

### Three STF jawans injured in IED blast on Karregutta

Kothagudem: Three special task force (STF) personnel were injured in an improvised explosive device blast during search operations on Karregutta hills in Bijapur district of Chhattisgarh.

As part of ongoing 'Operation Karregutta' the STF personnel were carrying out combing operations on the hills on the 14th day of operation on Monday. They sustained minor injuries and rushed to the district hospital for treatment. Their condition was said to be out of danger.

### Defence Secretary meets PM Modi amid tension with Pakistan



GNS News Agency, May 5

Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh met Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday amid tension with Pakistan and ongoing preparations for the country's response to the Pahalgam terror attack.During the meeting, Singh is believed to have briefed the Prime Minister about the latest security situation and military preparations, especially on the western frontier.Sources said that response in the event of a multi-front engagement and measures to ensure uninterrupted defence supplies have also come up for discussions that the PM Modi has held with the chiefs of forces and officials over the week.

PM Modi's discussion with the top defence official came on a day when Russian President Vladimir Putin called him and "strongly condemned" the April 22 terror attack in

Pahalgam, offering "full support" to India in its ongoing fight against terrorism.Defence Minister Rajnath Singh also held bilateral talks with his Japanese counterpart General Nakatani during the days, as Tokyo reaffirmed its commitment to countering regional security threats, including terrorism.On Sunday, PM Modi had met Air Chief Marshal Amar Preet Singh, completing his engagement with the chiefs of all three forces to fine-tune the response to the April 22 attack, which left 26 dead.

The meeting came against the backdrop of rising tensions along the Line of Control (LoC), where Pakistan has been violating the ceasefire for 11 consecutive days.According to the Indian Army, Pakistani troops fired small arms without provocation during the night of May 4-5 in several areas, including Kupwara, Baramulla, Poonch, Rajouri, Mendhar, Nowshera, Sunderbani and Akhnoor.On Saturday, the Navy Chief Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi spoke with the Prime Minister on the situation in the northern Arabian Sea.So far, India has taken a series of diplomatic measures against Pakistan, including the suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) and visa services for Pakistan nationals.Additionally, the Integrated Check Post at Attari has been closed.The Indian government also declared the Defence, Naval, and Air Advisors in the Pakistani High Commission as persona non grata.Lastly, the total diplomatic staff strength at both High Commissions has been reduced from 55 to 30, signalling a significant scaling down of bilateral engagement.

### BRS Silver Jubilee Celebrations in Dallas, USA – KTR to Grace the Event as Chief Guest

Hyderabad, May 5 The 25th anniversary celebrations of the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) will be held on a grand scale in Dallas, USA, on June 1, at the DR Pepper Arena, announced BRS Global NRI Coordinator Mahesh Bigala. He stated that the party's Working President, K.T. Rama Rao (KTR), has been invited as the Chief Guest for this historic event.

Reflecting on the recent silver jubilee celebrations held in Elkathurthy, Telangana, Mahesh Bigala noted that the event left a lasting impression and rekindled the hopes of Telangana people in the leadership of KCR. "The energy and enthusiasm among the leaders and cadre is a clear sign that people are once again looking towards KCR for direction," he said.As a continuation of the Elkathurthy celebrations, Mahesh Bigala announced that similar programs will be organized throughout the next year in various countries. "We will start with the Dallas event and continue to celebrate globally, highlighting the achievements and spirit of BRS," he stated.Tanneeru Mahesh, Chairman of the BRS USA Advisory Board, emphasized the emotional journey of the party, saying, "Since 2001, we have stood firmly with the BRS movement. The party entering its 25th year is a moment of pride for Telangana and its people." He added that elaborate arrangements are being made to coordinate with



various associations and NRI communities across the USA to ensure a massive turnout for the Dallas event. He further shared that the event will feature a vibrant cultural program with performances reflecting Telangana's rich tradition and spirit. "Just as the Elkathurthy public meeting stood out as one of the largest political gatherings in India, our aim is to make the Dallas celebration equally grand on the international stage," Mahesh Bigala affirmed. Highlighting the essence of the BRS journey, he concluded, "This movement wasn't born in royal gardens but from the pain, injustice, and discrimination faced by the people of Telangana. The silver jubilee is not just a celebration; it's a reaffirmation of our commitment to justice and identity.

### CM Revanth directs officials to make grand success of Miss World Pageant

Hyderabad, May 5 Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy ordered the officials to make elaborate arrangements for the successful conduct of the Miss World 2025 pageant. The State Police department has been alerted to step up the surveillance and make strict security arrangements for the glittering world-class celebrations in Hyderabad from May 10 to 31. The Chief Minister emphasized that the Miss World 2025 celebrations should be held in a dignified manner so that the image of Telangana draws the world's attention. In view of the young women from 116 countries participating in the competition, he instructed the authorities to provide the guests from all over the world with good hospitality without any shortcomings. Apart from the contestants, nearly 3,000 media representatives from India and abroad will be attending to cover the mega beauty contest. The Chief Minister suggested the officials to accord a warm welcome to those coming from different countries to the pageant with Telangana culture and traditions and also make arrangements without any mistake until the comple-

tion of the event. All the departments, including the Tourism department, should work in coordination with all officials to carry out the responsibilities assigned to them efficiently, the Chief Minister said. Revanth Reddy held a high-level review at the Command Control Center on Monday on the arrangements for Miss World 2025. Ministers Jupally Krishna Rao and Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy, CM Advisor Vem Narender Reddy, Chief Secretary K Ramakrishna Rao, Special Chief Secretary Jayesh Ranjan, DGP Jitender, City Police Commissioner CV Anand, Rachakonda Police Commissioner G. Sudheer Babu, ADGP Stephen Ravindra and senior officers of all departments participated in the meeting. The Chief Minister instructed the officials to make security arrangements as per the schedule of the programs to be held from May 10 to 31 and suggested that a nodal officer be appointed for each program. He called for making every program a success, from the Miss World inauguration at the Gachibowli Indoor Stadium in Hyderabad on the evening of May 10th to the grand finale on May 31st.

Telangana under the leadership of Nitin Gadkari. The road transport system has been simplified with the construction of expressways and underpasses. With the development of roads, the road accidents have decreased, vehicle running capacity has improved, and oil consumption has decreased. The central government is working with dedication for road, railway, air, and port connectivity. Industrial smart cities have been set up in Adilabad and Zaheerabad. One of the 7 mega textile parks set up across the country has been allocated to Telangana. A railway coach factory and a rail manufacturing unit have been sanctioned in Kazipet at a cost of Rs. 800 crore. An 800 MW power project under the auspices of NTPC in Ramagundam has been dedicated to the nation at a cost of Rs. 12,000 crore.

### Hyderabad gearing up to host Miss World Pageant-2025

Hyderabad, May 5 Hyderabad is gearing up to host the Miss World Pageant-2025 with splendor. Special arrangements have been made at Shamshabad Airport to welcome beauty queens arriving from over 120 countries.

Authorities have planned a traditional Telangana-style welcome for the international delegates. Starting Monday, the influx of foreign representatives is expected to rise. To accommodate this, special lounges and help desks have been set up at the airport.Additionally, welcome arches featuring Telangana's tourist attractions and unique symbols have been installed.

### CM Revanth expresses anger over RTC Union leaders



Hyderabad, May 5 With workers of the Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TSRTC) deciding to go on a strike from May 7, Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy has expressed anger over employee unions.Even if I am cut off... I cannot do anything beyond the income I receive," Revanth Reddy said.Despite Transport Minister Ponnam Prabhakar's discussions with the RTC Union leaders and appeals for them to reconsider their planned strike, the RTC employees have made it clear that their decision to strike is final. In light of these developments, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy made pointed remarks regarding the strike. While

speaking at the Zee Awards 2025 event on Monday, he questioned the RTC workers directly, asking, "Is your struggle against the people of Telangana? What is the reason for your protest? Is it because salaries are being disbursed on the first day of each month, unlike during the previous administration?"

"The State government pays Rs. 7,000 crore as salaries to RTC employees every month. The previous BRS government had left with arrears of Rs. 8,500 crore in retirement benefits. Despite this, some political parties are still making allegations against the Congress government. The BRS government left all of that on us without paying the bills that needed to be paid," Revanth Reddy pointed out. He criticised that the Union leaders, who should cooperate when the government is in financial difficulties, are saying that they will go on the fight with the government.

"I have only one appeal to the leaders of the employee unions. If there is any problem, we should discuss it. We are not here to fight. We are here to serve the people," Revanth Reddy said.Indirectly criticising former chief minister and BRS President K Chandrashekar Rao, the Chief Minister said that the person, who caused financial destruction, is now living comfortably in a farmhouse. He made a fervent appeal to the RTC Union leaders that what is needed now is not a fight, but timing and restraint.

### Miss World 2025 contestants to visit Pochampally on May 15

Hyderabad, May 5 (NSS):: In a vibrant cultural showcase, contestants of Miss World 2025 –Group 2 are set to visit the world-renowned handloom village of Pochampally on May 15. This exclusive event will shine a global spotlight on one of India's most celebrated textile traditions the Pochampally Ikat.Pochampally, located in Yadadri Bhuvanagiri district of Telangana, is acclaimed internationally for its intricate ikat weaving techniques. Recognised by UNESCO as the "Best Tourism Village of the World", it is a living museum of craftsmanship, culture and heritage.

Miss World contestants will experience the ikkvt flavour, traditional tie-and-dye process, interact with master weavers and witness the making of the iconic Tella Rumal, a double ikat masterpiece once favored by the Nizams of Hyderabad.The village, which played a historic role in the Bhoodan Movement led by Acharya Vinoba Bhave, offers a rare blend of textile artistry and socio-cultural legacy.This prestigious visit will place Telangana's rich handloom heritage on the global map, as the Miss World platform offers unprecedented international visibility. By showcasing the vibrant weaves, rural craftsmanship, and



cultural depth of Pochampally, the event becomes a powerful celebration of India's living traditions to a worldwide audience. As anticipation builds for the grand finale of Miss World in Hyderabad later this month, the Pochampally visit promises to be a highlight—where beauty meets heritage, and the loom tells the story of Telangana to the world.

### NH projects worth Rs. 2 lakh crore will be taken up in Telangana in next three years : Nitin Gadkari

Kagaznagar, May 5 : Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari on Monday announced that national highway projects worth about Rs. 2 lakh crore would be taken up in Telangana state in the next three to four years. He expressed confidence that these huge projects would completely change the face of Telangana. He made these remarks while addressing a public meeting organized after laying the foundation stone and inaugurating national highway projects worth Rs. 3,900 crore in Sirpur Kagaznagar of Komaram Bheem Asifabad district.Speaking on the occasion , Gadkari revealed that work on new Greenfield expressway highway projects worth about Rs. 1 lakh crore was currently underway in the state. He said that if these projects are completed, the state's economy would rebound significantly, employment opportunities for the youth would increase significantly, and transportation facilities would improve further. He explained that benefits such as reducing congestion, making travel possible at a lower cost, and increasing logistics capacity would be achieved thereby becoming a key step forward in the state's infrastructure sector.Gadkari clarified that the central government was fully committed to the development of Telangana.He said that When he took charge as the minister in 2014, the length of national highways in Telangana was 2,511 km but now it had almost doubled to 5,000 km. "We have already completed works worth Rs. 1.5 lakh crore in Telangana. But this is just the beginning. In the next 3-4 years, we will take up works worth Rs. 2 lakh crore. I am sure that these will definitely change the face of Telangana," he said. Gadkari gave details of some key greenfield express highway projects undertaken in the state: He said that the 770 km long Indore-Hyderabad Expressway project with a cost of Rs. 17,000 crore would include 136 km in Telangana. He said that 100% of the permits for the works in the state (Rs. 4,500 crore) had been completed and added that this route, which passes through Kamareddy, Medak and Sangareddy districts, would be completed by March 2026 while noting that the highway will reduce the Indore-Hyderabad travel time from 20 hours to 10 hours.He also said that the 1,100 km long Surat-Chennai Expressway would also pass through Telangana, connecting the north and south and fulfilling the dream of Kanyakumari from Kashmir and added that It would be completed next year while noting that 78 km long stretch of the highway will be in Telangana connecting neighboring Kurnool while noting that This will



reduce the distance between Surat-Chennai by 300 km and the travel time from 28 hours to 17 hours. He said that the 221 km long Suryapet-Devarapalli Greenfield Expressway, As part of the Hyderabad-Visakhapatnam corridor, had been undertaken at a cost of Rs. 8,000 crore and added that Out of this, 164 km would pass through Suryapet and Khammam districts of Telangana and reduce the travel time between Hyderabad and Visakhapatnam from 12 hours to 6 hours. Gadkari, who mentioned the backwardness of Komaram Bheem Asifabad and adjoining districts, stressed the need to focus on water, electricity, transport and infrastructure for their development. Recalling the water conservation work he had undertaken in the Vidarbha region of Maharashtra (where farmer suicides are high), he promised to help in increasing the water storage capacity of dams and water bodies in Telangana by desilting them free of cost.He suggested that the use of electric and CNG vehicles should be encouraged instead of petrol vehicles with the aim of protecting the environment and reducing the cost of transportation.

LOST OF PASSPORT

I. Andhura Rateesh S/o. A. Radhakrishna, R/o. 10-148/29/1, Sai Nagar, Nr. Venkateshwara Swamy Temple, Balanagar, Medchal District 500042.This notice is hereby given to caution the general public that the above said has lost/misplaced his original travel document, Passport bearing No. H2720484 issued at Hyderabad on 23rd January 2009. A formal complaint pertaining to lost document has been registered at Balanagar PS of Cyberabad Commissionerate.The general public are hereby cautioned not to deal with the said lost document in any manner. If anyone found may handover the document to the undermentioned.

From: Andhura Rateesh  
R/o. 10-148/29/1, Sai Nagar,  
Balanagar, Medchal District - 500 042.  
Mob: 8247330979.



# Indian Chronicle

English Daily

## Manipur's misery

MANIPUR is a tragic example of a state left to fend for itself. Peace and normalcy have eluded it for the past two years, ever since ethnic violence broke out between Meiteis and Kukis. Even the imposition of President's rule — for all intents and purposes, a belated step — has not made much difference on the ground. More than 260 people have been killed, around 1,500 injured and over 70,000 displaced during the prolonged mayhem that has shown the Central and state governments in a poor light. Thousands of uprooted residents — labelled "Internally Displaced Persons" — are living in overcrowded camps, clutching to the hope that they will return to their homes and rebuild their lives.

The BJP has dangled the "double-engine" bait before voters to win one Assembly election after another across the country, but Manipur's woes sum up how things can go horribly wrong even when the same party is in power at the Centre and in the state. It became obvious shortly after the ethnic clashes broke out that the situation had spun out of Chief Minister N Biren Singh's control. However, the ruling party kept him in the saddle, even ignoring serious allegations that he was playing a partisan role. Biren thought he would make amends with a public apology, but by that time his position had become even more tenuous. He was finally shown the door in February this year, but it's unpardonable that the BJP delayed the inevitable for so long.

No less inexcusable is the failure of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to visit the strife-torn state even once during the past two years. Why he has been conspicuous by his absence is a question Manipuris themselves are asking, not just the Opposition. The healing touch has remained painfully elusive. Such unfair treatment is a blot on India, that is Bharat.

## Andhra Pradesh to Emerge as a Sporting Hub““AP's Sports Policy to be the Best in the Nation.



“May 5, Indian Chronicle Rayalaseema coordinator”“SAAP Chairman Ravi naidu said that TDP Coalition Government Moving Forward with a Robust Plan“Revolutionary Changes to Enable Students to Excel in Sports from the School Level Itself.” Ravinaidu attended as a chief guest for inaugural ceremony of the All India Inter-University Softball Men's Tournament held at Vikrama Simhapuri University. On this context AP Sports Authority (SAP) Chairman Ravinayudu stated that the TDP coalition government is moving forward with a strong plan to transform Andhra Pradesh into a Sporting Andhra Pradesh.“He mentioned that the AP government has formulated the best sports policy in the country. Revolutionary changes will be introduced to ensure that students excel in sports right from the school level.“Telugu Desam Party leaders and activists warmly welcomed Ravinayudu, who was visiting the Sullurpet constituency for the first time after assuming charge as SAP Chairman.“Vikrama Simhapuri University Vice-Chancellor Allam Srinivasa Rao, Registrar Sunitha, TDP leaders Ravuri Radhakrishna Nayudu, Kunkala Dasaratha Nagendra Prasad, Kattamreddy Radhakrishna Reddy, Kakarla Tirumala Naidu, Amalla, and others participated in the event.

## NHRC, India takes suo motu cognizance of the reported death of three workers

Hyderabad, May 5 : The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), India has taken suo motu cognizance of a media report that three workers died and three others were injured in an explosion that occurred at a propellant mixing unit of an explosives manufacturing plant at Katepalli village in Yadadri Bhongir district of Telangana. Reportedly, the incident happened on April 29, 2025.

