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Child trafficking racket busted in Telangana's Suryapet; 10 kids rescued, 18 arrested

Suryapet: In a major crackdown, police in Suryapet district have busted a child trafficking racket that was allegedly involved in selling infants brought from other States. The gang primarily targeted childless couples, offering babies for sale at prices ranging from Rs 3 lakh to Rs 7 lakh. Authorities confirmed that the gang had sold 28 children so far, with transactions taking place discreetly. During the operation, police successfully rescued 10 children and placed them under the care of child welfare officials. A total of 18 individuals linked to the trafficking network have been taken into custody by Suryapet Town police.

Cabinet approves two multi-tracking railway projects in Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh

GNS News Agency, May 28

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi approved two multi-tracking railway projects to ensure faster transportation of both passengers and goods, the government said on Wednesday. It added that these projects include the third and fourth line between Ratlam-Nagda and fourth line between Wardha-Balharshah. According to a government statement, the total estimated cost of the projects is ₹3,399 crore and will be completed by 2029-30. "The projects are result of PM-Gati Shakti National Master Plan for multi-modal connectivity which have been possible through integrated planning and will provide seamless connectivity for movement of people, goods and services," the press note said.

It added, "The two projects covering four districts across the States of Maharashtra, and Madhya Pradesh, will increase the existing network of Indian Railways by about 176 km. The proposed multi-tracking project will enhance connectivity to approx 784 villages having a population of about 19.74 lakh." Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said that these two projects will give a boost to infrastructure in the country in the Delhi-Mumbai and Delhi-Chennai economic corridors, removing the traffic bottlenecks. He added that during the third term of the Modi government, projects worth more than ₹4.5 lakh crore have been approved in the transport and infrastructure sector in the country. The government said that these are essential routes for transportation of commodities such as coal, cement, clinker, gypsum, fly ash, containers, agriculture commodities, and petroleum products etc, hence the capacity augmentation work will result in additional freight traffic of magnitude 18.40 MTPA (million tonnes per annum).

Outlining the environmental benefits, it said that the



railways, being environment-friendly and energy-efficient mode of transportation, will help in achieving climate goals and minimising logistics cost, reduce oil import (20 crore litres) and lower CO2 emissions (99 crore kg) which is equivalent to plantation of 4 crore trees. "The projects will also generate direct employment for about 74 lakh human-days during construction. These initiatives will improve travel convenience, reduce logistic cost, decrease oil imports and contribute to lower CO2 emissions, supporting sustainable and efficient rail operations," the government said. "The projects would also enhance logistical efficiency by augmenting line capacity along critical routes for transportation of containers, coal, cement, agricultural commodities, and other goods. These improvements are expected to optimise supply chains, thereby facilitating accelerated economic growth," it added. Talking about other benefits, the press statement said that the increased line capacity will significantly enhance mobility, resulting in improved operational efficiency and service reliability for railways. "These multi-tracking proposals are poised to streamline operations and alleviate congestion," the press note said.

Lokpal gives clean chit to former SEBI chief Madhabi Puri Buch



GNS News Agency, May 28

New Delhi: Anti-corruption ombudsman Lokpal on Wednesday disposed of complaints alleging impropriety and conflict of interest against former SEBI chief Madhabi Puri Buch based on a Hindenburg Research report, terming the charges as "presumptions and assumptions" not supported by any verifiable material. The Lokpal said that the complaints, including the one by TMC MP Mahua Moitra, filed last year were essentially founded on the report "by a known short seller trader whose focus was to expose or corner Adani Group of Companies". In its report published on August 10, 2024, Hindenburg Research alleged that Buch and her husband had stakes in obscure offshore funds used in the alleged money-siphoning scandal involving the Adani Group.

They had denied the allegations saying the short-seller was attacking the capital markets regulator's credibility and attempting a character assassination. The Adani Group had also termed the allegations as malicious and manipulation of selective public information. In its Wednesday order, the Lokpal "concluded that the allegations in the complaint(s) are more on presumptions and assumptions and not sup-

ported by any verifiable material and do not attract the ingredients of the offences... so as to direct an investigation therefor". Accordingly, these complaints are disposed of, said the order by a six-member bench headed by Lokpal chairperson Justice AM Khanwilkar. Buch, who took over as the chief of the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) on March 2, 2022, demitted office on February 28, this year after the completion of her tenure. Referring to an earlier order in this regard, the Lokpal said the Hindenburg report by itself cannot be made the sole basis to escalate action against Buch. "The complainant(s) being conscious of this position advisedly attempted to articulate allegations independent of the stated report but the analysis of the allegations by us, ended with a finding that the same are untenable, unsubstantiated and bordering on frivolity," the order said. The Lokpal had on November 8, last year sought Buch's "explanation" on the complaints filed by Moitra and two others. Buch, the former chairperson of capital markets regulator Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), was asked to submit her response within four weeks. Buch had filed her response by way of an affidavit sworn on December 7, 2024, raising preliminary issues as well as giving an explanation allegation-wise. The Lokpal had on December 19 last year decided to give an opportunity of oral hearing to both Buch and the complainants to clarify their positions taken in the complaints or the affidavit. Hindenburg Research's founder announced its closure in January this year. Meanwhile, the Lokpal took the matter for oral arguments on April 9, after further documents and affidavits-cum-written-submissions were filed. "The advocate for the complainant in the second complaint made exhaustive oral submissions. The proxy counsel appearing for the complainant in the third complaint opted to file written submissions. Although the complainant in the third complaint has been represented by an advocate, neither the complainant nor the advocate appeared to make oral submissions," the order said.

said, adding that the statements alleged made by an IAS officer, goes against the very concept of establishing Gurukuls to protect students from marginalised communities from caste and class bias. "This is not teaching dignity of labour, but making children work as labourers and indulging in caste-based exploitation," she remarked. Kavitha reminded a recent tragedy in Bhikkanur, Kamareddy district, where a watchman died while cleaning a water tank, and another was seriously injured. "Instead of hiring essential staff, the government is shifting dangerous and degrading responsibilities onto children," she said. She took strong objection to the officer's remarks in the audio clip, stating that just because children at Gurukul schools do not come from posh families, they cannot be treated differently. "Cleaning blackboards in classrooms and common toilets is not same. Will the said officer would make her children clean the common toilets at their school?" she asked. Kavitha argued that Gurukul schools, which were established to empower SC/ST students and protect them from caste discrimination, are now becoming centres of forced labour and humiliation under the Congress government. "We cannot allow institutions meant for social justice to turn into platforms of oppression," she asserted.

GNS News Agency, May 28

Hyderabad: BRS MLC K Kavitha came down heavily on the Congress government in Telangana, calling it "anti-poor" and "anti-Dalit" policies. She was reacting to an alleged audio clip of a senior officer of the Telangana Social Welfare Residential Educational Institutions, could be heard asking teachers and staff to make students clean toilets and manage kitchens. She demanded for the immediate removal of the officer and start releasing the required funds every month to run the social welfare schools effectively.

Sharing the audio clip on X, BRS MLC K Kavitha lashed out at the Congress government, stating that such behavior is discriminatory, exploitative, and violates basic principles of child rights and dignity. "It only reflects the Revanth Reddy government's contempt for the marginalised," she remarked. The BRS MLC reminded that under the previous BRS regime, each Gurukul school was allocated Rs 40,000 per month for hiring four sanitation workers. These positions were scrapped by the Congress government in August 2023. Moreover, the role of assistant caretakers in 240 schools has reportedly been eliminated, leaving the burden of sweeping, toilet cleaning, and hostel maintenance duties on the students. "Now, the officer is forcing children to clean toilets in schools," she

HYDRAA frees park land worth Rs 40 crore from land sharks in Hyderabad's Chandanagar

Hyderabad: Responding to a complaint received in Prajavani, HYDRAA authorities retained one-acre park land worth Rs 40 crore at Mytrayee Nagar in Chandanagar. Residents of Mytrayee Nagar had approached HYDRAA and complained that park land had been encroached upon, converted into plots, and sold. As the issue was under court litigation, the park land was filled with shrubs, resulting in poisonous snakes entering the colony.

HYDRAA Commissioner AV Ranganath on verification of the layout identified the one-acre land earmarked for the park and deployed men and machinery and retained the park land.

GNS News Agency, May 28

The Supreme Court Collegium has recommended the transfers of four Chief Justices from the High Courts of Madras, Rajasthan, Tripura and Jharkhand. The Collegium headed by Chief Justice of India has proposed the transfer of Madras High Court Chief Justice K.R. Shriram to Rajasthan. In return, Rajasthan Chief Justice Manindra Mohan Shrivastava was recommended to head the Madras High Court. The May 26 resolution of the Collegium published on Wednesday (May 28, 2025) recommended the transfer of Tripura High Court Chief Justice Aparesh Kumar Singh to Telangana. Jharkhand High Court Chief Justice M.S. Ramachandra Rao was proposed for transfer to Tripura. The Collegium, in a separate resolution, has recommended the transfer of Telangana High Court judge, Justice Tadakamalla Vinod Kumar, to the Madras High Court.

The Collegium has also recommended the transfer and repatriation of 21 other High Court judges across the country. These proposed transfers span across the High Courts of Telangana, Karnataka, Madras, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Bombay, Delhi, Rajasthan, Calcutta, Allahabad, Punjab and Haryana, Gauhati, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh



and Patna. This is one of the largest proposed shuffle of High Court judges in recent months. The Collegium had recommended five senior High Court judges for appointment as Chief Justices of the High Courts of Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Gauhati, Patna and Jharkhand. The Collegium had separately proposed Justice N.V. Anjaria, Chief Justice, High Court of Karnataka; Justice Vijay Bishnoi, Chief Justice, Gauhati High Court; Justice A.S. Chandurkar, judge, Bombay High Court; to the apex court.

KTR calls NDSA report 'political fiction', demands apology



GNS News Agency, May 28

Hyderabad: BRS working president KT Rama Rao welcomed the strong rebuttal by construction major L&T, questioning the NDSA report on the Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Scheme (KLIS) without conducting basic technical and field study. He blasted the Congress and BJP for indulging in cheap politics over the Kaleshwaram project in general and Medigadda barrage in particular.

"I am glad that L&T is standing up against the utter political mudslinging via an unscientific report and pointing out what the BRS had always said. We were not wrong in

calling it an NDA report," he stated. Reacting to the L&T statement, Rama Rao termed the National Dam Safety Authority's (NDSA) report a conjured up piece of vile imagination, driven by political agenda. He charged both the State and Central governments with orchestrating a smear campaign against the Kaleshwaram project, the world's largest multi-stage lift irrigation system, purely to target former Chief Minister K Chandrashekhara Rao and undermine BRS's achievements.

"Without tests and without any scientific data, the Congress and BJP jointly kept attacking Kaleshwaram. One can create as many conspiracy theories as you feel like but the fact will remain, Kaleshwaram is the lifeline of Telangana and KCR garu is a visionary," he added. The BRS working president said Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy had committed an unforgivable sin by letting political vengeance dry up Telangana's farmlands, without taking up repair works at Medigadda barrage. He stated that over 500 farmers have died by suicide due to irrigation failures under the Congress regime.

He pointed to similar issues in the Polavaram project, where the damaged diaphragm wall was restored quickly, unlike Medigadda, which has been neglected for over 18 months. He demanded an unconditional apology from Revanth Reddy to Telangana's farmers and also immediate restoration of Kaleshwaram project operations. He warned that farmers, pushed to the brink by misgovernance, would teach a lesson to those playing with their livelihoods.

India to hold mock drills in states bordering Pakistan tomorrow

GNS News Agency, May 28

Jaipur: Amid the ongoing tensions between India and Pakistan, mock drills will be conducted on Thursday in the border states of Rajasthan, Jammu and Kashmir, Gujarat and Punjab, officials said on Wednesday. These drills in the states bordering Pakistan will be held following directives from the Union government, as these areas came under heavy attack from across the border during the recent conflict between the two nations.

Sirens will be sounded during the drills, and emergency preparedness systems will be closely examined. The Civil Defence department in Rajasthan has already initiated preparations and is issuing instructions to all districts. Special emphasis is being placed on the districts located along the India-Pakistan border, where enhanced measures are underway.



TDP Pays Emotional Tribute to Late NTR With AI-Generated Speech at Mahanadu

GNS News Agency, May 28

Kadapa: On the occasion of TDP founder Nandamuri Taraka Rama Rao's (NTR) birth anniversary, the party paid a heartfelt tribute by playing an Artificial Intelligence-generated video of the legendary leader at its annual conclave Mahanadu in Kadapa. The video, shown to lakhs of party workers present at the venue, recreated NTR's voice and spirit, drawing an overwhelming and emotional response from the crowd. The AI-generated speech, one of the key highlights of Mahanadu Day 2, featured NTR addressing the gathering with a powerful message about the 43-year journey of the Telugu Desam Party, its mission, and the future ahead. His words stirred deep emotion and nostalgia among the party cadres, many of whom gave a standing ovation. In the video, NTR opened with a greeting to all Telugu people around the world, especially appreciating farmers, workers, artists, and the loyal party cadre. He said the TDP was not just a political party but a movement built from the struggles of the common man. "It has been exactly 43 years since the birth of Telugu Desam Party, a movement I proudly

say was founded by me—not just as a political party, but as a dream born from the pain of the common people, from the sweat of laborers, and from the cries of the oppressed." In the video, NTR praised CM Chandrababu Naidu for his leadership and vision in transforming Andhra Pradesh. He recalled key achievements like building Tank Bund, developing Cyberabad as a tech hub, and launching major irrigation projects like Pattiseema. "From building Tank Bund to creating Cyberabad, Chandrababu Naidu transformed the Telugu land with vision and innovation... When I once asked when Godavari would meet Krishna, we made it happen through Pattiseema." He also lauded welfare schemes like the ₹2/kg rice program which began during his time and how it had evolved into the P4 model under CM Chandrababu's leadership to help poor families become financially secure. In the video, NTR expressed pride in Minister Nara Lokesh, calling him a young leader who is carrying forward his dream of empowering youth and standing by party workers. "Today, my grandson Lokesh is fulfilling that dream and working for betterment of people... Watching him from the heavens, I feel proud and emotional."

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

Boost for India's higher education

For decades, India's higher education system has been unable to shake off its colonial character, designed to churn out clerks and stifle innovative thinking. Unfortunately, the structural flaws were allowed to continue to impair the growth needed to achieve real transformation. Approving the entry of foreign universities into the country is one of the key areas of educational reforms that is long overdue. Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan's announcement that 15 foreign universities are expected to establish their campuses by 2025-26 is a welcome development. With the recent approval from the University Grants Commission (UGC) to establish its first overseas campus in Bengaluru, the UK-based University of Liverpool has joined a growing list of international institutions showing eagerness to launch their operations in India. It is the second member of the prestigious Russell Group to launch a campus in India, after the University of Southampton in Gurugram. Two Australian universities have already commenced operations in Gujarat. Any established institution that offers an exceptional learning experience, with a strong research culture, is a welcome addition to India's burgeoning but flawed educational landscape. In 2023, the UGC unveiled draft norms for allowing, for the first time, foreign universities to set up campuses in India with autonomy to decide the admission procedure, and fees structure and even repatriate funds back home. Political posturing and fear-mongering had delayed the much-needed reforms. The last attempt, made by UPA-II in 2010 in the form of the Foreign Educational Institutions Bill, had failed to pass muster in Parliament and lapsed in 2014 because the BJP, which was then in the opposition, had opposed it along with the Left and Samajwadi Party. In power for the last ten years, the saffron party has realised the importance of restructuring the higher education sector. Given the inadequate opportunities and poor quality of higher education at home,

NTR – A Visionary Who Empowered the Backward Classes.



“PS Ashokan” Indian Chronicle “Manthani May 28” – “A Historic Champion of Political Inclusion” – A Successor in Spirit to Jyotirao Phule” – Tribute by Former MLA Putta Madhukar on NTR's Birth Anniversary” “Former Manthani MLA Putta Madhukar paid glowing tributes to the late legendary Chief Minister Nandamuri Taraka Rama Rao (NTR), stating that it was only after the inception of the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) that the Backward Classes (BCs) in Telangana began to receive rightful political recognition and representation.” “Commemorating NTR's birth anniversary, Madhukar garlanded the leader's statue erected at Bokkalavagu bridge in Manthani and reflected on his enduring legacy. Speaking at the event, he remarked that prior to TDP's formation, members of marginalized and underprivileged communities in Telangana rarely had the opportunity to rise socially or politically.” “NTR changed that narrative,” Madhukar said. “He ushered in a new era where BCs and Scheduled Castes were no longer relegated to the margins but were instead empowered and brought to the forefront of political life.” “He particularly acknowledged the upliftment of communities like Gouds, Mudirajs, Padmashalis, and Yadavs — who, under NTR's leadership, were encouraged and elevated to positions of political influence and public leadership. “Through his vision and courage, NTR restored dignity and self-worth to countless individuals who had long been ignored,” he said. “Drawing a profound comparison, Madhukar likened NTR's social reformist zeal to that of Mahatma Jyotirao Phule. “Just as Phule pioneered the cause of the oppressed in his era, NTR championed their rights in modern politics. His thinking was deeply rooted in social justice,” he observed. “Madhukar concluded by saying that inspired by such towering figures, it was just fitting to enshrine NTR's statue alongside other icons of social reform. “NTR was not just a political leader—he was a transformative force, a beacon of empowerment, and a statesman of extraordinary stature,” he said.

Aquino Squadron bags The Commandant's Banner at Air Force Academy

Hyderabad: The Commandant's Banner presentation ceremony was held at the Tejas Parade Ground, Air Force Academy (AFA), Dundigal.

Aquino Squadron was declared the Champion Squadron for the Spring Term 2025. Squadron Cadet Captain, Flight Cadet Surya Dev of Aquino Squadron received the esteemed banner from Air Marshal S Shrinivas, Commandant, Air Force Academy. As a symbol of their achievement, the Flight Cadets of the Champion Squadron will don a lanyard on their left shoulder throughout the forthcoming term. The award of Commandant's Banner to the Champion Squadron symbolises overall excellence and marks the conclusion of fiercely contested series of events, ranging from physical activities, sports, debate, quiz, cultural, cross-country runs, field camps, drill competition and academics. The finale of this quest for excellence was marked by the prestigious Inter-Squadron Drill Competition. Brar Squadron achieved the feat of winning this coveted competition with flawless drill movements, daunting words of command and synchronised team efforts. In his address to the Flight Cadets and UTFOs, the Commandant exhorted everyone to be physically fit and mentally agile throughout their careers. He also congratulated the instructors for their crucial role in transforming greenhorns into confident and competent cadets, equipping them to uphold the Academy's exemplary standards.

Immediate Response and Resolution to Complaints is Essential

Rachakonda Police Commissioner Sudheer Babu



Hyderabad: On Wednesday, Rachakonda Commissioner Sudheer Babu conducted a Crime Review Meeting at the Rachakonda Police Commissionerate, Neredmet. The meeting included DCPs, Additional DCPs, ACPs, and CIs from Malkajgiri, LB Nagar, Maheshwaram, and Yadadri-Bhuvanagiri zones. The Commissioner reviewed key issues related to law and order, and crime investigation, focusing on performance and progress. He emphasized the need to resolve all pending Under Investigation (UI) cases quickly and held a comprehensive review on crime prevention strategies. He directed officials to ensure investigations are thorough and lead to appropriate punishments for criminals. He also stressed that verticals within police stations should function effectively and be monitored daily.

He advised daily reviews of Blue Colts and Dial 100 responses. He elaborated in a structured manner on how to identify the real accused in cases and counter-cases, how to approach such investigations, and how to deliver justice to victims. In light of the upcoming Bakrid festival, he instructed the setup of intensive patrolling and strong security measures at checkpoints. The meeting was attended by Malkajgiri DCP P.V. Padmaja, LB Nagar DCP Praveen Kumar, Bhongir DCP Aksansh Yadav, Maheshwaram DCP Sunitha Reddy, SB DCP G. Narasimha Reddy, Crime DCP Aravind Babu, Cyber Crime DCP Nagalakshmi, Admin DCP Indira, as well as Additional DCPs and ACPs.

Sri Padmavati Mahila Visvavidyalayam Commemorates 102nd Birth Anniversary of Founder, Late N.T. Rama Rao“



“May 28, Indian Chronicle Rayalaseema coordinator” “Sri Padmavati Mahila Visvavidyalayam (SPMVV) today observed the 102nd birth anniversary of its visionary founder, the revered former Chief Minister, Sri Nandamuri Taraka Rama Rao (NTR), with a solemn and grand ceremony.” “The commemorative event began with the Vice-Chancellor, “Prof. V. Uma, and Registrar, “Prof. N. Rajani”, respectfully garlanding the statue of NTR, offering heartfelt tributes to his enduring legacy.” “In her address, Vice-Chancellor Prof. V. Uma eloquently praised NTR's extensive and multifaceted contributions to the state. She specifically underscored his profound foresight in establish-



ing Sri Padmavati Mahila Visvavidyalayam 43 years ago, an institution singularly dedicated to the empowerment and higher education of women.” “The very existence and current stature of this university are a direct result of NTR's pioneering efforts,” Prof. Uma stated. “His vision laid the crucial groundwork for women's advancement. We are proud to see numerous alumnae of this institution achieving significant success and holding esteemed positions globally. The credit for their achievements, and indeed for the university's impact, belongs entirely to Nandamuri Taraka Rama Rao. We collectively acknowledge our immense debt to him.” “The ceremony witnessed the presence of the Deputy Registrar, Engineer Srinivas, deans and heads of various academic departments, along with a significant turnout of teaching and non-teaching staff, all joining in the tribute.

