arrived, the call was still going on with the logo of Delhi Police's Crime Branch on the screen. She immediately disconnected the call. Later, we received a threatening message saying that if we didn't take the call, we would be arrested." Shanthi says. Her daughter then reported the incident to the cybercrime helpline, informed the bank, and requested a password change for their accounts. A police officer said people's personal information is on sale on the dark web and apps like Telegram for as low as 10 paise. According to Akshat Khetan, founder of AU Corporate Advisory and Legal Services that also offers financial services, black market data trading must be tackled jointly by the government and technology platforms. He calls for stronger penalties for violations to deter illegal sale of data

Modus operandi of fraudsters: How scamsters execute digital arrests revealed

New Dehli: As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, cybercrimes are on the rise, and digital arrest and other online scams are emerging as a new threat.

These scams have a certain modus operandi where the fraudsters impersonate as officials of the law enforcement agencies and use video calls to convince victims that they are involved in criminal activities and hence accountable to the law. Fearing action, they give in to the hollow threats of these scammers. Typically, these scams begin with an automated message, projecting it as a call from the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI). The phone calls are usually made via WhatsApp voice or video call. The scammers, posing as officials give the victim two options: either report to a police station or court within a few hours or provide a statement via phone. Unsuspecting victims usually opt for the latter, which sets the stage for the scam.In recent incidents, these scammers also show fabricated government documents letters to justify their identity,

thereby leading the former to believe they are under threat

Armed insurrection to parliamentary politics



The recent electoral success of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP)-led National People's Power in the parliamentary and presidential elections in Sri Lanka highlights a less noticeable trend, where left-wing revolutionary groups, once dedicated to armed struggle, are shifting toward democratic engagement. Historically guided by ideologies such as Marxism-Leninism and Maoism, these groups have viewed the state as a tool of capitalist oppression, believing that social and economic justice demands dismantling capitalist structures by force. In recent decades, however, some of the most prominent insurgencies, including Nepal's Maoists, El Salvador's Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN), and certain Marxist-Leninist groups within India, have pursued a new path by entering parliamentary politics. This shift reflects a pragmatic blend of ideological adaptation and responsiveness to changing political reali-

Left-wing insurgencies typically emerge with the belief that dismantling the capitalist state is necessary for social justice, viewing it as inherently biased toward elite interests, and armed struggle becomes a key tenet of resistance. This conviction is often grounded in the belief that only through force can the structures of oppression be overturned. Many movements, such as those in El Salvador, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka, have adhered to the principle of "protracted people's war" to achieve a revolutionary overthrow of the state. Yet, prolonged insurgency is daunting, requiring extensive resources, popular support, and the resilience to withstand state counterinsurgency tactics. Over time, these factors push revolutionary groups to reconsider armed struggle as the optimal strategy. The harsh realities of insurgency often reveal that public sentiment may shift against sustained violence, particularly when civilian casualties and prolonged hardship weaken popular support. This realisation has spurred some factions to experiment with political engagement to achieve their goals without violence and potentially greater public acceptance. A striking example in NepalThe transformation of Nepal's Maoist insurgency is a striking example of this political shift. The Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) launched a civil war in 1996 to dismantle the monarchy and establish a people's republic. After a decade of intense conflict, the Maoists chose to negotiate, signing the Comprehensive Peace Accord in 2006. This historic agreement permitted them to participate in mainstream politics, allowing former insurgents to engage in governance. By 2008, they played a pivotal role in transitioning Nepal to a federal democratic republic, a landmark achievement for a movement once defined by its commitment to revolutionary overthrow. Their participation in mainstream politics demonstrated how revolutionary ideals could be adapted to op-

A similar transformation took place in El Salvador, where the FMLN, a coalition of Marxist-Leninist guerrilla groups, fought a civil war throughout the 1980s, aiming to overthrow a U.S.-backed government until the 1992 peace accords enabled their shift from an insurgent group to a legitimate political party. The FMLN eventually won national elections, illustrating how left-wing insurgent groups can channel their social and economic agendas through democratic processes, winning significant support in the electoral arena. Over time, the party shifted from revolutionary Marxism to a more moderate leftist stance, aligning itself with democratic socialism. What drives the shift

erate within established political institutions.

In India, the story is more complex. The Communist Party of India (Maoist) continues to pursue armed insurgency, especially in rural areas where government presence is weak, holding to Mao's concept of a "protracted people's war". However, other Maoist factions, such as the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) Liberation, have abandoned armed struggle. By the 1980s, the CPI (M-L)

Liberation shifted to democratic participation, contesting elections and becoming a political entity. In Sri Lanka, the JVP provides the latest example of insurgents-turned-politicians. Initially a Marxist-Leninist-Maoist party, the JVP led two uprisings in 1971 and the 1980s, using ingenious methods in their violent strategy to capture power. The brutal suppression of both insurrections led the group to shift course and embrace parliamentary politics. Since the 1990s, within the democratic framework, the JVP could advocate for economic reform, social justice, and workers rights without the costs and sacrifices of warfare. The shift from armed struggle to electoral politics is driven by several factors, with strategic realism being among the most significant. Protracted insurgencies are resource-intensive and often unsustainable, as seen in places such as Nepal and El Salvador, where negotiated peace accords opened the door to political influence without ongoing violence. Shifting public sentiment is another key factor. Over time, the persistence of violence often alienates civilian populations, making it difficult for insurgent groups to sustain a loyal base of support. International pressure has also encouraged insurgent groups to transition to peaceful political engagement. International actors have been instrumental in mediating peace agreements in a global context that often condemns violent insurgencies, particularly in regions where insurgencies have been prolonged. In El Salvador, for example, the United Nations played a vital role in brokering peace between the government and the FMLN, enabling the transition of insurgents to legitimate political figures. Insurgent groups often undergo significant ideological evolution, adapting rigid revolutionary doctrines to fit within democratic frameworks as prolonged conflict pushes them to reassess their methods. The JVP in Sri Lanka, for example, reoriented its Marxist-Leninist-Maoist roots to advocate for social justice within a democratic structure, thereby reaching a broader social base without resorting to armed confrontation. While the JVP has softened its revolutionary rhetoric to appeal to a wider electorate, it has remained committed to its core values of social and economic justice.

The transition from insurgency to electoral politics reveals a paradox among revolutionary groups once rooted in rigid ideologies. While they may have dismissed democratic systems as capitalist instruments, many now use them to drive change. Some view this as a dilution of revolutionary ideals, but it reflects a pragmatic shift - recognising that violent revolution is not the only, and perhaps not the most effective, path to power. By entering mainstream politics, these groups gain avenues to expand representation and amplify marginalised voices. For example, Nepal's Maoists have prioritised rural and marginalised communities, fostering more inclusive governance. The responsesOperating within established political frameworks gives former insurgent groups legitimacy and greater capacity to address the social injustices that motivated their struggle. Yet, whether this shift leads to genuine reform or co-option by existing systems remains uncertain. These groups often face public scepticism about their commitment to democratic norms, as citizens may remember their violent past. To succeed, they must build credibility and balance their ideals with the practical demands of governance. This raises questions about whether ideology drives their actions or merely serves as a tool for power. Often, their transition reflects political realities rather than an abandonment of ideology. Integrating insurgent groups into democratic politics can strengthen the legitimacy of democracy These groups often bring with them large support bases, and their inclusion can reinforce trust in the democratic process, fostering a more participatory and resilient political system — especially when these groups commit to democratic principles and contribute to the development of inclusive governance structures. While some may view this adaptation as an ideological compromise, it could also be seen as an evolution. Left-wing insurgencies adapting to parliamentary politics could be rationalised as a new phase of ideological struggle, reinterpreting revolution in a modern democratic context. In this view, parliamentary engagement is not an anathema but rather an adjustment to contemporary realities where the state can be reformed from within. This transition from armed insurrection to political participation is reshaping the narrative of contemporary insurgencies. It reveals that radical movements can evolve within democratic frameworks. It also rekindles confidence in certain forms of democratic socialism, offering paths that address the systemic issues of capitalism.