## DERMICOOL PRICKLY HEAT TALC BRINGS OVERHEAD TRAFFIC SHADES TO COMMUTERS ACROSS 35 LOCATIONS IN INDIA



Hyderabad: Are you a daily commuter? If yes, then waiting at long traffic signals in this scorching summer must be a troublesome experience when you not only have to bear the fierce and direct heat of the sun during daytime but also become more susceptible to summer heat associated problems like heat exhaustion, sweating, body odour and even itching from prickly heat.Dermicool, one of India's leading prickly heat powder from the house of Emami Ltd is a dermatologist-approved solution for prickly heat that offers the Double Power of "Neem" and "Tulsi". This summer, the brand has launched a thoughtful initiative in Hyderabad, to ease the summer woe for pedestrians like shoppers, office goers and students, etc and commuters on cycles, two-

wheelers and in cars by installing temporary shades at key traffic signals across the city. These shades, in place for a month, offer a brief yet welcome relief from the harsh "Chubti Jalti Garmi" of summer. The shades can also help to improve visibility for drivers by reducing glare from the direct sunrays, potentially contributing to a safer traffic environment.

Under this initiative, Dermicool Overhead Traffic Signal Shades have been installed at two locations in Parvath Nagar, Madhapur in Hyderabad.Similar initiatives are being undertaken in phases during the summer season in India, spanning 35 locations across the states of Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Punjab and Delhi, where summer temperatures consistently exceed 35 degrees Celsius Besides the above, the brand is conducting on-ground sampling of Dermicool Cooling Prickly Heat Talc to provide immediate relief from heat-induced discomfort and skin problems. A pilot initiative of this project was conducted during last year's exceptionally hot summer at key intersections in Kolkata (West Bengal) and Kanpur (Uttar Pradesh) which received an overwhelming positive response from the public, highlighting the brand's commitment to providing tangible relief during the challenging summer season.

## PhonePe Unveils its Made in India SmartSpeaker The next-gen SmartSpeaker comes with 4G connectivity, fast charging capability, and longer battery life

Hyderabad:PhonePe, today, announced the launch of its next-gen SmartSpeaker, an upgraded version, designed to meet the evolving business needs of merchants. Built on the foundation of the original SmartSpeaker, the next-gen version is Made in India. The latest upgrade retains the popular features of its predecessor while introducing significant enhancements.Speaking on the launch, Yuvraj Singh Shekhawat, Chief Business Officer of Merchant Business at PhonePe, stated, "We are excited to introduce our next-generation SmartSpeakers, which are Made in India. Manufacturing these devices locally allows greater flexibility in adapting products to the specific needs and preferences of our merchants. With these SmartSpeakers, we are not only driving financial inclusion for merchants nationwide, especially in underserved areas, but also fostering domestic innovation and ensuring that Indian manufacturers become integral participants in the country's digital transformation."

PhonePe launched its SmartSpeaker in 2022, providing offline merchants with a reliable and convenient payment solution featuring voice notifications. Available in 21 language variants, the SmartSpeaker includes a celebrity voice feature with leading Indian actors. The real-time au-



dio alerts for successful payments reduce merchants' dependency on checking SMS or app notifications, allowing them to focus on their business without constantly monitoring their phones for payment updates.

The new "Made in India" SmartSpeaker retains all the popular features of the previous one and comes with notable enhancements in connectivity and power efficiency. It utilizes a 4G network for faster speed and higher network reliability. The latest version gets completely charged in approximately 75 minutes. The device also has an extended battery life, exceeding seven days of standby period. Additionally, it includes great audio clarity even in the noisiest of environments, and a compact form factor allowing merchants to use it even in the most congested counter spaces.

## CONGRESS LEADERS ACCUSE CENTRALGOVERNMENTOFUNDER MINING CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS““—

Senior Congress leaders Odnal Srinivas, Pentali Raju, Polu Shiva.““

PS ASHOKAN"INDIAN CHRONICLE"MANTHANI MAY 4""Congress party leaders have expressed serious concerns over the central government's actions that they claim are undermining the constitutional rights granted to citizens. The criticism was made during a large-scale rally organized in Manthani, led by Manthani Campaign Committee Chairman Odnal Srinivas, Town Congress President Polu Shiva, and Town Youth Congress President Pentali Raju. The rally, which bore the slogans "Jai Babu, Jai Bhim, Jai Constitution," aimed to educate the public about the government's alleged infringement on constitutional values.""Addressing the media, the Congress leaders stated that the "Jai Babu, Jai Bhim, Jai Constitution" initiative was part of a broader "Constitution Protection March," which was organized with the support of IT and Industries Minister Duddilla Sridhar Babu and youth leader Srinubabu. The leaders highlighted the historical significance of the Congress party's role in India's freedom struggle, as well as its contributions to the nation's development and the welfare schemes it has introduced since independence.""The Congress leaders condemned the BJP-led central government for allegedly disregarding the Constitution, dismantling essential democratic institutions, and pursuing policies they claim are detrimental to the public welfare. They expressed their concern over the government's actions, which they argue weaken the democratic fabric of the nation.""The rally also paid tribute to the legacy of iconic leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Jyotirao Phule, and Savitribai Phule, whose revolutionary ideas, ideals, and achievements have shaped the path to social justice and



equality in India.""The event was attended by prominent Congress figures, including Kotha Srinivas, Konda Shankar, Peraleni Lingayya Yadav, Azeem Khan, Ravikanth Satish, Kodukula Venkanna, Odnal Pravalika, Srirambhatla Santoshi, Marupaka Niharika, and other dedicated activists.

## Mayor Dr. Sireesha Urges Swift Action on Storm Damage,

“May 5 Indian Chronicle Rayalaseema coordinator”“Tirupati Municipal Corporation Mayor Dr. Sireesha has issued urgent directives to engineering and electricity department officials to accelerate the removal of large trees and electric poles that were toppled by the unseasonal rainfall and strong winds which struck Tirupati city on Sunday.“This morning, Monday, Mayor Dr. Sireesha, accompanied by relevant officials, conducted on-site inspections in the Chinnakapu Veedi, Peddakapu Veedi, and Thathanagaru areas within the 11th and 27th municipal divisions. During these visits, she emphasized the need for the immediate clearance of fallen trees and damaged electrical infrastructure. Furthermore, she instructed the officials to organize a special campaign to ensure the smooth flow of drainage systems. The Mayor also assessed the damage inflicted on vehicles (cars and auto-rickshaws) and commercial establishments by the uprooted vegetation and collapsed poles. She engaged with the local Village Revenue Officer (VRO), requesting that necessary support and assistance be extended to the affected shopkeepers.“Addressing the media and officials, Mayor



Dr. Sireesha acknowledged the destructive impact of Sunday's unexpected weather event. She highlighted the prompt response of the municipal and electricity departments in initiating the removal of the fallen trees, electric poles, and power lines immediately after the hailstorm and strong winds. Importantly, she also issued a public advisory, urging citizens to exercise caution and remain vigilant over the next two to three days, as weather forecasts indicate a continued possibility of strong winds in the region.“

## MG Windsor PRO Arriving Soon!



Hyderabad:JSW MG Motor India, today, announced the extension of its EV portfolio with the addition of the MG Windsor PRO. The MG Windsor PRO promises to elevate the popularity of MG Windsor by offering more choices to customers with the inclusion of new and advanced features. With its compelling value offering, the MG Windsor has earned broad customer acceptance. Responding to increasing expectations for added features, the carmaker is launching the MG Windsor PRO, designed to meet evolving preferences. The MG Windsor PRO will offer customers an array of additional tech features, enhanced safety, a new cabin experience, improved convenience, fresh style elements and a new battery pack. The MG Windsor, India's 1st Intelligent CUV, combines the expanse of a sedan with the versatility of an SUV, making it a premium offering for discerning consumers who seek both value and class. This Intelligent CUV has disrupted the EV segment and has emerged as a modern marvel in the automotive industry, capturing the essence of comfort, style, and technology. About JSW MG Motor IndiaSAIC Motor, a global Fortune 500 company with a presence in over 100 countries and JSW Group (India's leading conglomerate with interests across B2B and B2C sectors), formed a joint venture - JSW MG Motor India Pvt. Ltd. in 2023. The joint venture aims to build a smart and sustainable automotive ecosystem while staying focused on developing a diverse portfolio of vehicles to give car buyers better access to advanced technologies and futuristic products with attractive value propositions. JSW MG Motor India Pvt. Ltd. is committed to introducing world-class technology, strengthening the manufacturing landscape, bringing the best of innovation across its business operations, and generating significant employment opportunities through extensive localisation.

## NIF Global Welcomes UK Visual Merchandising Icon Sarah Manning for Exclusive Workshops in Hyd

Hyderabad: The New York Institute of Fashion (NIF Global), Himayantagar branch proudly hosted the first-ever exclusive workshop series in India conducted by the esteemed UK visual merchandising expert Ms. Sarah Manning on May 5, 2025. This groundbreaking event marked a significant milestone in NIF Global's commitment to providing international educational excellence in the fashion and design sectors.Ms. Sarah Manning, renowned for her extensive 25-year career with leading retailers such as Harrods and Selfridges, inspired postgraduate students through hands-on training in visual storytelling, space planning, consumer psychology, and advanced display strategies. Her expertise was palpable as she engaged with students, sharing invaluable insights drawn from her experience working with iconic brands like Nespresso and Triumph."The students' passion and boundless imagination were quite remarkable," stated Ms. Manning. "The wealth of design expertise in India is astonishing, and it is a privilege for me to contribute to their learning journey at NIF Global. Workshops like this are vital in equipping budding designers with the tools they need to bridge the gap between creative ideas and business strategy."The workshops provided a unique platform for interaction, allowing students to not only learn from theoretical frameworks but also to apply those principles through case studies and practical exercises. "We've never experienced learning like this. Sarah's insights opened our eyes to how design connects with business and branding," expressed an appreciative Interior Design student from NIF Global.

## Robinson Research Institute Awarded \$71 Million to Host Advanced Technology Platform

Hyderabad:Robinson Research Institute, a pioneer in high-temperature superconductivity (HTS) research, has received funding of \$71million towards setting up and hosting an advanced technology platform in Future Magnetic and Materials Technologies. The funding for the advanced technology platform was announced by Minister for Science, Technology and Innovation, Dr Shane Reti at Robinson Research Institute's facility in Lower Hutt, and will operate through the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment-administered Strategic Science Investment Fund (SSIF) portfolio over a period of seven years. In line with the objective to grow New Zealand's hi-tech exports, the advanced technology platform will apply materials and engineering expertise across a range of sectoral themes including space, electric aviation, critical minerals and technologies for fusion energy. The platform will play a crucial role in lifting New Zealand's innovation capacity, enabling companies to take technology to market, and in accelerating the growth of the domestic manufacturing sector. Professor Nick Long, director, Robinson Research Institute, said "It is an honour for the Institute to receive this strategic funding. At Robinson, our focus has always been on how applications of HTS can be leveraged to address real-world issues, ranging from propulsion in space to more accessible Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) scanners. With proven capabilities in emerging areas like space and advanced aviation, Robinson is well-placed to drive growth in this area. Initially leveraging our capability in magnetics, the Institute has also developed processing methods for critical minerals from New Zealand resources. This funding will enable us to solve some problems with scaling these methods to commercial levels."



# We have fulfilled the decades-old dream of the people of Mulugu“



— Modernization of the bus stand in a high-tech style— We are working towards the goal of development in the state— Implementation of 42 percent reservation is possible— State BC and Road Transport Minister Ponnampalani Prabhakar— Bus stand modernization work in Mulugu with Rs. 4.80 crores— Foundation stone laying of Ponnampalani along with State Minister Seethakka, Mulugu, Mahipal, Indian Chronicle: Public governance continues based on the opinion of the people, we are going to fulfill the decades-old dream of the people of Mulugu district with the modernization of the bus stand in the district center, the new bus stand in a high-tech style will be completed and opened within six months, said State Road Transport, BC Welfare Minister Ponnampalani Prabhakar. He explained that steps have been taken to provide bus facilities to all the rural areas of the state and to ensure that the people do not face any inconvenience. On Sunday, Minister Ponnampalani Prabhakar, along with State Panchayat Raj, Rural Development, Rural Water Supply, Women and Child Welfare Minister Dhanasari Anasuya (Sitakka) and District Collector Diwakara TS, laid the foundation stone for the construction of a new bus stand to be undertaken at a cost of Rs. 4.80 crore at the district

headquarters. At Gattamma near Mulugu, Minister Ponnampalani Prabhakar was welcomed by Collector Diwakara TS and SP Dr. Shabarish with a garland of flowers along with Mantra Seethakka. After performing pujas to the goddess Gattamma, a huge rally was organized along with the ranks of the Congress party and he was felicitated with huge garlands in Mulugu. Speaking on the occasion, Minister Ponnampalani Prabhakar said that they are not only implementing the promises they have made but also implementing new schemes. The bus stand in the district center was built in 1989 and the current condition of the bus stand is not good. Minister Seethakka informed that Rs. 4.80 crore has been allocated for the construction of a new bus stand on a 32-hole site, and similarly, work on the construction of a bus stand is underway in Mangapeta mandal with Rs. 50 lakhs, and the foundation stone for the construction of a bus depot in Eturunagar with Rs. 7 crores will be laid soon. He assured that the construction of a new bus stand will be undertaken on an acre of land with Rs. 45 lakhs since there is a tribal university, an integrated collectorate office and a medical college at Premanagar, near the district center. He said that 600 buses have been purchased from women's groups to empower women economically and they have been made bus owners. The minister instructed the officials to complete the construction of the new bus stand in Mulugu within six months and to submit a progress report every month. He criticized the central government for coming forward to conduct a caste census across the country just after they conducted a caste census in the state, and said it was strange for central ministers to make a fuss about it. He praised Minister Seethakka for taking the initiative to develop Mulugu constituency in all ways. — Achieving 42 percent reservation for BCs in the state is a great thing: Minister Seethakka — State Minister Seethakka expressed happiness that achieving 42 percent reservation for BCs in the state is a great thing. Her said that Mulugu was once a rural area, a mandal and a district, and the government has issued a gazette notification establishing Mulugu Gram Panchayat as a municipality. He thanked Minister Ponnampalani Prabhakar for allocating funds for the construction of new bus stands in several areas in Mulugu district. He said that achieving 42 percent reservation for BCs in the state as the BC Welfare Minister is a great thing. He said that meetings will be held in the coming days to make the district center a role model. He explained that since the area has become a tourist destination, State Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu is allocating funds for any work, and that special arrangements are being made in view of the beauty queens visiting Ramappa as part of the Miss World program. He expressed happiness that the problems of passengers will be eliminated with the construction of the new bus stand. District Library Chairman Bhanothu Ravichander, RTC Executive Director Salman Raj, Deputy RMO Bhanu Kiran, RDO Venkatesh, Executive Engineer Bhaskar, Depot Managers Jyotsna, Ravi Chander, public representatives, concerned officials, and others participated in this program. —

# Mega CME program on Modern Medical knowledge in 'Medicover Hospital'



“Warangal, May 04 (Indian Chronicle): — “The Medicover Hospitals, Warangal held their Continuing Medical Education (CME) program at the Kodam Convention Hall on Hunter Road in the city on Sunday. The event was attended by leading medical professionals, specialists and medical field staff and shared their experiences on the latest development and modern technologies in the medical field. Subsequently, significant sessions were conducted on an acute stroke protocols, pulmonology, cryotherapy, robotic cardiovascular surgery and sepsis management. In these sessions, experts shared their clinical experiences.

The organizers said that. once again proved his norm in providing medical care, continuous medical education and best health services. Dr. Shafi, Cardiologist, Dr. R Shrawan, Cardiologist, Dr. Sunil, Surgical Gastro, Dr. Pradeep Vitta, Neuro Surgeon, Dr. Purnachand, Pulogist, Dr. Lakshmi Deepak Nagur, Critical Care” Dr K Nagarjuna Reddy, IAM President Dr Alladi Sreejan, Consultant Cardiothoracy and Vascular Surgeon, Priyanka, Consultant Neurologist, Medical Hospital Chief Business Officer Mahesh Digloker, Marketing Head Harinath Gupta and Hospital staff participated in this program.

# Minister Sridhar Babu Participates in Solemn Ritual Observances at the Sri Dattatreya Swamy Temple Commemoration“

“Ps Ashokan” Indian Chronicle” Manthani, April 4” — Manthani, May 4 — In observance of the third annual consecration commemoration of the revered Sri Dattatreya Swamy Temple at Dhanwada village, Kataram Mandal, Honourable Minister for Information Technology and Industries, Sri Duddilla Sridhar Babu, presided over an assemblage of ritualistic liturgies on Sunday. — “Escorted by his mother, Smt. Jayaprada, and joined by a sizeable congregation of devotees from the surrounding rural constituencies, the Minister engaged in a sequence of sacrosanct rites, comprising Ganapati invocation, the installation of 54 sanctified Kalashas, ritual ablutions (Abhishekam), and the performance of the Datta Homam—each meticulously executed in adherence to Vedic precepts. —



# It is not right to do politics by creating divisions between castes and religions“

— Prime Minister's announcement of caste census due to Rahul Gandhi's struggle — “Jai Bapu, Jai Bhim, Jai Samvidhan for the protection of democracy — Ministers Ponnampalani Prabhakar, Seethakka — Congress leaders welcomed with huge cheers — Mulugu, Mahipal, Indian Chronicle: State BC Welfare, Roads and Buildings Minister Ponnampalani Prabhakar and State Panchayati Raj, Rural Development, Women and Child Welfare Minister Dr. Danasari Anasuya (Seethakka) criticized the BJP at the Center for doing politics by creating divisions between castes and religions, saying that this is a bad idea. The ministers attended the organizational election preparatory meeting held at Leela Garden in Mulugu on Sunday under the chairmanship of Congress District President Paidakula Ashok as the chief guests. were welcomed with huge cheers. First, they performed pujas at Gattamma and then participated in a huge rally at Mulugu. Minister Ponnampalani Prabhakar said in the meeting held on this occasion that the Congress government is running beyond caste and religion and is moving forward with the aim of uplifting the poor, downtrodden and weak sections. He said that the BJP at the Center is causing division among castes and religions, which is leading to the disintegration of the country. He said that the Congress wants the country to be built in a high way. The country's resources and wealth should be distributed equally to all the people of the country. He said that the BJP government is not thinking about the people of the country but is thinking about multinational organizations. Speaking, Minister Seethakka said that the Congress party leaders should go door to door and convey to the people the services done by the Congress party during the freedom struggle, the development done by the Congress party in the country after independence, and the development and welfare schemes provided to the people after the Congress government came to power in the state. He wanted to inform them about how the BJP government in the country is insulting and belittling the Constitution, weakening all the institutions and taking



undemocratic decisions. Seethakka called on the people to explain the anti-people policies of the BJP and every Congress party worker to participate in this program and implement the instructions given by the party. Former MLA Podem Veeraiah, Congress district president Paidakula Ashok, in-charges Kailash Neta, Sambaiah, District Library Chairman Banoth Ravi Chander along with former public representatives and Congress leaders participated in this program.