Sri Venkateswara University Glorifies the Timeless Legacy of NTR“From Reel to Real Leader: SVU Remembers the Iconic NTR“



“May 28, Indian Chronicle Rayalaseema coordinator” “As per the call given by the Government of Andhra Pradesh vide Memo No. 1546185/Political.A/2024-2, dated 26.06.2025, Sri Venkateswara University, Tirupati, solemnly observed the birth anniversary of Padma Shri Dr. Nandamuri Taraka Rama Rao Garu on 28th June 2025 at the University Senate Hall.” “The programme commenced with a respectful welcome address by Prof. N. Chendrayudu, Dean, College Development Council, who also meticulously coordinated the event. Sri V. Suresh Kumar, Assistant Administrative Officer (Teaching), rendered a prayer song, setting a reverent tone for the proceedings. The Vice-Chancellor and dignitaries on the dais garlanded the portrait of Sri N.T. Rama Rao Garu, followed by a gathering of faculty, officers, staff, and well-wishers paying floral tribute.” “Delivering the keynote address, Prof. Ch. Appa Rao, Hon'ble Vice-Chancellor (I/c), spoke with deep admiration and conviction about Sri NTR's life and legacy. He emphasized that NTR was not merely a film actor or politician, but a transformational figure who gave voice to the common man, uplifted Telugu pride, and led with unwavering discipline and service-mindedness. He called upon the university fraternity to draw inspiration from NTR's life by committing to excellence, punctuality, and social responsibility in their academic and administrative roles.” “Prof. M. Bhupathi Naidu, Registrar, recollected NTR's steadfast discipline, punctuality, and commitment to public service. He urged all SVU employees to emulate these qualities and maintain professional decorum and timely attendance at work.” “Several senior professors and staff members shared their reflections on NTR's contributions.” “Prof. P. V. Narasalaiah, Principal, SVU College of CM & CS, highlighted



NTR's efforts in empowering Telugu-speaking communities.” “Prof. Gangaiah, Retired Professor of Economics, reflected on NTR's visionary governance and welfare schemes.” “Prof. P. Balasiddamuni, Former EC Member, shared personal experiences with NTR and praised his humility and intellect.” “Prof. G. Adinarayana, Dept. of Law, elaborated on NTR's commitment to justice and constitutional values.” “Sri Srinivasa Rao, Assistant Engineer, appreciated NTR's direct connection with people and bold policy decisions.” “Sri V. Suresh Kumar, AAO (Teaching), presented a soulful song in praise of NTR's legacy.” “Sri Pradeep Kumar, Senior Assistant, spoke about NTR's charisma and lasting impact on the masses.” “The event concluded on a patriotic note with the rendition of the National Anthem, reinforcing the university's commitment to national values and collective responsibility.

Telangana MLC K Kavitha dismisses reports on her 'exit' from BRS

Hyderabad: BRS MLC K Kavitha strongly refuted reports in a vernacular newspaper speculating about her exit from the party, terming them baseless. Taking to X, Kavitha criticised a vernacular newspaper for publishing conflicting stories within a span of three days — one claiming that she would float a new party if not given prominence in BRS, and another alleging that she was exploring entry into the Congress through mediators.

A legend arrives: The power-packed, iconic Volkswagen Golf GTI makes its debut in India



Hyderabad: Volkswagen today announced the price for the highly anticipated Golf GTI in India. The iconic hot hatch has witnessed significant customer demand, being sold out even before its launch. The brand has launched the latest Mk 8.5 Golf GTI in India for INR 52.99 lakh (ex-showroom; introductory price). Commenting on the announcement, Mr. Nitin Kohli, Brand Director, Volkswagen India, said, “Bringing the Golf GTI to India is more than just a product launch — it's the extension of a legacy. Indian customers have evolved into performance lovers who also value heritage, design, and technology. The GTI brings all of that in one legendary package representing the spirit of Volkswagen — innovation, driving pleasure, dynamic performance and sportiness.”

With the launch of the Golf GTI Mk 8.5, Volkswagen now extends its product portfolio and reaffirms its commitment to delivering world-class vehicles to Indian customers. Volkswagen India is truly proud to be introducing the Golf GTI for fans of the brand and customers alike. Golf GTI: A Global Icon, delivering to Indian aspirations

With over 37 million Volkswagen Golf sold worldwide, the launch of the Golf GTI in India is much more than just a product announcement — it's a celebration of an automotive icon arriving in India. The GTI has long been the sportiest expression of the Golf family, a hot hatch that blends bold design, pure driving pleasure, dynamic performance and sportiness.

Now, Indian enthusiasts can finally experience this legacy firsthand. For five decades, the Volkswagen Golf has been a car that has connected generations of drivers around the world. As the iconic Golf GTI approaches its 50th anniversary next year, Volkswagen proudly introduces the Golf GTI Mk 8.5 to Indian customers, marking a spectacular milestone in the brand's journey in India. Power Meets Precision: The latest Golf GTI Mk 8.5 The new Golf GTI Mk 8.5 is engineered for pure driving pleasure. Equipped with a 2.0L TSI turbocharged petrol engine, the GTI delivers 265 PS power and 370Nm torque, accelerating from 0 to 100 km/h in just 5.9 seconds. Paired with razor-sharp handling and dynamic styling, the GTI offers the perfect blend of style and horsepower.

No full-fledged enumeration of crop losses even as unseasonal rain causes acute distress to Telangana farmers



GNS News Agency, May 28

Hyderabad: Unseasonal rain and hailstorms have taken a big toll on Rabi crops in the State for the last two-and-a-half months, from the second week of March to the end of May. The crop losses were extensive in several districts.

Farmers of paddy, maize and mango crops have borne the brunt of the losses. They have reported distress due to premature fruit drop and soaked paddy stocks at procurement centres. Several districts have been impacted, with Siddipet alone seeing nearly 20,000 acres of crop damage following heavy rain on May 4-5. Multiple districts, including Mulugu, Adilabad, Nirmal, Mancherla, Karimnagar, Nizamabad, Kamareddy, Siddipet, Warangal, Hanamkonda, Sangareddy, Medak, Rangareddy, Suryapet, Yadadri Bhongir and Mahabubabad, have reported major losses. Paddy stocks at procurement centres in Mulugu, Jayashankar Bhupalpally, Mahabubabad and even some parts of Suryapet were rendered unfit for sale due to moisture exposure. At some places, even standing crops were flattened by strong winds.

Organisations such as the Rythu Swarajya Vedika and Telangana Rythu Sangham have been making efforts to prevail on the government for a comprehensive enumeration of crop losses and payment of compensation to the affected farmers. But their efforts too did not bear fruit so far. The government had indicated a compensation package at the rate of Rs 10,000 per acre for the affected farmers across 29 districts. But a majority of farmers are not covered in the first spell of the enumeration exercise. The crop losses suffered in the current month are even more extensive. But there is no full-fledged assessment of the damage assessment so far. Rythu Swarajya Vedika leader Kondal Reddy said, stressing that the administration needs to have a serious approach to this issue. Even as the government assured to compensate at the rate of Rs 10,000 per acre, the need for crop insurance must be realised at this stage at least, he insisted. Incomplete surveys and exclusion of tenant farmers have been key issues to be addressed. Farmers, in view of the worst experience they had this year in the absence of prompt response from the government, have been demanding the implementation of a state-backed crop insurance scheme.

All-Party Front Demands Strict Action Against Those Who Demolished Homes in Venugopal Colony, Calls for Rehabilitation and TDP Mahanadu Resolution



“May 28, Indian Chronicle Rayalaseema co-ordinator” An all-party delegation, including leaders from CPM, RPI, and CPI, today strongly condemned the demolition of homes in Venugopal Colony, Tirumala Nagar Panchayat, located a stone's throw away from Tirupati city. The incident, which occurred on Monday, May 26, saw approximately 300 individuals, accompanied by seven JCBs and one tractor, ruthlessly destroying and leveling the houses of the colony residents. The delegation visited the affected area and subsequently submitted a detailed memorandum to the District Collector, demanding stern action against the perpetrators and immediate rehabilitation for the victims. “The delegation that met the Collector included CPM District Secretary Vandavasi Nagaraju, CPI District Secretary P. Murali, R.P.I. South Indian States President P. Anjaiah, CPM City Secretary K. Venugopal, CPI City Secretary J. Viswanatham, CPM G. Balasubrahmanyam, P. Bujji, and B. Muniraja, along with the affected colony residents.” Speaking on the

occasion, the leaders asserted that stringent measures must be taken against those who perpetrated this act of aggression. They called upon the government to construct new homes and provide rehabilitation for the impoverished families who have lost everything. Furthermore, they urged the government to distribute essential commodities to all the affected families. “The District Collector, upon hearing the grievances, responded positively. He immediately instructed the RDO, District SP, and Tiruchanur CI to gather details, identify the culprits behind the attack, register a case, and ensure they are severely punished. The Collector also directed the RDO to personally visit the incident site tomorrow morning for a direct assessment.” The CPM, CPI, and RPI parties collectively demanded that the coalition government address and resolve these issues promptly. They also urged the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) to pass a resolution on the Venugopal Colony residents' plight during their upcoming Mahanadu (annual conference).

Chronicling milestones in the wild: The story of a Telangana forester with a steely resolve

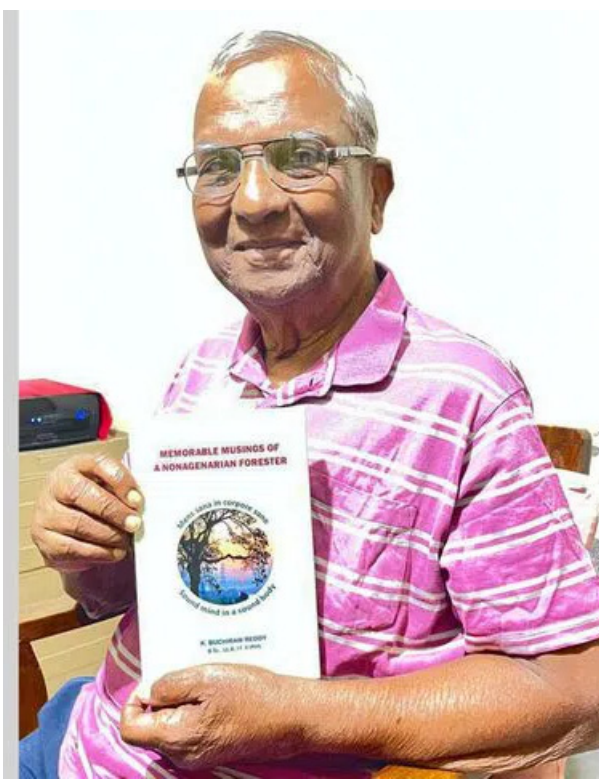
GNS News Agency, May 28

Hyderabad: For someone who has undertaken the arduous task of chronicling some of the milestones, challenges and the occupational hazards of being a forester since the early '50s, K Buchiram Reddy, retired IFS officer, proves that age is just a number when it comes to this documentation, starting with his first one — ‘Forest Martyrs’ — published in 2012. The 93-year-old Reddy, a graduate in Science and Law, and a member of the Indian Forest Service, has penned down the challenges and occupational hazards of being a forester since the early 1950s. He was often referred to as an official with integrity and a walking encyclopedia on Forest Law.

Only a few months ago, when his ‘Compilation of Legal Notes for Forest Officers’ was released by PK Jha, president, Association of Retired Forest Officers of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, it was a recognition and acknowledgement of his contribution in the field. And, Reddy's latest publication, ‘Memorable Musings of a Nagenarian Forester’, released a couple of days ago, is essentially a compilation of his articles over the years and a generous donation to the Telangana State Forest Academy, Dulapally, Hyderabad.

For the record, Reddy is a founding editor of ‘Vana Premi’, a retired foresters' magazine, which was his brainchild founded in 1994, thanks to the help from selfless officials such as late Narayanaswamy, JV Sharma and late Lohit Reddy. Reddy's autobiography, ‘Journey of My Life in The Wilderness’ (2013) and ‘Okav Vana Premi Jeevana Yanam’ in Telugu during the pandemic (2019) were also widely appreciated by family, friends and fellow foresters.

Continuing his steely determination, Reddy came up with ‘Smaraka Vartha Vahini’ in Telugu four years later, on the ghastly murder of FRO Ch Srinivas Rao who was trying to prevent forest encroachment. “I am grateful to Messrs Nagabhushanam and Thirupathiah, both of whom were my collaborators and esteemed colleagues from the Indian Forest Service,” Reddy insists. “Those were the days when



forestry discipline and fear of prosecution were there. Now, it is not the same for different reasons,” he says. “Definitely, the huge plus is now technological advances such as drone surveillance for tracking criminals as well as endangered wildlife, compared to the old days when a lone forester as a foot-soldier covered long distances, in off-road territories in life-threatening and inhospitable conditions,” Reddy points out. “But the fact that there is loss of lives of foresters in the line of duty is a sad reflection that such atrocities still remain unchallenged,” he concludes.

Fish Prasadam distribution for asthma patients at Nampally Exhibition Grounds on June 8



GNS News Agency, May 28

Hyderabad: The annual fish prasadam distribution by Bathini Goud family on Migasira Karthi day will begin at Nampally Exhibition Grounds on June 8 at 10 am. Bathini family members on Wednesday told the media persons that necessary preparations were being made in coordination with various government departments including the

Hyderabad Collector, DGP, Police Commissioners, GHMC, Water Works, RTC, Municipality, Police, and Electricity. The Fisheries department is also preparing to supply necessary fish to the family for distributing the medicine to asthma patients.

The family said they have been providing the fish prasadam as was told to their family elders by a sage about 190 years ago. Since then, they have been selflessly providing it free of charge to lakhs of patients with respiratory issues.

The family acknowledged the support from Badri Vishalal Pannalal Pitti Chairman Sharath Pitti, volunteer organizations like Agarwal Seva Dal which provide food, coffee, tea, buttermilk, and drinking water to patients. Emergency medical facilities are also provided to ensure patients waiting in the queues do not face any difficulties. The fish prasadam distribution will start at 10 am on June 8 and continue till 10 am on June 9, the family said. Bathini family members Bathini Amarnath Goud, Sivasankar Goud, Gouri Shankara Goud, Chandrashekar Goud, Santhosh Goud, and Siva Goud on Wednesday were present at the meet.

Rowdy sheeters turn to ganja trade in Hyderabad as lucrative drug business attracts hardcore criminals

GNS News Agency, May 28 Hyderabad: With the law enforcement agencies tightening its grip over the notorious ganja smugglers and peddlers, and trade on other hand being lucrative, a new set of criminals are trying to make their way into the illegal yet ‘profitable’ business. The emerging trend is of rowdy sheeters, who are basically involved in robberies, murders, dacoities, extortion and property offenses, turning to ganja business. In the last two months, the Hyderabad police caught eight rowdy sheeters who were actively pursuing the weed business. Hyderabad: Notorious chain snatcher, ganja smuggler Syed Sayeed Hussain alias Lamba arrested with associates

In mid May, the Special Team of the Detective Department seized 21 kg of ganja from Syed Sayeed Hussain alias Lamba and his four associates. A notorious chain snatcher Lamba, is involved in more than 250 offenses. “Lamba came in contact with some persons from Nagpur

and with help of his associates was smuggling ganja to the city,” said D Bikshapathi, Inspector Special Team. In April, the Task Force (west) team caught Mohammed Sofiyanuddin (24), a rowdy sheeters of Masab Tank police station, and seized 2 kg of ganja. Sofiyanuddin along with his three other associates brought the ganja from Taj Bagh Darga in Nagpur. The ganja is routed to Nagpur from Odisha and Andhra Pradesh. “Rowdy sheeters while in the jail are coming in contact with ganja smugglers and peddlers. After coming out of the jail, they are sourcing the weed as they see huge money in the business,” said an official of the Task Force. Ganja is sourced at Rs. 4000 to Rs. 7000 a kg and is sold at a price of Rs. 20,000 to Rs. 25,000 a kg in loose quantity to customers. The huge profits are luring the rowdy sheeters who are no novice to the crime world into the trade. Almost eight of ten rowdy sheeters are addicted to some form of drug abuse.

India or the US: Fintech professional's social media post comparing living costs triggers debate

GNS News Agency, May 28

Hyderabad: Given the craze for many Indians to migrate to the United States, the question of is life better in India or in the US has been a long-standing debate. A LinkedIn post by fintech professional Shivani Gera, for the same reason, has gone viral on social media. Gera wanted to say that if one was earning Rs.25 lakh per annum in India, that was like earning Rs.70 lakh to Rs.75 lakh in the US. Attributing this to purchasing power parity (PPP), she claimed this changed everything. “If you're earning Rs 25 LPA in India, that's like earning Rs 70-75 LPA in the US. It's due to Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) – and it changes everything. Because it's not just what you earn, it's what that money lets you afford,” she said.

Going on, she gave her own version of how this worked out, and reasoned that in India, Rs.25 LPA gave one a lifestyle most people abroad pay a fortune for. “A good home, meals out, convenience services, even help at home – without burning out. So next time someone flexes a dollar salary, ask this: What's their lifestyle really like? Because in the real world, how far your money goes matters way more than how big the number looks,” she said, also adding that however, her figures did not factor in tax deductions. But even if there were deductions, the core point still stands, she argued, reiterating that PPP wasn't about precise math, but about relative cost of living. Her post triggered mass reactions, literally, with more than 300 people responding to the post on LinkedIn, while several hundreds responded to wherever the same was shared. “To be honest, this comparison doesn't really make sense. I've seen many people working abroad in the US or Europe, and they're way ahead of us in terms of savings. My landlord, for example, lives in the US and owns three flats in Bangalore. So if you ever get



the opportunity to move to the US, don't think twice—just go. What you might save in 5 years here, you'll probably save there in just 1–2 years,” was how one responded. Another netizen, a United States resident, partially agreed. “Even though taxes are high in the U.S., let's assume we save about 50% in India after all expenses, which amounts to Rs.12.5 lakhs. In the U.S., we might save around 35%, which equals Rs.26.25 lakhs. Even then, we have a profit of Rs.13.75 lakhs — and this is a conservative estimate. Then, the work culture in the U.S. and India is completely different. It's well known that in India, employees often work beyond regular hours, whereas in the U.S., that is generally not the case,” he said. “We often chase the currency without questioning the capacity it offers. Rs.25 LPA in India isn't just a figure—it's access to time, convenience, comfort, and quality of life that many abroad can't afford without serious trade-offs. It's not about how much you earn—it's about how much life your money can buy,” said another.

British American Tobacco sells 2.5 per cent stake in ITC for Rs 12,927 crore

GNS News Agency, May 28

New Delhi: British multinational BAT Plc on Wednesday trimmed its ownership in conglomerate ITC by divesting a 2.5 per cent stake for Rs 12,927 crore (USD 1.51 billion) through a block deal, according to a revised term sheet accessed by PTI. Following the stake sale, shares of ITC went lower by 1.15 per cent to trade at Rs 421.15 apiece on the NSE. British American Tobacco (BAT), through its arm Tobacco Manufacturers (India) Ltd, sold the stake in Kolkata-based ITC. Before the latest transaction, BAT through its affiliates — Rothmans International Enterprises, Myddleton Investment Company and Tobacco Manufacturers (India) Ltd — owned a combined 25.44 per cent stake in ITC Ltd.

Following the completion of the block trade, BAT will remain a significant shareholder of ITC, with less than 23 per cent stake in FMCG-to-hotel conglomerate ITC. As per the latest block deal, up to 31.3 crore equity shares of ITC were sold at a final price of Rs 413 per share. This represents a discount of about 4.8 per cent to ITC's closing price of Rs 433.90 on the National Stock Exchange (NSE) on Tuesday, as per a revised term sheet seen by PTI.

Goldman Sachs (India) Securities Pvt Ltd and Citigroup Global Markets India are the placement agents for the transaction, sources said. The total number of shares has been raised from the initial 290 million (29 crore shares) as mentioned in the earlier term sheet. The sources said 31.3 crore shares amount to around 2.5 per cent stake in ITC, and the offer size, based on the final price, is pegged at USD 1.51 billion or about Rs 12,927 crore. The shares sale executed through multiple tranches on the BSE and NSE under the bulk sale route. The share sale is entirely secondary in nature, meaning that ITC will not receive any proceeds from the deal, and the stake is being sold solely by the Tobacco Manufacturers (India) Ltd. The seller and its affiliates will be subject to a lock-up period of six months post-sale. In a regulatory filing on the London Stock Exchange, BAT plc on Tuesday said that its wholly-owned subsidiary Tobacco Manufacturers (India) Ltd intends to sell



stakes in ITC Ltd. The transaction will provide BAT with increased financial flexibility as it delivers on its commitment to invest in transformation, deleverage and sustainable shareholder returns. BAT's initial investment in ITC dates back to the early 1900s, and the two companies have a longstanding, mutually beneficial relationship. As one of India's leading FMCG enterprises, ITC has delivered significant value for its shareholders.