Do new schemes ahead of elections amount to 'voter bribes'?

On November 23, the incumbent Bharatiya Janata Party-led Mahayuti alliance won a landslide victory in Maharashtra Assembly elections. Among several reasons cited for this victory are the implementation of the Mukhyamantri Majhi Ladki Bahin Yojana — a direct benefit transfer programme introduced by the Maharashtra government in July 2024 - four months ahead of the polls. The scheme, much like its Madhya Pradesh counterpart, which was also introduced ahead of the Assembly elections there, aims to provide monthly financial assistance of ?1,500 to poor women between the ages of 21 and 65 whose incomes are less than ?2.5 lakh annually. Critics say such schemes amount to bribing voters and giving the incumbent government an unfair advantage. To discuss this, Kunal Shankar spoke to Reetika Khera and Vikas Rawal. Edited excerpts: Your initial thoughts.

Vikas Rawal: I think implementing social welfare programmes in response to popular needs, reflected through the political processes is necessary. That said, if this happens just before elections, if it is accompanied by weakening systems of evaluation, independent regulation and so on... And if it does not result in establishing a robust system of social welfare and merely ends in providing election soaps, then there is a problem.

Reetika Khera: Not so long ago in the southern States, parties promised mixer-grinders. At that time too, the media labelled these manifesto promises as freebies. I think of cash transfers as a modern avatar of those electoral promises. Labelling them as bribes would be wrong, just as it was wrong to label electoral promises as freebies. I do have reservations about certain cash transfers, though I support other kinds of cash transfers, like old age pensions and maternity benefits. What you're probably getting at is that these promises reflect the flaw in our democracy. The only time that ordinary people get a hearing and are remembered by political parties is during elections and it is a pity that electoral promises are reduced to small, visible and short-term gains such as these cash transfers. But for those who are on the margins and largely ignored by the powers that be, they'll just take what they get right? There's a related question how much do such promises - mixer-grinder or cash transfers, actually influence voter behaviour? I don't know the answer to that, but as a voter, what would stop me from taking what is due to me through such interventions and yet apply my mind independently to what is a pressing is-

sue for the country and decide who to vote for?

Are DBTs then a failure of the government's attempt to provide better livelihoods, and substitute it with one-time cash transfer schemes?

Reetika Khera: The question arises, do these cash transfers displace spending on health and education? From the point of view of the women who get these cash transfers, they have welcomed it, because they are often vulnerable. But what are cash transfers taking away from, if anything? Fiscally, that's one important question. I was looking at the objectives for the cash transfers to women what are they trying to achieve? There are three objectives which I've come across — one is they (governments) say economic independence for women, another to improve their health and nutrition. And the third, especially in Tamil Nadu, that it was compensation for all the unpaid domestic work. Each of these raise questions. Take economic independence. Isn't that better achieved by making employment opportunities available to them? Why is the central government starving MNREGA (the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act) of funds? It would give women much more money. In Tamil Nadu for instance, they're getting ?12,000 a year (as part of the State's cash transfer scheme). If women were to get 100 days of MNREGA employment, they would get ?29,000 a year - more than double what they get through these cash transfers.

I talked to a woman recently in Chengalpattu and she absolutely prefers employment over cash transfers. The second objective of health and nutrition can also be achieved much better through providing eggs in anganwadis and midday meals. In many North Indian States children are not getting nutritious food. The third objective is compensation for unpaid domestic work: are you then saying that if women are supposed to be doing domestic work only, then they should just be given some money for it? Wouldn't it be much better to think harder about how to change gender norms? So, the problem with these cash promises is not that it is a "bribe", but rather what are they trying to achieve? Where do they fit into our conception of a welfare state?

'India willing to cut 100% tariffs; trade deal with Delhi soon': Donald Trump



India is willing to cut 100 per cent tariffs on American goods, US President Donald Trump claimed once again while saying that a trade deal between New Delhi and Washington is coming soon. In an interview to Fox News, Trump, however, said that he is not in a "rush" for the proposed trade deal. Against the backdrop of the US president's repeated claim of India offering to drop all tariffs on American goods, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said in New Delhi on Thursday that "any trade deal has to be mutually

Trump again described India as "one of the highest tariff nations in the world." "They make it almost impossible to do business. Do you know that they're willing to cut 100

per cent of their tariffs for the United States?" Trump said. When asked if the deal with India is coming soon, Trump said, "that'll come soon. I'm in no rush. Look, everybody wants to make a deal with us." Then he went on to add: "South Korea wants to make a deal but I'm not going to make deals with everybody. I'm just going to set the limit. I'll make another some deals. Because I can't, you can't meet with that many people. I've got 150 countries that want to make deals." India and the US are holding talks to firm up a trade deal. "These are complicated negotiations. Nothing is decided till everything is. Any trade deal has to be mutually beneficial; it has to work for both countries," he said. "That would be our expectation from the trade deal." Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal is currently in Washington to assess the progress of negotiations for the proposed

He is expected to hold talks with US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick and US Trade Representative (USTR) Jamieson Greer. To boost bilateral trade, India is seeking duty concessions for labour-intensive sectors like textiles, gems and jewellery, leather goods, garments, plastics, chemicals, shrimp, oil seeds, chemicals, grapes, and bananas in the proposed pact with America. On the other hand, the US wants duty concessions in sectors like certain industrial goods, automobiles (electric vehicles in particular), wines, petrochemical products, dairy, agriculture items such as apples, and tree nuts.

Suez Canal offers 15% discount to cargo ships: Will vessels return to the Red Sea route after US-Houthi ceasefire?

Egypt's Suez Canal Authority (SCA) is offering a 15 per cent discount from May 15 on transit fee to cargo ships of minimum 130,000 mt capacity, underscoring the impact that the Red Sea security crisis has had on the waterway critical to the shortest maritime route to the Mediterranean Sea and beyond from the Arab Peninsula, North-East Africa, and the Arabian Sea. "The SCA has issued incentives and reductions of 15 per cent on the transit tolls of container ships of 130 thousand tonnes or more in net tonnage (loaded or in ballast) for 90 days," said Admiral Ossama Rabiee, SCA chairman and MD after a meeting with the Italian Ambassador to Egypt, Michele Quaroni

Earlier, Rabiee also reached out to 25 major shipping line operators and maritime agencies, urging them to gradually return their vessels to the Suez Canal citing the positive development "towards the return of navigation in the Red Sea". This came three days after US President Donald Trump announced that Iran-backed Houthi militia had agreed to a ceasefire in the Red Sea. The Houthis maintained that Israel-flagged and -linked ships are not part of the agreement with the US, and they will continue to be targeted .In November 2023, Yemen-based Houthi rebels, backed by Iran, began targeting commercial vessels that they believed were linked to Israel and its key allies in response to its military offensive in Gaza. This crisis prompted the world's major container lines to divert their ships from the Red Sea route and navigate around the Cape of Good Hope. With much of the cargo movement rerouting away from the Suez Canal, its revenue crashed to around \$4 billion in 2024 from \$10.3 billion in 2023."This (discount offered) seems to be a move to bring the container ships, also called boxships, back to the Suez Canal. Bulk carriers and tankships were diverted from the Suez Canal, but these boxships were a major source of revenue for the SCA." said Anil Devli, CEO, Indian National Shipowners Association. With the SCA offering steep discounts and the apparent calm in the Red Sea, even if fragile, the central question is: will vessels return to this key artery of global shipping and trade anytime soon? The Suez Canal accounts for nearly 12-15 per cent of global trade, according to IMF data. Nearly 30 per cent of global container traffic flowed through the Suez Canal before the Houthi attacks began. It is also a key passage for 8-9 per cent of global energy flows.