# Minister Sridhar Babu Participates in Solemn Ritual Observances at the Sri Dattatreya Swamy Temple Commemoration“



“Ps Ashokan” Indian Chronicle” Manthani April 4” — Manthani, May 4 — In observance of the third annual consecration commemoration of the revered Sri Dattatreya Swamy Temple at Dhanwada village, Kataram Mandal, Honourable Minister for Information Technology and Industries, Sri Duddilla Sridhar Babu, presided over an assemblage of ritualistic liturgies on Sunday. — “Escorted by his mother, Smt. Jayaprada, and joined by a sizeable congregation of devotees from the surrounding rural constituencies, the Minister engaged in a sequence of sacrosanct rites, comprising Ganapati invocation, the installation of 54 sanc-

tified Kalashas, ritual ablutions (Abhishekam), and the performance of the Datta Homam—each meticulously executed in adherence to Vedic precepts. — “During his address to the gathering, Minister Sridhar Babu articulated a benediction for the collective well-being of the populace—entreat-ing divine providence for sustained vitality, societal harmony, and enduring affluence. He further invoked celestial intercession for seasonal precipitation conducive to agronomic abundance and enhanced rural prosperity. — “The ceremonial observance was marked by fervent devotional participation, encapsulating the spiritual gravitas and cultural sanctity that the temple embodies within the regional ethos.

# MP Dr. Maddila Gurumoorthy Addresses Concerns of Tirupati Railway Porters



“May 5 Indian Chronicle, Rayalaseema co-ordinator — “Licensed porters serving at Tirupati Railway Station met with Tirupati Member of Parliament Dr. Maddila Gurumoorthy earlier today, Monday, to present a memorandum detailing the difficulties they are encountering. Their primary concern revolves around the threat to their livelihoods due to the ongoing modernization efforts at the Tirupati Railway Station. — “Responding swiftly to their appeal, MP Gurumoorthy has penned a letter to the Union Minister for Railways, Shri Ashwini Vaishnaw, outlining the porters' plight. The letter emphasizes that these licensed porters, some with 15 to 30 years of dedicated service at the Tirupati station, are now facing significant financial hardship. The recent introduction of escalators, battery-operated vehicles, and luggage trolleys has diminished the demand for their services, resulting in a substantial loss of income. — “Furthermore, the letter highlights the fact that a considerable number of these porters are illiterate and thus unable to utilize the increasingly prevalent online porter booking systems. Dr. Gurumoorthy stressed the continued vital role these porters play in assisting elderly and differently-abled passengers. — “In his communication to the Railway

Minister, Dr. Gurumoorthy earnestly requested consideration of the following measures to safeguard the porters' means of sustenance: — “ \* Giving preference to these porters for suitable employment opportunities within the railway station. — “ \* Ensuring the continuation of licensed porter services. — “ \* Making offline porter booking facilities readily available. — “ \* Implementing welfare programs and skill enhancement initiatives for the porters. — “Acknowledging their extensive years of service and dedication, MP Dr. Gurumoorthy urged the Railway Minister to intervene and ensure a just resolution that secures their livelihoods.

# Three arrested in connection with Falaknuma murder

Hyderabad: Three persons were arrested by the Falaknuma police in connection with the murder of a pan shop owner reported at Vattepally three days ago.

The arrested Shaik Mohd Ali and Shaik Osman are brothers while Shaik Akhtar Ali, is their cousin



# APPGCET-2025 Online Application last date is Extended



““May 5,Indian Chronicle Rayalaseema co-ordinator””Sri Venkateswara University is conducting APPGCET-2025 on behalf of the Andhra Pradesh State Council of Higher Education. The APPGCET-2025 notification was released on March 31. Online application submissions began on April 2. Students can apply without any penalty fee till May 5th. This last date has been extended to May 11th without any penalty fee with the permission of

the Council of Higher Education, PG CET-2025 Chairman Acharya Apparao and Convener Acharya P.C. Venkateswarlu informed. ““Speaking on it, the VC said that for the first time, the Council of Higher Education has entrusted the responsibility of conducting APPGCET-2025 to Sri Venkateswara University, for M.A., M.Com., M.Sc.courses. For the convenience of students in PG courses, the online application last date has been extended from 5/5/2025 to 11/5/2025 without any penalty fee. He said that degree exams are going on in some universities in the state hence the last date has been extended by 6 days on the request of the students. They explained that online applications can be made from May 12th to 15th with a penalty fee of Rs. 1000/-, from May 20th with a penalty fee of Rs. 2000/-, from May 24th with a penalty fee of Rs. 4000/- , and from May 25th with a penalty fee of Rs. 10000/- . The convenor said that 31 exams will be held in three sessions from 9/6/2025 to 13/6/2025 for admission to 153 courses. The exam will be held in about 35 exam centers based on 13 old district centers. So far, 22 thousand students have applied, and students who have not yet applied should utilize this opportunity.

# Special bus services forMallurBrahmotsavams “– RTC DM Jyotsna“

Mulugu, Mahipal, Indian Chronicle: Warangal 2 Depot Manager V. Jyotsna said that the RTC is providing transport facilities to the devotees for the Brahmotsavams to be held at the Sri Heyachala Lakshminarasimha Swamy Temple in Mangapeta Mandal of Mulugu district without any hassle. Her said that from the 8th to the 10th of this month, the RTC is running special services for devotees coming from various districts during the Brahmotsavams. Her said that a service will be run from Eturunagaram to Mallur every 40 minutes. Similarly, on the 12th, the day of the Swami's Kalyanam, and the 16th, the day of Nagavelli, the number of buses will be increased and one bus will be run every 20 minutes from 7 am. Her advised the devotees to take note of this and make good use of the RTC services.



# If there are Pakistanis in the district, they should be identified and sent back “– BJP District President Balram



“Mulugu, Mahipal, Indian Chronicle : BJP District President Sirikonda Balaram has demanded that the government identify Pakistani nationals in Mulugu district, immediately check their visas and immediately send them to their native places. In this regard, on Monday, under the leadership of BJP Mandal President Rayanchu Nagaraju,

he met Mulugu District Collector Diwakara TS and handed over a memorandum. Speaking on the occasion, Balram said that the Center is taking steps to identify Pakistani nationals in India and send them back, and that steps should also be taken to identify Pakistani nationals residing in Mulugu district illegally. He expressed his concern that terrorists who took refuge with the help of Pakistan had carried out a brutal attack in Pahalgam, Kashmir on April 22 and killed 26 people. He said that Pakistani nationals living in various parts of Mulugu district who do not have valid documents and have expired visas should be identified. He said that these measures will increase confidence in security among the people. BJP State Council Member Bhukya Jawahar, ST Morcha State General Secretary Kotha Surender, district leaders Donthireddy Ravi Reddy, Gadam Kumar, Dandiga Venkanna, Elkathurthi Srihari, Yeruva Papireddy, Velpukonda Raghuv eer, Sagar and others participated in the program.

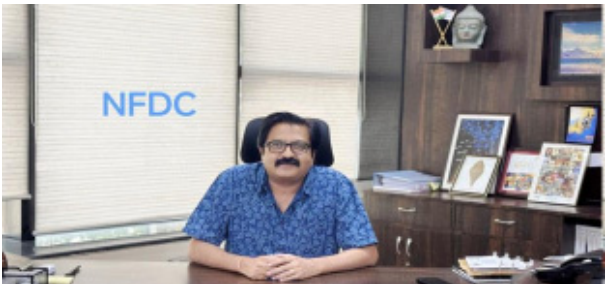
# Hyderabad Super Twins Achieve Rare Feat in International Chess

Hyderabad:Hyderabad's Super Twins, Amaya Agarwal and Anay Agarwal, have brought pride to the city by achieving sensational victories in the international chess arena. At just 10 years old, Amaya Agarwal earned the Woman Candidate Master title within two years and secured the World No. 2 rank in the under-10 girls' category. Meanwhile, her brother Anay Agarwal emerged victorious in the FM Bezelina Open Rapid Tournament held in Bosnia. Speaking at a press conference organized on Monday at the Hyderabad Press Club in Somajiguda, Dr. Suresh Chaitanya, Chief Coach of Ekagra Chess Academy, highlighted that Amaya Agarwal delivered an outstanding performance at the FM Bezelina Open Chess Tournament in Bosnia, achieving a FIDE rating of 2004 points. He noted that achieving such success with just two years of training at Ekagra Chess Academy is a matter of great pride for the academy. During the event, the Super Twins' mother, Panasha Agarwal, expressed heartfelt gratitude to Dr.



Suresh Chaitanya, Chief Coach of Ekagra Chess Academy, for providing exceptional training and encouragement to their children, Amaya and Anay, who are studying in the fourth grade at Indus Public School in Hyderabad, enabling them to achieve this remarkable feat.

# Shri Prakash Magdum assumes charge as Managing Director, National Film Development Corporation



Mumbai, 5 May 2025:Shri Prakash Magdum has assumed charge as the Managing Director of National Film Development Corporation (NFDC) today.

Shri Magdum is a 1999-batch Indian Information Officer Service officer. Prior to this, Shri Magdum served as the Additional Director General of Press Information Bureau (PIB) and Central Bureau of Communication (CBC) in Ahmedabad.

During an illustrious career spanning two decades, Shri Magdum had served as the Director of the National Film Archive of India (NFAI) in Pune. In this role, he was instrumental in preserving India's cinematic heritage through film

archiving and restoration efforts.He has also served as the Registrar of the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) and as a spokesperson for the Ministry of Defence in Thiruvananthapuram.

# Ram Mohan Naidu Announces Resumption of Flight Service between Vijayawada and Visakhapatnam from June 1

Hyderabad, May 5 (NSS): Union Minister of Civil Aviation, Ram Mohan Naidu, announced on Monday the resumption of the morning flight service between Vijayawada and Visakhapatnam, set to begin on June 1, 2025. This route will significantly enhance connectivity within Andhra Pradesh, linking Vijayawada, with the state's financial hub, Visakhapatnam.

# Tummala suggests farmers to reduce use of pesticides



Vikarabad, May 5 : Minister for Agriculture Tummala Nageswara Rao has emphasised the importance of employing scientific methods in farming and advocated for a reduction in the use of urea and pesticides.During an event at the Dharur mandal headquarters in Vikarabad district on Monday, the Minister, accompanied by Assembly Speaker Gaddam Prasad Kumar, Farmers Commission Chairman Kodanda Reddy, and PJTAA Vice Chancellor Professor Althas Janaiah, inaugurated a program called 'Scientists' Interaction with Farmers.'During his speech, Tummala Nageswara Rao highlighted the alarming increase in can-

cer cases in Punjab attributed to the overuse of pesticides and urea. He encouraged farmers to consider cultivating oilseeds, as this could lead to significant financial gains. "Unlike in earlier times, oil palm cultivation can now produce yields within three years. Additionally, farmers can grow intercrops during this timeframe. With the recent approval for oil palm cultivation throughout the state, farmers are encouraged to merge their practical knowledge with scientific recommendations to advance their farming practices," he stated. The Minister noted that the previous BRS government did not prioritise crop insurance; however, the current Congress government plans to reinstate it.

"I have already communicated with the central government regarding crop insurance. The matter of crop insurance premiums will be reviewed in the Cabinet shortly, and a decision will be made," Tummala remarked.Assembly Speaker Gaddam Prasad Kumar Goud said that scientists and officials should educate farmers so that they can practice modern farming technique District Collector Prateek Jain, Agriculture Commissioner Gopi, Farmers Welfare Committee members Sunil and Janardhan Reddy, scientists and farmers participated in the programme.

# Vivek Singh from Telangana emerges as runner-up in the South Zone Tenpin Bowling Tournament

Hyderabad, May 5 While Kishan. R and Hitasha Sisodia from Karnataka emerged as the winners in the South Zone Tenpin Bowling Tournament, V.S. Vivek Singh, a young man from Hyderabad emerged as the runner-up, said Telangana Tenpin Bowling Association State Chief Secretary Sridhar Reddy. In the men's final of the tournament, which was held at the Amoeba Bowling Center in Church Street of Bengaluru from April 28 to May 1 in collaboration with ARC, Kishan.R (Karnataka) defeated the top-ranked Vivek Singh (Telangana) by just 5 pins in a thrilling match. In the first game, which was decided based on the total score of the two games, Kishan scored 179, gaining a 20-point lead over Vivek (159). In the second game, Vivek Singh scored 189 and Kishan scored 174, and Kishan won the title with a total score of 353-348.

As part of the previous stepladder round, 5th seed Parvez Ahmed (Karnataka) won the match 1 with a score

of 364 against Lalit Kumar (Telangana- 327) and Eshwar Rao (Karnataka- 324). Similarly, in match 2, 4th seed Naveen Siddham (Telangana) won the match 2 with a score of 395 against Vijay Punjabi (Karnataka- 303) and Abdul Mujeeb (Andhra Pradesh- 365). Similarly, in the semi-finals match, Kishan.R (394) won the match against Naveen Siddham (340) and Parvez Ahmed (366) and entered the final match . Similarly, in the final of the women's category, Hitasha Sisodia (Karnataka) won the title with an outstanding performance. In the first game, the 3rd seed Sana Salim (Tamil Nadu) had a slight lead with a score of 172 but in the second game, Hitasha closed three frames and then scored 199 with four strikes to win. In the total score, Hitasha scored 366, Sabina Athika (Tamil Nadu) scored 352, and Sana scored 319. On this occasion, the winners were congratulated by Karnataka State Tenpin Bowling Association General Secretary R. Kannan, Tenpin Bowling Federation of India President Dr. Ajay Singh and others.

# Shabbir Ali pushes for speedy implementation of minority welfare schemes in Telangana

Hyderabad, May 5 Advisor to the Telangana Government Mohammed Ali Shabbir on Monday chaired a detailed review meeting with senior officials at the Telangana Secretariat to assess the status of minority welfare schemes, Central government programmes, and key issues concerning the Waqf Board.The meeting featured critical discussions on the functioning of the Telangana State Waqf Board, delays in flagship minority welfare schemes like Overseas Scholarships and Shaadi Mubarak, and coordination efforts for upcoming Moharram arrangements. Shabbir Ali directed officials to ensure accountability, transparency, and time-bound implementation of all pending initiatives.

A major issue highlighted was the non-utilised building adjacent to the Haj House, constructed during the previous Congress regime after acquiring two commercial properties for several crores. Despite being structurally completed, the building has remained unused for years. Shabbir Ali urged officials to remove all hurdles and prepare a utilisation plan at the earliest, especially for community-centric purposes such as services for Haj pilgrims.Expressing serious concern over Waqf property protection, Shabbir Ali demanded a clear action plan for safeguarding Waqf assets across the state. He cited the Moin Manzil land case as a glaring example of legal failure, where the Waqf Board's counsel did not act decisively to prevent encroachment on prime land. He also sought an updated list of Dargahs under the direct management of the Waqf Board, stressing the need for robust oversight to prevent further mismanagement and unauthorised occupations. In view of the upcoming Moharram processions, Shabbir Ali reviewed inter-departmental coordination involving the Forest Department, Police Department, Waqf Board, and the Minority Welfare Department for arranging elephants and ensuring smooth conduct of religious events. He asked all departments to work in harmony to preserve religious customs while maintaining law and order.