“ITC is a valued associate of BAT in an attractive geography with long-term growth potential where BAT benefits from exposure to the world's most populous market. “Whilst this transaction supports delivery on our commitments to BAT shareholders, we continue to view ITC as a core strategic component of our global footprint as we partner on business opportunities in India. I am confident that ITC, under the stewardship of its current management, will continue to create further value for its shareholders,” BAT's Chief Executive Tadeu Marroco said. In March 2024, BAT Plc sold a 3.5 per cent stake in ITC Ltd for Rs 17,485 crore. BAT is in the multi-category consumer goods business. Its strategic portfolio comprises global cigarette brands and a growing range of nicotine and smokeless tobacco products, including vapour brand Vuse; heated product brand 'glo' and Velo, a modern oral (nicotine pouch) brand.

Hyderabad-based Granules India net profit up 17 per cent in Q4 FY25

GNS News Agency, May 28

New Delhi: Drug firm Granules India on Wednesday said its consolidated profit after tax increased 17 per cent to Rs 152 crore in the fourth quarter ended March 31, 2025, riding on strong sales in the formulations segment. The Hyderabad-based firm reported a profit after tax (PAT) of Rs 130 crore in the January-March quarter of last year.

Revenue from operations increased to Rs 1,197 crore for the fourth quarter as compared with Rs 1,176 crore in the year-ago period, Granules India said in a statement. For FY25, the drug firm posted a consolidated PAT of Rs 501 crore as against Rs 405 crore in FY24. Revenue, however, declined to Rs 4,482 crore as against Rs 4,506 crore in the 2023-24 fiscal. “We are pleased to report a resilient bottom line and cash flow performance this year, despite sales remaining steady. This was achieved with a profitable formulations growth of 18 per cent,” Granules India Chairman and MD Krishna Prasad Chigurupati stated.

The company's strong financial performance reflects the success of its strategic initiatives, particularly its focus



on enhancing product mix by prioritising high-margin offerings and expanding portfolio of non-legacy molecules, he added. The drug firm said its board has recommended a final dividend of Rs 1.5 per share of the face value of Re 1 each for the financial year 2024-25. Shares of the company ended 1.29 per cent down at Rs 522.05 apiece on the BSE.

Kamal Haasan clarifies Kannada remark: It was a statement of love

Veteran star Kamal Haasan has responded to the controversy around his statement on the Kannada language. The actor, while promoting his upcoming movie Thug Life, had said that “Tamil gave birth to Kannada.” Kamal Haasan's remark, made at the audio launch of the Mani Ratnam-directorial in Chennai, drew criticism from the people of Karnataka. Actor and politician Kamal Haasan spoke about his recent statement claiming that the Kannada language “was born out of Tamil.” The remark, made during the audio launch of his upcoming film Thug Life in Chennai, has drawn fierce backlash in Karnataka, particularly from the BJP and pro-Kannada groups who demanded an immediate and unconditional apology. | Video Credit: The Hindu

Pro-Kannada groups demanded an apology from Kamal Haasan even as they held protests in Bengaluru and Belagavi against the actor for hurting the Kannada sentiments. Angry fans on social media threatened to boycott the movie, set to release on June 05, 2025. Addressing the row, Karnataka chief minister Siddaramaiah told reporters that “Kannada language has a very long history... he (Kamal

Haasan) doesn't know.” The BJP too joined the backlash, demanding an apology from the star. Karnataka BJP president B.Y. Vijayendra condemned Kamal Haasan's remarks as “uncultured” and “insulting” to Kannada and its 6.5 crore speakers. Kamal Haasan, addressing the media in Thiruvananthapuram as part of the film's promotions, said people “have confused the issue.” “My statement was said out of love,” said the National Award-winning actor. He added that politicians “are not qualified to talk about it” (history of languages). “They don't have the education to talk about it, including me. Let's leave the discussions to historians, language experts, and archeologists. People will take care of Thug Life and Kamal Haasan,” he said. Speaking about his controversial statement, Kamal Haasan said, “It was a statement of love to Mr Shivanna (Kannada star Shivarajkumar). His father (Dr Rajkumar) is like my father. We are a family, and so are the other languages. “If you look at it from the Northern point of view, what they say is right. If you look at it from Thenkumari, then what I say is right. There is a third angle to it, that's where the language experts come into play.

Over Rs 3.17-crore ‘fraud’: ED searches residence of Bajwa Developers’ chief



GNS News Agency, May 28

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) conducted a raid on the residence of Jarnail Singh Bajwa, owner of Bajwa Developers, on Wednesday afternoon in Mohali in connection with a financial fraud amounting to approximately Rs

3.17 crore. According to officials, the ED had obtained permission from the Mohali District Court in April to interrogate Jarnail Singh Bajwa. Following this, ED officers visited him at Ropar Jail for questioning. Based on the information gathered during that session, the agency launched a raid today at his Mohali residence.

The ED had initiated an investigation against Jarnail Singh Bajwa, Managing Director of Bajwa Developers, based on multiple FIRs filed by Punjab Police under various sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), 1860. The investigation revealed that Bajwa was allegedly involved in a financial fraud amounting to approximately Rs 3.17 crore. The scam includes charges of collecting money from unsuspecting buyers without allotting plots and registering the same plots in the names of other individuals. In 2023, the ED had already begun probing Bajwa under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) and had attached assets worth Rs 54.16 lakh, which were later seized.

Reduced supply, muddy water: The reality of 24×7 water access project hits hard months after launch in Manimajra



GNS News Agency, May 28

Despite the launch of a 24×7 water supply pilot project in Manimajra aimed at ensuring round-the-clock water access, residents are facing increasing difficulties due to reduced water pressure and limited supply. The severity of the crisis can be understood from the fact that even residents of Indira Colony are grappling with the problem of muddy and discoloured water. To provide uninterrupted water supply to households in Manimajra, the UT administration had launched a 24×7 water supply pilot project in August last year.

Initially, residents welcomed the move with the hope that water would now reach every floor of their homes without the need for motor pumps. However, since the project began, residents are complaining of severe water shortages. Naveen Sharma, a Manimajra resident, said that previously, residents used to receive water for 3 to 4 hours every morning and evening, which they managed with motor pumps. But now, even motor pumps aren't sufficient, and water reaches only limited parts of homes. "The summer season has further intensified the crisis. Under the project, canal water was supposed to be stored in two underground

reservoirs (UGRs) with a total capacity of 4 million gallons, built opposite Shivalik Garden. This stored water was meant to be distributed with adequate pressure across Manimajra. However, due to limited canal water availability, the system is running on reduced capacity," added Sharma. Pooja Bhajni of Dhera Sahib, Manimajra said that initially when the project started, water used to reach even the fourth floor of buildings without any motor. Now, water doesn't even reach the first floor. She said his neighbours are also facing severe shortages and despite repeated complaints, project plumbers only inspect the water meters and pipelines without resolving the core issue. In Indira Colony In Indira Colony, residents are dealing with a different but equally troubling issue — muddy and contaminated water. According to Subhash Dhiman, chairman of the Indira Colony Welfare Association, houses in the area are receiving muddy water. However, Colonel (retired) Gursewak Singh, President RWA of Modern Housing Complex, said the situation is better than earlier, there is improvement in the water supply after the 24×7 water supply pilot project. On the muddy water sometimes in the area, he said that the internal pipes were though replaced with new ones by the authorities concerned, but at few areas the main pipes have not been replaced — which are nearly 25 years old — and when they are to be repaired sometimes, the ground has to be dug, to reach to the pipes and in the process, certain amount of mud goes in water, and then for sometime the supply of water gets muddy. The problems related to water supply are occasional, the Colonel (retired) added. Mayor Harpreet Kaur Babla, however, said that the issue was raised before the Municipal Commissioner too. The expert teams are working on the problem, and soon the issue will be resolved, she added. Residents, however, remain dissatisfied and are urging the administration to take immediate action to restore clean and adequate water supply across Manimajra and Indira Colony.

‘Prof Jayant Narlikar believed in nurturing children with love of science from young age’: Educator remembers astrophysicist

GNS News Agency, May 28

Astrophysicist Prof Jayant Narlikar believed children should be nurtured with the love of science from a young age, and he realised his dream to set up a children's science centre at the Inter-University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics (IUCAA) in Pune in 2004, said Prof Arvind Gupta, a science educator and toy inventor. Prof Gupta, 71, a Padma Shri awardee, well known for turning trash into toys that children can make themselves while learning the basic principles of science, recalled his association with Prof Narlikar, who passed away at the age of 86 Tuesday. His mortal remains were kept at the Bhaskara foyer at IUCAA Wednesday morning for the public to pay their final respects.

"In 2003, I was invited by JVN (Prof Narlikar) to work in the IUCAA's children's science centre (Muktangan Exploratory Science Centre). Initially, I was reluctant to work in a government institute. But JVN assured me that I could help shape the science centre, and if I did not like it, I could quit after six months. So, I initially joined for six months, but ended up working there for 11 years," he said. Prof Narlikar was the founder-director of the IUCAA in Pune and was known for his seminal works in cosmology and most importantly, for believing in an alternate model to the popular Big Bang theory for the origin of the universe. In 1988, Prof Narlikar founded the IUCAA within the Savitribai Phule Pune University (SPPU). Professor Narlikar was India's most celebrated astrophysicist, having received the second highest civilian award, the Padma Vibhushan in 2004. Two decades earlier, he was honored with the Kalinga Award, UNESCO's highest recognition for science popularisation.

A large donation from Sunita Deshpande, the wife of his late friend Pu La Deshpande, a cultural icon of Maharashtra, turned this dream into reality and the children's exploratory science centre was inaugurated in 2004 by Prof Yash Pal, a fellow Kalinga awardee who shared his vision of science. "Right from its inception, IUCAA had an active public outreach programme. Every second Saturday, there was a popular science lecture/demonstration for some 1,000 students and teachers from over 100 schools in Pune. This tradition still continues. JVN started the students' summer internship programme. During summer holidays, children would work with scientists on some projects. That gave children a feel for what goes into doing science," Prof Gupta said.

Prof Gupta also spoke about Dr Vidula Mhaiskar, who is now with Garware Bal Bhavan, Pune; and Ashok Rupner, now with Indrani Balan Science Centre, IISER, who had joined him at IUCAA's children's science centre. "In 2004, we set up the popular website arvindguptatoys.com. We started uploading science projects — photographs, videos, and popular books on the website. We made over 8,700 videos in 15 languages and uploaded them on YouTube. We had 3.7 lakh subscribers, and we were the second-largest YouTube channel from India at one stage. Today, 12 crore children worldwide have viewed our 2-minute 'toys from trash' videos," Prof Gupta said. Dr Gupta also recalled that the anti-superstition activist Dr Narendra Dabholkar often collaborated with Prof Narlikar. "Prof JVN was a renaissance scientist. He wrote prolifically in his mother tongue, Marathi, and was a pioneer of science fiction writing. He was a rationalist and consistently debunked pseudoscience. Dr Narendra Dabholkar often collaborated



with JVN, who was invited widely to give lectures to school and college children," he added. According to reports, Dr Dabholkar also conducted a statistical test on the accuracy of horoscopes with Prof Narlikar. The report was published in the journal Current Science.

From TDI to Aerocity, residents face daily power outage this summer



GNS News Agency, May 28

Unscheduled power cuts have left Mohali residents in a lurch with temperatures soaring over 42°C. Areas like TDI City (Sectors 117, 118, 119, 74A, and 92) are facing daily outages, especially at night, leaving hundreds sleep-deprived and frustrated. The TDI Residents' Rights Protection and Welfare Society has submitted a complaint to PSPCL and local authorities, demanding urgent intervention. It highlights recurring issues like transformer failures, cable faults, and feeder overloads, claiming conditions are worsening. However, the crisis is not limited to TDI, Aerocity, New Sunny Enclave, Phase 9, sectors 80, 66, 67, and 68 are also battling 2-3 hour daily cuts. In rural areas like Balongi, Bar Majra, Juharnagar and Badi, residents report going entire days without power. Office-goers in phases 7 and 8 say even inverters can't keep up. A senior PSPCL official blamed it on overloaded grid stations in Phase 9, Sector 80, Industrial Area Phase 7, and Sunny Enclave. The official said power cuts are inevitable, also citing the ongoing staff strike, which is delaying fault repairs, worsening the crisis.

Amid Punjab-Haryana standoff, Centre clears 296 CISF personnel for Nangal Dam security



GNS News Agency, May 28

The Centre Wednesday sanctioned a contingent of 296 armed CISF personnel for providing security cover to the Nangal Dam, the move coming on a day when the ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in Punjab organised a Fateh (victory) Rally for not letting extra water to flow to Haryana till May 20.

Meanwhile, water was released from the dam to Haryana as fresh distribution cycle kicked in Wednesday. The Bhakra Beas Management Board (BBMB), which regulates the water quota, in a meeting last week decided that Punjab will get 17,000 cusecs, Haryana 10,300 cusecs, and Rajasthan 12,400 cusecs of water in the new distribution cycle that will remain in effect till May 20, 2026. In a communication to BBMB, the Union Ministry of Home Affairs said that 296 posts of CISF personnel have been created for manning the "Bhakra Dam Project, Nangal (Punjab)". The has been asked to provide boarding, lodging and other logistics for the personnel.

The communication has quoted a security deposit of Rs 2,90,100 per head and has asked the BBMB to transfer Rs 8,58,69,600 (for 296 personnel) to CISF headquarters. Punjab will also have to bear part of the cost of deployment, being a partner state of BBMB. Meanwhile, the AAP workers who had been staging a sit-in at the Nangal dam, situated downstream of the Bhakra dam, for the past 20 days to prevent release of extra water to Haryana, lifted the 'dharma' after Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann reached there and addressed the Fateh rally.

Mann said he will flag the issue of reconstitution of the BBMB in the meeting of Niti Aayog, to be chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and slated for Saturday. Mann, who has chosen not to attend Niti Aayog meetings in the past, he will attend the meeting this time and flag the issue. He said as the level of water is changing frequently, every water agreement should be reviewed after every 25 years. Punjab is a landlocked border state which has already over explored its only available natural resources in terms of water and fertile soil to feed the country, he said. Mann bemoaned that the manner in which BBMB "be-

came a party to snatch" the legitimate share of waters of the state was unfortunate and highly condemnable. He said Haryana exhausted its share of water in the March, but the BBMB acted as a "puppet of the Centre and Haryana government" to "snatch" Punjab's waters. Mann said, in an unprecedented manner, BBMB chairman Manoj Tripathi himself came to Nangal to "steal" the state's share of water, a move which was "thwarted" by the people of the state. Centre's move to deploy CISF comes days after Tripathi was locked up at BBMB rest house in Nangal. He was released after the intervention of Punjab Police. Mann said that new cycle of water has now begun but water will be released to Haryana only after releasing 3,000 cusecs for Punjab farmers. "I again want to ask Haryana officials to use water judiciously. Do not expect more water from Punjab," Mann said, adding Haryana was allocated 15.06 lakh cusecs of water in the previous water cycle but it utilized 16.48 lakh cusecs.

Mann claimed that the BBMB, which had taken Rs 32 crore from Punjab for its very existential projects, never returned the money. Punjab is owed nearly Rs 150 crore from BBMB, he claimed, adding that the state government will soon stake a claim for recovery of this money. The CM called BBMB a "white elephant" and termed it unacceptable in the present form. He said 3,000 posts of Punjab's quota have deliberately not been filled by BBMB so as to "weaken" the state's claim over the waters. Mann said even the townships like Nangal that were aesthetically designed, have been "ruined" due to the "neglect" of the BBMB. He said Punjab has a glorious history of making sacrifices to protect the 553 kilometres long border with Pakistan.

He said this time Punjabis were at the forefront while giving a befitting reply to the Pakistani Army and on the other hand they saved the share of their water too. He said that for years, Punjab's water has been diverted to other states through the BBMB adding that hands of Congress, Akalis and BJP were drenched with blood of Punjabis as these parties have backstabbed them by ignoring the water rights of the state for vested interests. He said that a former Chief Minister got a plot in Gurgaon, where they have a hotel now, for planning the Sutlej Yamuna Link (SYL) canal and issuing its survey order. Mann also said that self proclaimed savior of Punjab waters and former chief minister had presented silver spade to the then Prime Minister for the ground breaking ceremony of SYL at Kapoori. Mann said that despite being smaller in area, Haryana is getting more water than Punjab. Today, nearly 60 per cent of the state's farmlands are irrigated through canals, which makes every drop of Punjab's water extremely valuable, he said. On the occasion Cabinet Minister Harjot Singh Bains welcomed Mann and other dignitaries. Meanwhile, Cabinet Minister Barinder Goyal thanked all the dignitaries and people who had attended the rally.

YouTuber Jyoti Malhotra was in contact with people knowing that they were Pak intel operatives: Haryana Police

GNS News Agency, May 28

The Haryana Police Wednesday said that till now no such fact has come to light to show that YouTuber Jyoti Rani Malhotra had access to any military, defence or strategic information or that she was in contact with any terrorist organization. The 33-year-old vlogger from Haryana was arrested on May 16 for allegedly spying for Pakistani intelligence agencies. Hisar Superintendent of Police Shashank Kumar Sawan said that the accused was in contact with some people knowing that they are Pakistan Intelligence Operatives (PIOs). "But till now no such fact has come to light directly which can be said that the accused was in contact with any terrorist organization. No fact has come to light so far regarding the accused's involvement in any terrorist incidents," added the SP. The SP said the police seized three mobile phones, a laptop and some other electronic devices from the accused.

Along with this, Harkirat, a resident of Kurukshetra, was also called for questioning. Harkirat provides visa services. Police seized two mobile phones from Harkirat. Harkirat has not been arrested yet. The mobile phones, laptops and electronic devices recovered from Jyoti and Harkirat have been sent to the forensic lab for investigation where analysis is going on. The result of the analysis has not been handed over to the Hisar Police yet.

SP Sawan said that no comment can be made about Malhotra's WhatsApp chats as of now. The Hisar SP also made it clear that the entire case is being investigated by Hisar Police and the accused is in the custody of Hisar Police. Some central investigation agencies are questioning the accused from time to time but the custody of the accused has not been handed over to any of these agencies. "No facts have yet emerged about the accused having access to any military, defence or strategic information. In-depth analysis of the accused's 4 bank accounts is going on. No comment can be made about the money transactions as of now," he added.

Malhotra has a YouTube channel called Travel with Jo with over 3,77,000 subscribers and an Instagram account with over 1,32,000 followers. She visited Pakistan multiple times and also went to China once. We are analysing her financial transactions and travel details. She was in touch with PIOs (Pakistan Intelligence Operatives). She did not



have direct access to military or defence information, though Hisar is a strategic location," the SP had stated earlier. Sawan said one of her Pakistan visits was "sponsored". "She met some high-profile persons during the visit. Why and what information was shared; all these things are being probed." The police also said she possibly "fell into a trap for views and likes" and "her travel details show more expenses than her known sources of income".

Malhotra is among 12 people who have been arrested from Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh over the past two weeks on charges of espionage, with investigators suspecting the presence of a Pakistan-linked spy network operating in north India. Meanwhile, YouTuber Navankur Chaudhary, another person under scrutiny for espionage, has said that he was ready to fully cooperate with any investigation agency and asserted that a fake narrative was being spread against him. Chaudhary, who hails from Rohtak, has also claimed that Malhotra had met him as a fan at an event at Pakistan High Commission. "I did not know Jyoti personally before that day. I had never met her earlier," he said. In a video on X, Chaudhary, who runs the YouTube channel 'Yatri Doctor', said he has visited Pakistan just once. His father said on Wednesday, "A media trial is going on. Our entire family is going through a tough time. I am a bank employee, but have been unable to attend office due to this. Both me and his (Navankur) mother have not had food for the past two days." The man added, "So far, he has visited 144 countries and his objective is to visit the entire world and he visited Pakistan once. At present, he is in Ireland."

TTD to employ AI, facial recognition tech to enhance pilgrimage experience

Tirupati: The Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD), the official custodian of the famous Venkateswara temple here, is exploring the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and facial recognition technology to enhance the pilgrimage experience, said an official on Thursday. TTD executive officer (EO) J Syamala Rao said the temple body will employ these technologies to authenticate genuine pilgrims for ensuring a smooth darshan (visit to deity), prevent impersonation and fraudulent activities and ease accommodation, access control and other operations. "TTD envisioned adopting the latest technological solutions available in the market including Artificial Intelligence to improve the overall pilgrimage," said Rao in a press release. As part of these futuristic initiatives, the EO said pilgrims will be provided with time slotted darshan tokens, which will capture their facial features using facial recognition technology. On capturing a pilgrim's image, he said it will be sieved through data from the past 30 days or about 10 lakh images to root out duplicate bookings and thereby enable servicing more number of pilgrims. By implementing this solution, token issue and

verification process becomes quick and hassle-free while impersonation and fraudulent activities can be prevented, said Rao. AI and facial recognition technology are also contemplated to track pilgrim numbers at various locations such as queue lines, compartments and inside the Tirumala temple, among others. The installation of AI-powered facial recognition cameras are expected to power this facial detection, said Rao. "This solution leverages TTD management to exactly assess the probable darshan time expected for the pilgrims who are waiting and also can assess the darshan time for pilgrims joining queue lines," he said. Powered by this tech, the temple body will be equipped to notify pilgrims of the expected darshan time so as to empower them to properly plan their pilgrimages. Installed across darshan paths in the temple, TTD can estimate the time taken to complete darshan under various categories and also fix gaps in operations. Further, AI and facial recognition cameras will come in handy to track and identify intruders in Tirumala at exact locations. Eventually, the EO observed that facial recognition technology will be extended to all possible TTD services.