As of May 11, 2025, Suez Canal's daily transit trade volume (TTV) stood at 484,137 mt, compared with 1,349,086 mt a year ago, shows data from PortWatch, a live conflict tracker maintained by the IMF and Oxford University. TTV denotes the total volume of goods transported through a shipping route. Daily TTV stood at 11,052,600 mt as of May 11, 2025 at the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, compared with 1,192,116 mt a year ago, according to PortWatch data. According to an analysis by the Federal Reserve Bank of St Louis, ports in East Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Central Asia, the Middle East and North Africa witnessed a decline in the amount of trade between October 20, 2023 and January 28, 2024 compared to the year-ago period.

Shipping costs in the Suez Canal region soared 180 per cent during the period under consideration. "As firms reroute shipments, the companies that continue to ship through the Suez Canal are likely raising prices to compensate for the higher risk, as well as to take advantage of the reduced shipping supply," the Federal Reserve of St Louis

Like various other countries, India was also heavily reliant on the Red Sea shipping route for exports to Europe, with nearly 80 per cent of the volumes going through the



Suez Canal. The shifting of trade flows from the Red Sea to the route around Africa have evidently impacted Indian exporters by denting their margins as they now have to contend with higher freight rates for exports to Europe and beyond. With much of India's trade dependent on overseas shippers and foreign-flagged commercial vessels, there is little the country can do in the short term to shield itself from the impact of the Red Sea crisis. Well-adjusted to new route, shipping giants may be hesitant

While the Red Sea security crisis hit traffic and revenue for the Suez Canal, it also led to higher shipping costs as vessels go around Africa, extending voyage durations by 10-14 days—and fuel burn significantly, leading to higher freight rates. The longer voyages also made vessel availability tighter, again having an inflationary impact on freight rates. And for vessels still looking to transit the Red Sea, war risk insurance premiums skyrocketed, making the route unviable for most. To be sure, while freight rates have risen as ships chose to go around the Cape of Good Hope, shipping companies have mostly passed on the cost to the consumers, Devli said. During this time, the SCA's revenues crashed, while shipping lines were able to navigate the storm reasonably well, with global majors like Maersk reporting growth in revenue and profit on the back of higher freight rates and strong container demand. "The Cape of Good Hope route has resulted in ship owners charging higher freight rates, as shown by the earnings of Danish shipping giant Maersk. The company's vessels will continue to sail around the Cape of Good Hope since the declaration of a ceasefire was not adequate," Devli added.

Given that the global shipping lines have adjusted rather well to the new normal of using the longer and safer route around Africa and still protecting—and even growing their profits, there is little reason for them to return to the Suez Canal route till they are fully confident of the safety of their ships and crew. "Even if the truce is a step in the right direction, I think many players will remain cautious until there's consistent evidence that navigation is truly safe," Arturo Regalado, Kpler Insight Senior LNG and Natural Gas Analyst said.

The Red Sea crisis has also hit liquefied natural gas (LNG) flows via Suez Canal which plummeted to 4.15 million tonnes in 2024 from 32.36 million tonnes in 2023 and 34.94 million tonnes in 2022 according to Kpler data. Meanwhile, LNG volumes going via the Cape of Good Hope increased by a little over five-fold from 11. 76 million tonnes in 2022 to 59.37 million tonnes in 2024. According to industry watchers, a key factor that is adding to shipping lines' hesitation is the fact that the Houthis are still likely to target Israel's ships and those headed for Israeli ports, potentially making the maritime route volatile and unsafe for other vessels in the region when such attacks or counter-attacks

From Asiatic lion to pygmy hog, 10 unique Indian animal species found nowhere else on Earth

India's rich biodiversity is, undoubtedly, one of its greatest natural treasures. From majestic big cats to elusive amphibians, the country is home to an array of species, some of which exist nowhere else on Earth. Here are 10 extraordinary species found only in India, and where you can spot them:

Asiatic Lions

Gir National Park in Gujarat is home to Asiatic Lions. Different from their African counterparts, these big cats come with a larger tuft tail, folded skin on the abdomen and thinner curls on their head.

2. Sangai Deers

Found only in Manipur's Keibul Lamjao National Park, they are also known as "dancing deers" owing to their habit of jumping through floating grassland habitats (phumdi).

3. Nilgiri Tahr

Also known as Nilgir Sholakilis, this stunning songbird is found in Shola forests of the Western Ghats and the hills of Southern India. It boasts of bright blue plumage, white belly feathers, and a black tail with an orange tip.

4. Kashmir Stag

Spotted in Dachigam National Park in Kashmir and

sometimes in the northern Chamba district of Himachal Pradesh, this subspecies of red deer is also known as Hangul.

A visit to Manas National Park of Assam will get you closer to the world's smallest and rarest wild pig. With a population less than 250, these creatures thrive in wet grasslands and are capable of building their own homes with a roof from scratch.

6. Nilairi Blue Robin

Also known as Nilgir Sholakilis, this stunning songbird found in Shola forests of the Western Ghats and the hills of Southern India, boasts of bright blue plumage, white belly feathers, and a black tail with an orange tip.

7. Ganges River Dolphin With a population of 3750 today, they are found in parts

of Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, and Bihar. 8. Andaman Wild Boar

This animal features a dark coat and sturdy build, thriving in dense forests of the Andaman Islands. Having adapted to the island life, it sustains itself on roots, fruits and small invertebrates found in the tropical region.

What can gamers do to ensure health and device safety



As we race toward mid-May and temperatures persist in the high 30s and low 40s, it's the time of year to discuss the best practices for gaming during the summer months. In such inclement weather, a marathon gaming session can be extremely demanding - both on the gaming device and the gamer. This week, we focus on the essentials to ensure your summer gaming sessions are smooth

When to play?

Early mornings or late evenings in ventilated spaces is the best time because not only is the weather cooler but there is also the chance of a cool breeze making things easier. If you play with the AC on, most times during the day work but I would still recommend not playing between 1-4 pm when the temperature is at its highest.

Where to play?

Despite the stereotypical image of gamers seeking dark places - a dark, cool room is one of the best places to play games. However, with gamers preferring large bright displays and fancy RGB lighting setups it is important to think about how cool one's gaming space is. Always ensure there is enough space around your gaming device for good air flow. In the case of gaming consoles, if they are primarily kept in tight enclosures in TV units, bring them out in the summer and give them the breathing room they require. This week, we focus on the essentials to ensure your summer gaming sessions are smooth and hasslefree. Short bursts of time not exceeding 90 minutes at a time is a good way to go. Try and avoid marathon gaming sessions and ensure there is enough time between gaming sessions for the device to cool down. Also make sure to not leave your systems/consoles in rest modes, unplug the power on your laptops, and don't leave your handhelds in their docks for too long. Onto the more advanced bits in terms of cooling, I would strongly recommend giving your device a thorough clean and using a good blower to get rid of the dust in its many vents. The number of stories I've heard where dust accumulation has prevented cooling and led to a device catching fire is simply too many. If you rely on liquid cooling or gel-based cooling mats, make sure to test the system and the liquid that does the actual cooling.If you play on a PC with one of the newer graphics cards (RTX series or Navi/Radeon RX), liquid cooling is a must. For console players, during the day, I recommend some air-conditioning given how small and tight the console de-