He also reviewed the PM Vikas Programme, a Central government initiative aimed at skill development and entrepreneurship among minorities. Shabbir Ali enquired about the status of project proposals, disbursal of central grants, and urged officials to proactively follow up with the Centre to ensure Telangana receives its rightful share. Raising alarm over the delay in the Chief Minister's Overseas



Scholarship scheme, Shabbir Ali was informed by the officials that of the ?130 crore allocation, nearly 76% of funds had been released, but ?103 crore in old dues remain pending. He questioned the reasons for the backlog and instructed officials to expedite the processing of applications to avoid disrupting the academic careers of students planning to study abroad.On the Shaadi Mubarak scheme, meant to provide financial assistance for the marriage of minority girls, Shabbir Ali was informed that while around 48,000 applications had been received, nearly 7,900 cases remain pending. Officials claimed that fund availability was not a constraint, but delays in verification, particularly in Hyderabad, Medchal, and adjoining areas, were holding up the process. Shabbir Ali directed the department to write to the respective District Collectors immediately and clear all pending applications without delay. He also reviewed the implementation of BC (E) reservation in employment and education, and instructed that comprehensive data be collected from all departments to evaluate representation and policy effectiveness. He specifically asked for a report from all Heads of Departments detailing appointments of Muslim candidates under the BC (E) quota, their performance in recent recruitments on merit, and their overall strength in each department. Shabbir Ali instructed all concerned departments to submit detailed progress reports on the discussed schemes and warned against bureaucratic delays. He emphasised that the welfare of minorities is a top priority for the Congress government and assured that pending issues would be addressed with urgency and seriousness. (NSS)

# Raghunandan Rao urges union minister to keep Telangana students' quota in AP Sainik school



Hyderabad, May 5 MP Raghunandan Rao has appealed to the Union Minister to continue the local quota for Telangana students in AP Sainik Schools in the ongoing academic year.He released a video to this effect today. He said that around 25 to 30 thousand Telangana students had appeared for the entrance examination for admissions in the Sainik Schools. However, he said that the Union Ministry of Defense has issued orders to remove 67 percent local quota of the Telangana students in the AP Sainik Schools this year. He said that he spoke to Union Minister of State for Defense Sanjay Seth on the phone about the orders , which have been issued for removing the ten year long local quota for 67 percent Telangana students in AP.He said

that he had appealed to the Union Minister to sanction three new Sainik Schools for Telangana and to keep the 67 percent local quota for all those who have appeared for the entrance examination in this academic year. He revealed that the Minister has responded positively to his plea . He also revealed that he would be meeting the Union Minister of State for Defense along with some of the students' parents on Tuesday evening.

# Fire department launches safety awareness campaign

Hyderabad: Following a series of fire mishaps in the city the fire department is undertaking an awareness campaign to educate people on fire safety measures.On Sunday night, fire broke out on the fourth floor of the State Bank of India building at Patny in Secunderabad. The fire spread rapidly engulfing computers, furniture and articles. Seven fire tenders were pressed into service to control the fire.The fire officials point out that many buildings are below 15 meters and the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) has to ensure fire safety measures at the buildings.



# Mohali MC issues notices to RWAs over neglect of public parks



GNS News Agency, May 5

The MC allocates approximately Rs 16.44 lakh every month to these associations for park maintenance. The MC allocates approximately Rs 16.44 lakh every month to these associations for park maintenance. Taking steps toward improving the maintenance of public parks, the Mohali Municipal Corporation has issued notices to several Residents Welfare Associations (RWAs) for failing to properly manage the parks entrusted to them. Out of the total 798 parks in the city within the corporation's jurisdiction, 190 parks have been handed over to various welfare associations for upkeep. However, according to municipal officials, several associations have failed to meet expectations in maintaining these green spaces. "The condition of many parks is extremely poor, although a few are being managed rela-

tively well," an official said. Sources said that the corporation had also issued notices last financial year, demanding an account of the funds provided. Numerous associations were found lacking in basic upkeep. Some failed to paint railings, others didn't install proper signboards, and multiple irregularities were discovered. While a few associations responded to the notices, many did not reply at all. Now the corporation is preparing to take action once again, issuing fresh notices. The MC allocates approximately Rs 16.44 lakh every month to these associations for park maintenance. This amount is distributed at a rate of Rs 4.23 per square metre, which officials claim is higher than the rates quoted by private contractors. "Several contractors undertake similar work at lower rates, yet many associations, despite receiving more funds fail to deliver satisfactory results," said one official. One municipal officer pointed out, "When a contractor does poor work, we can take strict action or even blacklist them. But dealing with welfare associations often involves external pressures and complications." Ward No. 70 councillor Pramod Mitra recently submitted a formal complaint to the Municipal Commissioner, along with video evidence showing overgrown congress grass in a park in his ward. He alleged that despite receiving the full funding, the local association has done little to maintain the park.

A senior corporation official emphasised the importance of transparency and responsible use of public funds. "Government funds must be utilised properly and transparently. If an association fails to maintain a park responsibly, the corporation may consider withdrawing the park's management from them in the future," he said.

# Mann writes back to Saini, says ‘not a drop of water to share’

GNS News Agency, May 5

Slamming the BJP for conspiring to divest Punjab of its waters by misusing its power in Haryana and Center, Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Wednesday said that Punjab has not a single drop of water to share with any other state. In a letter to his Haryana counterpart, the Chief Minister said that he had received the letter of Nayab Singh Saini through media only and it is unfortunate that a person of his stature is misleading the people by saying that he has assured water to Haryana. He said that this is nothing more than a bundle of lies as this promise was never made adding that this doesn't suit a person sitting on a constitutional post.

Mann said that the Chief Minister of Haryana did call him but he never gave any assurance regarding water to Saini. He added that he cannot give such a promise when Punjab has no drop of water to share with any other state. The Chief Minister said that every year Bhakra Beas Management Board (BBMB) distributes water to Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan which is applicable from May 21 to May 20 next year. He said that this year BBMB had distributed 3.318 MAF, 2.987 MAF and 5.512 MAF water to Rajasthan, Haryana and Punjab respectively. Mann said that the BJP government in Haryana had used its share of water by March 31 this year after which the crisis had arisen. The Chief Minister said that subsequently the Haryana government had urged Punjab that they don't even have water to cater to the drinking needs of people. He said that as a humanitarian gesture the Punjab government generously allotted 4000 cusec of water daily to Haryana from April 6, 2025. Bhagwant Singh Mann said that though the population of Haryana is three crore and as per estimates 1700 cusec of water is enough to meet the needs of people of state. However, the Chief Minister said that the Haryana government has sought 2.5 times more water from Punjab than its actual need. Despite this, he said that Punjab has been giving this water from the month of April adding that a few days back Haryana had pleaded that this water is not sufficient for and they need 8500 cusec additional water daily. He said that it is evident that this water is needed for irrigation purposes and this problem has arisen as Haryana has not utilised its share of water properly. The Chief Minister highlighted that Punjab is already grappling with shortage of water for agricultural purposes as the groundwater



is receding across the state. He said that the level of water in the dams has been recorded all time low and water level at Pong Dam, Bhakra Dam and Ranjit Sagar Dam is 32 feet, 12 feet and 14 feet low respectively as compared to last year. He said that every single drop of water is precious for the state and there is no question of sharing the water with any other state. The Chief Minister said that "water of Punjab belongs to the state and no one will be allowed to divest the state from it. The state government will not allow anyone to deprive Punjab of its legitimate share. The BJP through its government in Haryana and center is trying to suppress the state and it is unfortunate that BBMB is passing new resolutions everyday to rob share of Punjab's water. The state government is committed to safeguard the interests of the state and no one will be allowed to plunder our waters from us," said Mann. Later in the evening, during a meeting of both the states with BBMB, Punjab government reiterated its stand on not having a single drop to spare for Haryana. Punjab was represented by its water resources secretary water resources Krishan Kumar. Kumar told the meeting that Haryana was seeking this water for irrigation purposes and not for drinking. He said as per norms per capita requirement to fulfil the drinking water needs for a single person is 135 litres per day. The supply of 8500 cusecs decided for Haryana is more than sufficient to cater to the drinking water needs of population of about 15 crore whereas population of Haryana is only around 3 crores. Hence the demand made by Haryana for additional 8500 cusecs is not justified. The actual requirement of water for drinking purposes of Haryana for population of 3 crore is not more than 1700 cusecs. Haryana is also learnt to have stuck to its stand.

# Mother-son duo caught with 4 kg heroin in border village

GNS News Agency, May 5

heroine seized news, punjab news, indian express Women drugs smugglers came into focus after the arrest of a woman constable Amandeep Kaur in Bathinda for possession of heroin and who was subsequently dismissed from service. In a unique case of its kind, Tarn Taran Police have arrested a woman and her son for being involved in drugs smuggling and recovered 4 kg heroin from them. Speaking to The Indian Express, SSP Tarn Taran, Abhimanyu Rana, said that the police received a tip off that a consignment of drugs had been received in village Dhanoa Khurd on the Indo-Pak border. "This village is right on the Indo-Pak border very close to border fencing. Acting on the tip-off we arrested the location and arrested Rupinder Kaur (aged 45) and her son Gaganpreet Singh (aged 21) and recovered 4 kg heroin from their house. We will be interrogating them to find out how long they were involved in drugs smuggling and who were their conduits," said the SSP. DGP Gaurav Yadav said in a post on X that preliminary investigation reveals that Rupinder Kaur and her son, Gaganpreet Singh, are actively involved in drug smuggling and have direct links with Pakistan-based smugglers. Police said that while they have come across many instances of father and son being involved in drugs trade, this is the first time they have come across a mother and son duo.

An FIR has been registered at police station Sarai Amanat Khan, Tarn Taran and further investigation is underway to trace the forward and backward linkages of the network, the DGP said. The Indian Express had earlier reported that 407 women drug smugglers have been arrested in the ongoing 'Yudh Nashe Virudh' (war against drugs) ever since it was launched on March 1 by Punjab government. Data accessed by The Indian Express from Punjab Police regarding cases registered under the NDPS Act reveals that the maximum arrests of women drug smugglers during this special drive against drugs has taken place in Hoshiarpur (43) followed by Sangrur (33) and Jalandhar Rural (28) districts. The data shows that women drug smugglers have been arrested in each of the 23 districts of the state. Women drugs smugglers came into focus after the arrest of a woman constable Amandeep Kaur in Bathinda for possession of heroin and who was subsequently dismissed from service. Police said that with the men of the family behind bars due to previous cases of smuggling, it is



often left to the women of the family to continue the trade. "It has come to notice that the men give away the command of the drug trade to the women who are left behind while they themselves are in jail for selling drugs. Hence, there is a complete ecosystem of drug merchandising within the family," a senior police official said. Meanwhile, with the ongoing 'Yudh Nashian Virudh' has completed 60 days, police teams have arrested 7891 drug smugglers after registering 4931 FIRs under the NDPS act since March 1, 2025, and recovered 329 kgs heroin, 100 quintals poppy husk, 157 kg opium, 95 kg ganja, 21.89 lakh tablets/capsules/pills and Rs 8.09 crores drug money from their possession.

# Hyderabad-based ParentVerse now available on iOS and Android

Hyderabad: Hyderabad-based ParentVerse, a digital parenting companion, launched on iOS and Android, for families navigating the challenges of raising children in a tech-driven world. The app under a 'freemium' model offers free features with plans to introduce advanced, premium tools for subscribed users in the near future. It offers a more engaging and empowering experience, allowing parents to guide their children's digital usage while promoting healthy habits through interactive, gamified tools. The application also enables real-time safety tracking, routine and task management, and gives parents access to expert-backed resources to navigate everyday parenting with more confidence.

# In a first, HPTDC sees highest turnover of Rs 107 crore



GNS News Agency, May 5

The state government on Wednesday claimed that the Himachal Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation (HPTDC) has recorded a turnover of Rs 107 crore for the first time since the corporation's inception in 1972. The government said that the previous highest turnover of Rs 78 crore was recorded during the BJP regime in 2020-21. Meanwhile, the state government has also decided to shift the office of HPTDC from Shimla to Kangra. The decision was taken in a meeting of Board of Directors (BoD) of HPTDC. Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu in a statement issued after chairing a meeting of HPTDC and Tourism department said, "Due to the turnover earned by the HPTDC, the corporation has been able to clear Rs 41 crore benefits of pensioners during the past two and half years whereas the previous BJP government disbursed only Rs 26 crore in five years." Sukhu said, "The HPTDC has achieved the annual turnover from Rs 78 crore during the previous BJP government's rule Rs 107 crore under the present government despite facing challenges posed by natural disasters. This has been achieved due to effective management of HPTDC hotels and restaurants, alongwith

regular maintenance and optimal utilisation of the properties."

In the meeting, Sukhu directed officers to further improve service across HPTDC properties and explore the possibilities of leasing out vacant properties on an operation and maintenance basis to private players. He also lauded the purchase agreement between HPTDC and Food and Civil Supplies Corporation for the supply of materials to HPTDC hotels including ration, groceries and other essential items. Meanwhile, expansion projects of Kangra, Shimla and Bhuntar airports to provide better air connectivity to the tourists were also reviewed in the meeting. HPTDC chairperson RS Bali said, "We have decided to shift the office of HPTDC from Shimla to Kangra in view of various reasons, including to decongest Shimla. The CM has agreed on this. There will be a zonal office of the corporation in Shimla." Sukhu also reviewed various projects of the tourism department and directed to expedite those to yield maximum revenue. He said that the state is investing Rs 2,415 crore to develop better infrastructure, wayside amenities and promote other adventure sports activities to attract tourists in the state. He instructed the Tourism department to provide food vans to the local people and commence Hop-on, Hop-off luxury bus rides on local tourism routes in the state. Sukhu asked the department to complete the construction work of Shivdham in Mandi district at the earliest and beautification works in Renuka lake area to make these more bewitching to the tourists. He also instructed the officers for the swift operationalization of the heliports to improve air connectivity to various hill stations of the State. Chairman HPTDC Raghuvir Singh Bali, MLA Suresh Kumar, Principal Secretary Devesh Kumar, Director Tourism Vivek Bhatia, OSD to Chief Minister Gopal Sharma and other senior officers also attended the meeting.

# ‘Free’ for first 15 minutes, charges kick in later: Smart parking of 87 paid parking sites in Chandigarh approved

GNS News Agency, May 5

The General House of Chandigarh Municipal Corporation Wednesday approved the agenda item for smart parking of 87 paid parking sites in Chandigarh with revised rates. Now four-wheelers and two-wheelers in the city will get "free" parking for the first 15 minutes, and then the parking charges will be levied. The agenda was brought up before the House, where there was no opposition, as the 18 councillors of Congress and AAP had boycotted the House meeting. After due deliberation, the General House passed the resolution and scrapped the existing RFP (request for proposal). Accordingly, a meeting of committee members was convened on April 22, 2025 for preparation of RFP of smart parking solution on PPP model.

The committee members had discussed various points like smart feature to be included in the RFP document, GST, stamp duty, baseline revenue, free parking list, rates of parking, duration, zone or single, hours of operation, illustration of sharing of revenue to be mentioned in the RFP and data protection and theft cases. The committee members recommended for preparation of the RFP and estimation of baseline revenue, a mechanism for capturing data on the duration of vehicle stay in the parking lot is required. As per MC officials, the parking fees are being collected at entry point of each paid parking area as per existing parking fee. Additionally, at exit point, vehicle data may be recorded through POS machines to capture information on the duration of stay. For collection of data, the SPIC, Chandigarh, will now be requested to provide the software integrated with POS machines as this software will support the collection of accurate data on vehicle stay duration in each paid parking lots and also help to prepare RFP of smart



parking solution on PPP model The agenda item for imposing compound surcharge as penalty at 10 per cent of water bill was placed before the House, which after consideration was sent to the Water Committee for deliberation. As per the agenda, it has been proposed that existing provision may be substituted in Clause 13 A (1) to impose compound surcharge penalty/interest as "a consumer who fails to pay the water charges including arrears and surcharge/penalty thereto, if any, should be liable to pay penalty as 10 per cent of the total amount of water charges due including surcharge, if any, due on the date from the consumer". Not for reinstating outsourced fire, rescue service employees A table agenda item for renewal and reinstatement of outsourced employees engaged by the fire and rescue service, MC, was placed before the House on Wednesday. The outsourced employees were fired by the MC, and their service was not being extended from April 1 by MC. The agenda was approved by the MC House .

# ‘We stood on hotel parapet for an hour, but it seemed endless’

GNS News Agency, May 5

kolkata, Kolkata news Kolkata Hotel Fire, Kolkata Hotel Fire news, Kolkata Hotel Fire today, Burrabazar fire, Burrabazar hotel fire, Kolkata fire deaths, Kolkata news, Indian Express Hotel guests being rescued by fire officials in Burrabazar area of Kolkata For Akash Agarwal and his wife, it was a narrow escape. The Agarwal family, comprising Akash and his wife and their two children and a nephew, was visiting from Odisha, and waiting to check out of Rituraj Hotel in Burrabazar area of Kolkata on Tuesday evening when fire broke out.

"My children and nephew were waiting downstairs with luggage, while my wife and I went upstairs to bring the remaining luggage downstairs, when suddenly the fire broke out. My wife and I got stuck in the room, and the smoke started to fill the room. We had no other way than to get out through the window. Luckily, the window had no iron grill. So, we broke the window and stepped out on the parapet. We were standing on the parapet for close to an hour, but it



seemed an endless wait for the fire officials to come," said Akash as he waited for the police to hand over his luggage on Wednesday. The Agarwals were in Kolkata for shopping for their family event. And every time they visited Kolkata, they stayed at Rituraj Hotel. Akash admits that there were no safety measures in the hotel, but he could never imagine that it would be a life and death situation for them.

# Union Minister Bandi Sanjay slams congress party

Peddapalli, May 5 : Union Minister Bandi Sanjay today said that The Congress party, which imposed a ban on Naxals, was now demanding that talks should be held with the Naxals and added that the demand of the Congress party exposed its double standards on the issue.