Never misbehaved with any woman: Principal suspended for ‘misbehaving’ during Singapore tour pleads innocence



GNS News Agency, May 28

Placed on suspension on Monday for his alleged misbehaviour with a lady tour guide during a visit to Singapore for an official teachers’ training programme, the accused principal of a Fazilka school has pleaded his innocence. “I am being defamed without knowing details of the full incident. As a teacher, I never think of misbehaving with a woman.” Speaking to The Indian Express, Gautam Khurana, principal of the School of Eminence, Jalalabad, Fazilka district, said that he had only objected to an extra class on Chinese language, because even teachers had undergone an eight-hour-long full-day exhaustive training session. “Just because I objected to an extra class after a full-day exhaustive training session from 9 am to 5 pm, as I was feeling nauseous and tired, it has been projected as misbehaviour with a lady guide. I did not even speak to the tour guide directly.”

According to the suspension order, the action was being taken as Khurana “misbehaved with a lady tour guide during the teachers’ training programme in Singapore”. The suspension order by Mitra came close on the heels of Punjab Director of Education (Secondary) Gurinder Singh Sodhi’s May 9 order, stating that Khurana was “being let off with a stern warning to be careful in future after he replied to the show-cause notice and the matter was being treated as “daakhil daftar” (meaning no further action will be taken on it)”. The suspension orders went viral on social media.

“We went to Singapore in March,” Khurana told The Indian Express. “On that day, we had a 9 am to 5 pm training session. In the evening, we were taken on a jungle safari. All teachers were exhausted. On the way back from the jungle safari, our bus broke down. Within a few minutes, the atmosphere inside the bus turned humid, and I

started feeling nauseous. In such a situation, some teachers started requesting the tour guide, a Singaporean, to teach them the Chinese language. It continued for some minutes, but some teachers, like me, sitting in the back seats, got irritated. I objected to it and said that when we had already completed the day’s training, why were we taking an extra class on Chinese on the bus? That’s all,” Khurana said. “I commented on teachers, not the lady guide. I did not speak to her directly, but the SCERT director, Madam, who was leading us, objected and asked, ‘Who said this?’ I got a little scared and realised I should not have said this. Since I was feeling nauseous, I moved out of the bus and started moving around to feel better. As the new bus came, we reached the hotel, and no discussion was held that day. I did not misbehave with the guide even once,” Khurana claimed. Khurana said the next day, the matter was again raised by the SCERT director and some teachers, stating that the incident should not have happened. “I immediately sensed the gravity of the situation and apologised to the SCERT director and the entire group of teachers. I told them that I never meant to hurt anyone and had only objected to the extra class as I was feeling unwell, suffocated and nauseous in that broken bus. As we returned from the tour, I received a show-cause notice on March 25, to which I replied,” Khurana said. “The lady guide has not filed any complaint against me, and I did not speak to her directly. So, how could this be misbehaviour with her,” he questioned.

Notably, Government Senior Secondary School (Boys), Jalalabad, is now a School of Eminence, headed by Khurana as the principal. However, the secretary’s suspension order avoided mentioning the School of Eminence and addressed Khurana as the principal of GSSS, Jalalabad. “This was possibly done to avoid tarnishing the image of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government’s ambitious School of Eminence project,” said a teacher. Khurana said that he was shocked to see the suspension order giving “misbehaviour with a lady guide” as the reason for his suspension. “As a routine practice, the reason for suspension is never mentioned in the letter until the inquiry is completed and the chargesheet is not issued. I have been declared an accused without a chargesheet. I never misbehaved with any woman. Expressing one’s discomfort and health issues is not misbehaviour. Despite that, I apologised,” he said. “There is not a single blot on my teaching career. I have earned this respect by sheer hard work. I don’t have any political connections to save myself,” he added. Mitra, however, said the action against the principal was initiated based on the complaint received from the SCERT director.

FOSTTA’s application receives over 3,000 complaints on default payments within a month of launch

GNS News Agency, May 28

FOSTTA app receives over 3,000 complaints on default payments within a month of launch As per the complaints received on the app, buyers allegedly defaulted on payments amounting to a total of Rs 170 crore. The Federation of Surat Trade and Textile Association (FOSTTA), which had launched a mobile application, FOSTTA FORUM, to register complaints from traders who have been cheated or have their payments due from buyers, has received over 3,000 complaints within a month of the launch, it said. As per the complaints received on the application, buyers allegedly defaulted on payments amounting to a total of Rs 170 crore. The association also said that it has hired 20 college students as telecallers who will be trained to and tasked with resolving various issues faced by complainants.

The application was launched around 30 days ago to control the menace of fly-by-night firms, which default on payments.

Sources in the textile industry say there are over 170 textile trading markets in Surat city, with 30,000 traders having Goods and Services Tax Number (GSTN) and others who run businesses without it. The FOSTTA, which has around 1,100 registered members from Surat, also started an awareness drive to get textile traders in the city registered on FOSTTA FORUM. Talking about the application, FOSTTA President Kailash Hakim said, “Every year, the textile industry faces losses worth hundreds of crores due to fly-by-night firms who default on payments to textile traders, weavers, embroidery unit owners, and dyeing and printing factory owners. The firms purchase finished and unfinished (unprinted) fabrics from traders and default on payments. Out of 100 such firms, over 70 are from other states, and the rest are locals. We have tied up with 146 ‘kapda mandis’ across the country so that the cross-verification of textile businessmen from other cities and states can be done. We will also ask the textile traders of these ‘kapda mandis’ to download FOSTTA FORUM.”

He further said, “We have started spreading awareness among textile traders from various markets in the city and are convincing them to download the application and also register themselves as FOSTTA members. Through this application, registered and non-registered traders can submit their complaints along with their name, firm details,



GSTN and address, and also submit details of the firm and owner who default on payments. The complainant also has to upload the details of textile fabrics sold and the amount due from buyers. “As per sources in FOSTTA, textile factory owner Surat Harsh Hakim received a call through a broker who wanted to purchase grey bales (each bale consists of 100 metres of unprinted fabric). The broker introduced Hakim to a buyer, also a textile trader from Surat. The buyer placed an order for around 20 grey bales. Hakim, who had already downloaded FOSTTA FORUM application on his mobile phone, entered the name of the buyer and found that different textile traders from Surat had registered three complaints of “default payments” against his firm on the app. Hakim cancelled the order and shared details of the buyer firm with the FOSTTA office.

“Once the complaints are generated, our team gets in touch with the buyer firm, which has allegedly defaulted on a payment and tries to resolve the issue through conversations. Over 80 per cent of such issues are generally resolved through conversations. Complaints which are not resolved have to go to arbitration. Out of the 3,000 complaints, which have been received in a month, we have resolved 20, and working on around 300 others,” Hakim added. Talking about the college students hired as telecallers, Hakim said, “We will pay them based on the hours they work. We will train them, starting Thursday. We have selected these students after visiting different colleges. Once a defaulter receives a call from FOSTTA, he would surely want to mutually settle the matter. We are short of hands, and once these students start working, they will be able to work on more pending complaints.”



and I am a leader who is found among the people. I am a minister and I am not on the run. I am in my constituency today and working for the people... On what basis are people claiming that I am underground? I am very much in public. The investigation will keep happening but I am working for the people,” Khabad added. Stating that he was among those BJP leaders, who ensured leads of over one lakh votes for the party during the elections, Khabad mentioned the “support of 1.5 lakh voters” and expressed confidence in the ongoing probe. He said, “I am a leader, who is among the people.

Amid rain, hailstorm, huge temperature drop after heat index soars in Delhi



GNS News Agency, May 28

After Delhi recorded the season’s highest minimum temperature at 30.2 degrees Celsius on Wednesday, hailstorms, rain, and thunderstorms brought a huge respite to the city in the evening. However, the Capital experienced strong winds gusting up to nearly 80 kmph, prompting the India Meteorological Department (IMD) to sound a red alert. A sharp drop in temperatures was recorded in many parts of the city amid the pre-monsoon showers and storms.

Among all the monitoring stations, Palam observatory recorded the maximum drop in temperature at 14 degrees Celsius. Between 7.30 pm and 8.30 pm, the weather station saw the temperature drop from 37 degrees to 23 degrees Celsius. Lodhi Road, which was among the places lashed by hailstorms, saw the temperature drop by 10.7 degrees Celsius (see box). The temperature drop ranged

between 8 degrees to 14 degrees at the monitoring stations, as per the IMD data. Meanwhile, the Safdarjung observatory, which is representative of the Capital, recorded wind speed at 79 kmph. Moderate rainfall was observed in many areas (see box). Safdarjung logged 12.1 mm of rain as of 8.30 pm. A cyclonic circulation in the neighbouring state of Haryana was cited as the cause of the storm on Wednesday evening. Moisture-carrying winds from the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal fed into the system, said the weather office. A cloud mass that moved towards south-southeastwards away from Delhi over Gurgaon, Noida, and Faridabad led to intense thunderstorm activity in the region, as per the IMD officials.

The sudden change in weather came after Delhi grappled with intense heat stress this week as “feel-like” temperatures or heat index values soared, even as no heatwave was declared. The heat index soared to 50.1 degrees Celsius on Wednesday afternoon while the actual temperature was recorded at 39.8 degrees Celsius at 2:30 pm. The day’s high was registered at 40.7 degrees Celsius. The city’s power demand also surged amid the sultry conditions on Wednesday, reaching a peak of 7,748 megawatts (MW), as per data from the State Load Despatch Centre. Unlike previous years, no heatwave days have been registered so far in May. The IMD defines a heatwave when the maximum temperature reaches at least 40 degrees Celsius in the plains amid a departure of 4.5 to 6.4 degrees from normal temperature for two days in a row in at least two weather stations.

UT Excise Dept registers 35% surge in revenue, earns Rs 526 crore from liquor contracts so far

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The UT Excise and Taxation Department has achieved 35% increase in revenue from liquor contracts this year, with Rs 526 crore from the auction of 85 vends so far — a significant rise compared to Rs 413 crore earned during the same period last year. The jump comes after key policy changes introduced in the new excise policy, which officials say have helped drive the surge. The department is in the process of auctioning 97 liquor contracts for the current fiscal. With 85 vends already sold, the administration is optimistic about crossing Rs 600 crore in total revenue — a near 50 per cent increase over last year’s earnings. This increase in revenue marks a sharp departure from the previous two years, where the growth had remained limited to just 6-7 per cent annually. The excise department attributes this success to strategic changes in its policy framework, which included revised reserve prices, flexible payment terms, and streamlined auction processes to attract more bidders. Meanwhile, the department has faced challenges in the ongoing sixth round of e-auctions. In the latest round held on Monday, only one out of the 11 liquor vends up for auction managed to find a bidder. The vend, located in Industrial Area, Phase I, fetched Rs 4.50 crore against a reserve price of Rs 4.38 crore.

On May 14, during the fifth round of e-auction, only six out of 17 vends were successfully auctioned, generating Rs 39.60 crore against a reserve price of Rs 24.32 crore.



The highest bid came in at Rs 10.95 crore for the Sector 22-C market vend, followed by Rs 10.50 crore for the vend opposite the Sector 17 bus stand, and Rs 6.21 crore for the Sector 40-C vend. Earlier, in the fourth round held on May 8, the department auctioned 11 of the 21 vends, collecting Rs 60.76 crore. In the third round on April 29, only 7 out of 28 vends were sold. On April 21, the department re-auctioned 48 vends — previously cancelled due to non-payment of guarantees — and sold 20, earning Rs 131 crore. The initial auction held on March 21 had seen a high success rate with 96 out of 97 vends allotted, raising Rs 606 crore. However, 48 licences were later cancelled, and the department recovered Rs 23 crore by forfeiting earnest money and security deposits from defaulters.

Visitor visa approvals to Canada pick up under new govt, tourists from Punjab heave a sigh of relief

From July to August of last year, there was a surge in refusals, even for well-qualified individuals—professionals, government officials, and those with substantial financial assets—without clear reasons for the rejections. From July to August of last year, there was a surge in refusals, even for well-qualified individuals—professionals, government officials, and those with substantial financial assets—without clear reasons for the rejections. Canada has recently taken steps to improve the issuance of tourist visas to Indian nationals, marking a stark contrast to the significant reductions observed just a few months ago. The sharp drop in visa approvals, which saw success rate plummet from around 80 per cent to as low as 10-20 per cent, particularly for applicants from Punjab, left many prospective visitors disheartened.

However, under the new government, or just prior to its election, a noticeable shift in immigration policy has provided some relief, signalling a more welcoming approach for travellers. Despite Canada phasing out the automatic 10-year multiple-entry tourist visas for eligible applicants last year, the recent developments offer hope for those seeking visitor visas. Although Canada has become more selective and tightened its immigration system, initially frustrating many potential tourists, the approach now appears to be loosening under the new leadership.

Visitor visa approval rates have improved in the past few months since the new government was expected to take charge. Visas are now being processed faster compared to previous timelines. “From April 28 to May 15, I received four visitor visa approvals. In one case, there were three refusals in the past, but this time, visa approvals came within two weeks after application,” said Tirath Singh of Pinnacle Immigration in Jalandhar. He added that since the new government took office, visitor visa approval rates have increased by about 50 to 60 per cent, reversing the sharp declines seen last year. From July to August of last year, there was a surge in refusals, even for well-qualified individuals—professionals, government officials, and those with substantial financial assets—without clear reasons for the rejections. “The change, however, came with the arrival of the new government, which has worked to alleviate some of the frustrations caused under previous policies. Under the leadership of the current government, the visitor visa process has improved, reversing long delays and rejections without explanation,” said Tirath Singh.

Gurpreet Singh of iCan Immigration Consultancy noted that the success rate for visitor visas has improved in recent weeks, now hovering around 50 per cent. “We hope this will continue to improve. The new government has focused on streamlining visa processing times, which has allowed for a smoother experience for applicants,” he added. Experts point out that while it is still early to make definitive conclusions, they believe the new government’s policies strike a better balance between controlling immigration and fostering global tourism, something that was increasingly difficult under the previous administration. As a result, the system is still selective but more predictable, with fewer unexpected rejections and clearer reasoning. Experts also suggest that Indian applicants who are granted visitor visas should avoid overstaying in Canada and ensure they leave before their visa expires. This will help maintain a good record for Indian tourists and further



improve the approval rate for visitor visas. Experts also caution applicants against illegal employment and ask them to clearly state their intent to return after their visit. They also advise that visitors should not use Canada as a gateway to the United States. The decision to discontinue the automatic 10-year tourist visas is still in effect, but experts believe that the new government may lead to an improved success rate for the six-month tourist visas.

Indian man stabs another Indian in Texas for “resembling his uncle”

Hyderabad: A 30-year-old Indian was stabbed to death by another Indian man in a public bus in Austin, Texas.

According to the Austin Police Department (APD), the victim, Akshay Gupta, was travelling in a bus on the evening of May 14, when he was stabbed by a fellow passenger, later identified as Deepak Kandel, 31.

APD said its officers and emergency medical services responded to a “Shoot/Tab” call of someone being stabbed on a CapMetro bus in South Lamar Boulevard. When officers arrived on the scene, they located Gupta with trauma to his body.

Though life-saving measures were attempted, Gupta was pronounced dead on the scene at 7.30 pm. Investigation revealed that Kandel was sitting next to Gupta on the bus when, without provocation, he stabbed Gupta in the neck.

“Once the bus stopped, Mr. Kandel calmly exited the vehicle with the other passengers. APD patrol officers were able to locate and detain Mr. Kandel a short time later,” the APD statement said.

Kandel then admitted to stabbing “Gupta due to him resembling his uncle.” He was booked into the Travis County Jail and has been charged with 1st Degree Murder.

According to local media reports, Gupta had graduated from Penn State University, and was an entrepreneur on O1 visa (given to extraordinary individuals). His LI profile shows many laurels, reports said. Kandel was identified as a “homeless man”, with previous criminal records.

Israeli politician critiques the Gaza war’s toll on Palestinians and sparks an outcry



GNS News Agency, May 28

It is some of the harshest language against Israel’s wartime conduct in Gaza and it came this week from a prominent Israeli politician, sparking a domestic uproar as the country faces heavy international criticism.It is not uncommon for politicians to criticize Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s war strategy, especially his failure to free all the hostages held by Hamas. What made the comments by center-left opposition party leader Yair Golan rare — and jarring to officials across the political spectrum — was their focus on the plight of Palestinians. The ensuing controversy underscored how little the war’s toll on Gaza’s civilians has figured into the public discourse in Israel — in stark contrast to the rest of the world.

Speaking to the Israeli public radio station Reshet Bet, Golan — a former general — said Israel was becoming a pariah state and cautioned that “a sane country doesn’t engage in fighting against civilians, doesn’t kill babies as a hobby and doesn’t set for itself the goals of expelling a population.”After the outcry, he said he was referring to the conduct of Israel’s far-right government, not of its soldiers, in his remarks.Golan’s words were a shock to the system because, outside of the country’s politically marginalised left, criticism focused on Palestinian civilian suffering and deaths has rarely been spoken publicly in Israel. The reasons for this include: the trauma Israelis still feel over Hamas’ deadly attack on Oct. 7. 2023, Jewish citizens’ deep faith in the righteousness of the military, dozens of hostages remain in Gaza and soldiers are dying to rescue them.Criticism of the war has focused overwhelmingly on Netanyahu. His opponents believe his own political motives have dictated war strategy and his failure to reach a deal with Hamas to release all the hostages — an accusation he denies.“Part of the Israeli public and media outlets are still trapped in an obsession over the initial shock that started this war,” said Ehud Olmert, a former prime minister and fierce critic of the current government. “But this is changing and it’s just a matter of time.”Israelis on ending the warPublic opinion polls show that most Israelis support ending the war in exchange for the release of the remaining 58 hostages held by Hamas, around a third of whom are said to be alive.Opponents of the war have tended to focus on concerns over the fate of the remaining hostages and the risk of soldier casualties in a campaign that many feel has run its course.While Olmert disputed Golan’s choice of words, he said the essence of his remarks “reflects what many people think.”

After Hamas’ 2023 attack, in which 1,200 people were killed and 251 taken hostage, Israelis rallied behind the military. They saw the war as a just response to the deadliest attack in Israel’s history. Many Israelis cannot imagine a future where Hamas remains intact.Israel’s retaliatory war in Gaza has killed more than 53,000 people, mostly women

Use international law to take on Pakistan-backed terror

GNS News Agency, May 28

Operation Sindoor has powerfully demonstrated India’s intent to use kinetic measures to tackle terrorism emanating from Pakistan. In addition to executing “hot pursuits”, India possesses other potent non-kinetic strategies, going beyond regular diplomacy, to ensure that Pakistan is held accountable for its continued support of terrorism directed against India. An impactful approach that India has not effectively employed so far is the strategy of “lawfare”, or leveraging international law to confront adversaries to accomplish strategic and diplomatic objectives.Leverage terrorism conventionsA key element of a lawfare strategy against Pakistan should be to deploy international law to highlight Pakistan’s sponsorship of cross-border terrorism. This is especially important as India has led the process of adopting a Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT) at the global level. India and Pakistan are parties to numerous terrorism conventions at the regional and international levels. The primary regional treaty is the SAARC Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism, while key international treaties include the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism (ICSFT) and the International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings (Terrorist Bombing Convention).