If you play on a mobile phone, then my golden rule is: "If it's hot to the touch, immediately stop playing." I now extend this rule to gaming handhelds like the Switch, ROG Ally, and MSI Claw as well—always be aware of how hot a screen or the backplate feels. While mobile phones are no longer as poorly optimized or throttled for heat as they once were, the handheld market is still relatively new and requires careful monitoring. No playing while charging the device, whether from a wall charger or a power band. Lastly, always make sure you are well-hydrated and take as many breaks as possible during play sessions to maintain your posture and overall health. Gaming can get intense and very hot, and it can lead to you falling ill. You're just as likely to get a heat stroke indoors as you are out in the sun if you're trapped

Pakistan goods in transit via third country being banned

Pakistan goods in transit, Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, Pakistan, Customs, OPERATION SINDOOR, ceasefire, india Pakistan ceasefire, Pakistan drone strike, drone strike, Pakistan drone strike reponse, drone strike reponse, Army strikes, Army strikes in Pakistan, Army strikes Pakistan terror sites, Indian army, Army strikes PoK, Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, Pahalgam attack, Pahalgam terror attack, Pahalgam terrorist attack, Pahalgam terrorists, Indian army, india pakistan ties, india pakistan tensions, article 370, Indian army, Abrogation of Article 370, terrorism, terrorist attack, Kashmir attack, Jammu and Kashmir terrorist attack, Jammu and Kashmir, cross-border infiltration, border security, border infiltration, Pahalgam attack, Pahalgam terror attack, Pahalgam terrorist attack, Pahalgam terrorists, Indian army, india pakistan ties, india pakistan tensions, article 370, Indian army, Abrogation of Article 370, terrorism, terrorist attack, Kashmir attack, Jammu and Kashmir terrorist attack, Jammu and Kashmir, cross-border infiltration, border security, border infiltration, Indian express news, current affairsPrior to the May 2 ban, India had already terminated direct trade with Pakistan, marked by the closure of the Integrated Check Post (ICP) at Attari on April 24, following the Pahalgam terror

The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI), the antismuggling body under the Finance Ministry, has begun blocking in-transit goods originating from Pakistan that are being routed through third countries such as the UAE, a government official told . The increased scrutiny by the Customs authorities follows an immediate government ban on the import and transit of all goods originating in, or exported from, Pakistan, according to a May 2 notification by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry in the wake of the Pahalgam terrorist attack.

The official said the government is closely monitoring goods arriving from Pakistan, and even consignments that may have been in transit before the May 2 notification now fall under the scope of the ban. Under normal circumstances, an exception is made for goods already at sea. "Customs are taking action whenever there is suspicion. At a few ports, the DRI has initiated action — for instance, a Pakistani-flagged ship was not allowed to dock. Traders have been reaching out to authorities, claiming trade losses. But a strong notification was necessary to ramp up scrutiny," the official said. "With regard to goods arriving from third countries, it is sometimes difficult to identify Pakistaniorigin goods based solely on rules-of-origin certificates. However, closer scrutiny through labelling verification of-



ten reveals the product's actual origin," the official said.

The official said it is suspected that Pakistani dates and dry fruits have been entering India through the UAE, and the matter has been raised with the Emirati government. "The UAE has provided production figures, claiming that it also produces dates and dry fruits. But strict notifications serve as a deterrent, even encouraging other countries to avoid bending the norms," the official said. Prior to the May 2 ban, India had already terminated direct trade with Pakistan, marked by the closure of the Integrated Check Post (ICP) at Attari on April 24, following the Pahalgam terror attack. That move was expected to halt cross-border trade worth Rs 3,886 crore between India and Pakistan. According to estimates by the Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI), about \$10 billion worth of Indian goods reach Pakistan via trans-shipment hub routes. Tensions between the two countries — particularly after the 2019 Pulwama attack — reduced bilateral trade from Rs 4,370.78 crore in 2018-19 to Rs 2,257.55 crore in 2022-23. However, trade rebounded to Rs 3,886.53 crore in 2023-24, the highest in the past five years. Notably, total cargo movement also declined from 49,102 consignments in 2018-19 to just 3,827 in 2022-23, the data shows. In dollar terms, annual India-Pakistan trade has shrunk to about \$2 billion over the past five years — a small fraction of the \$37 billion trade potential estimated by the World Bank. India's overall goods trade stands at \$430 billion, while Pakistan's is approximately \$100 billion. The curbing of trade marks a significant shift from the late 1990s, when India took the initiative to boost bilateral trade by extending Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status to Pakistan in 1996, leading to a surge in trading volumes. However, Pakistan never reciprocated by granting the same status to India. In 2019, India revoked Pakistan's MFN status following the Pulwama terrorist at-

Kanpur engineers die after botched hair transplant: What questions should you ask your dermatologist?

Two engineers in Kanpur have died after a botched hair transplant at a private dental clinic, which the police are investigating for employing untrained staff and attempting procedures they were not qualified for. This has raised anxieties about whether hair transplants are safe and an easy option for everybody.Let me say that hair transplants are totally safe if done by skilled and experienced medical practitioners in a well-equipped and clean environment. The process entails relocating healthy hair follicles from a donor site, typically the back of the head, to thinning or balding areas. With precise extraction and minimal scarring, the outcomes have become more natural and enduring.

The right clinic and a qualified dermatologist or hair transplant specialist are most important. All pre- and postoperative instructions should be carefully followed by the patients, such as proper hygiene, avoiding alcohol or smoking, and adhering to prescribed medicines. Expectations must also be realistic. Hair transplants enhance looks but are not guaranteed to completely restore the initial density of hair. Recovery is time-consuming, and hair growth generally begins three to four months after surgery.

1) To begin with, they must go through an exhaustive medical screening to exclude any underlying disease like uncontrolled diabetes, heart condition or infection of the scalp that might predispose them to complications. Let your doctor know about blood thinners and medication that you might be on as they interfere with the healing process. You may have to stop these a week or more before the procedure.



2) Avoid alcohol consumption for 72 hours before the surgery. Avoid smoking for at least two weeks before the surgery.3) Wash your hair with the shampoo prescribed by your surgeon the night before the procedure.4) Wear buttoned up shirts or dresses the first few days to avoid brushing against the newly implanted grafts. Wear a cap for sun protection.5) Post procedure, hydrate yourself, sleep on a tilted pillow for a week and apply cold packs at graft sites.1. Ask about the type of hair fall and does your overall physical condition make you a good candidate for transplant or not. All kinds of hair fall do not need a transplant. Besides, you must have those many healthy hair follicles.2. What method will you perform and why? Find out the advantages and disadvantages of each method.3. What will be the risks and complications?