He said that it was sad to see innocent people being killed with guns from a social perspective. He questioned as to why there were no talks with those , who kill with guns in the past . He reiterated that there was no question of holding the talks with the Maoists, who killed innocent people with guns . He wondered as to social activist Professor Haragopal and revolutionary writer Varavara Rao achieved after seeing the many bloody scenes and deaths due to the violence committed by the Naxals for decades? He emphasized that the Naxals should put down their guns, surrender themselves and join the flow of life. In this regard, he suggested that the leaders of the civil rights association including Haragopal and Varavara Rao should convince the

Naxals. This afternoon, while going from Kagaznagar to Karimnagar, Sanjay stopped at NTPC in Ramagundam for a while. He met local BJP leaders. Later, he spoke to the media on the occasion. He said that The Narendra Modi government at the center had spent more than Rs. 12 lakh crore for the development of Telangana in the last 10 years. "We spent 1 lakh 25 thousand 485 crore for the development of National Highways alone. Apart from this, we spent Rs. 32 thousand crore for the development of railways. We spent 21.5 lakh crores for the purchase of paddy alone." Despite all this, the Congress party is spreading misinformation that the center has not given a single penny. We will explain the funds spent by the center along with the account statement. Even though we asked them to come for discussion, they are not coming. The Congress party has failed miserably on its 6 guarantees. When we talk about these things, they are spreading misinformation about the Centre just to divert people's attention. They are creating drama in the name of caste census.



# Collision, Truce, Tragedy: Delhi biker beaten to death after heated exchange with SUV driver



GNS News Agency, May 5

Earlier this month, Jagvinder Singhania (40) was on his way home from work when his bike brushed against a Mahindra Scorpio in the Baba Haridas Nagar area of Dwarka. The man in the SUV, Rohit Kumar Singh (28), was peeved — his liquor bottles broke during the mid-collision. Heated words were exchanged, but suddenly, all seemed forgiven. Rohit then invited Jagvinder for a drink. Jagvinder left his TVS Apache by the side of the road and got into the Scorpio. They drove towards a market and bought alcohol. As they sat drinking, they began arguing again — over their vehicles hitting each other. Enraged, Rohit picked up a stone and allegedly hit Jagvinder on the head. Police said the incident took place on April 14. After scouring through hours of CCTV footage from multiple cameras, police pieced together the sequence of events and traced Rohit. He was arrested. Police said he holds a BBA degree from a reputed institute and is currently employed as a cashier at a bank in Vasant Kunj. He had purchased the Scorpio last November and was driving it on the night of the incident. Jagvinder's wife filed a complaint; she told police that he used to work at his father's general store in JPN Colony, RK Puram. On April 13, he left work for his home in Gopal Nagar on his motorcycle. However, he never returned, and his mobile phone was switched off.

The next day, his motorcycle was recovered from Firni Road in Najafgarh. But there was no sign of the man.DCP

Singh said, "Several CCTV cameras were checked. In one of them, we spotted Jagvinder riding alongside a black Mahindra Scorpio and conversing with its driver. The Scorpio stopped, and Jagvinder moved his motorcycle in front of the parked vehicle. He then walked over to the passenger side of the Scorpio and remained there for some time," Singh added. He then parked his motorcycle slightly closer to the footpath. Carrying his helmet and bag, he got into the Scorpio, which then drove off toward Nangloi," said the DCP. The case just got curiöser and curiöser. Where did Jagvinder go after getting into the SUV?

Police knew that finding the vehicle would give them a clue. So they looked at CCTV footage again and deployed their local intelligence network. Finally, they narrowed down their search to three black Mahindra Scorpios — one of them was suspected to be involved in the incident. Even as police teams were working to ascertain the vehicle's details, a decomposed body of a man was discovered in a drain (Ganda Nala) in the Ranhola area on April 27. There was a wallet in the pocket; it contained an Aadhaar card bearing the name Jagvinder Singhania, the officer added. Police had found their victim. Jagvinder's father and brothers later identified the body. It was back to scouring CCTV footage again for the police. Finally, near the spot where the body was found, they got a clue — a Scorpio had been parked near the Ganda Nala, another officer said. "The owner of the Scorpio, Rohit, was arrested. During questioning, he initially tried to mislead the police but eventually admitted to the crime," the officer added. During the investigation, police found that, initially, a scuffle had broken out between Jagvinder and Rohit after some liquor bottles belonging to Jagvinder broke. Following this, the two had a conversation, and Rohit offered Jagvinder some liquor. They then proceeded to Indira Market together in the car, where they purchased more alcohol and consumed it. Drinking, the two got into another argument over the vehicle collision, which escalated into a physical fight. During the altercation, Rohit struck Jagvinder on the head with a stone, causing him to collapse and die on the spot. Rohit then disposed of the body and fled the scene, said police.

# L-G vs Delhi govt tussle ends, HC told no action planned against officers

GNS News Agency, May 5

Delhi BJP government, Delhi governments, Anshu Prakash, Shurbir Singh, J B Singh, G Narender Kumar, Delhi high court, Delhi news, India news, Indian express, current affairs The communication also noted that as such, none of the subject matters of the petitions are pending before the Assembly or its committees and these are thus to be treated as disposed. A long-standing tussle between the Union and Delhi governments, from when the AAP government was in power, came to a formal close at the Delhi High Court Wednesday. The new Delhi BJP government informed the court that it has decided "not to take any further action" against bureaucrats who were facing action and inquiries before the Committee of Privileges of the Legislative Assembly.

Nine petitions moved by bureaucrats Anshu Prakash, Shurbir Singh, J B Singh, G Narendar Kumar and Manish Saxena against the Delhi government in 2018 were disposed of by Justice Manoj Kumar Ohri following the submission by the government, which made the petitions infructuous. The bureaucrats had challenged the breach of privilege notices issued to them by the Committee of Privileges, seeking that they appear before it.

One of the petitions was moved by then Chief Secretary Anshu Prakash, who had alleged that the issuance of notice by the committee was a case of "malice". Prakash had said the action was taken after an FIR was lodged against AAP MLAs Amanatullah Khan and Prakash Jaiswal, who were sent to judicial custody for allegedly assaulting the bureaucrat. The HC had in 2018 directed the bureaucrats to participate in the proceedings of the committee(s) under the Assembly as required. It had, however, clarified that if the Committee of Privileges imposes or recommends any punitive measure, the same would not be implemented or given effect to in any manner till the petitions are pending before court.. Justice Ohri was supplied with a communication from March 28, where the Assembly's deputy secretary (legislation) communicated to the standing counsel of GNCTD (Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi) that with respect to the 9 petitions, the House on March 27 had decided that "no further action be taken on pending matters referred to the Committee of Privileges, Committee on Petitions and Questions and Reference Committee during the VI and VII Assembly and the same may be treated as disposed". The communication also noted that



as such, none of the subject matters of the petitions are pending before the Assembly or its committees and these matters are thus to be treated as disposed. The summary of the proceedings of March 27 noted that the Assembly Speaker informed the House that "in its sitting on December 4, 2024, the 7th Legislative Assembly (when AAP was in power) adopted three motions to the effect that unfinished work of the Committee of Privileges, Committee on Petitions and the Committee on Questions and Reference be examined by respective committees of the 8th Legislative Assembly."

The communication also noted that, as such, none of the subject matters of the petitions are pending before the Assembly or its committees and these are thus to be treated as disposed. The summary of the proceedings of March 27<sup>th</sup> noted that the Assembly Speaker had informed the House on the day that "in its sitting held on December 4, 2024, the Seventh Legislative Assembly (when AAP was in power) had adopted three motions to the effect that unfinished work of the Committee of Privileges, Committee on Petition and Committee on Questions and Reference be examined by the respective committees of the Eighth Legislative Assembly under Rule 183". Despite the prior government's adoption of the motion, the new BJP government "had examined all the pending matters and reached the conclusion that the Eighth Assembly should not proceed further in these matters", the Speaker had added. "Some of the matters before these committees have been pending for long and no sitting has been held to examine them. Moreover, it also led to litigation in HC... the committees of Eighth Legislative Assembly should start on a clean slate and not be entangled with matters, which appear to be motivated," the Speaker had further said.

## Old city of Hyderabad switches off lights to protest Waqf Act

GNS News Agency, May 5

Hyderabad: The All India Muslim Personal Law Board's 'Batti Gul' protest against the Waqf (Amendment) Act evoked a positive response in Hyderabad and other parts of Telangana with people switching off lights for 15 minutes on Wednesday night. There was near total darkness in several parts of the old city of Hyderabad and in many other areas, including Nampally, Malleshpally, Toli Chowki, Mehdiapatnam and Golconda. Shopkeepers also stopped their business for 15 minutes to join the protest. In response to the call given by the AIMPLB, people switched off the lights of their houses, shops and business establishments from 9 p.m. to 9.15 p.m. to register their protest.

All India Majlis-e-Ittehad ul Muslimeen (AIMIM) president and Hyderabad MP Asaduddin Owaisi also switched off the lights of his residence at Shastripuram. Owaisi, who is one of the prominent members of AIMPLB, had appealed to people to make the 'lights off protest' a success. Talking to media persons, the MP said that the protest was a huge success. "There was a huge spontaneous reaction. Reports from Hyderabad, Telangana, and Karnataka show that people, irrespective of their religion, participated in the protest," he said, and thanked people who made it a success. Owaisi said that through this protest, they wanted to give a message to Prime Minister Narendra Modi that this legislation is not in the interest of Waqf. "This Act is unconstitutional and will destroy Waqf properties," he said. He reiterated that this Act is a violation of the Indian Constitution, especially Articles 14, 15, 25, 26 and 29.

The AIMIM president said that after a couple of weeks, another round of protests will be held with the formation of human chains and round-table meetings. "This protest will

## Why Delhi principals are not on board with draft Bill to regulate fees in private schools



GNS News Agency, May 5

The draft Bill to regulate fee hikes in all 1,677 aided and unaided private schools, which the Delhi BJP government has described as a "historic and bold" move, has elicited sharp responses from schools. While parents hail it as a long-overdue intervention against unregulated fee surges, experts warn that it may strangle institutions already grappling with rising costs and evolving educational demands. The Delhi government has an existing framework related to the regulation of school fees; under Section 17(3) of the Delhi School Education Act and Rules (DSEAR), 1973, every school is required to submit a statement of proposed fee hikes to the Directorate of Education by March 31 each year. They must also file their audited balance sheets by July 31. The Act also touches extensively upon recognition, constitution of management committees, and grant-in-aids, among others. According to school bodies and stakeholders that The Indian Express spoke to, apprehensions remain on how the new Bill will change things.

Dr Ameeta Mulla Wattal, Chairperson of DLF Foundation Schools, described the issue as “complex and long-standing,” emphasising that many schools in Delhi are decades old and face increasing pressure to upgrade.

"The NEP (National Education Policy) also requires extra teachers, vocational education... The CBSE puts a lot of emphasis on quality infrastructure like playgrounds, labs, and new subjects. There has to be a fee hike, which is not elaborate," she said. "Construction costs have tripled. Many schools are borrowing from alumni due to fund

## 'Took us 35 years to build everything... all turned to rubble now': Shop owners after fire at Dilli Haat

GNS News Agency, May 5

“Everything we earned has turned to rubble”, a man told Law and Justice Minister Kapil Mishra, as he arrived in the aftermath of the fire that broke out at Dilli Haat last night. Officials estimate that around 25 to 30 stalls of different states caught fire. While no casualties or injuries were reported, shopkeepers claimed that they lost articles worth crores. “It took us 35 years to build everything... 35 years is a long long time. Everything we earned has turned into rubble,” a shopkeeper told Mishra. Another shopkeeper who refused to be named said, “My brother and I owned a chandni and pashmina shop. We have lost items worth around Rs 50 lakh.” “I have lost saris worth Rs 26 lakh... my life has been ruined,” said Mohammed Taiyyab, a shopkeeper. Shopkeeper Ajank Hussain told The Indian Express that Lucknowi Chikanjari articles, among others, worth Rs 95 lakh were gutted in the fire. “Our shop had pure lehngas... not even a thread remains... Allah hak shukar hai koi mara nahi (By God's grace, no one died),” he added. “Delhi Fire Service (DFS) officials came 45 minutes after the blaze started... their station is just three minutes away. Their phone was unreachable at times,” his brother alleged. Fire fighters trying to douse fire inside Dilli Haat in New Delhi on Wednesday Fire fighters trying to douse fire inside Dilli Haat in New Delhi on Wednesday (Ex-



press photo by Praveen Khanna)“Everyone will get compensation. This is our responsibility,” Mishra told the crowd. “(Delhi CM) Rekha Gupta Ji has sent me here. Whoever has suffered any loss will get another chance to stand up on their feet. Stay tension-free,” he added. “Step 1 would be to give compensation to everyone who suffered. Step 2 would be to not leave those who caused this incident,” said Mishra. “I will come again to see you all in a day or two...I salute your bravery,” he added.

## Phone tap leads to security scare: GPS tracker found on Delhi BJP chief's car, triggers 'Z' security

GNS News Agency, May 5

An intercepted call between two alleged associates of wanted gangster Kapil Sangwan alias Nandu, who is believed to be in the UK, led police to a "portable GPS device" attached to an SUV of Delhi BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva who was swiftly placed under 'Z' category security cover last weekend, has learnt. "The recovered GPS device has been sent for forensic examination and a probe is on. A Delhi Police Special Cell team has also been deployed along with security personnel providing 'Z' category cover (to Sachdeva)," sources said. According to sources, the sequence of events that led to the GPS device started on Saturday afternoon when Sachdeva approached Delhi Police Commissioner Sanjay Arora and "shared details of a call and some messages from unknown numbers threatening him". The Special Cell was alerted within hours after initial investigations traced the numbers and pattern of threats allegedly to Nandu, sources said. "Simultaneously, the western range of the Crime Branch intercepted a call by two associates of Nandu, who were talking of installing something on a car. A team of the south-western range of Special Cell was then asked to visit Sachdeva's residence in Mayur Vihar (East Delhi) to conduct an anti-sabotage check on his vehicles," sources said. During the check, sources said, the police team found a GPS device attached below the boot of Sachdeva's SUV. "It was not functional." But senior officers at the Delhi Police headquarters were immediately informed and they decided to upgrade his security cover from 'Y' to 'Z' category," the sources said. The sources said preliminary investigations also revealed that "similar calls and messages were received" by Sachdeva "around one month ago" allegedly from Nandu — but "he did not notice them". The Crime Branch of Delhi Police was informed at the time, they said. When contacted, Sachdeva declined to comment on the calls or the police probe. Nandu is an accused in several cases, including the murder of Haryana politician Nafe Singh Rathore last year. "The probe had found that he tracked Rathore's vehicle for days before the murder with the help of a portable GPS device that was attached magnetically to the spare tyre under the boot of the ex-MLA's SUV. In several other murder cases, too, it has come to the fore that Nandu got similar portable GPS devices installed... they were later removed by his associates," the sources said. Incidentally, before the arrest of former AAP MLA Naresh Balyan in an extortion case last year, the BJP had played a purported audio clip of what it claimed was an alleged conversation between him and Nandu. Nandu gained notoriety allegedly by extorting money



from local businessmen in Southwest Delhi and has been on the run since 2019 when he was granted parole for a month. A non-bailable warrant and a red corner notice have been issued against him by multiple agencies in different cases. Sachdeva was appointed as the Delhi BJP president in March 2023, and led the party to victory against AAP in the elections this year. Mahender Singh Manral is an Assistant Editor with the national bureau of The Indian Express. He is known for his impactful and breaking stories. He covers the Ministry of Home Affairs, Investigative Agencies, National Investigative Agency, Central Bureau of Investigation, Law Enforcement

Hyderabad-based  
ParentVerse now available  
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Hyderabad: Hyderabad-based ParentVerse, a digital parenting companion, launched on iOS and Android, for families navigating the challenges of raising children in a tech-driven world. The app under a 'freemium' model offers free features with plans to introduce advanced, premium tools for subscribed users in the near future. It offers a more engaging and empowering experience, allowing parents to guide their children's digital usage while promoting healthy habits through interactive, gamified tools. The application also enables real-time safety tracking, routine and task management, and gives parents access to expert-backed resources to navigate everyday parenting with more confidence. Currently available for smartphones and tablets on both Android and iOS, the team behind ParentVerse is working to expand its presence across smart ecosystems.



# Russia-Ukraine war: U.S. threatens to quit mediation efforts unless 'concrete proposals'



GNS News Agency, May 5

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio warned on that the United States would give up on mediation unless Russia and Ukraine put forward "concrete proposals," as U.S.' patience wanes on an early priority for Donald Trump.The U.S. President had vowed to end the war in his first 24 hours back in the White House but, as Mr. Trump celebrates 100 days in office, Mr. Rubio has suggested the administration could soon turn attention to other issues."We are now at a time where concrete proposals need to be delivered by the two parties on how to end this conflict," State Department spokesperson Tammy Bruce told reporters, in what she said was a message from Mr. Rubio.