These conventions obligate that states not only criminalise acts of terrorism under their domestic laws and prosecute the perpetrators but also refrain from financing such activities. For instance, Article 2(1) of the ICSFT explicitly classifies terror financing as a crime. Similarly, Article 6 of the Additional Protocol to the SAARC terrorism convention requires states to take measures to prevent, suppress, and eradicate the financing of terrorism.Pakistan has a long history of sponsoring, abetting, and funding terrorism against India. Following the terror attacks in Mumbai in 2008, India meticulously gathered evidence to demonstrate Pakistan’s active involvement in those attacks, which Islamabad later acknowledged, albeit reluctantly. India needs to consistently publicise proof of Pakistan’s role, which includes the Pahalgam terror attack on April 22. Further, India should utilise all international forums to build a solid legal case against Pakistan for its violations of international law regarding terrorism suppression. India’s move to have all-party parliamentary delegations travelling abroad to present India’s case on Operation Sindoor is an ideal opportunity to do this. India should identify specific provisions in terrorism conventions, along with various United Nations Security Council Resolutions that sanction terrorism, and customary international law that Pakistan is violating, and highlight these publicly. Rather than mere diplomatic hyperbole, a clear and compelling narrative entrenched in international law, grounded in indisputable facts and supported by irrefutable evidence will significantly benefit New Delhi’s fight against cross-border terrorism.A critical aspect of many terrorism conventions is that they grant jurisdiction to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to enforce the treaties. For example, Articles 20(1) and 24(1) of the Ter-

and children, according to local health authorities, whose count doesn’t differentiate between combatants and civilians. The fighting has displaced 90% of the territory’s roughly 2 million population, sparked a hunger crisis and obliterated vast swaths of Gaza’s urban landscape.While international media coverage has largely focused on the war in Gaza and its toll on civilians there, in Israel, the media still devotes heavy attention to the Oct. 7 attack itself and the hostage crisis. Photos of those still held captive line the streets.Stories about the plight of Palestinian civilians are less prominent and largely avoid the harshest images emanating from Gaza. Most outlets repeat the official line that Hamas is solely to blame for the civilian toll.Politicians on Reshet Bet Golan’s commentsFor many Jewish Israelis, it is hard to fathom that their own children, most of whom must enlist in Israel’s military, could be committing the crimes that Golan described.All that has helped solidify a national narrative that views the war as an existential struggle.“When you fight a war of existence, you don’t much think about the suffering of the enemy,” said Shmuel Rosner, a senior fellow at the Jewish People Policy Institute, a Jerusalem think tank.A former deputy chief of staff of the military, Golan’s words have sparked outcry in the past. The most notable occasion was a 2016 speech marking Israel’s Holocaust remembrance day, when he compared what he said was an increasingly illiberal atmosphere in Israel to that of Nazi-era Germany.On Oct. 7, Golan donned his uniform and grabbed a gun to help battle militants during Israel’s flailing first response to Hamas’ assault. Olmert called him “one of Israel’s greatest warriors.”Golan is not the first public figure to have made such remarks about Israel’s conduct in Gaza.

Former defense minister and military chief of staff Moshe Yaalon accused Israel of ethnic cleansing during a major operation last year. Zehava Galon, a former leader of a dovish political party, highlighted the deaths of thousands of children at a recent protest in Tel Aviv.But unlike them, Golan has his political future at stake, lending more weight to his words.Netanyahu said Golan’s words “echoed disgraceful antisemitic blood libels.” Benny Gantz, an opposition leader, said Golan’s remarks were extreme and false and called on him to recant and apologize, which he did not do.Cabinet minister Amichay Eliyahu suggested Golan’s words inspired an attacker in Washington, who killed two Israeli embassy employees and yelled “Free, free Palestine” after he was arrested. “Yair, the blood of the embassy employees is on your hands,” he wrote on X. Golan, in response, said it was Netanyahu’s far-right government that “gives fuel to antisemitism and Israel hatred.”Rosner said Golan’s wording on the Palestinian toll was “uncareful” and that instead of triggering introspection, they prompted a media debate over Golan himself and the damage his remarks might cause to Israel.But they could resonate among the steadfast anti-war protest movement, said Alma Beck, an activist who is part of a small contingent of demonstrators who have been holding up pictures of Palestinian children killed in Gaza ever since Israel ended a ceasefire in March. She said the group began as 20 people and has grown to 600, still just a fraction of the thousands attending the broader anti-government protests.Beck said the protest movement has been receptive to messages that focus on the Palestinian toll, and more signs with that message have been held up by demonstrators in recent weeks. Their main criticism remains that Netanyahu is continuing the war to appease his governing partners and ensure his own political survival.“I think there is a shift. I think people are starting to connect the dots,” she said, while noting that the bulk of Israeli society hasn’t changed. “I hope that it will only grow.”



rorist Bombing Convention and the ICSFT, respectively, empower a country to refer disputes to the ICJ. These provisions, known as compromissory clauses, help circumvent jurisdictional obstacles in international law, which is based on consent. Thus, countries that are signatories to these treaties are bound by ICJ jurisdiction unless they make specific reservations. Ukraine, for instance, invoked such a clause when it sued Russia before the ICJ for violating the ICSFT.Given that Pakistan has been sponsoring and abetting terrorism against India and has not taken any action against terror groups operating from its territory, New Delhi has a compelling case against Islamabad under these terrorism conventions, which it can present to the ICJ — just as it did in the Kulbhushan Jadhav case.Hurdles to overcomeHowever, there are two significant hurdles. First, Pakistan has not accepted the ICJ’s jurisdiction under the ICSFT due to a reservation, which could hinder efforts to hold Pakistan accountable. Nevertheless, India can still file a case with the ICJ to draw global attention to the issue. India should put the ball in the ICJ’s court to address Pakistan’s jurisdictional argument.Second, and perplexingly, India has adopted a reservation about the ICJ’s jurisdiction under the Terrorist Bombing Convention, while Pakistan has accepted the ICJ’s jurisdiction for this convention. This obstacle can be overcome if India withdraws its reservation, allowing it to initiate proceedings against Pakistan at the ICJ for terrorism. The ICJ may likely interpret the provisions of the ICSFT and the Terrorist Bombing Convention narrowly, similar to its approach in the Ukraine vs Russia case decided last year. Therefore, India should have foolproof evidence and devise its legal strategy accordingly. The dissenting opinion of judges such as Hilary Charlesworth in Ukraine vs Russia can come in handy for India. In any case, India should not be overly concerned about the outcome of the legal dispute. Instead, it should utilise the legal proceedings to assiduously promote a global narrative against Pakistan-sponsored terrorism, aligning it with its national objectives.In sum, international law and courtrooms can also be used to combat terrorism. To accomplish this, India must build state capacity and mainstream international law in statecraft.Prabhash Ranjan is Professor and Vice Dean (Research), Jindal Global Law School, O.P. Jindal Global University. The views expressed are personal

Indus Waters Treaty will remain in abeyance till Pakistan stops cross-border terrorism: India



GNS News Agency, May 28

India on Thursday once again asserted that the Indus Waters Treaty with Pakistan will remain in “abeyance” until Islamabad “credibly and irrevocably” abjures support to cross-border terrorism as “water and blood” cannot flow together.External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal also said that any bilateral talks with Islamabad will only be on vacation of illegally occupied territories of Kashmir by Pakistan.“You are well aware of our position that any India-Pakistan engagement has to be bilateral,” he said in response to a question on U.S. President Donald Trump showing interest in helping India and Pakistan in resolving the Kashmir issue.“I would like to remind you that talks and terror don’t go together,” Mr. Jaiswal said.“On terrorism it-

A silent burden: Thalassaemia patients in Karnataka battle disease with hope and hardship

GNS News Agency, May 28

Her day begins with a quiet prayer and a glance at the faded calendar, marked with yet another hospital appointment. For over two decades, Gowramma’s life has revolved around needles, blood bags, prescriptions, and silent strength.Gowramma is the mother of two grown-up children — Tarun and Santosh — both living with thalassaemia, an inherited blood disorder characterised by reduced haemoglobin production.Every few weeks, the children need blood, life-saving transfusions that keep them alive, but slowly poison their bodies with iron. The medicine to fight this iron overload is expensive, and the bills never stop. The family has a small garment shop at Peenya, an industrial area in the northern part of Bengaluru, and is struggling to meet an avalanche of medical expenses. Gowramma has not been able to get the free medicines from the government-run Victoria Hospital for the last four months.

At Sunkadakatte, a semi-urban locality in west Bengaluru, life is a daily struggle for 19-year-old Mubeena Ruqsar, who lives with her parents. She was diagnosed with beta-thalassaemia major at just six months. Since then, blood transfusions every three weeks, countless needles, and a growing pile of medical records have all been part of her routine.Her father, Rahmathulla, works as a mechanic in a local garage. Her mother, Sakina Banu, once dreamed of becoming a teacher but now dedicates every waking hour to managing Ruqsar’s health — tracking her transfusion schedules and watching for signs of fatigue, fever, or distress. They live in a rented two-room house, and save every extra rupee for hospital visits and medicine. The young adult’s treatment involves not just transfusions but also expensive iron chelation therapy.Bone marrow transplant offers the only permanent curative option for children with thalassaemia, but access remains limited due to financial and logistical barriers, according to experts.Bone marrow transplant offers the only permanent curative option for children with thalassaemia, but access remains limited due to financial and logistical barriers, according to experts. | Photo Credit: K. Bhagya PrakasAccess to drugs

These three are among an estimated 10,000 thalassaemia patients in Karnataka, a number that experts say is growing due to the lack of systematic screening and awareness. No government registry is available to document the number of people living with this disorder.However, despite the growing burden, public health mechanisms remain fragmented. The State established the Karnataka State Blood Cell for the treatment of patients with blood disorders (haemophilia, thalassaemia, and sickle cell anaemia) in 2017. While this Blood Cell — operating under the National Health Mission (NHM) — is coordinating treatment and providing free transfusions in government hospitals, access to quality iron chelation drugs and specialised care remains uneven.

Although the State is providing thalassaemia drugs for free, short supply and lack of access to standardised drugs are proving costly for patients. Patients, who had been dependent on branded drugs by known manufacturers, are now getting only generic medicine manufactured by smaller pharma companies at the government centres. This is because there has been no response from big players to the tenders floated for procuring the drugs post- the COVID-19 pandemic. Officials, who expressed helplessness, said according to norms, the tender has been allotted to the lowest bidder among those who participated.According to data from the State Health Department, as many as 2,288 thalassaemia patients are registered with the 36 Integrated Centres for Haemoglobinopathies and Haemophilia (ICHH) run under the NHM. These centres, which also run day-care centres, provide free iron chelation drugs and blood transfusion services. Nearly half of the total registered patients have enrolled at the Indira Gandhi Institute of Child Health (IGICH) in Bengaluru, which is the nodal centre. While free transfusion services are also provided in all government blood banks, in Bengaluru, Rotary TTK Blood Bank’s Bangalore Medical Services Trustand a centre run by Sankalp, an NGO working for thalassaemia, are the two larger transfusion centres. Sankalp also runs a day-care for children at the IGICH and another one at Vasanthnagar, in the central part of the city, where blood transfusions are also done.Patients from impoverished families, however, do not have sufficient information regarding the free treatment centres. They do not even know where to go to collect free medicines. Gagandeep Singh Chandok, president of the Thalassaemia and Sickle Cell Society of Bengaluru, says there is a need for quality drugs to be made available freely by the government.“The availability of free iron chelation drugs is limited to one particular brand in government centres. However, this drug does not suit all patients. Although the Centre’s guidelines on haemoglobinopathies clearly say that options such as Desferal injection with infusion pumps should be made available, this is not happening,” he says.“With the available drugs not effective, most patients have stopped taking them from the government centres. Several patients have developed side effects such as gastritis and a burning sensation in the throat, with no reduction in iron load. As these expensive drugs need to be taken every day, patients are forced to shell out around ₹20,000 every month. Many cannot afford this,” says Chandok.Apart from the financial burden, thalassaemia patients also face stigma in their day-to-day lives. “This stigma

self, we are open to discussing the handing over to India of terrorists whose list was provided to Pakistan some years ago,” he said.

Mr. Jaiswal added: “I would like to underline that any bilateral discussion on Jammu & Kashmir will only be on the vacation of illegally occupied Indian territory by Pakistan.” Asked about the Indus Waters Treaty, it will remain in abeyance till Islamabad stops supporting cross-border terrorism.“It will remain in abeyance until Pakistan credibly and irrevocably abjures its support for cross-border terrorism. As our prime minister has said, ‘Water and blood cannot flow together,’” he added.India on April 23 announced a raft of punitive measures against Pakistan including suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty.The measures were announced a day after the Pahalgam terror attack that killed 26 civilians. India carried out precision strikes on nine terror infrastructures early on May 7 in response to the Pahalgam terror attack.Following the Indian action, Pakistan attempted to attack Indian military bases on May 8, 9 and 10.The Pakistani attempts were strongly responded to by the Indian side by inflicting heavy damages to a number of key Pakistani military installations including air bases, air defence systems, command and control centres and radar sites.Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri on May 10 announced that India and Pakistan reached an understanding to stop all firings and military actions on land, air and sea, with immediate effect.



is impacting our social, professional, and personal lives, leading to feelings of isolation, discrimination, and difficulty finding employment or establishing relationships. It is difficult to get leave for regular transfusions, making life difficult,” says Chandok.Naveen Bhat Y., State Mission director, National Health Mission, says the government is committed to providing iron chelation drugs for free to increase the life expectancy, ensure a pain-free life, reduce disability, and uplift the standard of living of people with thalassaemia and their families. “There is no shortage of drugs. The centres need to submit an indent and take the drugs from the warehouse,” he says.“It is a matter of concern if the drugs currently being provided to patients are not effective. If patients are developing any side effects or complications, they can inform their doctors at our ICHs. While we have not received any complaints in this regard from patients or doctors in any of our centres, we will look into this issue and get the potency and efficacy of the drugs tested,” Bhat says.He says that six labs in the State — IGICH in Bengaluru, K.R. Hospital in Mysuru, Wenlock District Hospital in Mangaluru, Gadag Institute of Medical Sciences, Ballari District Hospital, and Kalaburagi District Hospital — have been upgraded into nodal centres for blood disorders where high-performance liquid chromatography (HPLC) tests are done to detect thalassaemia.There are an estimated 10,000 thalassaemia patients in Karnataka, a number that experts say is growing due to the lack of systematic screening and awareness. No government registry is available to document the number of people living with this disorder. There are an estimated 10,000 thalassaemia patients in Karnataka, a number that experts say is growing due to the lack of systematic screening and awareness. No government registry is available to document the number of people living with this disorder. | Photo Credit: K. Bhagya PrakashBone marrow transplant Sunil Bhat, director and clinical lead, Paediatric Haematology, Oncology and Blood and Marrow Transplantation, Narayana Health, says bone marrow transplant (BMT) offers the only permanent curative option for children with thalassaemia, but access remains limited due to financial and logistical barriers.Although the Karnataka State Cabinet approved the inclusion of BMT under Ayushman Bharat-Arogya Karnataka in January this year, it has not yet become operational.

However, free BMT is being offered to eligible children from the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe families. Last year, a seven-year-old son of a farmer from Kalaburagi underwent a sibling donor allogeneic BMT at the State-run Kidwai Memorial Institute of Oncology for thalassaemia. This is the only BMT done for thalassaemia here so far.The cost of an autologous BMT ranges from ₹7 lakh to ₹15 lakh in private hospitals, and allogeneic BMTs are even more expensive. The stem cells in autologous transplants come from the same person who will get the transplant, so the patient is his/her own donor. The stem cells in the allogeneic transplants are from a person other than the patient, either a matched related or unrelated donor.To improve access to transplantation for patients in need, DKMS Foundation India is funding a BMT centre operated by Sankalp India Foundation with the medical advice from Cure2Children on the premises of the Bhagwan Mahaveer Jain Hospital (BMJH) in Bengaluru. All the three are non-profit organisations.D.M. Mohan Reddy, programme director, Sankalp-BMJH Centre for Paediatric Haemato-oncology and Bone Marrow Transplant, says that overall, 520 free BMTs have been done since 2013 under the programme. “We were earlier running the facility at People Tree Hospital and moved it to BMJH in 2021. Here, we have conducted 230 transplants so far with funding from the DKMS Foundation. For the last six months, we are also getting funds through the COAL India Project,” Reddy says.India CEO of DKMS Patrick Paul says the country faces a shortage of stem cell donors, the core of bone marrow transplants. “Of the total 2,07,553 blood stem cell donors as per our database till April, as many as 42,939 are from Karnataka. Stem cell transplants play a vital role in treating blood cancers and blood disorders, including thalassaemia. However, because of genetic diversity, the chances of finding a perfect match within Indian registries are relatively low, emphasising the need for more donors,” he says.Consanguineous marriagesVasundhara Kailasnath, paediatric haematologist and BMT physician at Kidwai, says consanguineous marriages significantly increase the risk of a child inheriting thalassaemia. “This is because both parents are more likely to be carriers of the disease. Thalassaemia is inherited as an autosomal recessive trait, meaning a child needs to inherit two copies of the faulty gene (one from each parent) to develop the condition,” she says.”

Bengaluru under water yet again



The leaders found fault with the statements of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah who, responding to the encounter, claimed they had achieved a great success and that the killing of a high-ranking leader like Keshav Rao had never happened in history. The Centre, which could not catch the terrorists who infiltrated the country and shot citizens, was waging an unconstitutional war to protect the interests of big corporate companies and to exploit mineral wealth in Central India. Drones and paramilitary forces that should be on the India-Pakistan borders have been aimed at eliminating Maoists, the rights groups leaders said. The Maoists for the last three months declared a ceasefire and said they were ready for peace talks. How could the government wage war on those who were under a ceasefire; the encounter was definitely a ruthless murder by the government, the leaders said.

It’s globalisation, my love: 25 years of ‘Kaho Naa... Pyaar Hai’



It was a moment of national swooning. The Bollywood film Kaho Naa... Pyaar Hai released on January 14, 2000. At the dawn of the new millennium, it put the country into overdrive. Bolstered by an aggressive publicity blitz, word had already spread about its otherworldly star. He had hazel eyes and a silvery smile. His Stallone-like build betrayed a schoolboy’s charm. He was 27 years old. And, it was rumoured, he could dance.It’s been 25 years since Hrithik Roshan’s star-making debut in his father’s musical. Families hoarded theatres. ‘Ek Pal Ka Jeena’ played on loop. Young boys and girls had found their new pin-up god. Some, with embarrassing mileage, aped the Hrithik handshake, flicking the palm horizontally. Manoj Desai, executive director of G7 Multiplex (then Gaiety Galaxy) in Mumbai, remembers running packed shows round the clock. “The film ran for 25 weeks non-stop at my theatre. From children to grown-ups, everyone went crazy about Hrithik’s dancing. When he returns in a new avatar after the interval, the seetis (whistles) were boundless.”The buzz overseas was just as strong. By the mid-1990s, India had one of the largest diaspora populations in the world, concentrated in North America, UK, the Gulf countries and Australia-New Zealand. Bollywood, its boundaries broadened by liberalisation, began reaching out to them. Films like Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge, Dil Toh Pagal Hai and Pardes successfully rode the wave of globalisation. The movement reached its apotheosis with Kaho Naa... Pyaar Hai. Its star-crossed lovers danced on cruise ships, got stranded on the sands of Krabi, Thailand. Hrithik and his co-star, Ameesha Patel, rode a hot air balloon in Christchurch, New Zealand. Everything about the film was calibrated to sing an international tune. Its dual-hero storyline was a frank allegory of free-market aspirations: After Rohit, a penniless car salesman turned popstar, dies, his NRI doppelgänger Raj rolls up in a BMW and Honda Hurricane.

The film had a curious genesis. Hrithik’s father, director Rakesh Roshan, had initially intended it for Shah Rukh Khan, the reigning knight of the Hindi diaspora film. The 90s were a wild era of remakes and rejigs; French Kiss, the Meg Ryan comedy about a missing diamond necklace, was remade in Hindi as Pyaar To Hona Hi Tha (1998). A year before that, James Cameron’s Titanic had set the bar for the sweeping romantic epic. Cruise ships, aquatic deaths, ill-fated lovers from across the class divide... Kaho Naa Pyaar Hai was like Titanic filtered through Karz (1980). Another oft-cited inspiration is the Kannada film Ratha Sapthami (1986), remade in Tamil as Love Birds (1996). In both, the hero seemingly dies in an accident, the heroine takes a healing trip somewhere far and scenic, and the lovers are fortuitously reunited (the grungy discotheque number recurs in all versions).

World-view“Toh hass kyun ki duniya ko hai hassana (smile, so you can make the world smile),” Hrithik sings in the film. It became a motto of the times. The language of globalisation is threaded throughout Kaho Naa... Pyaar Hai. Rohit’s bedroom wall has a poster of the Backstreet Boys. He wears dresses casually, he wears a shirt and tie to work, the dress code of the IT generation. There are product placements for Lexus, Mercedes, Ferrari, Yokohama tyres, and Coca-Cola. The multiracial, tropical-themed nightclub Raj dances at is called Club Indiana. He reads Cosmopolitan magazine on a flight. A year before Peter Jackson’s The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring, the film boosted tourism and migration interests in New Zealand, highlighting attractions like Lake Wakatipu and The

We are balancing welfare outgo with prudent fiscal management: Thangam Thennarasu

Since mid-2021, the Tamil Nadu government has rolled out several women-oriented welfare schemes that involve a significant annual financial outgo. At the same time, the State was unable to announce a cash component for Pongal festival this year. In an interview with The Hindu, Finance Minister Thangam Thennarasu says the government is managing the situation through prudent fiscal management. He also highlights the Centre’s passive approach to the State’s request for funds to handle natural calamities such as the recent Cyclone Fengal. Excerpts:

The State government has introduced numerous welfare schemes, such as Vidiyal Payanam (costless bus travel for women), Kalaigarn Magalir Urimai Thogai and Pudhumai Penn, which have significantly benefited women and involved substantial financial outlay. How is the state managing to balance its finances while implementing these initiatives?