Neeraj Chopra's 90m dream achieved: On 'bittersweet' night, Neeraj hopes it is just the beginning for bigger throws



GNS News Agency, May 22

A wry smile, a shake of the head, and a side embrace with his fellow competitors. There wouldn't be a more muted, low-key celebration to any sporting accomplishment than this, let alone when an athlete joins an exclusive club that only a couple of dozen were a part of before Friday night.Indeed, Neeraj Chopra roared and raised his arms in the trademark fashion as he launched the javelin into Doha's night sky. But that he always does. The difference this time — on this balmy evening with the temperature in the low 30s and very little wind — was that the spear flew and kept flying. By the time it returned to earth, crashing into the other end of the arena, the javelin had travelled the farthest Neeraj - or any other Indian, for that matter — had ever thrown -90.23m. Three years after coming within 6cm of the 90m mark, Neeraj finally breached the barrier at the Doha leg of the Diamond League on Friday night. The landmark throw came on his third attempt, thus becoming only the 25th javelin thrower to cross the 90m-mark. When the scores flashed on the big screen and were announced in the stadium, Neeraj looked more relieved than happy. That Neeraj would finish in the top two of the Doha leg of the Diamond League was taken for granted. He's done that in every competition since the Tokyo Olympics. The only thing that mattered was if, in the new season, he'd offer something new — in other words, a throw that would cross 90m. With the proverbial monkey now off his back, at least he wouldn't constantly be bombarded with that one question which has haunted him wherever he has gone, sometimes even threatening to overshadow everything else he'd achieved — an Olympic gold? 'That's fine, but what about 90m?' The World Championship title? 'Alright, but when will you throw 90?' An Olympic silver? 'But hey, Arshad Nadeem romped to a gold with a daddy 90!

All those days, Neeraj painstakingly explained that it was winning that mattered and not the distance. On a night when the distance he coveted became the central focus ironically, after no one bugged him with the 90m question in the lead-up — Neeraj didn't win. And the irony wasn't lost

on him, and Neeraj called the evening 'bittersweet'. That he did not win the Doha leg of the Diamond League despite the giant throw — Germany's Julian Weber, like Neeraj, breached the 90m-mark for the first time as well; throwing a mammoth 91.06m in his final attempt to finish first — only underscores how crucial it was for the Indian to get this out of the way. Lieutenant Colonel (Honorary) Neeraj Chopra clinches Silver at the Wanda Diamond League in #Doha with a record-breaking throw of 90.23m, surpassing his own National Record and breaching the 90m mark for the first... Add Arshad Nadeem, who had given this competition a miss, to the mix, and it looks increasingly likely that the World Championships podium in Tokyo this year will be decided with 90m-plus throws. Yet, for all the hype, unrelenting obsessing, and desperation over this feat, there was also an element of inevitability to it. Nine months ago, after finishing second at the Paris Olympics, an anguished Neeraj was at pains to convince the world that he had it in him to hurl the spear beyond 90m. All he needed, Neeraj had said at the time, was a body that would support his endeavour and, perhaps, a few technical changes. On the eve of the year's curtain raiser for men's javelin, Neeraj said that the groin injury that had hindered his performances was healed. It meant he did not miss throwing sessions, the block was stronger, and the follow-through, better. The noticeable difference was that his block leg functioned. Earlier, Neeraj used to fall to the ground when releasing the javelin because the block leg wasn't straight enough at that point. Consequently, he wasn't able to put all his force into the javelin. On Friday, he looked in more control, didn't fall over, and the release was smoother than before. And, like Neeraj had said, he gained a few centimetres.

There have been some technical tweaks, too, although the full scope of that is yet to be seen. Neeraj, who has been working with javelin legend and world record holder Jan Zelezny since February, highlighted two areas where the Czech coach suggested tweaks — the trajectory, which Zelezny said was relatively flat, and the fact that the throws landed to the left. Zelezny knows a thing or two about throwing big distances — he has hurled the javelin more than 90m a whopping 52 times in his career. On Friday, he told Neeraj before the competition that a 'big throw' was around the corner. Some of Neeraj's throws on Friday — as well as at a practice meet in South Africa last month — were on a trajectory more towards the centre. When everything falls into place, it would add a few more centimetres, like it happened with Weber, who was just a tad bit better on the night."Normally, he doesn't come for Diamond Leagues," Neeraj said about Zelezny. "(Before competition) he told me, 'Today is the day'. Even after the 90m throw, he told me, 'You can throw 2-3m more'. (But) It was just the first competition of the year."

Virat Kohli is the swami at the Chinnaswamy: Suresh Raina

GNS News Agency, May 22

As Kolkata Knight Riders take on Royal Challengers Bengaluru, one of the intriguing battles to watch out for is how the RCB talisman Virat Kohli is going to deal with the off-spin of Sunil Narine, who is a master of using variations and bamboozling the batters and has picked up RCB opener four times from 17 innings. However, Kohli has been in good form this season, and former Indian cricketer Suresh Raina is confident that Kohli is playing in rhythm and can deal with Narine. "Virat Kohli is the swami at the Chinnaswamy. He won't be able to dismiss Virat now because he is playing in als in 18 years, he might have gotten stuck somewhere," Raina said, speaking on Star Sports.

"However, he is playing 'Virat' knocks now. He is already in the Orange Cap race, and Virat knows how to play him. He is also playing the sweep now. Along with the paddle sweep, he is also playing the slog sweep. He is reading the bowlers well from their hands. It will be important for Virat to look to dominate a little," Raina observed. Raina would also mention that winning the trophy for RCB is the only thing left for Kohli to achieve. "Absolutely, he has retired (from Tests) just now, and will get a different happiness if he wins



RCB the trophy. He is RCB's unbeatable strength. He has got everything in life, just the RCB trophy hasn't come. He will definitely work hard for that. I feel RCB can lift the trophy this year if Virat Kohli plays 'Virat' knocks," he responded."The other 10 players need to respond to him and stay alongside him. He knows how to read the situation. We have seen his running between the wickets along with his cricketing shots. A different energy will be seen now. He has already gotten a break. A different form will be seen. He has done it in the past, so why not now? He will be even more eager to do it now," Raina observed.

'Man Utd are not good at anything': Former captain Roy Keane blasts Manchester United after 18th Premier League loss



GNS News Agency, May 22

The misery for Manchester United continues with nothing going their way in the Premier League 2024-25 season. On Friday, United were handed a 1-0 loss by Chelsea for their 18th loss of the league, compounding problems for the Ruben Amorim side. With just 39 points from 37 games one of United's worst performances — the Red Devils sit just two positions above the relegation zone at 16th place. Former Man United captain and now a football pundit, Roy Keane minced no words and thrashed his former club for their abysmal play. A frustrated Keane went on to say United are not good at anything. "You sit up and watch certain teams, and you hang your hat on something. You say they're really technically very good, they're fit, they're brilliant, they're good at set-pieces. You look at United and go, they're not really good at anything," he said. "The fans, even here tonight, I don't think the United fans are angry anymore. It's just an acceptance. Even the manager's interview there, he's accepting where they are. Now, obviously, you have to be realistic, but you still want to show emotion and a bit of anger. I think United fans will be going back up the motorway to Manchester tonight going: 'Oh, that's what we thought would probably happen.' And that's a sad thing to do," he added. United days are gone United will play fellow struggling Premier League side Tottenham Hotspur in the final of the Europa League for a potential Champions League spot. Keane said if United fails to win the Europa League, players will stop wanting to sign for the club. "If they don't win (the Europa League final) next week, I think the days of everyone wanting to go to Manchester United are gone. I don't think there'll be players looking to sign for Manchester United. That's gone, that bit of excitement with the club," he said

Pro Kabaddi League announces players list

Hyderabad: The Pro Kabaddi League (PKL) announced the 'Elite Retained Players', 'Retained Young Players', and 'New Young Players' for Season 12 on Saturday, with the season 12 auction set to take place on May 31 and June 1 in Mumbai. While most franchises have retained their key players, they will also be looking to build stronger units in the upcoming PKL Season 12 Player Auction.

Top players retained by their respective teams include Sunil Kumar and Amirmohammad Zafardanesh (U Mumba), Jaideep Dahiya (Haryana Steelers), Surender Gill (UP Yoddhas), and the Puneri Paltan duo of Aslam Inamdar and

Meanwhile, a total of 83 players were retained across three categories: 25 in the Elite Retained Players (ERP) category, 23 in the Retained Young Players (RYP) category, and 35 in the New Young Players (NYP) category.