"If there is not progress, we will step back as mediators in this process." She said it would ultimately be up to Mr. Trump to decide whether to move ahead on diplomacy.The President suggested on Tuesday (April 29, 2025) that his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin still wants to negotiate a peace agreement with Ukraine. Asked in an interview with ABC television if Mr. Putin wants peace, Mr. Trump said: "I think he does."Mr. Putin recently proposed a three-day ceasefire around Moscow's commemorations next week for the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II. But he has rebuffed a Ukrainian-backed U.S. call for a 30-day ceasefire.The United States wants "not a three-day moment so you can celebrate something else — a complete, durable ceasefire and an end to the conflict," Ms. Bruce said.It remains unclear if Mr. Rubio is actually ready to turn the page or is seeking to pressure the two countries. The United States already put together a framework proposal which Ukrainians feel bows to Russian demands.

Mr. Trump has suggested an official recognition of Russia's takeover in 2014 of Crimea, an annexation rejected by nearly all the world, in addition to land swaps. "We all

want this war to end in a fair way — with no rewards for Mr. Putin, especially no land," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky told an event in Poland by videoconference Russia has also not moved on the proposal with many experts believing Moscow now sees an upper hand — on the battlefield and diplomatically, with Mr. Trump eager to reconcile. Russia's Ambassador to the United Nations, Vassily Nebenzia, sought to blame Mr. Zelensky and said Russia would keep speaking with the United States.Mr. Zelensky "is bent on escalating the conflict. He's recklessly rejecting the United States' balanced peace proposals," Mr. Nebenzia told a UN Security Council meeting. U.S. diplomat John Kelley told the session that both sides would benefit from working off the U.S. framework and condemned Russian strikes into Ukraine. "Right now, Russia has a great opportunity to achieve a durable peace," Mr. Kelley said.Mr. Trump, criticising his predecessor Joe Biden for shunning Mr. Putin over the February 2022 invasion, reached out by telephone to the Russian leader and has sent his business friend turned globe-trotting Ambassador Steve Witkoff to see him.Mr. Trump in turn berated Mr. Zelensky in a February 28 White House meeting. He and Vice-President J.D. Vance accused the wartime leader of ingratitude for the U.S. weapons sent under Mr. Biden.Ukraine quickly tried to make amends by backing the U.S. diplomatic efforts and pursuing a deal in which the United States would control much of the country's mineral wealth.

U.S. Senator Jeanne Shaheen, the top Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said on Tuesday (April 29, 2025) that recognising "Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea would invite additional aggression from Moscow and Beijing.""I have endeavored to give President Trump the space to negotiate a just and lasting peace in Ukraine, which is a goal we both share," she said."However, President Trump and his team have fatally mismanaged these negotiations — offering concession after concession to Russia, throwing away our leverage and fracturing the united front with our allies that is critical to ending this war," she said.Ukraine ordered on Tuesday (April 29, 2025) the evacuation of seven villages in the eastern Dnipropetrovsk region which used to be remote from the frontlines but are now under threat as Russian forces close in.Last week, a ballistic missile ripped into a residential area of Kyiv in one of the deadliest attacks on the capital since the invasion. Mr. Trump, who has claimed that Mr. Putin would not have attacked Ukraine if he were in power in 2022, wrote, "Vladimir, STOP," on social media after the attack.



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Even prior to the Trump interlude in the United States, there were enough signs that the world was witnessing uncertainty across many sectors. This was a heralding of problematic conditions in many areas of the globe, and policymakers, strategists and business leaders had begun to prepare for more difficult times ahead. Some did, however, hew to the view that new analytical tools and strategic methodologies which were in use would help mitigate the levels of uncertainty in the course of time.Leader-led disruptionNotwithstanding this, the majority adhered to the view that the recent shifts in global hegemonies, the spate of disruptive technologies and also prevailing geopolitical tensions were certain to herald more disruption, accompanied by an increase in geopolitical tensions and economic tsunamis. The general consensus, hence, is that given the influence wielded by leaders such as Xi Jinping of China, Vladimir Putin of Russia, and Donald Trump in the U.S. — not excluding the role of leaders such as Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelenskyy, intent on disrupting the existing order — there is little hope of change for the better.

Few parallels, perhaps, exist for this state of affairs, at least in the recent period. Many also hew to the view that this is the beginning of a new phenomenon in the history of the world — one which has the potential to not only disrupt but also overturn the existing order. Such a situation, many also believe, would be very different from what had existed since the early 21st century, which was marked by considerable turbulence.The U.S., which since 1945, had trumpeted the view that it is the fountainhead of democracy, is itself beginning to witness disruption of a kind that it has not seen in recent centuries. One consequence of this has been an escalation in tensions between the U.S. and several other countries. Most important, however, is that the situation is leading to what some experts estimate to be a 'cauldron of unexpected consequences'.Today, the U.S. appears like a nation divided. Seen as a pillar of democratic stability, it is currently grappling with profound internal divisions. This, in turn, has had an adverse impact on its relations with countries across the globe. One reason for this is, no doubt, Mr. Trump's new tariff war — which demonstrates a profoundly transactional approach — the impact of which has been to turn the world upside down. This is having a highly unsettling effect on global trade. Already leading economists assess that the impact of tariffs has led to sharp decline in the growth potential of the U.S., and brought down its GDP.The U.S. President also seems not unwilling to shoot himself in the foot. Trumponomics now involves inflicting crippling wounds on world famous educational institutions such as Harvard and Columbia. It has targeted foreign students (who reportedly contribute over \$40 billion to the U.S. economy, and sustain over 4,00,000 American jobs). This again is likely to adversely impact the future of the U.S., and, incidentally, its intrinsic capabilities.

In Europe and West AsiaIn the meantime, with Mr. Trump's ascendancy, Europe finds itself in a serious dilemma. Embroiled in a conflict with Russia over Ukraine for the past three years (which shows no signs of ending, despite recent peace efforts initiated by Mr. Trump), what Europe is now staring at is pronounced uncertainty about its future and that of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The European Union is today a pale shadow of what it appeared to be only a few months back — Mr. Trump's re-

cent diatribes about Europe's inability to defend itself is further adding to concerns about its future.The situation in West Asia seems even bleaker. Israel's continuing offensive in the Gaza sector and beyond is amounting to a virtual pogrom (and with the U.S. and the West refusing to restrain Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu), the situation in the region is possibly the worst ever in recent decades. Further, Israel appears intent on redrawing the geography and the destiny of the region, and is actively seeking to achieve a larger geographical presence for itself, including seeking territories that had never previously been Israeli.

Elsewhere in West Asia, the situation appears to be only worsening. Even as Israel appears impervious to existing ceasefire agreements and is looking further afield to set up permanent positions in Syria, the administration there under its new leader, Ahmed al-Shara, appears to be on the brink of collapse, having disbanded the army and security services, purged the civil services of all Alawite elements, and abolished all political parties, thus, making it easier for Israel to establish its stranglehold over the region. Old feuds such as those between Ethiopia and Eritrea have meanwhile reemerged across North Africa. Türkiye is in turmoil with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan having created a tempest by arresting his principal political opponent before the elections. More problematic is that there are ominous signs that Israel, on the pretext that Iran is about to go nuclear, is contemplating a strike to destroy Iran's nuclear capabilities.Meanwhile, the past few months have seen Islamic State (IS) affiliates moving out of the West Asian region, carrying out a series of attacks in Mozambique, Democratic Republic of Congo, pockets in North Africa and extending activities into Afghanistan. The revival of the IS is something that the world needs to worry about, as it could mark the revival of terrorist activities across many parts of the globe.Pronounced indifference, meantime, by the world to events in parts of Asia have masked the reality of what is taking place in these regions. Both Afghanistan and Pakistan are today facing a great deal of internal turmoil and tensions, and alongside this, have also come within the crosshairs of terrorist groups such as the IS and its affiliates. A fresh wave of terror attacks, not only within both these countries, but further afield, is also beginning to be seen. While some are a leftover from the past, such as al-Qaeda and the IS, many are being sponsored by new affiliates. All this is providing a beachhead for a new brand of terrorists. Quite a few new terror attacks have, hence, occurred across the region. The latest was an attack on tourists in Pahalgam, in Kashmir on April 22, in which 26 people were killed. While regions in Asia, to the north and west of India, seem caught up in a fresh wave of violence, the situation elsewhere in the region is again far from happy.

Countries such as Bangladesh, Myanmar and Nepal situated to India's east, currently face internal turmoil of different kinds.Further to India's east, the ubiquitous China-Taiwan problem remains unresolved, though it has not yet to come to the boil. China appears more intent at present on finding solutions for its economic woes, and on how best to outflank Mr. Trump in his current tariff offensive. Meanwhile, Southeast Asia is seeing fresh signs of a Chinese economic and peace offensive. As the U.S. takes a back seat in regard to political manoeuvrings in Asia, what is evident is that China is exploiting this situation to its benefit. India may have reason to think that the recent accord/adjustments between India and China (at the border in Ladakh) marks a return to peaceful coexistence, but the reality would seem to be otherwise. China-India rivalry for the heart of Asia, hence, remains more intense than ever. Many other countries in the region, meantime, appear to be 'tilting' towards China. China is taking full advantage of this, and is intent on demonstrating its naval strength in the Indian and Pacific Oceans, going well beyond its 'nine-dash-line' by venturing into the South Pacific. It has also increased its presence and the numbers of its submarines in the Indian Ocean region. The Asian region, hence, remains wide open, needing India to be on its guard against any and all eventualities.

# U.S. Senate votes down resolution to block Trump's global tariffs amid economic turmoil

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Senate Republicans narrowly voted down a Democratic resolution on Wednesday (April 30, 2025) that would have blocked global tariffs announced by Donald Trump earlier this month, giving the president a modest win as lawmakers in both parties have remained skeptical of his trade agenda.Mr. Trump announced the far-reaching tariffs on nearly all U.S. trading partners April 2 and then reversed himself a few days later after a market meltdown, suspending the import taxes for 90 days. Amid the uncertainty for both U.S. consumers and businesses, the Commerce Department said Wednesday that the U.S. economy shrank 0.3% from January through March, the first drop in three years.

The 49-49 vote came weeks after the Senate approved a resolution that would have thwarted Mr. Trump's ability to impose tariffs on Canada. That measure passed 51-48 with the votes of four Republicans — Sens. Susan Collins of Maine, Lisa Murkowski of Alaska and Mitch McConnell and Rand Paul of Kentucky. But McConnell — who has been sharply critical of the tariffs but had not said how he would vote — and Democratic Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse were absent Wednesday, denying Democrats the votes for passage.Democrats said their primary aim was to put Republicans on the record either way and to try to reassert congressional powers."The Senate cannot be an idle spectator in the tariff madness," said Oregon Sen. Ron Wyden, a lead sponsor of the resolution.

Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer said the dismal economic numbers should be a "wakeup call" to Republicans.Wary of a rebuke to Trump, GOP leaders encouraged their conference not to vote for the resolution, even as many of them remain unconvinced about the tariffs. Vice President J.D. Vance attended a Senate GOP luncheon Tuesday with U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer, who assured senators that the administration is making progress toward trade deals with individual countries.Ms. Collins said the close vote "demonstrates that there is unease with the President's plan."It's partially the president's plan is still evolving but many of us are hearing from employers back home about the impact of the tariffs in a negative way," she said. Some Republicans argued that the vote was a political stunt. North Carolina Sen. Thom Tillis said he backs separate legislation by Iowa Sen. Chuck Grassley that would give Congress increased power over determining tariffs but would voted on the resolution, which he said is only about "making a point."Several Republicans defended Trump's tariffs — and said they were willing to give him time to figure it out."People are willing to give the president



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an opportunity to prove that the new system works," said Louisiana Sen. John Kennedy.Texas Sen. John Cornyn said the vote shows that senators "believe that the President's policies deserve to be tried and see if they're successful."Democrats say the Republicans' failure to stand up to Mr. Trump could have dire consequences. "The only thing Donald Trump's tariffs have succeeded in is raising the odds of recession and sending markets into a tailspin," said Schumer, D-N.Y. "Today, they have to choose — stick with Trump or stand with your states."The Democratic resolution forced a vote under a statute that allows them to try to terminate the national economic emergency Trump used to levy the tariffs.Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren called it a "fake" emergency that Trump is using to impose his "on again, off again, red light, green light" tariffs."Republicans held a procedural vote after the tied vote to ensure that Democrats could not bring the resolution up again, Senate Majority Leader John Thune told reporters afterward. Vice President J.D. Vance came to the Capitol to break the tie and ensure they dismissed the resolution for good.The Republican president has tried to reassure voters that his tariffs will not provoke a recession as his administration has focused on China, raising tariffs on Chinese goods to 145% even as he paused the others. He told his Cabinet Wednesday morning that his tariffs meant China was "having tremendous difficulty because their factories are not doing business."Mr. Trump said the U.S. does not really need imports from the world's dominant manufacturer. "Maybe the children will have two dolls instead of 30 dolls," he said. "So maybe the two dolls will cost a couple bucks more than they would normally."

# When Pakistan Army plays with fire

GNS News Agency, May 5

Whenever Army chiefs in Pakistan with a strident anti-India posture have precipitated conflict with India, the fallout has been severe on the Pakistani people, not to mention the steep downward spiral in bilateral relations. At every juncture in the past, when democratic institutions and Pakistan's civil society have attempted to seek a dialogue with India, ambitious Generals have usurped power and deepened the India-Pakistan divide.General Ayub Khan started the rot by initiating the 1965 war with India, and his protégé General Yahya Khan took his legacy forward by precipitating the 1971 crisis that dismembered Pakistan and left its military nursing the humiliation of a military defeat. From that humiliation arose the ambitions of General Zia-ul-Haq, who oversaw the next phase of Pakistan's descent into chaos.Alarmed with the rise of the Bhutto family and putting together a carefully crafted strategy of "bleeding India with a thousand cuts", Zia-ul-Haq seized power in 1978, and it was his regime that executed Pakistan People's Party leader and former Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. He then went on to systematically and successfully direct both the Pakistan Army and Pakistan's civil society on the path to "Islamisation" and away from modernity, unmindful of missing the bus of progressive liberalisation that India was about to board.

Dying in a mysterious plane crash in August 1988, Zia did not live to see his strategy of covert and asymmetric warfare against India put into practice beyond stoking secessionist fires in Punjab. However, so profound and deep had been his anti-India impact on a whole generation of Pakistani military officers, particularly from the ISI, that it was only a matter of time before Pakistan's active covert war in Jammu & Kashmir was put into motion soon after his death. The rest, as they say, is history with the covert war waxing and waning for the past three-and-a-half decades and morphing into a hybrid war that has constantly challenged India's national security establishment.After Pakistan experienced democracy for a few years, it was the turn of another ambitious Pakistan Army chief, General Pervez Musharraf. Deeply scarred by his inability to dislodge the Indian Army from the Saltoro Ridge (Siachen) during his tenure there as Pakistan's Brigade Commander in the late 1980s, he orchestrated an ambitious but ill-fated operation a decade later known as the Kargil conflict. Apart from again suffering a bruising reality check at the hands of India, Musharraf had a role in diminishing Pakistan's stature as a responsible state. In fact, it is impossible not to flag the fact that Pakistan's descent towards a "rogue state" status commenced during his tenure at the helm of affairs in Pakistan at various levels when the attack on India's Parliament (December 2001) heralded the complete embrace of the Jihadis by the Pakistani security establishment. Since his departure from the scene, it has been downhill all the way for Pakistan with analysts suggesting that the day is not far when it could be termed a failed state, notwithstanding its emergence as proxy for a rising China.

Where does General Asim Munir stand in this unenviable list of Generals. Commissioned in 1986, a couple of years before Zia's death, Munir has held several prestigious appointments in the Pakistan Army including that of Director-General, Inter-Service Intelligence, and Corps Commander of the Gujranwala Corps. He took over as Pakistan's Army chief in November 2022 and has since commanded a force that has been seriously challenged for the first time by entities other than the Indian Army in the form of organised Baloch fighters and anti-Pakistan Taliban factions. For the Pakistan Army, which is probably among the few Armies in the world that owns a nation state, this was an unacceptable state of affairs. Was this the tipping point for General Munir's recent inflammatory speech to a congregation of Pakistan's diaspora that raked up anti-India sentiment and placed religion at the centre stage.To add to Munir's problems, Imran Khan too has been creating a ruckus from jail and so were the restless Jihadis in Muridke and Bahawalpur who were facing continued pressure in Kashmir at the hands of the Indian Army. The local Kashmiri population was just beginning to reap the fruits of a democratic process and improved governance.Clearly, the dastardly Pahalgam attack on selected males by terrorists belonging to The Resistance Front (TRF), an affiliate of the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), could not have been conducted without a green flag



and active support from Rawalpindi. There is little doubt that this desperate attack is as much an attempt to shift focus from Pakistan's western front, which does not grab public attention in Pakistan as much as India and J&K does, as it is to deflect attention from the poor performance of the Pakistan Army in its battles against Baloch rebel fighters and the Taliban.

Escalation with India is clearly on Munir's mind and so is probably a grandiose idea that it may also be the right time to seize power in a situation that may be again be projected as an existential crisis for Pakistan when India retaliates at a time and place of its own choosing. It is important, during these troubled times, for India's policy makers to use the post-1988 period as a historical lens to respond to the current situation with assertiveness that goes along with the tag of being a responsible and rising power. General Asim Munir may well be lighting a fire that he may not be able to douse.

# Pakistan resorts to unprovoked firing on J&K LoC for 7th consecutive day

Jammu: For the seventh consecutive day on Thursday, Pakistan Army resorted to unprovoked firing on Indian positions on the Line Of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir, officials said.