This state has been a pioneer in rolling out landmark schemes which have then paved the way for the entire country to follow. Today, what is globally acclaimed and recognised as the Mid-Day Meal programme was introduced in 1920s in the Madras Municipal Corporation-run schools. This government, under the leadership of our Chief Minister M.K.Stalin, is continuing this illustrious legacy. Each of these schemes are showing remarkable results. While we are implementing these schemes for the welfare of the people, we are also ensuring prudent fiscal management. We have been taking concerted efforts to ensure a sound growth in revenues in all sectors, be it GST, stamps and registration, motor vehicle taxes, etc. We have also introduced the Tamil Nadu Public Fund Tracking System to ensure a just-in-time fund release for schemes. This is helping us to save the interest costs by efficient cash and debt management.Recently, at the Pre-Union Budget meeting, you reiterated the request to the Centre to release funds for cyclone relief and the Chennai Metro Rail project. How confident are you that the Centre will allocate these funds? What impact has the non-release of funds had on the State’s finances?This is an issue of major concern for the state. The funds from Union Government have not been released for Cyclone Fengal (2024). Even for Cyclone Michaung (2023) and the unprecedented rainfalls in southern districts, the Union Government had released a meagre sum of ₹276 crore, against an amount of ₹37,907 crore sought by the State. For Samagra Shiksha Scheme, disbursal of ₹2,152 crore is pending. These funds are meant for salary of teachers, maintenance of schools and RTE Act reimbursement.

Remarkables ski resort outside Queenstown. In 2004, Helen Clark, the former Prime Minister of New Zealand, wrote to Rakesh Roshan: “Your film captured the imagination of Indian audiences and portrayed a rich and vibrant image of New Zealand.”Diaspora films tend to reflect the dualities of immigrant life, its characters caught between tradition and modernity. But Raj — an assault of soft power charm, in a netted vest and sunglasses — seemed perfectly at home in the wider world. Kaho Naa Pyaar Hai is not a reincarnation story, unlike Karz, and poor Rohit, searching for ‘saadgi’ (simplicity) in a capitalistic world, meets a dark end. Written by Honey Irani and Ravi Kapoor, the screenplay has silly contrivances that most audiences happily ignored at the time, but which do not survive a rewatch. Rohit’s younger brother is frozen mute by his passing. Sonia’s fashion sense changes every 15 minutes. A lovelorn Raj follows her back to Mumbai, happily abandoning his aging parents (returning NRIs were a fiscal asset, and were granted tax benefits). Though a parade of pretty people in pretty places — Krabi also featured in Danny Boyle’s The Beach the same year, becoming a major tourist hotspot — Kaho Naa... Pyaar Hai is also a film of sounds. There are lines, at times mere words, that are permanently stuck in our heads: Tannaz Irani’s nasal “Sonias...”, for instance, or Raj tooting, “Isse kehte hai ittefaaq. Ittefaaq No. 3.” Rajesh Roshan, Hrithik’s uncle, composed the film’s songs, appropriating — not his first time — tunes from Greek composer Vangelis. The film’s cultural legacy is inextricably linked to its soundtrack. Lucky Ali blessed it with his vocals, belting out two diametrically opposite hits, the electronic headrush of ‘Ek Pal Ka Jeena’ soothed out by ‘Na Tum Jaano Na Hum’, with its tranquil guitar strums and melancholic outro.

Off-shoringKaho Naa Pyaar Hai was the antithesis of all the raucous energies shaping Hindi cinema at the time. Ram Gopal Varma’s Satya and John Matthew Matthan’s Sarfarosh had nudged Bollywood into gritty, challenging directions. But Roshan, with his escapist blockbuster set aboard a big boat, steered it back on course. Anurag Kashyap, the lead writer of Satya, mocked this apparent regression in a line of dialogue in Nayak: The Real Hero, released the following year. Reluctant to join politics and change his country’s course, Anil Kapoor’s character remarks, “I want to live the easy life... watch Kaho Naa Pyaar Hai on Sundays.”

There was a shocking, Satya-like coda to the Kaho Naa Pyaar Hai wave. On January 21, 2000, a week after the film’s release, Rakesh Roshan was shot at by two unidentified gunmen outside his office. In a bleeding state, he drove to Santa Cruz police station, scared more for his son’s life than his own. It emerged that the shooters belonged to Mumbai’s Budesh gang, who had tried extorting the director over the film’s overseas earnings. Bollywood was corporatizing and bringing in the big bucks, and the underworld, its uneasy ally since the 90s, wanted a piece of the pie.Over the last 25 years, Kaho Naa Pyaar Hai has turned up in popular culture in amusing ways. Na Tum Jaano Na Hum became a full-length film with Hrithik, Saif Ali Khan and Esha Deol. Raj flipping through photographs of his dead lookalike is a meme. During the surreal early weeks of COVID-19, someone registered the film title ‘Corona Pyaar Hai,’ inviting the wrath of Rakesh Roshan. Canadian YouTuber Lilly Singh made Hailey Bieber dance to the film’s title track, and, in 2021, while campaigning for the Trinamool Congress in Asansol, West Bengal, Ameesha Patel sang a few lines from the same song — an apparent dig at Babul Supriyo, a singer on the film, who was fielded from the BJP in the assembly elections.

Hindi blockbusters today have moved past the candelied nothingness of Kaho Naa... Pyaar Hai. They have become more strident and unabashed. Curiously, even their internationalism now feels parochial. Hrithik’s most recent smash was Fighter, a politically-slanted actioner from 2024, inspired by the Top Gun franchise. In a disappointing scene, Hrithik’s combat pilot, bashing up a terrorist, yells the words ‘India-Occupied Pakistan’ — the kind of triumphalist coinage that has become depressingly commonplace. It makes one long for the easygoing Sundays, when life was less hectic and charged, and we all watched Kaho Naa... Pyaar Hai.

As a result of non-receipt of funds, the State is having to bear these expenditures from their own budgetary resources, causing a severe strain on the finances.

Given the significant impact of Cyclone Fengal across several districts, affecting daily life and assets, will there be any implications for the State’s Own Tax Revenue (SOTR)?

Definitely. All such natural disasters have an adverse impact on the economy and thus revenues of the state. Despite our best efforts at planning and mitigation, there is a significant loss of livelihoods and property of the people and substantial damage to the infrastructure. This poses a double blow to state finances — One one hand, we are not able to receive the revenues and on the other, the expenditure for providing the necessary relief increases suddenly. This has become a major challenge for the state and its economy, especially because Chennai and surrounding areas which are more prone to such disasters, contribute about 33% of our State’s GDP. (Gross Domestic Product). This is why we are consistently seeking funds from the union government under the NDRF window.While the revenue collections have been in double digits, there has also been increase in revenue expenditure? Will this affect the capital expenditure? Will the State be able to meet the capital expenditure targets?There has been a setback to the growth of capital expenditure due to the onslaught of Cyclone Fengal. However, we are continuously following up to ensure that the pace of implementation of projects is fast. We will make our best efforts to achieve the capital expenditure targets in the budget.

How has the growth in the State’s Own Tax Revenue progressed so far in the current fiscal year 2024-25?

The growth in State’s Own Tax Revenue up till November has been 13.96%. This has been primarily owing to a good growth in the Goods and Services Tax (GST) component driven by higher Integrated Goods and Services Tax (IGST) settlements. The government has been taking active measures to ensure that the transactions are correctly recorded and the amount of revenue due to the state is timely received. Further, several technological measures and use of data analysis tools is helping us to improve the tax collection efficiency. Apart from GST, the effects of rate revision in Tamil Nadu State Marketing Corporation Limited (TASMAR) and motor vehicle taxes have also shown a positive impact on the revenues. However, the sales volume in these sectors continue to be a cause of concern amidst a general economic slowdown in the country.

How does BJP elect its party President?



The story so far: For the past year, J.P Nadda, the incumbent president of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), has been on an extended tenure as the party sought to maintain stable leadership during a Lok Sabha election year. With its most recent membership drive crossing the 100 million-mark, the BJP is currently holding polls for its State party units. Following this, a new party President will be elected, as per tradition — unanimously and with the approval of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS).

Since its inception, the BJP has always chosen its president after a ‘co-ordination’ meeting with the RSS where a suitable candidate who has majority support on both sides is selected. However, during the Lok Sabha campaign, Mr. Nadda’s assertion that the BJP was ‘capable to run on its own’ had ruffled the feathers of the RSS top brass, and RSS largely stayed away from the poll campaign. The poll result, which saw BJP form a coalition government at the Centre, forced it to re-enlist the RSS’ help for State elections. A five-hour meeting was held in August 2024 at Defence Minister Rajnath Singh’s residence with Mr. Nadda, Home Minister Amit Shah, RSS second-in-command Dattatreya Hosabale and its joint general secretary Arun Kumar in attendance. The RSS would prefer someone with strong organisational skills, while the BJP prefers someone who ensures seamless coordination between the high command and the president’s office, reported

How are organisational polls held by the BJP?

During its membership drive, BJP enrolls ‘active’ members who are tasked with bringing in at least 50 persons as party members in a booth or an assembly seat. Only active members can take part in the party’s organisational elections. An ‘active’ member can take part in elections to BJP’s mandal committees and above — district, regional, State and central committees. All these committees have a three-year term.The primary unit of the BJP is its local committee, which comprises of up to 300 members. A member who has been part of the BJP for at least a year can be elected as president of a local committee along with a stipulated number of committee members depending on the strength of the local committee.

Many such local committees together constitute a mandal — whose committee members are elected by the president of these local committees. There are three types of mandal committees based on categorisation of the States according to the number of Lok Sabha seats they have - (a) three or less Lok Sabha seats; (b) four to twenty Lok Sabha seats; and (c) more than 20 Lok Sabha seats. These committees have an elected president and up to 60 elected members, as decided by the State executive. The mandal president has the power to nominate four vice-presidents, two general secretaries, one treasurer and not more than five secretaries. There are reserved quotas for women and Scheduled Caste/Tribe (SC/ST) members in these mandal committees. Similar to the mandals, the district committees are based on the State categories and the president of such a committee is elected by the mandal committee presidents. An active member can be nominated as district president if nominated by one-third of the elected mandals. A district president must be a primary member for at least six years and can appoint a general secretary (organisation) even from outside the committee. The BJP State unit has two bodies — State Executive and State Council. Mandal committee members can elect members to the State Council proportional to strength of the State Assembly. Other members in the Council include 10% each of the party legislators and party parliamentarians, former State presidents, State executive members, leaders of the party in the State Assembly and Council, members nominated by State President, allied morchas and chiefs of cells, district committee presidents and general secretaries. File photo: Maharashtra CM Devendra Fadnis addressing party workers on concluding day of State BJP working committee meeting at Nasik on April 3, 2016.The State executive is also classified according to the categories of States and is headed by a president who is elected by members of the elected State council members from district units, parliamentarians and legislators. Any active member can be nominated to the president’s post if nominated by one-third of the elected district committees. The president can nominate members from different State executive categories as vice-presidents, general secretaries, general secretary (organisation), secretaries and treasurers. All the above committees have reserved quota for women and SC/ST members.

National levelOn the national stage, the BJP has the national council, national executive and the plenary session. Similar to the State council and executive, the national council members are elected by State council members in proportion with the Lok Sabha seats in the State. Other members are similar to those State council — former national presidents, all State presidents, party leaders in State assemblies, councils, Lok Sabha, and Rajya Sabha, 10% of the Parliamentarians, members nominated by the national president, all national executive members and allied morchas and chiefs of cells. The national executive is headed by the party president and has no more than 120 members, of

which at least 40 must be women and 12 must belong to SC/ST communities, nominated by the party president. One general secretary (organisation), one treasurer, nine general secretaries, fifteen secretaries, and thirteen vice-presidents are nominated by the party president. Only members active for at least three terms can be nominated to the executive body. Exceptions to these criteria can be granted by the party chief to not more than 15 members.Prime Minister Narendra Modi with BJP National President JP Nadda, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Home Minister Amit Shah during the party’s Central Election Committee (CEC) meeting on the Delhi Assembly elections, at the party headquarters in New Delhi, Friday, Jan. 10, 2025.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi with BJP National President JP Nadda, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Home Minister Amit Shah during the party’s Central Election Committee (CEC) meeting on the Delhi Assembly elections, at the party headquarters in New Delhi. The national president is elected by an electoral college comprising of (a) national council members who are parliamentarians or State council members and (b) State council members who are district unit members, party legislators, or party parliamentarians. Any twenty members of the electoral college can propose an active member who has been a member for at least fifteen years, for the post of national president. This proposal should come from at least five States where national council elections have been concluded. The party president’s term is for three years, and any person can hold the post for two consecutive terms.

History of BJP presidents and pollsThe BJP’s first Party President was Atal Bihari Vajpayee, one of its co-founders. In the 1980 general election, the BJP fared poorly, winning only two seats. After a critical appraisal of its party functioning, the party’s National Executive in 1985 decided to make BJP a cadre-based party and the responsibility was passed on to L.K. Advani — Mr. Vajpayee’s deputy. The veteran BJP leader channelled the party’s efforts into the Ram Janmabhoomi movement, making it an official resolution in the 1989 National executive meeting.

After two consecutive terms with Mr. Advani at the helm, most other party chiefs were chosen unanimously and lasted only a single term, or less. Mr. Advani’s successors — Murli Manohar Joshi, Jana Krishnamurthy, M. Venkaiah Naidu, Bangaru Laxman, Kushabhau Thakre were all deeply-rooted RSS leaders who had risen politically among the BJP ranks. Of these, only Mr. Joshi and Mr. Thakre completed a full term.In 2003, the BJP amended its constitution to introduce a consecutive term limit, clarifying that “any member can hold the post of president for more than one term but not consecutively.” Subsequently, in 2004, after the BJP-led coalition NDA failed in its re-election bid, Mr. Naidu took moral responsibility and resigned from his post, allowing Mr. Advani to once again take over the party reins. Them Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee flanked by the party president, M. Venkaiah Naidu and Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, at the party’s parliamentary party meeting in New Delhi on February 16, 2004 to discuss the Lok Sabha elections.Them Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee flanked by the party president, M. Venkaiah Naidu and Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, at the party’s parliamentary party meeting in New Delhi on February 16, 2004 to discuss the Lok Sabha elections. In his address, he blamed his own government’s failure to “pay heed to BJP’s ideological and organizational constituency,” signalling BJP’s renewed focus on its core ideology. However, his term was cut short in 2005 when he was asked to step down as BJP chief after he eulogised Pakistan’s founder Mohammed Ali Jinnah as ‘secular’ during a personal trip to Karachi. Since then, his ties with the RSS have remained strained.In 2012, RSS once more pressed the BJP to amend its constitution to enable continuity in leadership. The resulting amendment, passed by the BJP national executive in Mumbai in May that year, stated that any eligible active member can hold the post of president for three years for two terms. The RSS felt that Mr. Gadkari, who had improved the party’s prospects and functioning since its poor performance in 2009, would need a second term to complete the overhauling of the BJP.However, it was not to be as Mr. Advani continued to criticise Mr. Gadkari’s style of running the BJP and voiced his opposition to giving Mr. Gadkari a second term when he met him along with RSS General Secretary Suresh Bhaiyyaji Joshi in Mumbai. Faced with tough opposition and an income tax department raid on companies related his Puri group, Mr. Gadkari suddenly opted out of the presidential polls on January 22, 2013. He was succeeded by 61-year-old Uttar Pradesh BJP veteran Rajnath Singh. Rajnath Singh, second from right, greets newly appointed BJP president Amit Shah as Prime Minister Modi, center, and BJP senior leader L.K. Advani watch at the party’s headquarters, in New Delhi, India, Wednesday, July 9, 2014.Rajnath Singh, second from right, greets newly appointed BJP president Amit Shah as Prime Minister Modi, center, and BJP senior leader L.K. Advani watch at the party’s headquarters, in New Delhi, India, Wednesday. After the spectacular poll win in May 2014 which ushered in Narendra Modi as Prime Minister, in July that year, the BJP parliamentary board approved a proposal to make Mr. Modi’s close confidant Mr. Amit Shah the next president of the BJP, cutting short Mr. Singh’s term. Armed with Mr. Shah’s organisational skills, BJP eyed expansion as well as better coordination between the party and the Centre. He was re-elected as BJP chief in 2017 and completed his full term till 2020. Ensuring a smooth transition, the BJP elevated J.P. Nadda — a peer of Mr. Gadkari and a former Modi cabinet member — as its working president in 2019. At the end of Mr. Shah’s term, Mr. Nadda was elected unopposed as the BJP chief. Despite receiving a one-year extension, Mr. Nadda is mostly likely to be replaced by another RSS loyalist who enjoys the favour of the Modi-Shah combine. Frontrunners include Union ministers Shivraj

The World of Mysore Pak, Mysuru’s first experiential store, is reinventing the classic dessert

Many of us are familiar with the story of the royal cook, Kakasura Madappa, who curated the recipe of Mysore pak for King Krishna Raja Wadiyar IV in the 19th century, by blending together the simplest ingredients: gram flour, ghee, and sugar. Now in the dessert’s birthplace of Mysuru, a new store is reimagining this timeless sweet. The World of Mysore Pak situated on Chamundi Hills Road is an experiential store devoted to Mysore pak. They offer 11 varieties here: roasted almond, carrot,cashew, mango, figs, milk, millet, jaggery millet, jaggery, traditional and special Mysore pak. I sample all 11 varieties and am particularly impressed with roasted almond, mango, milk and the special Mysore pak. The sweets deliver a delicate balance, with the added flavours enhancing the experience but with the essence of the original flavours still intact. A subtle hint of spices lingers towards the end.The store was started by three friends, who are now partners. Sowmya H S, who has an IT background says “The project started two years ago. We

have done countless trials to perfect the recipe.”Shruti Pavan Shroff adds, “There are many sweet shops offering Mysore pak, but none solely dedicated to this legacy sweet. Our goal is to give customers an immersive experience — they can watch the sweet being made, taste samples, and share their feedback.” Sowmya continues, “We were selective about the store location, since we wanted to attract tourists, who can take home local specialties. Mysore pak, being a popular choice, has long been a favourite souvenir of the city.”As I walk past the counter, my attention is drawn to a variety of unique sweets featuring Mysore pak, like the paka sandwich and Mysore peda. “The paka sandwich is a layer of kaju barfi sandwiched between Mysore pak,” explains Nikhil Mannar, the third partner and owner of Pataka, a popular chaats and sweet shop in Mysuru. “The Mysore peda draws inspiration from the famous Dharwad peda.”Among the most popular offerings are the jaggery millet and jaggery Mysore pak, crafted for health-conscious customers. “We avoid synthetic



RBI’s risk buffer seen rising with Economic Capital Framework review, may dent dividend to govt in future



As the Reserve Bank of India’s central board of directors meets today, all eyes would be on its decision regarding the Economic Capital Framework (ECF) — a rule-based system for the provisions the central bank must make against the risks it faces. While an increase in the risk buffer is likely due to the rising geopolitical tensions and global trade disruptions, this decision is being keenly watched as it could lead to a significant fiscal fallout — a reduction in the dividend the government gets from the RBI going ahead.

The RBI’s Central Board of Directors met last week to review the regulator’s Economic Capital Framework. The meeting of the board now comes after an internal review of the framework which was earlier outlined by the expert committee led by former governor Bimal Jalan in August 2019. The committee had suggested the framework be examined every five years. “Nevertheless, if there is a significant change in the RBI’s risks and operating environment, an intermediate review may be considered,” it had added. The review of the framework is crucial as it can potentially dent a key source of revenue of the central government: the annual dividend from the RBI. The dividend for 2024-25 is expected to be transferred to the government this month and economists think it could be as high as Rs 3.2 lakh crore, or 6.3 per cent of the Indian government’s budgeted expenditure for 2025-26.

The Economic Capital Framework provides a rule-based system for the provisions the RBI must make against the risks it faces. These provisions are to be made from the revenue the apex bank generates in the normal course of its operations and after it has met its expenses. A key recommendation of the Jalan committee was that the RBI should set aside 5.5-6.5 per cent of its balance sheet as a Contingent Risk Buffer to meet the credit, operational, and financial and monetary stability risks it faced. This means, if the RBI’s balance sheet grows by Rs 100 in any given year, the central bank would have to provide an additional

Rs 5.5-6.5. After maintaining a Contingent Risk Buffer of 5.5 per cent for three years after the Jalan committee’s recommendations were accepted, the RBI increased it to 6.0 per cent in 2022-23 and further to 6.5 per cent in 2023-24. It is this key ratio, among other aspects, that would have been reviewed in recent months. What would a hypothetical increase in the Contingent Risk Buffer to 7.0 per cent from 6.5 per cent mean for the dividend? Considering its balance sheet expanded by around 7.0 per cent in 2024-25, the RBI would have to provide nearly Rs 70,000 crore to ensure its Available Realised Equity is equal to 7.0 per cent of its balance sheet.