500+ players, including notable Indian players like Pawan Sehrawat, Arjun Deshwal, Ashu Malik and PKL 11's top raider Devank Dalal, are set to go under the hammer. Iranian powerhouses Fazel Atrachali and Mohammadreza Shadloui alongside PKL veterans Maninder Singh, and Pardeep Narwal, will also enter the PKL 12 auction.

We want to end the season as champions: Barcelona coach Hansi Flick ahead of Villarreal match



Hansi Flick BarcelonaBarcelona head coach Hansi Flick, right, gestures for his players to leave the field at the end of the Spanish La Liga soccer match between Barcelona and Espanyol at Lluis Companys Olympic Stadium in Barcelona, Spain, With Barcelona players celebrating their 28th league title win with an open bus parade on Friday, coach Hansi Flick reminded them that the season was not over and they needed to finish the season on a high. The German had an exceptional first season at the Catalan club winning league title, Copa del Rey and the Spanish Super

"Yesterday was a day of celebration and rest. A lot of

players went out partying, but whoever can party can work, it's not an excuse. I want to finish the season as we started it," Flick told reporters on Saturday, a day before hosting Villarreal. "It's the last time we play at home and we want to win. We want to end the season as champions. We haven't lost in 2025 (in the league) and we want to keep it that way. It was incredible to see the faces, the passion of the people, how they celebrated. It was fantastic to see. To celebrate year after year would be amazing. Maybe we can do it again next year. We will work for it. It's everyone's title," he said.On Thursday, Flick led Barcelona to a 2-0 win over Espanyol which helped them secure the La Liga title. Unbeaten since late December in domestic competition, Barcelona beat Real Madrid to win the Spanish Super Cup in January and then the Copa del Rey. In his very first season on the Blaugrana dugout, Flick also took Barca to the semi-final of the Champions League, where they lost to Inter Milan in a hard-fought two-legged game by 7-6. Nonetheless, after the terrible 2023-24 season, the former German national and Bayern Munich coach led Barca to greater heights this season. Flick had credited the team atmosphere for Barca's achievements this year. He had said, "The family we've created. Everyone works with passion and knows their role is important. That has helped me enormously in reaching our

Real Madrid complete signing of Dean Huijsen from Bournemouth

GNS News Agency, May 22

Dean Huijsen Real MadridBournemouth's Dean Huijsen, left, and Bournemouth's Illya Zabarnyi celebrate at the end of the English Premier League soccer match between Arsenal and Bournemouth at Emirates stadium in London, Saturday, Spanish giants Real Madrid on Saturday revealed the signing of Bournemouth defender Dean Huijsen who signed a deal with the Los Blancos until 2030, making him eligible to play in next month's Club World Cup.

"Real Madrid C. F. and AFC Bournemouth have reached an agreement for the transfer of Dean Huijsen, who will be linked to our club for the next five seasons, from 1 June 2025 to 30 June 2030. At his 20 years of age, Dean Huijsen is already a Spain international and has played in Italy's Serie A with Juventus and Roma, and in the Premier League with Bournemouth. Dean Huijsen has been nominated for Premier League Young Player of the Year 2024-2025," the club announced. Premier League side Bournemouth said Real activated a 50 million pounds (\$66.36 million) release clause to sign the 20-year-old on a

"AFC Bournemouth can confirm that defender Dean Huijsen will join Real Madrid following the conclusion of the 2024/25 season, with the Spanish side having activated a £50 million release clause," the English club said in a statement of their own. Real, keen to have Huijsen for the Club World Cup in the United States, beat several clubs to one



of Europe's most sought-after young players, after his impressive campaign since joining Andoni Iraola's Bournemouth last year from Juventus. The centre back made 34 appearances in all competitions for Bournemouth, scoring three goals. Dutch-born Spain international Huijsen made his debut for Spain against the Netherlands in the Nations League in March. Meanwhile, Real will part ways with current coach Carlo Ancelotti after this season with the Italian set to be the next Brazil national team manager, which was officially announced earlier this week by the Brazilian FA. The 65-year-old has enjoyed four hugely successful years in his second tenure at the Spanish giants but they finished this season without a trophy. Former Real player and outgoing Bayer Leverkusen boss Xabi Alonso is the heavy favourite to replace Ancelotti at the Bernabéu.

Ravi Shastri slams Shubman Gill's critics: People will talk he's not scored runs overseas...see your own record, how much have you done overseas?

GNS News Agency, May 22

Shubman Gill's talent has never been in question since he burst onto the scene in 2020 in the red-ball format. He promise for long-term success in the format. But it did not manifest as the more conditions he got exposed to overseas, the more bowlers started to exploit him around the off-stump channel with the incoming delivery, which has affected his performances. With Rohit Sharma retiring from the format, there have been reports circulating about Gill taking the reins, while there have been few in the yay category in favour of Gill, there also have been a few in the nay category, pointing at his ordinary record outside India.

"You people will talk he's not scored runs overseas. You know, that topic always comes, not scored runs overseas. Sometimes I tell them, go and see your own record, how much have you done overseas?" Ravi Shastri said on The ICC review Show. "Overseas, overseas, let him play, let him get a run overseas, then he'll score runs. He's a class player. He has a decade of cricket ahead of him for the country. And I'm sure he'll get cracking in one of the tours, he'll make up for all those runs he's not got on earlier.""You groom somebody and I would say Shubman's



looked very good. Give him the opportunity. He's 25, 26 years of age, even give him time. There's Rishabh as well. I think these two are the obvious ones I'm looking at because of their age and they have a decade ahead of them. So, let them learn," said Shastri. Both Pant and Gill have been captaining their respective Indian Premier League franchises for a while. "They've got experience as captains, now, captaining their franchise, and that makes a difference," Shastri noted. "The little I've seen of Shubman looks very interesting. Composed, calm, he has all the qualities.'

Rahul Dravid hails Rohit Sharma with hilarious quip after Wankhede stand honour: 'Now I know who to contact'

GNS News Agency,

Rahul Dravid has congratulated Rohit Sharma after the Mumbai Cricket Association named a stand at the Wankhede Stadium after the latter and joked that he now knows who to call whenever he needs tickets for matches at the venue. The stand was unveiled on Friday and Rohit was felicitated in the presence of his family and his Mumbai Indians teammates, among others. "Hey Rohit. Guess you hit so many sixes into those stands that they had to name one after you! But, congratulations. I'm sure as a young boy going into the iconic Wankhede Stadium - truly one of the great stadiums in the world — I'm sure you would have loved to have played there, I'm

sure you would have wanted

to have some great perfor-



mances there, which you

have done. I'm not sure you

dreamt about having a stand

named after you, but that it

has come to that and that

you have one named after

you, it's a just reward for

your contribution to both

Mumbai and Indian cricket,"

said Dravid in a video

shared by the Mumbai Indians on their X handle. Rohit had started his international career under

Dravid, making his debut in an ODI against Ireland on June 23, 2007. Later, Dravid took over as head coach of the Indian team when Rohit was captain and the pair led



2023 ODI World Cup before clinching the 2024 T20 World Cup title. The pair also led India to a rare draw in a Test series in South Africa in January 2024. "It's truly well deserved - congratulations! I hope it was a great day with family and friends.

Neetu Chandra opens up on lack of support from men in the film industry



Mumbai: Actress Neetu Chandra has opened up about the lack of support she received from men in the film industry. In a recent conversation, the actress revealed that despite her consistent efforts and talent, she was often met with doubt and questioned for not having an industry background. Instead of waiting for validation, she chose to build her journey step by step—gaining strength through theatre and creating her own opportunities when none came her way.