A Defence Ministry Spokesman said, "During the night of 30 April and May 1, Pakistan Army posts initiated unprovoked small-arms fire across the LoC opposite Kupwara, Uri and Akhnour sectors in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir. These were responded proportionately by the Indian Army."For the last seven days, Pakistan has been resorting to unprovoked firing on the LoC and on Wednesday, Pakistan Rangers fired with small arms at the Indian posts along the International Border in Pargwal sector of Jammu district.Tensions have mounted between the two countries after Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) terrorists sponsored and aided by Pakistan killed 26 innocent civilians, including 25 tourists and a local, on April 22 in Baisaran meadow of Pahalgam.The entire country was outraged by the cowardly act of terrorists as Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in his first reaction on Pahalgam killings that the terrorists, their handlers and backers would be chased and hunted down to the ends of the earth.After a meeting with the Defence Minister, National Security Advisor, Chief of Defence Services (CDS) and the three Chiefs of Army, Navy and the Air Force, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced a free hand to the defence forces to respond to Pahalgam terror attack by choosing the timing, targets and the magnitude of response to avenge the innocent killings by the terrorists in Pahalgam.



# S8 tension: cosmologists can’t agree on how clumpy the universe is



Cosmology is in for exciting times, going by the latest research that suggests the key to revealing the fundamental nature of the universe lies in finding out how clumpy it is. Accepted theory has it that after the universe was explosively born in a ‘Big Bang’ in the void some 13.8 billion years ago, it expanded, engendering galaxies, star clusters, solar systems, and planets. When scientists looked at the cosmic microwave background (CMB) — the radiation left over from the Big Bang itself — they saw an absolutely smooth glow across the sky. The early universe must have been remarkably uniform, they concluded, with only small variations in density (of about one part in 100,000 when it was 380,000 years old).

How did matter in the universe get to be so lumpy today after starting out so evenly? The ‘lumps’ we see in the universe arose from different chunks of matter like galaxies and dark matter — a hypothetical, invisible form of matter that doesn’t interact with light or electromagnetic radiation and which makes up a significant portion of the universe — being pulled together by gravitational forces. Over the years, cosmologists have tried to map the overall spread of matter through the early universe. In the standard cosmological model, called the Lambda Cold Dark Matter (ΛCDM) model, dark matter and dark energy — the mysterious force that drives the expansion of the universe — comprise about 95% of the universe. The interplay between these components influences how the primordial fluctuations evolved into the large-scale structures that we observe today. Cosmologists use the term Sigma 8, or S8, to quantify the matter around us. This matter is made up of baryonic particles, such as protons and neutrons, that bunch up in different regions of space. The value of S8 is calculated by studying various regions of the universe. Each region is defined by an astronomical length scale of approximately 26 million light-years. Within these regions, cosmologists count the number of galaxies and other cosmic structures, such as galactic clusters and filaments, to assess the distribution of matter.

A higher value for S8? indicates more clustering with a greater amount of matter clumped together, while a lower value indicates a more uniform distribution of matter. A problem arose when cosmologists used different ways to measure the value of S8 and came up with different estimates. This lack of agreement has come to be called the ‘S8 tension’ in astrophysics. Cosmic-shear surveys Astronomers have conducted galaxy surveys to determine the value of S8. One method involves measuring the distortion in the shape of galaxies as seen from the earth: an effect known as cosmic shear. These distortions occur when starlight passes through a galactic cluster and is bent and amplified by gravitational forces, much like a magnifying glass does. Astronomers use this gravitational lensing to study indistinct epochs in the evolution of the universe. Cosmic-shear surveys help to map the diffusion of matter, including dark

matter, in the universe so cosmologists can deduce the amplitude of matter fluctuations as quantified by S8.

The results of the latest such survey were recently published in the journal Physics by an international team of researchers from the University of Tokyo. They used the Hyper Suprime-Cam (HSC) — a camera installed on the Subaru Telescope in Hawaii — to collect data and came up with a value of 0.747 for S8, which tallies with the values found by previous surveys. “The Subaru HSC survey is one of the deepest wide area surveys of the sky,” Surhud S. More, a co-author of the study and professor of astrophysics at the Inter-University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics in Pune, wrote in an email. He added that the researchers probed matter’s distribution using the gravitational lensing effect down to small scales. “We were able to show that any movement of ordinary matter, such as gas within the large-scale structure of the universe, will not be sufficient to explain the smaller value of the clumpiness which had been found in our previous study.” In other words, the discrepancy in S8 has to do with the dark matter and dark energy that pervades the cosmos. While this reaffirms that all is well with the ΛCDM model, it does not dispel the S8 tension itself: studies like this were based on gravitational lensing to determine the value of S8 to be 0.747, which does not agree with the higher value predicted by data from the CMB.

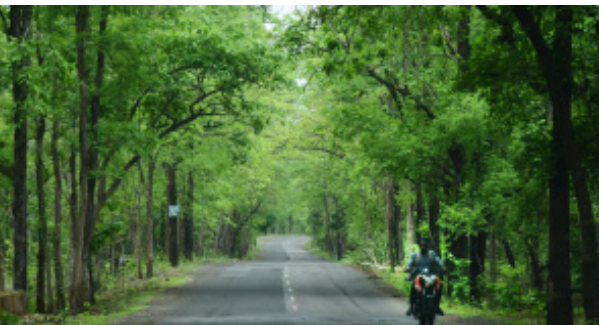
Cosmologists consider the CMB to be a better tool to look back in space and time. They have known for a long time that the surge of primordial matter in the CMB holds clues to the universe’s origins in the form of ‘ripples’ generated by the expanding universe. These ripples resulted in lumps and bumps — future star clusters and galaxies — in the otherwise uniform fabric of space. These telltale galactic signatures were detected in 1992 by NASA’s Cosmic Background Explorer satellite. But with the S8 tension persisting, the ΛCDM model looks to be in need of modification — unless some as yet undiscovered systematics could affect such a conclusion. As Prof. More said, “One of the main difficulties in using deep surveys such as Subaru HSC is our lack of understanding of how fast the galaxies in these surveys are actually receding from us, quantified by the redshift [increase in wavelength] of certain lines in their spectrum. As the millions of galaxies used in these analyses are faint, one cannot analyse the spectrum of light of these galaxies to determine this redshift. This constitutes one of the major uncertainties that still remains unresolved before we start entirely doubting the standard theory of cosmology.” Last year, data from the Dark Energy Spectroscopic Instrument in Arizona in the US suggested that the push of dark energy — represented by the cosmological constant lambda in the ΛCDM model — is weakening and that the universe may actually be decelerating over time. The possibility of dark energy getting weaker means that the pace of expansion of the universe will eventually slow down and may, at some point, even turn negative. In that case, it is not inconceivable that the universe will collapse in on itself in a ‘big crunch’. In any case, the task of updating the ΛCDM model will become easier when the Rubin Legacy Survey of Space and Time (LSST) begins operating later this year. The LSST will launch from the Vera C. Rubin Observatory being built in northern Chile, using its camera — the largest ever built — to peer back in space and time like never before. Who knows what answers this unparalleled wide-field astronomical survey of the universe, wider and deeper than all previous surveys combined, will provide to questions we can’t even imagine now about the mysteries of the universe...

# Expanding tree cover is crucial

As climate change accelerates, tree plantation and carbon sequestration are essential for environmental sustainability. For India, a rapidly growing economy reliant on carbon-intensive industries, expanding tree cover is crucial for mitigating climate change while supporting industrial growth and rural livelihoods. India’s forest and tree cover is 25.17%, significantly below the 33% target set by the National Forest Policy of 1988. This shortfall has serious implications, as deforestation, rapid urbanisation, and industrial emissions continue to degrade ecosystems.

Tree plantations act as natural carbon sinks, absorbing and storing atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO2). However, in India, this sequestration potential needs to be enhanced through large-scale afforestation programmes. Beyond reducing greenhouse gas emissions, increased tree cover improves soil health, recharges groundwater, retains water, reduces soil erosion, and enhances resilience against extreme weather events. Recognising this, India has introduced several policies and initiatives to accelerate afforestation efforts. The National Agroforestry Policy (2014) and the Trees Outside Forests in India Program encourage private landowners, farmers, and industries to participate in large-scale tree planting. They aim to reduce dependence on natural forests for timber and fuelwood, restore degraded ecosystems, and provide additional income sources for rural communities.

The Green India Mission, part of the National Action Plan on Climate Change, has been instrumental in reviving degraded forests and promoting sustainable forest management. According to government data, GIM has helped increase forest cover by 0.56% between 2017 and 2021. Corporate social responsibility initiatives have also contributed to large-scale tree plantation drives. Companies in sectors such as automobile manufacturing, cement, and energy have undertaken afforestation projects to offset emissions. Many corporations are also integrating afforestation efforts into their carbon credit strategies, allowing them to claim emission reductions while restoring ecosystems. Indian industries face growing pressure to reduce their carbon footprint due to stringent international regulations. The European Union’s Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism, set to be enforced in 2026, will impose tariffs on carbon-intensive imports such as steel, cement, and aluminium. As trade between India and the EU reached \$124 billion in 2023, these tariffs could greatly impact Indian exporters. To remain competitive in global markets, industries are increasingly investing in carbon-offset projects, including large-scale tree plantations. Such investments help companies align with global sustainability standards, earn carbon credits under frameworks such as the Verified Carbon Standard and Clean Development Mechanism, and offset emissions in a cost-effective manner instead of purchasing expensive international carbon credits. Sustainability is no longer about regulatory compliance — it has become a strategic advantage. Companies are integrating sustainability into their operations by developing green supply chains, sourcing raw materials from sustainable forestry projects, and implementing energy-efficient manufacturing processes. With global capital markets increasingly favouring environmental, social, and governance principles, Indian industries must adapt to maintain their market position. Tree plantations also offer economic and social benefits. Large-scale afforestation initiatives create millions of jobs, especially in nursery man-



agement, forest conservation, and agroforestry. These are particularly vital for rural communities. Agroforestry, which integrates trees into agricultural systems, is a particularly promising approach. It enhances soil fertility by improving nutrient cycling, provides additional income from timber, fruits, and medicinal plants, and increases resilience to droughts and erratic weather conditions. A study by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research found that agroforestry can increase farm incomes by 20-30%. To support community-led afforestation, government and non-governmental organisations have stepped in to provide financial incentives, training and capacity-building programmes to educate farmers and rural workers, and market linkages to help communities sell forest-based products. These foster a sense of responsibility and ownership. Policy recommendations Despite its benefits, large-scale tree plantation faces several challenges. One is the rising cost of carbon credits. In 2023, the average price of carbon credits under the EU Emissions Trading System was \$3 per tonne of CO2. For Indian businesses, investing in afforestation offers a more cost-effective solution than purchasing expensive carbon credits from international markets. Another challenge is the absence of a robust carbon trading policy in India. To fully capitalise on global carbon markets, India must establish a transparent national carbon credit registry, a well-defined regulatory framework under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, and financial incentives to encourage private-sector investments in afforestation. As India strives to achieve net-zero emissions by 2070, tree plantations and carbon sequestration will be key pillars of its sustainability strategy. The risks of inaction are too high. B.B.L. Madhukar, Chairman, FORE School of Management, and Director General, BRICS Chamber of Commerce and Industry

# Hyderabad man loses Rs 1.6 crore in crypto currency investment fraud

GNS News Agency, May 5

Hyderabad: A man has approached the Cyberabad Cybercrime police alleging he was duped to the tune of Rs 1.60 crore by cyber fraudsters who promised him huge returns for investments in crypto currencies. The 47-year-old private employee from Miyapur told the police that his mobile number was recently added to a Telegram group by unidentified persons, where he was contacted by a woman who claimed to show huge returns for investment in ‘Bitcoin’s and also offered him guidance and tips for the same.

# A graphic novel that brings to life Francis Buchanan’s survey of South India



Dr. Sashi Sivramkrishna’s recently published graphic novel, A Journey into the Furnace of History: The Dying Embers of Ancient Iron-Smelting in India, has an origin story that spans nearly two decades. The kernel for this book, which documents Sashi’s own attempts to retrace the journey of the Scottish physician, botanist and surveyor Francis Buchanan through the erstwhile Mysore State, emerged in the early 2000s when he was working on a documentary on the curse of Talakadu. “It is an interesting story about the Mysore Maharajas combined with two natural phenomena,” says the Bengaluru-based economist and the chairman of the Foundation to Aid Industrial Recovery (FAIR), a not-for-profit society that focuses on helping the country’s under-managed sectors. This 400-year-old curse, which is believed to have been uttered by Queen Alamelamma, the queen of the once-strong but now crumbling Vijayanagara Empire, when the Wadiyars dethroned her husband and took over Mysore, had three parts to it: Talakadu would become a desert, the river Malangi would turn into a whirlpool, and the Mysore Kings would bear no heirs.

Although he is someone who “could not believe that curses come true... I am quite a rationalist”, he thought of investigating this story, going into the project with an open mind. “Wherever we went, in Mysore and places around it, people generally believed in it,” he recalls. And while there appeared to be some anecdotal evidence, with many of the Mysore rulers failing to beget heirs and having to adopt, “it all seemed very confusing,” says Sashi, who researched the subject, with a colleague, for a year and a half, “getting stuck along the way, because there was very little evidence about all this.” In 2005, as part of his research, Sashi visited the library of the Mythic Society on Bengaluru’s Nrupathunga Road, looking through some references, when he came across Buchanan’s three-volume survey titled A Journey from Madras through the Countries of Mysore, Canara, and Malabar, published in 1807. Buchanan, who became a medical officer with the British East India Company in 1794, had been commissioned to survey South India in 1800, following the death of Tipu Sultan and the British’s decisive victory over the Kingdom of Mysore. While going through the survey, he discovered this. “Buchanan had visited Malangi, and he does talk about some curse and states that Talakadu was covered in sand,” says Sashi, who went on to make a film about the curse in 2005. “That was my introduction to Buchanan.”

Sashi then found himself delving deeper into Buchanan’s work, becoming increasingly fascinated by this survey. “Normally, when you look at history, it is about battles and wars,” he says. “But here, Buchanan touches upon people and the day-to-day life in these places. He talks about farmers, agricultural labourers, people weaving blankets, things we don’t usually learn as part of our history education.” That is when he decided that he wanted to trace Buchanan’s journey, travelling back and forth, between Bengaluru and the places chronicled in Journey from Madras through the Countries of Mysore, Canara, and Malabar, trying to understand whether the occupations Buchanan had described continued to exist and in what form. As Sashi, accompanied by other researchers, travelled to places such as Channarayana Durga, Yelladakere, Chikkanayakanahalli and Gattipura, and talked to the people who inhabited them,

they became deeply intrigued by one of the occupations described by Buchanan: iron-smelting. In South India, where iron has been smelted since at least 2000 BCE, going by artefacts at very early iron age sites, they couldn’t help but wonder why the traditional craft of smelting has largely disappeared, says Sashi, who worked with Mahadev Nayak, Amalendu Jyotishi and GJ Lingaraj on this project. “We met people who told us that smelting would happen even in the 1930s and 40s; they remember their grandfathers doing it,” he says, adding that, in India, there is usually a certain continuity of tradition, with things rarely disappearing completely. “So I started looking for answers to why and when iron smelting disappears from this region,” says Sashi, who was involved in this research till 2010 and has published it in several academic journals, including Environment and History and Economic and Political Weekly.

To make his research more accessible and to document his own journey, in 2022, he thought of putting it together into a graphic novel, which eventually became A Journey into the Furnace of History, beautifully illustrated by the Kolkata-based illustrator and a graphic novelist himself, Harsho Mohan Chatteraj. “I got in touch with a friend in Kolkata who introduced me to Harsho, a renowned artist in this space,” he says. They worked together, with Sashi sending him old pictures, and Harsho slowly creating them, panel by panel, he recalls. “I wrote the whole script, having an idea of what it needed to be, panel by panel. I could visualise the novel because I come from a documentary space,” he says of the 210-panel-long novel, which took about two years to create and was officially released in 2024. A Journey into the Furnace of History not only captures Sashi’s journey through the region but also offers insights into Buchanan’s thoughts, perspectives and experiences, and examines the craft, tradition and legacy of iron-smelting. Starting with a description of an encounter with a blacksmith, Marappa, who takes Sashi and his colleagues to an iron-smelting site a little outside Channarayana Durga, the book touches on other fascinating insights about this tradition, including how Tipu Sultan’s ongoing battle with the British upped demand for iron, how tribes like the Asur and Agaria played a massive role in the development of this technology, the origin of the famous Wootz steel or ukku and the surprising relationship between smelting and deformation.