As at the end of 2023-24, the Available Realised Equity — the sum of the RBI’s Contingency Fund, Asset Development Fund, capital, and Reserve Fund — stood at Rs 4.58 lakh crore, or 6.5 per cent of its balance sheet. Should the buffer be retained at 6.5 per cent for 2024-25, then the Available Realised Equity would have to be increased by around Rs 32,000 crore given a 7.0 per cent expansion of the balance sheet. While a hike in the Contingent Risk Buffer from 6.5 per cent would no doubt dent the dividend the government would get, it may still exceed last year’s Rs 2.11 lakh crore largely on account of the RBI’s gains from its foreign exchange transactions. “While there are discussions that the RBI may tweak the economic capital framework and widen the contingent risk buffer (realised capital), we do not think this would impact the RBI’s profit this year,” Madhavi Arora and Harshal Patel, economists at Emkay Global Financial Services, said in a note on Thursday. The duo sees the RBI’s dividend for 2024-25 around Rs 3.2 lakh crore, higher than the Rs 2.56 lakh crore estimated in the 2025-26 Union Budget as dividend from the central bank and public sector banks and financial institutions. In 2024-25, the RBI’s gross foreign currency sales rose to an all-time high of \$398.71 billion. To put this figure into perspective, its gross sales of \$153.03 billion in 2023-24 helped generate an exchange gain of Rs 83,616 crore — or 30 per cent of the RBI’s total income that year. According to Gaura Sen Gupta, IDFC FIRST Bank’s chief economist, the RBI’s gains from foreign exchange transactions may have more than doubled in 2024-25 to Rs 1.73 lakh crore. The RBI makes an exchange gain on its foreign exchange transactions when the price at which it sells a foreign currency is higher than the historical acquisition cost. According to Sen Gupta, the historical cost of the RBI’s gross dollar purchase is currently tracking at Rs 68.4. The rupee ended 2024-25 at around 85.5 per dollar after having fallen to an all-time low of 87.95 per dollar in early February 2025.

Why bitcoin has touched all time high of \$110k following a key crypto bill in US

Bitcoin has reached a new all-time high as it breached the \$110,000 cap for the first time, following the advancement of a key crypto bill in the United States Senate, which has received bipartisan support, and is expected to aid those running crypto businesses.

The bill, called the Guiding and Establishing National Innovation for US Stablecoins (GENIUS) Act, has advanced in the US Senate, after some Democrat members who had initially opposed it, joined their Republican colleagues in supporting the bill, which regulated primarily stablecoin. Bitcoin has fallen last month briefly over geopolitical uncertainties following Trump’s tariff-induced assault on many countries, triggering fears of a global economic turmoil. However, with some of those concerns reducing, after events like the US signing a trade deal with China, the digital currency has been gaining momentum. The GENIUS Act played a further role in its upward surge.

While the bill has received support from some Democrat members because of which it moves forward in the US Senate, there are growing concerns that US President Donald Trump — once a crypto sceptic — and some of his supporters from the crypto and tech industry could personally benefit from it. Trump and his wife Melania have issued their own meme coins and have an active interest in the crypto market going up. At its core, the GENIUS Act focuses on regulating stablecoins, a type of cryptocurrency that is



pegged to more predictable assets like the US dollar. Among others, it also allows big tech companies to issue stablecoins, in what is being seen as a big win for many of Trump’s supporters from the industry, who threw their weight behind him in the run-up to the Presidential bid and have continued their support to him since his reelection. The bill says that issuers must comply with anti-money laundering (AML) and anti-terrorism regulations, as well as privacy requirements under existing banking laws. It requires that crypto issuers must fully back stablecoins with fiat currency or high-quality liquid assets at a 1:1 ratio. They would also have to maintain reserves separate from operational funds and disclose these

Anil Ambani’s Reliance Defence signs pact with German firm for artillery shells, explosives supply

Anil Ambani’s Reliance Defence has signed an agreement with German arms manufacturer Rheinmetall AG for the supply of ammunitions like artillery shells and explosives from a new facility to be set up in Maharashtra. “Reliance Infrastructure Ltd-promoted Reliance Defence Ltd (Reliance Defence) and Dusseldorf-based Rheinmetall AG have agreed on a strategic partnership in the field of ammunition. An Agreement to this effect has now been signed by the representatives of both companies,” the Indian firm said in a statement.

This is the third defence tie-up by the group after joint ventures with Dassault Aviation and Thales of France. “The collaboration between the companies will include the supply of explosives and propellants for medium and large calibre ammunition to Rheinmetall by Reliance,” it said. Furthermore, the two companies intend to engage in joint marketing activities for selected products and may extend their cooperation based on future opportunities. The EUR 80 billion Rheinmetall AG excels in critical domains, such as armoured vehicles, infantry fighting vehicles, advanced air defence systems, and state-of-the-art ammunition technology. At the pinnacle of its portfolio is the Leopard 2A7, widely recognised as one of the most sophisticated main battle tanks worldwide. The strategic partnership will strengthen India’s defence manufacturing capabilities aligning with the government’s flagship ‘Make in India’ and ‘Atmanirbhar Bharat’ initiatives. It advances the vision to position India among the world’s leading defence exporters. “In order to support this collaboration, Reliance Defence Ltd will set up a greenfield manufacturing facility in the Watad Industrial Area of Ratnagiri, Maharashtra. The manufacturing facility, one of the largest in South Asia, will have an annual capacity to produce up to 2,00,000 artillery shells, 10,000 tonnes of explosives and 2,000 tonnes of propellants,” the statement said without giving details of investment to be made. This new facility will help Reliance Defence achieve its objective of being among the top three defence exporters in the country. “The cooperation gives Rheinmetall further access to important raw materials and secures not only its supply chains, but also the interest of its customers, but also creates further growth opportunities. In India, the new state-of-the-art facility will make a significant contribution to supplying the country’s armed



forces,” it said. The defence manufacturing complex will contribute to supporting India’s ambitious defence export target of Rs 50,000 crore by 2029.

Armin Papperger, CEO of Rheinmetall AG, emphasised that “this strategic partnership of Rheinmetall with Reliance Defence led by Anil Ambani’s Reliance Group illustrates our strong commitment to partner with India under the strong leadership of Prime Minister Modi”. Anil D. Ambani, founder and Chairman, Reliance Group, said: “We are proud to partner with Rheinmetall AG, one of the world’s most respected leaders in defence manufacturing, and to collaborate with visionary leader, Armin Papperger. This strategic partnership brings cutting-edge capabilities to India, marking a transformational moment for the country’s private defence manufacturing sector”. Guided by the vision of ‘Aatmanirbhar Bharat’, as championed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the objective is to position Reliance Defence among the top 3 defence exporters, enabling India to not only meet its domestic defence needs but also emerge as a key player in the global defence supply chain, he said. “This project marks a major step in the Reliance Group’s long-term strategy to invest in the fast-growing defence manufacturing sector.” Reliance Defence recently announced plans to set up an integrated project for the manufacturing of explosives, ammunition and small arms under the Dhirubhai Ambani Defence City (DADC). The DADC is being built in the Watad industrial area in Ratnagiri, Maharashtra, and once completed will be the largest greenfield project in the defence sector ever developed by any private company in India.

Virat Kohli and Anushka Sharma play pickleball: Why this is a fun family workout



Cricketer Virat Kohli and actor Anushka Sharma recently sparred on a pickleball court as part of a team bonding event of the Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB). All the players and their families got together for a moment of fun and fitness before the team gets into competitive mode for the next round. Once a retirees’ sport, pickleball has now become a family and a neighbourhood routine for ensuring quick health benefits without trying too hard. Pickleball is an amalgamation of tennis, badminton and ping-pong, played with a light, plastic ball on a smaller court and a net that’s not too high. Though not as rigorous as tennis or as exhausting as badminton, it gives you almost a perfect workout. “From a medical standpoint, it offers several benefits across age groups and that bridge helps in developing a family fitness plan,” says Vaibhav Daga, Head, Sports Science and Rehabilitation, Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital, Mumbai.

What are the health benefits of playing pickleball regularly?

It improves heart health through moderate aerobic activity, helping manage blood pressure and cholesterol levels. It engages both upper and lower body muscle groups, improving tone and endurance without over-stressing joints. A moderate session can burn up to 300–400 calories an hour, aiding in weight loss and metabolic health. Regular

Fatty liver to cirrhosis: Why can’t you see the silent damage?



GNS News Agency, May 28

A person in his late 30s came to us reporting a lack of appetite, bloating and yellowing eyes that indicated jaundice. “Doctor, I haven’t been feeling well before. I have been losing weight steadily, get a mild abdominal pain from time to time, my legs swell up and I am constantly fatigued. Could I be suffering from something else,” he asked. These were all early symptoms of cirrhosis, where his liver was damaged by chronic inflammation. He had an undiagnosed fatty liver, where fat accumulation keeps damaging the organ. This led to scarring, which eventually disrupted the liver’s structure and blood flow, resulting in cirrhosis — a more advanced and potentially irreversible stage of liver damage. His abdominal obesity and diabetes had compounded matters.

How fast does the liver get damaged?

This differs on a case by case basis. For example, someone with chronic hepatitis C and high alcohol intake may develop cirrhosis within 10–15 years, whereas others with milder or well-managed liver conditions may take decades, or never reach that stage at all. NAFLD, which is common because of sedentary lifestyles and poor diets, may also progress silently over 10 to 20 years.

Why can’t we sense liver damage?

That’s because the liver is one of the most resilient

movement and light-impact activity help slow down age-related bone loss, reducing risk of osteoporosis. They also enhance cognitive functions such as strategic thinking, reaction time and hand-eye coordination.

What makes pickleball a good fitness option for middle-aged and older adults?

It is a low-impact, high-reward sport. Pickleball offers cardiovascular, muscular and cognitive benefits without the high-impact stress associated with sports like tennis or running. The smaller court size means less running but still provides effective aerobic activity. It’s a highly social sport that encourages community bonding and mental stimulation, which are key for the emotional well-being in older adults. Besides, regular play enhances coordination, agility and balance, all of which help reduce the risk of falls. What precautions should beginners take to avoid strain or injury while playing pickleball? Always start with a gentle warm-up and dynamic stretching to loosen joints and muscles. Supportive court shoes (not running shoes) reduce the risk of ankle injuries and provide lateral stability. Start slow, gradually build stamina and technique. Overplaying early on is a common mistake. Stay well-hydrated and take regular breaks to avoid fatigue-related falls or muscle pulls. Can pickleball be safely played by people with joint issues or a history of cardiac conditions? With medical clearance, yes. Many people with joint concerns or heart histories can play pickleball safely as it’s a customisable and scalable sport.

Some modifications can help. Use a softer ball and slower pace. Avoid lunging or sharp movements. Play doubles instead of singles to reduce movement load. Opt for shorter sessions with breaks. Cardiac patients should start under supervision and maintain moderate exertion levels. A stress test or clearance by a cardiologist is advisable. Arthritis patients may find pickleball less stressful than other racket sports due to its slower pace and compact court size. Compression sleeves or joint braces can offer added support. Unlike boring treadmill sessions, pickleball keeps you moving and engaged, making it easier to achieve your fitness and weight goals consistently.

organs in the body and can function even when a significant portion is damaged. This compensatory mechanism masks the signs of damage until it is quite advanced. During early stages of fibrosis, patients experience no symptoms. Even as scarring progresses, the liver continues to perform its essential duties — detoxification, bile production, nutrient storage, and blood filtration — without significant disruption. By the time symptoms such as fatigue, jaundice, swelling in the legs or abdomen, or confusion due to toxin buildup appear, the liver is often already cirrhotic. Silent progression is particularly common in lifestyle-related liver diseases because they tend to develop gradually, and routine health check-ups might not include specific liver function tests or imaging unless a problem is suspected. Another reason cirrhosis develops quietly is the limited sensitivity of early-stage diagnostic tools. Mild to moderate fibrosis might not show up clearly on standard ultrasound scans, and liver enzyme tests can appear deceptively normal even in the presence of ongoing damage. In many cases, liver biopsy or advanced imaging techniques like elastography are required to detect and stage fibrosis accurately — tools that are not routinely used unless there is a strong clinical indication.

What are triggers of cirrhosis?

Certain factors can accelerate the progression from fibrosis to cirrhosis. These include co-existing conditions such as diabetes, obesity, high cholesterol, and continued exposure to liver toxins like alcohol or medications with side effects.

What should a NAFLD patient do to prevent cirrhosis?

Early lifestyle changes — such as stopping alcohol, managing blood sugar, losing weight, or initiating antiviral treatment in the case of hepatitis — can not only halt the progression but in some cases, even partially reverse fibrosis. Losing weight, even a small amount, can significantly reduce liver fat and inflammation and improve blood sugar control. Adopting a balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, while limiting processed foods, simple sugars, and unhealthy fats, is essential.

Virat Kohli and Anushka Sharma play pickleball: Why this is a fun family workout

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Mohammed Shami unlikely for England Test series; ability to bowl long spells a concern



GNS News Agency, May 28

WITH just few days left before the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) picks its squad for the five-match Test series against England, it is learnt that the senior selection committee is likely to leave out ace pacer Mohammed Shami from the tour. BCCI's medical team has informed the Indian board that the 34-year-old pacer won't be able to bowl longer spells. Chances of him playing all the five Test matches are bleak too, going ahead. There were deliberations over taking Shami along with the Indian team and playing him in few games. However, with Jasprit Bumrah already informing the board that his body can't take the toll of more than three Tests matches, the selection committee were known to be in a dilemma on whether to fly out with a similarly iffy bowler, who might only play few games. It hampers the planning of the Indian side too. It is understood that selectors want fit bowlers flying with the Indian side, who can bowl longer spells if needed. "Shami is bowling four overs in IPL for Sunrisers Hyderabad but the board and selectors don't know whether he can bowl more than 10 overs in a day. Test matches in England may demand

longer spells from the pacers and we can't take chances," a source in the board informed.

Shami's last Test match appearance came during the 2023 India vs Australia World Test Championship final at the Oval. Shami's possible omission could open up a slot for left-arm pacer Arshdeep Singh or Haryana right arm seamer Anshul Kamboj, who has 74 wickets from 22 first class games. Arshdeep could be the dark horse especially given his county cricket experience last season where he represented Kent. The selection committee had already picked Kamboj for the India A Squad due to travel to England.

The five-man committee is expected to meet in a few days when they will officially announce their new captain for Test cricket. The Indian Express had earlier reported that Shubman Gill is a frontrunner to lead the Indian Test team going ahead. It is learnt that Gill had a meeting with Indian team coach Gautam Gambhir and chairman of selection committee Ajit Agarkar. Shami had undergone ankle surgery in 2024 which halted his cricket for nearly a year. He made his comeback earlier this year through the T20 format and was later part of Champions Trophy too. The Bengal pacer had missed key events for India, including last year's T20 World Cup in Australia and the West Indies, and also the Border-Gavaskar Trophy in Australia in recent months. "I waited for an entire year and I worked very hard. There was a sense of fear even while running about what will happen or what will not happen. It's very difficult for any player to get injured while he is in full flow. Then go to the NCA for rehabilitation and make a comeback. When you go through injuries, I feel you grow stronger as an athlete. Because you have to repeat a lot of things while being mentally strong," Shami had told BCCI TV in an interview post his recovery.

Luka Modric to end glittering Real Madrid career after Club World Cup

GNS News Agency, May 28

Real Madrid legend Luka Modric has said that he will be leaving the club after the Club World Cup, thus bringing the curtains down on a career in which he has won nearly 30 trophies. This includes a record six Champions League trophies and four La Liga titles. Modric will say goodbye to the Santiago Bernabeu on Saturday where Real Madrid play their last home match of the season against Real Sociedad in the Spanish league. The Club World Cup is set to be played from June 14 to July 13 in the United States. "The time has come. The moment I never wanted to come, but that's football, and in life everything has a beginning and an end... On Saturday I will play my last match at the Santiago Bernabeu," Modric wrote on Instagram. "Playing for Real Madrid changed my life as a football player and as a person. I am proud to have been part of one of the most successful eras of the best club in history. Although, after the Club World Cup, I will no longer wear this shirt on the pitch, I will always be a Madridista."

Modric arrived at the club from Tottenham Hotspur in 2012. While he was initially seen as a surprise buy, with some sections of the Madrid fanbase questioning the signing, Modric quickly established himself in the Real Madrid starting lineup as a reliable playmaker who also had an incredible work rate defensively. He was an integral part of the team that won the club their long-awaited 10th Champions League crown in his second season. When Zinedine



Zidane took over as coach, Modric became the centre piece of the squad that won three Champions League titles in a row between 2015-16 to 2017-18. After his 2018 World Cup exploits when he guided Croatia to their first final, Modric won the Ballon d'Or for the best player in the world to break a 10-year duopoly between Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo. "I arrived in 2012 with the illusion of wearing the shirt of the best team in the world and with the ambition to do great things, but I couldn't imagine what came next," he added. "Playing for Real Madrid changed my life as a footballer and as a person. Throughout these years I have experienced incredible moments, comebacks that seemed impossible, finals, celebrations and magical nights at the Bernabeu... We have won everything and I have been very happy."

England score most runs on Day 1 of a Test at home; Record 498/3 against Zimbabwe at Stumps

GNS News Agency, May 28

England's Ben Duckett takes the applause from the crowd while walking back to the pavilion after getting dismissed by Zimbabwe's Wesley Madhevere. England's Ben Duckett takes the applause from the crowd while walking back to the pavilion after getting dismissed by Zimbabwe's Wesley Madhevere. Centuries from Ben Duckett, Zak Crawley and Ollie Pope helped England plunder a record 498 runs on Thursday, the first day of the one-off four-day Test against Zimbabwe at Trent Bridge in Nottingham. 498 is the most runs scored by any team on the first day of the Test on England's soil, bettering Australia's previously-held record of 475 scored against England during the fifth Test at the Oval in London in 1934. The most runs scored by any team on the first day of a Test also belong to England. During the first Test against Pakistan in 2022, England amassed 506 runs on Day 1 to break Australia's record set in 1910, where they managed 494 against South Africa. The most runs scored in a day in Test cricket is 588, managed by England and India on Day 2 of the Manchester Test in 1936. On Thursday, Zimbabwe's decision to bowl first after winning the toss turned costly right from the get-go when the openers stitched a fifty-run partnership in just 10.2 overs.



In the next 10 overs, they managed 50 more runs. The pair added 231 for the opening wicket before Duckett was dismissed for 140 off 134. Crawley also snapped his poor run in the Test — managing just 212 runs in his last eight Tests while averaging just 15.14 — scoring his fifth century in 54 Tests. He scored 124 off 171 and added 137 for the second wicket with Pope.

The third wicket partnership was also above 100 between Pope and Joe Root, who became the fastest to 13000 Test runs during his 34-run innings.

Novak Djokovic's eventful 38th birthday in Geneva: Angry racket smash, injury and return to 'playing good tennis'

GNS News Agency, May 28

On the night of his 38th birthday, Novak Djokovic returned to his feisty best at the Geneva Open to record a win over Italy's Matteo Arnaldi in the quarter-final on Thursday. While the eventual 6-4, 6-4 scoreline may not reflect the Serb's struggles, Djokovic brushed past his opponent after an eventful tide of frustrations and injury scare to even possibly reunite with the confidence he has lacked throughout the 2025 season. Making up for his Madrid Open defeat to Arnaldi wasn't easy. As the 38-year-old Djokovic handed a break and a 3-1 lead early on in the second set, the emotions led him to smash his racket. Soon after the wavering service game, the 24-time Grand Slam champion suffered a knee injury scare after Arnaldi expertly wrong-footed him to extend the lead to 1-4. But the inimitable Djokovic immediately flipped the scales and denied Arnaldi any further inroads to win the next five games in succession and a berth in the semi-final before announcing that he's slowly getting back in the groove. Djokovic had recently announced his split from long-time rival Andy Murray's coaching, and had undergone a tepid run of results since an injury-forced exit at the Australian Open. "It's great to be in the semifinals again. Last year, I played semifinals. Hopefully, this year I can go a step further. That's the goal. You know I think I'm playing really, really good tennis.



Today was, as I said, a lot of tension on the court, straight-set win but it was much closer than the score indicates," Djokovic said as he builds up to the French Open. Novak Djokovic is happy to reach back-to-back semifinals in Switzerland. #GoneGenevaOpen pic.twitter.com/vmlbDbsfce "Yeah, I was 4-1 down in the second and somehow, I don't know, after that racket breaking, I didn't lose a game and kind of found my optimal state and balance, mentally and emotionally, to really be able to play the best tennis when it was most needed," Djokovic added. Djokovic will test the positive streak on Friday facing Britain's Cameron Norrie in the semi-final and a title may just be the shot in the arm before opening his Roland Garros bid on Sunday.

8 Test hundreds vs 8 countries: England's Ollie Pope sets world record with century against Zimbabwe



England No. 3 Ollie Pope set a new world record after the Bazballers had a field day on the first morning of the cricket summer at home against Zimbabwe on Thursday. Batting first on Day 1 of the four-day Test at Trent Bridge, Nottingham, England piled on a massive 498 for three in 88 overs with the top-3 of the Ben Stokes-led side all gathering centuries. While opener Ben Duckett slammed

a century in as many balls on his home ground, a struggling Zak Crawley got some runs under his belt with relatively slower 124 off 171 balls. But it was England's No. 3 Pope who set the headlines after his senior batting partner Joe Root nudged past 13,000 Test runs. Pope waltzed to his eighth Test century in 109 balls and set multiple records as he crossed the three-figure mark. Despite his middling Test average, Pope recorded his seventh hundred at No. 3, putting him level with Jonathan Trott among English batters in the spot. Only legends Wally Hammond, Ken Barrington and David Gower have racked up more Test centuries for England at No. 3. More curiously, Pope's eight centuries have all come up against different oppositions. The 27-year-old extended his own world record to become the first batter to record his first eight Test hundreds against different countries. Pope became the 30th Test batter to record centuries at least against eight different countries and could even equal the record should he hit a century in the Ashes later this year.