Neetu told IANS, "Generally, men haven't supported me much. They've questioned how I would make it, saying I lacked a background. But I never let go of my own hand. I kept building myself step by step. Earlier, I feared not getting work. But after more than a decade of doing theatre, I don't feel that fear anymore. If I don't find something that resonates with me, I create opportunities for myself."Speaking about her experience of working in Bollywood, Chandra mentioned that she always wanted to do action films.

"Being a martial artist, Hollywood gave me my first opportunity, and I'm grateful. But my roots are in Bollywood. I debuted opposite Akshay Kumar and John Abraham at a very young age. I came to Mumbai when I was about fifteen or sixteen, going from studio to studio with my bag. My first break came through a Parker Pen advertisement directed by Mr. Priyadarshan, who launched me. I've always felt thankful to Bollywood—it gave me identity and courage. I've learned a lot from failures too. They've only made me stronger."

The actress also reflected on a moment from a few years ago when she made an emotional appeal for more work. She revealed that the decision to speak up did help, and she stands by it with pride. Chandra emphasized that seeking opportunities should never be looked down upon, regardless of one's experience or standing. "There's no shame in asking for work," she said, adding that every artist has the right to approach people for roles they believe in. "No matter what level you're at, it's your right as an artist to approach people. I've worked with thirteen National Award-winning directors. I ask makers like Priyadarshan or Kumar Mangat for work because I admire their storytelling. Even if they don't have a project for me right now, they know my dedication and quality. I've been getting good work, but meaningful roles take time. I recently returned to set after a break, and it reminded me how much I love this craft," explained Neetu Chandra

If John Abraham wants to save his career, he needs to stop saving damsels in distress first

There is a difference between ambition and delusion. Ambition often depends on one's means; delusion, on the other hand, hinges on one's capability. The Diplomat isn't an ambitious film for barring the brawny John Abraham from lifting a finger. But it's certainly delusional for thinking of itself as a desi answer to Argo. There is, however, a more unexpected comparison that the movie invites, without realising that it is guilty of committing the same mistakes that it is so confidently calling out. But more on that later. Directed by Shivam Nair, The Diplomat projects itself as a feminist film, but it is actually a tribute to male ego. A dramatically inert distillation of a multi-pronged story, The Diplomat takes a typically Bollywood approach to telling a story about a woman's emancipation and empowerment. It frames its narrative from the perspective of Abraham's character, India's Deputy High Commissioner in Pakistan, JP Singh. But it is actually the story of Uzma Ahmed, an Indian woman played by Sadia Khateeb, who is conned into marrying a Pakistani man named Tahir. They met in Malaysia, where he was working as a taxi driver. A few months into their relationship, Tahir moved back home and invited her to join him there. But he had an ulterior motive.

He picks her up at the Attari-Wagah border, drives her to a remote location in the mountains, and essentially keeps her prisoner in his house. Uzma discovers that Tahir is running some kind of human trafficking operation; there are several other 'wives' in the compound that Tahir regularly abuses. Uzma is spared the horror of being sold off to a warlord because she is deemed too old, to contact her friends in Malaysia — we never see her family, for some reason — and is advised to hatch an escape plan. She manipulates Tahir into taking her to the Indian embassy in Islamabad, where she is able to seek refuge and request repatriation. Uzma's kidnapping unfolds in a flashback, as she tells JP what she went through and waits for him to pull the strings necessary to facilitate her return to India. JP doesn't judge, but the movie expects you to; it has a character overtly call Uzma foolish for falling into such an obvious trap. But that's besides the point. The bigger issue with the movie is that it regularly undermines Uzma's own struggles by presenting her story through JP's eyes. By doing this, The Diplomat robs her of agency; it retroactively snatches her narrative away from her. What we're seeing, instead, is JP's version of events. Abraham doesn't resort to his typical gungho action — there is, however, a car chase — but he certainly plays a saviour figure to a damsel in distress.

Director Shivam Nair seems incapable of understanding that JP Singh isn't (and shouldn't be) the protagonist of this story. A real movie would've restricted him to being a tertiary character who appears in the final 10 minutes and makes a few phone calls. By projecting him as the hero — quite literally — the movie ignores the trauma that Uzma actually went through. We don't even get a glimpse of her folks, or of what her life used to be like in India. She exists only to be abused, to be rescued, and to be used as a mascot for the Machiavellian machinations unfolding around her. Heck, even her escape from captivity, the movie implies, was concocted by a man — her friend's husband. Meanwhile, JP gets a traumatic backstory of his own, and numerous (comedic) interludes where he talks to his young son in India. Why must we know this? Why is this important? Wouldn't cutting away to Uzma's worried family be a more responsible use of precious screen time? She constantly needs to be reminded to stand up for herself, to not be afraid of Tahir. She doesn't come to this realisation herself, but needs to be nudged out of passivity by JP. A ridiculous courtroom scene inexplicably puts him at the front and centre of the frame; at one point, he protectively shields Uzma from an enraged Tahir. Ben Affleck did nothing of the sort in Argo. He satisfied his urge to be super-heroic in a separate movie.

In structure, The Diplomat mimics — of all things — Mad Max: Fury Road. The action masterpiece subverted expectations by revealing that Mad Max is only a facilitator in Furiosa's story. Like Uzma, she, too, escaped captivity and made a mad dash to safety. But The Diplomat does the opposite; it injects a man into story that he has no authorship over. The movie doesnt even adhere to its own internal logic. It ends with a scene in which JP jumps behind the wheel of a car and personally drives Uzma to the Indian border as they're chased by Tahir and his men. Amazed at this tonal shift, you're left with no choice but to



wonder what sort of diplomacy JP is meant to have displayed at all. If launching into an action scene was always on the table, why didn't he throw a punch or two at Tahir sooner? The Diplomat falls into the same category as recent films such as Satyaprem Ki Katha, Mr & Mrs Mahi, and the tragically misguided Bawaal. Incidentally, Khateeb, who made such a strong debut in the film Shikara, followed it up with a supporting role in the Akshay Kumar-starrer Raksha Bandhan, which remains one of Hindi cinema's most egregious examples of 'fridging'. This when a female cnaracter is maimed or murdered in order to serve as mo tivation for her male counterpart to evolve. And while Uzma doesn't die, she isn't allowed to live either. The biggest mistake that The Diplomat makes is revealing the real JP at the end. Whatever disbelief you'd managed to suspend in the previous two hours is immediately undone the second you lay eyes on the nondescript norm-core dad that JP really is. Don't be surprised if Abraham decides that he should play Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri in a future film based on Operation Sindoor.Post Credits Scene is a column in which we dissect new releases every week, with particular focus on context, craft, and characters. Because there's always something to fix at a bout once the day his settled.

Fernale lead unveiled for Chiranjeevi's Mega157



Hyderabad: Megastar Chiranjeevi's next big project, tentatively titled Mega157, was officially launched recently and will go on floors soon. Directed by Anil Ravipudi, the film is aiming for a grand Sankranthi 2026 release.Known for his unique promotional style, Anil Ravipudi released a special video to introduce the film's leading lady, superstar heroine Nayanthara. The video shows her enjoying Chiranjeevi's songs, practicing dialogues, and reading the script with a smile, ending with the director joining her on screen.This marks Nayanthara's third collaboration with Chiranjeevi after Sye Raa Narasimha Reddy and Godfather. Ravipudi is said to have written a fresh and powerful role for her.Mega157 is produced by Sahu Garapati under Shine Screens,

Nawazuddin Siddiqui steps into the shoes of a customs officer in his new film, Costao



For someone who was told he is not "hero material", Nawazuddin Siddiqui has come a long way in the 25 years since he began his career with a small role in Aamir Khan's Sarfarosh (1999). In his latest film Costao, he plays the titular character, an honest Customs officer accused of corruption. Based on the real-life story of Costao Fernandes, who fought gold-smuggling in the Goa of the '90s, the ZEE5 original film is Sejal Shah's directorial debut.