Meet the first visually impaired Indian woman to scale Everest, from a village in Himachal Pradesh



Chhonzin Angmo, 29, hoisted the Tricolour atop Mt Everest; "This is only a step in my dream to instill willpower in every specially-abled person," Angmo says.

GNS News Agency, May 28

Amar Chand began his week as he has for decades — overseeing the green peas and apple plantations at his one-acre farm in a village deep inside the Hangrang Valley in Kinnaur district of Himachal Pradesh. But a video clip he received turned the mundane Monday morning memorable. It was of his daughter, Chhonzin Angmo, 29, hoisting the Tricolour atop Mt Everest. She was flanked by her sherpas, Dandu Sherpa and Om Gurung, and Army veteran Lt Col Romil Barthwal (retired), the expedition team leader.

What made Angmo's feat even more special was that she became the first visually impaired person from India — and only the fifth such mountaineer in the world — to conquer Everest. Before her, there was Erik Weihe from the United States — the first visually impaired person who scaled Everest in 2001 — Austrian Andy Holzer (from North Col route in Tibet) in 2017, Chinese Zhang Hong in 2021 and American Lonnie Bedwell (2023). Angmo, however, is the first visually impaired woman summiteer.

"Stepping on the summit of Mt Everest, my first thought was how each step counts in our journey, whether one is abled or specially-abled. This is only a step in my dream to instill willpower in every specially-abled person. If we have the willpower, nothing can stop us and my next target will be the highest peaks in each continent," Angmo told

"My role model is Helen Keller, whose books and biography I read as a student. My father, too, is a role model... There were times when people would taunt me for being visually impaired. But my father and my family supported me in this journey. If I, or they, would have been disheartened, we could not have taken a step forward in life," she said. Chhonzin Angmo with her father Amar Chand at Chango village. (Special Arrangement) Chhonzin Angmo with her father Amar Chand at Chango village. (Special Arrangement) "Our village, Chango, is like an oasis in the cold desert; the only green patch amidst yellow mountains of the Valley, fed by two glacier streams and the Spiti river. Our daughter is like the oasis in our world, and to see her climbing Mt Everest was a special moment for the whole village," Chand, 76, said. Angmo's younger sister Kesang Yangchen, who lives in Mohali, was quick to add: "The yellow hills above our village are called Moonland by the tourists and locals, too. To see Angmo atop Mt Everest is like her reaching the moon for all of us." Chhonzin Angmo with her family during national award function in 2024. Chhonzin Angmo with her family during national award function in 2024.

The second youngest among five siblings, Angmo was in Class 3 when her vision got severely impaired following a "medicine allergy", according to her family. Chand's brother, Gopal, said the family only got to know when her school teacher brought it to their attention after noticing that Angmo was struggling to write. "The next day, we rushed to a hospital 210 kilometres away, at Rampur Bushahr, which referred us to another hospital in Shimla," Gopal recalled. But there was no relief. As the years passed, Angmo lost vision in both her eyes completely.

"We visited Chandigarh, Dehradun and other cities to find a cure but Angmo slowly lost her vision. There were financial struggles, too, but the family did whatever it could to support Angmo," Gopal said. In 2005-06, Chand and his wife Sonam Chhomo got Angmo enrolled at Leh's Mahabodhi School and Hostel for Visually-Impaired Children, run by the Mahabodhi International Meditation Centre. She later completed her graduation from Miranda House in Delhi. In 2016, Angmo completed a basic climbing course from the Atal Bihari Vajpayee Institute of Mountaineering and Allied Sports, Manali, where she climbed the 5,289-

metres Friendship Peak. She followed this up by climbing multiple peaks in Ladakh and went on to become a part of Operation Blue Freedom, an expedition of specially-abled persons to Siachen Glacier, led by an Armed Forces veterans' group, Team Claw, in 2021. With every climb, Angmo's passion increased. It was a meeting with Skalzang Rigzin, who became the first Indian civilian mountaineer to scale Mt Everest without supplemental oxygen, that she began dreaming of conquering higher peaks.

Rigzin, who met Angmo in Leh through her schoolmate and mountain guide Tsewang Norbu, was impressed with her "willpower and willingness". "Through Norbu, Angmo showed me pictures of her Siachen trip and I could sense that she had the willpower to conquer higher mountains. Tagda chalti thi (She walked with a strong gait). That's my first memory of seeing her climb in Ladakh," Rigzin, 43, said. "The way she would rope up with the guide and use her senses to judge things was commendable. She scaled Kang Yatse 2 (6,250 metres) in less time than a normal mountaineer," he said. Rigzin, also the president of the Ladakh Mountain Guide Association, said that Angmo used the fixed rope route, a tried-and-tested method when climbers attempt to scale 8,000 metres-plus peaks. "I would tell her about the Jumar technique while ascending on a fixed rope line using coordination of body, hands and ascender to climb the rope... Before Mt Everest, she called me asking, 'yeh equipment theek hai (is this equipment right)?' I wished her luck, she inspires people like us through her willpower," Rigzin said.

Last year, Angmo, who is employed with the Union Bank of India, received the National Award for Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities. In April this year, after the Union Bank of India decided to sponsor her expedition, her preparations to conquer Everest got underway with mountaineering firm Boots & Crampons, based in Delhi-Hyderabad, along with Pioneer Adventures of Nepal. Boots and Crampons CEO Romil Barthwal and founder Bharath Thammineni met Angmo in April and, for the four weeks that followed, she first scaled Mt Lobuche (6,119 metres), before starting the acclimatisation cycles from Camp 1 (6,065 metres) to Camp 2 (6,400 metres) at Mt Everest and back. She later progressed to Camp 3 (7,200 metres) and Camp 4 (7,920 metres). Chhonzin Angmo during acclimatisation near Everest Base Camp earlier in April prior to the summit began. (Special arrangement) Chhonzin Angmo during acclimatisation near Everest Base Camp earlier in April prior to the summit began. "When Rigzin told us about Angmo, we were excited. When we met her in the first week of April, the first thing that impressed us was how she knew the basics of mountaineering like an expert," Thammineni, who has scaled eight 8,000 metres-plus peaks including Everest, said. "Of course, she required the assistance of the sherpa and me or Romil, but then she had to do the climb herself. Sometimes, she would judge from the tension in the rope and the step impressions in the ice or rocks," Thammineni said. With challenges like the Khumbu Icefall and multiple ladder crossings over crevasses during the climb, the team devised some in-house signages for Angmo. "The ladder crossings are done by a single climber... We would guide her using trek poles to tell her where to put her feet," Thammineni said. As she mounted her final assault, Angmo's elder brother, Lama Karma Yeshey, a monk at the Sherabling Monastery at Baijnath in Himachal Pradesh, immersed himself in prayers. "Whenever she goes for a summit, she takes prayer flags with her and tells me to pray for her too," Yeshey said. Upon her return, a simple — yet special — treat awaits Angmo. "She will ask our mother to get her the best apples from our small orchard," Yeshey said.

Bhool Chuk Maaf movie review: Rajkummar Rao, Wamiqa Gabbi film feels like poor man’s Brahmastra



GNS News Agency, May 28

For a long time, Bhool Chuk Maaf looks and feels like the poor man’s Brahmastra (remember that one?). A couple prancing up and down Varanasi’s ghats and gullies, surrounded by gais, gendas, gurus and the Ganga, and few raised eyebrows. Everytime you start to forget that this is supposed to be Benaras, come aerial shots to convince us that it is. And yet, this film need not have been staged in the eternal city at all. In fact, it would be difficult to place the Rajkummar Rao-Wamiqa Gabbi starrer anywhere – which is not a crime exactly, except how much Bhool Chuk Maaf wants to belong.

It’s not just to a place either. The film has so many ideas, people, strands, plots jostling about that it is obvious director Karan Sharma struggled to fill even its 121-minute length. The songs, one worse than the other, don’t help. Nor the fact that lovers Ranjan Tiwari (Rao) and Titli Mishra (Gabbi) seem to operate on different planes. The central strand is that the unemployed Ranjan and the spoiled Titli are desperate to get married. Titli’s dad (Zakir Hussain) lays down one condition: that Ranjan get a government job within two months. After suggesting that it might go into the interminable wait for a job in a country where recruitment exams are at the mercy of sarkaar or scamsters, Bhool Chuk Maaf slithers into jugaad territory. It as easily sidles in, and

skips out of, problematic issues such as dowry, for laughs, as you wonder more and more what Titli, with at least money and looks going for her, sees in Ranjan – who, she herself points out more than once, has little, if anything, going for him.

That could be a story too, as the free-spirited Titli threatens to upset Ranjan’s world, with his mother an enterprising breadwinner with a business in pickles. But just when you are digging into your popcorn, the film takes its most ambitious turn, and stumbling, swerving and somersaulting – even as you wish it would just keep lying down for once – finds a moral centre! There is even a mild stab at communal harmony, while Karan Sharma (also the co-writer) is at it. Yet, this need not have been such a stew of Ghat meets Groundhog Day. There are very many good actors in Bhool Chuk Maaf, starting with Rao, and including several usual suspects that Bollywood casts when it comes to Uttar Pradesh. They serve their own roles well. Gabbi is pretty and proficient, but, sadly, the most half-baked of them. There are also very many scenes which work on their own, and even evoke some laughs. Ultimately, Bhool Chuk Maaf may end up being remembered for all that happened off screen – the confusion between its theatrical and OTT release, and a “compromise” (which has worried many in the industry) that means that within two weeks, it will be showing on a TV near you.

Fountain of Youth movie review: We never got a third National Treasure movie, and thanks to Guy Ritchie, we still haven’t

After he directed Aladdin — the anonymous 2019 remake that you’d forgotten made over \$1 billion at the box office — Guy Ritchie became extremely prolific almost overnight. He made another movie that same year. But more importantly, Aladdin marked a major stylistic evolution for the famously flashy filmmaker: he got really into clothes. Nowadays, you find yourself admiring the tailoring in his films more than the films themselves. There is little, for instance, to like about Operation Fortune: Ruse de Guerre. But, boy, was Cary Elwes dressed smartly. Unfortunately, the costumes in Ritchie’s recent films are inversely proportional to their quality. The worse the movie, the better the clothes. The clothes in his latest, Fountain of Youth, are excellent.

Starring John Krasinski and Natalie Portman as estranged siblings who go on an epic adventure to locate the fabled Fountain of Youth, the movie comes across as a third copy of Indiana Jones. Even Nicolas Cage’s two National Treasure films had more spark than Ritchie’s over-written, bloated, and unevenly paced new adventure film. Fountain of Youth has a tremendously fun pre-titles sequence, where Krasinski’s character, an adventurer named Luke, steals a valuable painting in Bangkok and evades capture from a gang of goons and a mysterious woman played by Eiza Gonzalez.

The sequence is tactile, slick, and, most importantly, filmed not on a soundstage, but on location in the streets of Bangkok. Unlike most streaming tent poles these days, which have a certain flatness that invariably hurts their final score, Fountain of Youth has the look and feel of a big screen spectacle. The Bangkok sequence opens on the streets, and ends on a train. In the middle, Luke gives his adversaries the slip by running into a market and commandeering a street food cart. It’s fun stuff, but the thrills end the moment the titles roll. Fountain of Youth turns into a plodding affair; you realise that James Vanderbilt’s screenplay could easily have been fashioned from a discarded script for an Uncharted adaptation. Not that Ruben Fleischer’s actual Uncharted movie was any better, but at least it featured two actors — Tom Holland and Mark Wahlberg — who seemed to have real chemistry. Krasinski, for no fault of his own, is grossly miscast as the swashbuckling (yet earnest) Luke. His relaxed line delivery and generally laid-back demeanour is a poor fit for Luke, who, it is suggested, has the brash charm of Harrison Ford and the sincerity of Nic Cage. Fountain of Youth is the kind of movie that would’ve benefited greatly from another draft of the screenplay, and a thorough look at who’s playing who. It has the whiff of something that was made on the fly, which is odd, considering the resources that must’ve gone into it. They obviously filmed across the world, on real locations — the climax is shot in and around the Great Pyramids, which is where the treasure our heroes are trying to locate has been resting for thousands of years. Luke and Charlotte — that’s Portman’s more proper character — are hired by a wealthy billionaire who says that he is dying of cancer. He needs them to join hands and locate the mythical fountain, whose water, it is believed, can give the drinker immortality.

After stopovers in London and Vienna, the group finds itself being chased by Interpol — a tragic reminder of Red Notice — and Gonzalez’s mysterious organisation. This covert organisation is lead by Stanley Tucci, who is making a habit of doing cameos in movies like this, probably to



Fountain of Youth movie review: Guy Ritchie's new film, modelled after the Indiana Jones and National Treasure movies, is an unevenly paced and unenthusiastically acted letdown.

pay for his next three vacations to Italy. His presence also reveals Ritchie’s franchise ambitions. Even though he’s basically a gun-for-hire here — he usually writes his own movies — Fountain of Youth isn’t as aesthetically plain as some of his recent output been. That being said, the filmmaker has an exceptionally poor track record with franchises — the third Sherlock Holmes has been stuck in development hell for over a decade; The Man from UNCLE, RocknRolla, Operation Fortune, and Aladdin didn’t get the sequels that they were supposed to. Remember when he declared that he has a seven-movie series planned for King Arthur: Legend of the Sword?

But streaming industry can’t be compared to the theatrical marketplace. And streaming on Apple TV+ is an even stranger proposition. For the tech giant to spend however many millions on Fountain of Youth — to be clear, the movie looks expensive — is like you or I not thinking twice before buying a bag of potato chips. The small one. Ritchie is always at his best when he’s making standalone capers that bear his unmistakable stamp, not when he’s trying to appease masters by churning out potential franchise-starters. Fountain of Youth falls in the second category. Despite the handsome production values and infrequent bursts of fun, it’s a by-the-numbers experience that is way more serious than it should’ve. Here’s a movie in which the protagonists are hunting down a magical underground spring that has the power to change the world as we know it; medicine, governance, economies could all be on the line here. And yet, Fountain of Youth has the tone of an overdue library assignment. Ah, well, at least the cardigans and shawls are pretty.

Coldplay’s Ahmedabad show boosted economy by Rs 700 crore, Gujarat being dry state was a concern, says BookMyShow CEO: ‘Show’s budget was...’

The idea to perform at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Gujarat was Coldplay’s idea, said Ashish Hemrajani, the founder and CEO of BookMyShow. The band played five shows in India earlier this year, three in Mumbai and two in Ahmedabad. There were concerns about whether the Gujarat capital was infrastructurally capable of hosting such a massive live event, which saw over 2 lakh people in attendance, booked out local hotels, and fuelled an unregulated spike in ticket resales. In an interview with Raj Shamani, the BookMyShow CEO opened up about putting the events together, and the help and support that he received from top government ministers. “To play in the world’s largest cricket stadium, as a thought, came from the band,” he said, adding that work began a year prior to the actual show. Not only did they have to figure out how audiences will travel to and from the city, they also had to make sure that Gujarat being a dry state wouldn’t hamper their enjoyment. He had to reach out to the Railway Minister to arrange for special trains from Mumbai, which was a tall ask at the time, seeing as the Mahakumbh was also taking place.

He said that he received an enthusiastic response from Jay Shah, who happily agreed to loan out the Narendra Modi Stadium. “So, I had a partner in crime, and we went back to the band and said that it’s happening,” he said, adding that the Ahmedabad shows contributed Rs 700 crore to the Gujarat economy. “Ahmedabad’s infrastructure has really improved... But getting into the city, there aren’t enough flights. And around 75% of the people were coming from



out of Gujarat. It was mathematically impossible to transport as many people into the city,” he said, adding that special support was necessary from the Indian Railways. He also addressed the potential losses from food and beverages. “Gujarat has prohibition, so will people even come? Will people enjoy themselves? But it became the world’s largest concert. Everybody came safely, they left safely. They didn’t miss alcohol... Employment, hotel, airlines, food, travel, merchandise, spends in the city, we calculated what the average spend per-person in Ahmedabad was. The GST impact was Rs 72 crore, the overall impact was around Rs 700 crore, the direct impact was around Rs 250 crore,” he said, adding that the Ahmedabad show probably cost between Rs 30 crore to Rs 40 crore, minus artiste fees.

Will there be Dear Hongrang season 2 based on the original novel Tangeum’s ending? Netflix keeps the possibility open



Lee Jae Wook and Jo Bo Ah’s new historical mystery K-drama Dear Hongrang ended its 11-episode run on May 17 after debuting the same day on Netflix. If you’ve already watched it, you’re probably aware of the bitter-sweet ending and may have even found yourself scrolling through a fan thread, trying to piece it all together. Now, fans are wondering if Dear Hongrang will follow in the footsteps of Lee Jae Wook’s previous historical fantasy Alchemy of Souls and return with a Part 2 to continue the story. While there’s no official word from the streamer yet, it’s worth noting that the series is based on the 2021 novel Tangeum: Swallowing Gold, which also inspired a webtoon under the same name. So, whether the show expands or stops here depends a lot on how the novel wrapped things up.

Is Dear Hongrang based on a book?

Yes, the story is inspired by Tangeum by the renowned Korean author Jang Da Hye. Just as shown in the Netflix adaptation, the story is set in the late Joseon Dynasty, where a young boy, the only son of a powerful merchant guild, disappears on the very night he promises to pick red camellias for his little stepsister. Ten years later, he returns with the same habits and same scars but claims he remembers nothing about his past life. An ancient blood-mixing technique somehow proves he is the long-lost son of the family, but his sister, Jae Yi, isn’t convinced. Jae Yi grows up searching for her brother her

whole life while living in a suffocating home, filled with opium smoke and betrayal. Then there’s Mu Jin, the adopted son of the Min family. He grew up with Jae Yi. Once, he may have seen her as a sister. Now, his feelings have twisted into love.

Why Tangeum?

Tangeum translates to “swallowing gold.” It’s a poetic Korean phrase used to describe suicide, especially among “noblewomen or courtesans driven by despair.” The story focuses less on uncovering Hong Rang’s identity and more on the characters themselves, each broken in a different way, and how one incident fractures every bond — three people, caught in a web of memory, pain, desire, and guilt.

What’s the possibility of Dear Hongrang season 2

The possibility of Dear Hongrang getting a renewal is quite low, or even a complete no, given the current series has wrapped up all the arcs written in the novel, and Hongrang’s character met the same fate as Lee Jae Wook’s: taking his last breath in the arms of Jae Yi. The series covered everything, including the brutal history of the soul reaper, how he was poisoned in childhood, which slowly led his body and organs to give up... The villain meets a tragic end after Hongrang chops off the same arms that claimed the lives of so many innocent kids. According to author Jang Da Hye, she painstakingly rewrote her characters’ emotional arcs multiple times before publishing. The book is drenched in symbolism and emotion. However, when adapted on screen, writer Kim Jin Ah (The Devil Judge) and director Kim Hong Sun (The Guest, The Witch’s Diner) leaned harder into the political intrigue and suspense, though the story and character arcs largely stayed true to the source. What’s surprising is that Netflix still hasn’t marked the series as Limited, leaving the door slightly open. But if the story expands, it’ll likely go beyond the book, into completely original fiction. If you can read Korean, or even if you’re semi-fluent and willing to work through it with tools, Tangeum is 100% worth it. There’s no official English translation yet, but the demand has skyrocketed. There’s also a webtoon version on RidiBooks.

Helen jumps on a trampoline, does Pilates, dances to ‘Monica O My Darling’ as part of her workout: ‘I am a girl of 85’.

Iconic stars come and go in an industry as fleeting as Bollywood, but many stay in your mind long after the curtain has set on their professional career. Helen is one such celebrity; known for performances in films like Don (1972), Howrah Bridge (1958), and Sholay (1975), the actor continues living life as full as possible even at the age of 85. In a recent video shared by fitness coach and influencer Yasmin Karachiwala, the actor can be seen keeping up an active routine and doing all sorts of Pilates exercises.

The video shared by Yasmin starts with Helen saying, “Hi, I am a girl of 85, and because of Pilates.” The caption of the post reads, “At 85, Helen Khan is doing things most wouldn’t even try. From climbing stairs without a cane to trampoline jumps and dancing on Monica Oh My Darling—she’s just unstoppable. Living proof that Pilates keeps you young!” The actor then proceeds to jump on a trampoline and boasts about her ability to do so at 85.

She talks about “Bending it like Beckham” and



The video shared by Yasmin starts with Helen saying, “Hi, I am a girl of 85, and because of Pilates.” The caption of the post reads, “At 85, Helen Khan is doing things most wouldn’t even try. From climbing stairs without a cane to trampoline jumps and dancing on Monica Oh My Darling—she’s just unstoppable. Living proof that Pilates keeps you young!” The actor then proceeds to jump on a trampoline and boasts about her ability to do so at 85.

challenges the viewers to do the same as she is invited by Yasmin to do her most challenging exercise. With the help of a pull-up machine and a gym ball, the actor performs sit-ups effortlessly while being guided by her

coach. Yasmin talks about Helen not having any issues with activities such as sitting, standing up and walking up the stairs, things people usually struggle with a lot at this age. Helen then breaks into dance on the iconic song ‘Piya Tu Ab Toh Aja’, from

the film Caravan (1971). Helen danced to the song in the film as Monica, and it was composed by R.D. Burman and sung by Asha Bhosle. The track has stood the test of time and is still very much alive through pop culture references.