Having already done two biopics – Manto (2018) and Thackeray (2019) – Nawaz was certain what he did not want to do while approaching the character of Costao. He says often biopics are made to please the actual person, with their flaws being conveniently omitted. "We don't show their mistakes. Moreover, few actors are ready to work in

biopics; you require a different training for that. We either copy (someone) or make them out to be a caricature," he says. The core of Costao's story is about maintaining one's integrity while navigating their professional lives. Has Nawaz ever had to make compromises in the film industry? "Several times. I have done films for money, which I knew weren't up to the mark. I have also done mass films to create a balance in my filmography," says the actor who starred in the Emmy-nominated series, Sacred Games (2019).

While Nawaz is not the only one calling out Bollywood on its lack of creativity and poor storytelling in recent times, what also bothers him is the stress on high budgets. "The so-called commercial films are the biggest flops. If 1,000 films are being made, we only remember three or four. For other films, on which crores have been invested, there is no accountability," says the 50-year-old. The Gangs Of Wasseypur (2012) actor adds, "This hasn't just affected me, it has impacted Naseer sahab (Naseeruddin Shah), Om Puri, Manoj Bajpayee and Irrfan (Khan) bhai. The whole world says they are great actors but nobody made a 25-crore film with them. A newbie who comes from a film background gets those chances." Notwithstanding all his frustrations with the Hindi film industry, cinema, for Nawaz, continues to be all about the character: "For me, it is not about the story. I like going deeper into a character's mind. Aur jitna local hota hai, utna global hota hai (the more local the film, the greater the global appeal). I wish I could do more such films. The focus, however, is still on shock value and flashy things. If this continues, filmmaking will become a rich people's game and that's dangerous. People are making 100 crore worth of guns for their films, humaare 20 crore judd jaayen, poori film ke liye woh bhi bahut badi baat hai (It would be a huge deal if we get a 20 crore budget for a film).

Rishi Kapoor refused to do Hum Tum because he only had 7 scenes, said 'Kisi aur se kara lo', recalls Kunal Kohli

Rishi Kapoor had a long career as a leading man in Hindi movies but around the early 2000s, Rishi started transitioning to playing some character roles. Eventually, the second innings of his career worked well. But initially, he wasn't into the idea of playing a supporting role. Kunal Kohli, who directed Rishi in Hum Tum, recently shared that Rishi rejected the film at first because he felt that he had a miniscule part in it. Saif Ali Khan and Rani Mukerji played the lead roles in the film.

He shared with Radio Nasha, "When we went to see him, he had not switched to character roles fully. He was still doing lead roles. He said 'I have nothing to do in the film. I only have seven scenes. Main nahi kar raha. Kisi aur se karva lo (I am not doing it. Ask someone else to do it).' He sent us away." But Kunal did not lose hope and told producer Aditya Chopra that he would try again. "Then I talked to him again and I spoke to him about all the scenes individually. He liked every scene. He said, 'All these scenes are nice, add more of them'. I said, 'Sir, do you want to hang around in the film, or have a strong impact?' Then he said, 'Haan chalo, baat toh theek hai, karte hain (Yes, you are right, let's do it)," he recalled, and added, "And from then, we became best friends." Rishi played the role of Saif's father in Hum Tum.

In the same chat, Kunal also spoke about Saif's 'Tom Cruise look' in the film and said that the line actually came from a conversation between Saif and his daughter Sara Ali Khan, who was just 10 years old at the time. "I was at



Saif's house and we were trying different looks and Sara came in. She was just 10 or 12 then. Saif was trying on a wig. She looked at it and said, 'Ew, what happened to your hair, Abba?' He said 'What! It's my Tom Cruise look'," he recalled and said that as soon as he heard this line, he declared that he would add it in the film. "Saif was like 'Which line?' I said 'This, it's my Tom Cruise look'," Kunal recalled with a laugh. Hum Tum re-released in theatres this weekend.

Kamal Haasan faces off against Silambarasan in this Mani Ratnam gangster drama

The trailer for Mani Ratnam and Kamal Haasan's much-awaited film, Thug Life, is finally here. The film, also starring actors Silambarasan TR, Trisha Krishnan, marks the reunion of the actor-director duo after nearly four decades. Their last and only collaboration was the 1987 film Nayakan. The makers released the trailer Tamil, Telugu and Hindi trailer at a grand event in Chennai. Co-written by Kamal and Mani Ratnam, the film shows the many avatars of Kamal Haasan. The trailer begins with Kamal Haasan's voiceover, "You saved my life, you protected me from the Lord of Death. Our two destinies were written as one. You and I are now bound together as one. Till the end." The trailer then introduces STR's character with Kamal's voice continuing to speak in the background. He says, "If I am a lion, you're the king of the pride." STR corrects him and says, "Majestic lion." Kamal agrees, "Yes, your Majesty." Eventually, Kamal announces STR as his successor.

The twist comes when STR turns against Kamal Haasan. The film also stars Nasser, Trisha, Aishwarya and Mahesh Manjrekar, among others. As the trailer comes to end, Kamal Haasan's character says, "Death and I have



been playing this game."Thug Life was first announced in 2022. Jointly produced by Raaj Kamal Films International, Madras Talkies, and Red Giant Movies, the film is Kamal Haasan's 234th project as a lead actor. The songs and background score for the gangster action drama are composed by AR Rahman. The film's audio launch event, which was cancelled due to Pahalgam Terror attack is now rescheduled for May 24. Thug Life is all set to hit the theatres on June 5.

Amit Sadh quit Kai Po Che in a fit of rage because director Abhishek Kapoor was rude to him: 'I had a violent temper'

While actor Amit Sadh's first movie, Kai Po Che (2013), wasn't a big-budget launch that many young actors dream of, he was praised for his talent and the movie is still remembered for having given Amit and his two costars, Rajkummar Rao and Sushant Singh Rajput, a grand introduction in mainstream Bollywood. In a new interview, the actor revealed that he'd actually quit the project on day one because he felt insulted by the way director Abhishek Kapoor spoke to him and his co-stars.

Appearing on Cyrus Broacha's podcast Cyrus Says, Sadh said, "I got Kai Po Che, and we went to the first reading. I think Gattoo (Abhishek Kapoor) got some bad news about a big female star leaving the film, and he was a bit... whatever. So I, Sushant and Rajkummar were reading, and I have an elder brother syndrome, and I am very protective about the people around me, and Gatoto comes up to us and says, 'What are you guys doing? There is no emotion in this.' I got really mad and told him that he couldn't talk to us like that."

Sadh said that Abhishek's behaviour annoyed him, and he took the rather rash decision of quitting the film. "I came back home that day, and I decided that I am not going to do this film because Gattoo was rude to us. They tried casting someone else, and it didn't work out. We bumped into each other a week later, and he asked me if I had other work or even a house or a car. I said no, and he said, 'Then why did you quit the film'?"

The actor admitted that he was very sensitive early in his career, and it took him some time to get over anger issues. "I had a very bad temper, and I was very violent. The one thing I am proud of is that I met the right people, and I read the right book, and I realised that anger was futile. I found the other way, which is communication." The actor has talked about the film in the past as well, and said that after the movie's release, many people compared him to his co-stars, and what they were achieving in the industry.

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