“From these findings, a larger narrative of iron smelting evolved,” states the book’s introduction, pointing out that Indian environmental history has missed the scale and importance of proto-industrial development in South India, viewing medieval economies as agrarian, consisting of self-sufficient villages. And yet, the centrality of a war economy in the feudal period and the need for arms and ammunition were too large to be brushed aside, continues the introduction, which goes on to argue that there is a need to rethink our environmental history by “integrating military and metallurgical history, with elements of anthropology, economics and sociology.” Since iron smelting requires larger amounts of wood to make charcoal, the fuel for the activity, it leads to excessive deforestation, says Sashi, who believes that while many environmental historians attribute the destruction of forests in India to a colonial enterprise, connected to the advent of railways, the reality is a bit more complicated. “Typically, environmental history is not connected to iron and steel, but imagine armies of 50-100,000, carrying a sword, shield... elephants with armour... canons,” he says, pointing out that even making a small cannon would require 1000-1500 tonnes of wood to make. In Sashi’s opinion, there is a desperate need to connect the environment, the military, the social and the political history of the nation, and to reach a larger audience, which the graphic novel attempts to do. “We can write technical or academic papers and get them published, but how many people are interested in reading them?” he asks. Graphic novels, on the other hand, are well suited to convey research and are also very accessible, in his opinion. Besides, he admits, he has personally always loved graphic novels. “I grew up on comics. Superman, Batman, Tintin. Even my knowledge of Indian history started with comics,” he says. “Comics have always been able to communicate with me, so I thought if I made one, I could communicate with others.”

# Breathing life into Vembanad lake



Vembanad, the longest lake in India and the largest in Kerala, is gasping for breath. The 96.5 km-long water body spans the districts of Alappuzha, Kottayam, and Ernakulam and forms part of the Vembanad-Kol wetland system, a Ramsar site. Six major rivers drain into the lake, which accounts for around 30% of the State’s total surface water resource. Over the past century, the lake has shrunk significantly due to human-induced interventions, land reclamation, and natural sedimentation, according to experts. Though vital to the region’s ecology and agriculture, it faces severe threats from pollution, eutrophication, unsustainable agricultural practices, and invasive weed proliferation.

A few years ago, a study by the Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies revealed alarming levels of plastic waste, silt, and other sediments in the lake. According to a recent expert committee report prepared as part of the Vembanad Lake Rejuvenation Project, an ambitious joint effort of the Alappuzha district administration and the Local Self Government Department, the lake’s surface area has shrunk mainly due to land encroachment. Citing previous studies, the report notes that the surface area of the lake diminished by 27% between 1917 and 1990. The drastic reduction in not only area, but also depth, has significantly reduced the lake’s floodwater retention capacity and impaired its critical ecosystem services, including water purification, biodiversity support, and sediment transport. The unchecked proliferation of water hyacinths has further worsened the situation, contributing to dangerously high levels of chemical oxygen demand and biological oxygen demand. As a result, the fish catch has declined by about 66% over the last three decades.

The efforts to rejuvenate the lake are being spearheaded by Alappuzha District Collector Alex Varghese. The

initiative draws “inspiration from the Namami Gange Programme”. It gained momentum on October 28, 2024 when a workshop was held focusing on addressing the challenges of restoring the water body. Eight subcommittees — agriculture, fisheries, water resources, tourism, biodiversity, environment and sanitation, disaster management and climate change, and revenue — were constituted. A ₹188.25 crore comprehensive five-year plan was formulated and recently submitted to Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan. The estimate may be revised based on the detailed study on water resources and irrigation projects being conducted by the Centre for Water Resources Development and Management.

The short-term goals include the removal of plastic waste, construction of bio-shields to protect farmlands, fish ranching, weed eradication, and the construction of 31 bio bunds, each 1 km long in 31 grama panchayats. The long-term targets include dredging the lake bed to increase its water-holding capacity, promoting organic farming to prevent pollution from pesticides and chemicals, conserving the flora and fauna, establishing sewage and faecal sludge treatment plants in flood-prone Kuttanad, manufacturing value-added products from water hyacinth, and boosting tourism and fish yield. While the report is under the State government’s consideration, 28.72 tonnes of plastic waste and a greater quantity of water hyacinth were removed from the lake in recent mega cleaning drives conducted under the aegis of the Alappuzha district administration. Rejuvenating the lake is critical for enhancing the region’s resilience to climate change impacts such as erratic rainfall, sea-level rise, and intensified flooding events. However, it is easier said than done. For instance, houseboats are among the top sources of pollution in the lake. While the report calls for enacting strict laws against unauthorised vessels, previous efforts to rein in illegal houseboat operations have been largely ineffective. Another significant hurdle is land encroachment. The expert committee report notes that reclaiming encroached areas “necessitates strong political support and decisive action.” Since Kuttanad is part of the Vembanad wetland ecosystem, the lake’s restoration should be linked to the revival of the entire Kuttanad region. Coordinated collaboration among various stakeholders, including local communities, district administrations, and different levels of governance, will be key to overcoming these complex challenges and will require support from the Union and State governments.



# Air pollution will lower India’s solar generation capacity: study



A study by researchers at IIT Delhi has found that air pollution and climate change will impair solar panel performance in India. It was published in Environmental Research Letters in November 2024. According to the paper, India is the fifth-largest solar power producer worldwide. The country has set a target to produce 50% of its electric power from non-fossil fuel sources by 2030, and plans to install 500 GW of renewable energy capacity to this end by then. One-fifth of this capacity is expected to be in the form of solar power. India also has plans to develop more solar parks and promote rooftop solar generation. Like other forms of renewable energy sources are, solar photovoltaic energy is at the mercy of weather and climate.

“Accurately assessing future renewable energy resources, particularly solar energy in India, where solar deployment is expanding rapidly, is crucial for ensuring a sustainable and resilient energy future,” Sushovan Ghosh, lead author of the new study, then at the Centre for Atmospheric Sciences at IIT Delhi and now a researcher in the Earth Sciences Department of the Barcelona Supercomputing Centre, said. The study is the first to examine how climate change will affect solar-cell efficiency in India. “Studies of this kind give impetus to the innovations towards mitigating greenhouse gases through the exploration of viable energy alternatives and, more importantly, improvements in photovoltaic cell design,” T.V. Ramachandra, faculty member at the Centre for Ecological Sciences of the Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru, said. India has 300 sunny days a year but their quality is declining due to air pollution. “Solar radiation at the earth’s surface is not stable over time but undergoes significant long-term variations, referred to as global dimming and brightening,” Ghosh said. “This variation depends on atmospheric variables such as clouds, aerosols or particulate matter, water vapour, and radiatively active gas molecules such as ozone. Clouds reflect and aerosols either scatter or absorb incoming solar radiation reaching the surface. Therefore, on a cloudy or hazy day, due to particulate matter pollution, less solar radiation will impinge on the solar panel and reduce solar generation.” Data from CERES The team’s study used data from 1985 to 2014 to predict changes from 2041 to 2050, the middle of the current century. “Given that photovoltaic power plants generally have a lifespan of 20 to 25 years, analysing the 2040s aligns well with the operational lifetime of existing and planned installations,” according to Ghosh. “Beyond this period, the analysis may lose practical relevance.” The team used global cli-

mate models. They tested their models against observations from NASA’s Clouds and the Earth’s Radiant Energy System (CERES) project and the India Meteorological Department. CERES uses instruments in space to measure radiation coming from the earth and thus understand the role of cloud cover in climate change.

The team studied two scenarios. The first included a moderate level of efforts to control air quality and mitigate climate change. The second had weak climate change efforts but strong air pollution control measures. Air pollution blocks solar radiation from reaching solar panels, resulting in less power produced. Rising temperatures due to climate change also lower the efficiency of solar cells. Temperature to blame. The models found that by mid-century, the efficiency of solar panels in India will drop by 2.3% in the second scenario but by a greater amount in the first scenario. Based on current solar power generation levels, this amounts to a loss of at least 840 gigawatt-hours of electricity every year. Losses from temperature were higher in the second scenario, which was expected because of weaker climate action.

“This study, based on radiation data from global climate models, provides vital insights into the likely impact of escalating air pollution on photovoltaic efficiency,” Ramachandra, who wasn’t involved in the study, said. Solar cells perform best under bright sunlight. They also need lower ambient temperature and airflow over them for cooling. Any imbalance in these factors lowers solar cell performance. The study found that solar radiation was the main factor affecting solar-cell efficiency. Temperature came next, followed by ambient wind speed, although it was much less impactful. Cut emissions either way

The study also reported that the temperature of solar cells is expected to rise by 2 degrees C by the mid-century due to higher ambient temperatures. “It is important to distinguish between ambient air temperature and cell temperature, as solar cells can heat up significantly beyond the surrounding air temperature due to solar exposure,” Ghosh said. The researchers also revealed that some parts of India’s northeast as well as Kerala will develop higher solar power potential in time. “This is really interesting. ... This is because the cloud fractions are expected to decrease over these regions,” Ghosh said. According to the paper, the models can help the government and industry players better pick sites for future solar power projects and allocate resources accordingly. According to Ghosh, the study underscores the need to curb climate change and improve air quality. He advocated cutting greenhouse gas emissions in particular, which would mitigate climate change as well as remove particulate matter in the way of sunlight headed for solar panels: “This will help us fully utilise the future solar energy potential and create a path toward building climate-resilient nations.” “At the individual level, public participation is crucial, through the adoption of electric vehicles and the use of public transport to reduce fossil fuel consumption. Tree planting and climate awareness efforts to enhance environmental sustainability are needed,” Ghosh added. “While India has introduced commendable policies, the key challenge lies in accelerating their effective implementation from the ground level to top governance structures.”

# What is Elon Musk’s Starlink all about? | Explained



Bharti Airtel and Reliance Jio have signed distribution pacts with SpaceX Corp.’s Starlink service to bring satellite internet access to India. The distribution pacts are a reversal from the telecom industry’s reluctance to quickly make the Starlink service available in India without auctions for the satellite airwaves.

What is Starlink?  
Starlink is a low-earth orbit constellation of over 7,000 satellites that provide internet access to users with ground terminals, which the Elon Musk-owned SpaceX is already selling in around 40 countries. The satellites constantly orbit the earth, blanketing practically its entire habitable surface with coverage, as long as a given terminal on the ground has visibility to the sky. The service offers speeds of around 100 megabits per second, comparable with many home broadband connections. However, the “latency,” or the time it takes for a given data packet to travel between a user and terrestrial internet networks, is higher than wired broadband connections in offices and homes. Satellites work in conjunction with ground stations on earth, which are physically connected to the internet like any other network and beam up connections wirelessly to satellites above them at any given point. In India, Starlink may not be that useful in cities and towns with good 5G connectivity or wired broadband coverage, as local speeds and reliability will far exceed what a satellite link currently offers, even with technological advancements. However, in rural and remote areas where “terrestrial” networks have not penetrated deeply, Starlink can offer decent connectivity almost instantly.

How much does Starlink cost?  
There are two costs associated with Starlink: the user terminal — essentially a router — required to access the satellite network and the monthly access fee to stay connected. At present, a residential kit in parts of the U.S. costs \$149, while a portable “roaming” kit costs \$349. Import duty, GST and social welfare surcharges applicable on satellite equipment may push up the hardware price by around 30%. Without any introductory pricing on the hardware, the equipment may cost anywhere between ₹17,000 and ₹40,000, not including shipping costs from the U.S., where it is developed and manufactured. Besides this, unlimited residential and roaming plans range from \$120-\$165 in the U.S. It is not a given that this price will be any lower in India, as the cost to provide Starlink service is, by nature of the technology, the same everywhere on earth. Notably, in Bhutan, where Starlink launched this year, it is priced at 4,200 to 8,400 ngultrum, which may be an indication of the Indian price as well. The Bhutanese currency is pegged to the rupee at parity. A higher-priced plan for users on the move, called “mobile priority” is available at 21,000 ngultrum (or therefore rupees) per month and offers priority access in case of network congestion.

# A Dalit community’s generational wait to see god — and the backlash for breaking barriers



On March 12, Santwana Das, 45, climbed the 16 marble steps of the Shiva temple at Gidhagram in West Bengal’s Purba Bardhaman district. Unsure of how to approach the deity in the sanctum sanctorum, Santwana hesitantly looked at the priest performing the rituals, expecting approval. She got none. Instead, he repeatedly signalled for her to leave. But she mustered the courage, came closer to the deity, and sat down on the floor. As four women and a man, dressed in their finest, entered the freshly painted saffron temple, the otherwise quiet rural hamlet of Gidhagram became a fortress with the deployment of more than 100 police personnel. Sub-Divisional Officer (SDO) Ahinsa Jain was overseeing the arrangements. That Wednesday morning was a momentous occasion for Sashti Das, 45, who was among the five to enter the temple, which had been reconstructed in 1997. “This is a moment of joy for us that we got the right to pray to our god after centuries,” she said.

The entry into the temple at 10.03 a.m. marked the fall of generations of institutionalised caste-based segregation. It didn’t however end centuries of caste discrimination which Dalits have been subjected to across India. Attempts at breaking barriers. A young woman, wearing all the respectability-bestowing symbols of marriage, looks on from a distance as the little group enters the temple. “Today they have ruined our temple. All our traditions have been burnt to the ground, after these lower caste people have entered,” she says. Refusing to share her name, she adds that the only reason her caste members were not resorting to violence was due to the “severe pressure from the government and the police”. Another woman breaks down. “Now our temple is destroyed. South and north Indian States also do not allow these groups to enter their temples. Why are we being forced to let lower castes enter? This is unfair and forced on us,” she says. Many ‘upper caste’ residents of Gidhagram fail to fathom the need for this “sudden change”. For those who were able to tide over the caste divide, there was a feeling of joy and a sense of victory. Within Gidhagram lies Daspara, a locality segregated by caste and economics. Daspara, where the Dalits live, has about 130 mud huts; the houses in the rest of Gidhagram, about 800-1,000, are concrete structures, some a couple of storeys high. The Daspara neighbourhood in Purba Bardhaman’s Gidhagram village, where most members of the Dalit community in the area live.

Tensions have prevailed in Purba Bardhaman district since February 24, when the residents of Daspara approached the administration for facilitating their entry into the temple. They wrote to Jain seeking assistance. On February 26, on Sivaratri, a festival honouring Shiva, the Daspara residents were denied entry into the temple despite their appeal. On February 28, the district administration passed a resolution stating, “India is secular country. Caste and religious discrimination are illegal here. Everyone has the same rights. Hence, the Das families are to be allowed into the temple.” The residents of Daspara say that before February 24, before they wrote the letter to the administration asking for entry to the temple, Gidhagram was peaceful. “Once we sent the letter, everything changed,” says Sashti. On March 7, a Friday morning, under heavy police and administrative watch, two women from Daspara climbed the steps of the Gidheshwar shrine. This was the first time since the establishment of the mandir, which locals claim is about 200 years old, that anyone from their community had even entered the temple. People started hurling abuses, running towards the two women with bamboo sticks, threatening violence. The priests of the temple locked the gates, refusing to let the Dalits in. The belief is that contact with the stone image of god could make the place ‘impure’. “We will set you on fire if you enter the temple,” the ‘upper caste’ people reportedly screamed. Everyday casteism. Since they asked to enter the temple, the Daspara families started encountering casteism like never before. Ekkori Das, 50, a petitioner who signed the appeal says, “Our children go to school together, we chat together. Before this, they never called us untouchables to our face.” Everyone could partake of the bhog (food blessed in the temple) outside the premises. Ekkori insists that before February 24, the only discriminatory practice was that the Dalits were forbidden from setting foot in the temple. He adds, “That always felt odd to us. When pujas happen, our children are shooed away and our wives told off, but they never shy away from asking for our monetary contributions for the puja. Why is that?” Sitting cross-legged under a thatched roof, the Das men and women discuss their journey and next steps of action. This thatched mud hut with open sides is the meeting point, a place to discuss ideas and grievances. The children gather around, listening eagerly, wondering what the fuss is about, as the adults look worried about how severe the backlash could be.

The residents point out that the dhakis (traditional drummers) at temple festivities are always from their neighbourhood. They also supply wood from their trees as a traditional practice during the pujas. Dukhiram Das, 70, who has lost most of his teeth, smiles despite the worries. He jokes, “They marry our daughters. They say we have purified her with Ganga jal. It is so funny that they think humans can be purified by sprinkling water on them.” The tension is broken. The 30-odd community members sitting in a half circle laugh. An economic blockade

Most of the Das community of Daspara either supplies milk to the milk centres owned by the ‘upper castes’, or leases out farmland from them to cultivate paddy. “They threatened to burn our crops; they are not letting us supply milk. We now have to travel to far off villages to sell the milk at a lower cost and pay additional transport fee. We are suffering losses,” says Bijoy Das, 22. Bijoy wants to offer prayers at the Shiva temple, because he says it is the biggest in the area. He adds, “We are all Hindus here. Why

can’t we have the same God?” The Daspara residents complain that they are being turned away from buying groceries from nearby stores and have to walk miles to find basic supplies. Many men say the electric rickshaw drivers have also been asked to stay off the road or find new spots for business. All these developments have only started after they raised their voices, they say. The five Daspara residents walk towards the temple. According to locals, the temple is 200 years old, but the Dalits in the area have never been allowed to enter it until March 12. The five Daspara residents walk towards the temple. According to locals, the temple is 200 years old, but the Dalits in the area have never been allowed to enter it until March 12. | Photo Credit: SHRABANA CHATTERJEE Even when his Daspara neighbours climbed the mandir steps to break the shackles of centuries-old casteist practices, Bijoy says the everyday backlash is far from over. On March 12, when history was being made on one side, Bijoy had lost friends from the ‘other side’. He says, “We have been friends for so long. I asked for a phone number this morning, and my friend refused to help. He also said I am never to ask help of his community ever again.”

Challenge for the administration. SDO Jain, who has been talking with people from both Daspara and Gidhagram, says that the whole locality has become sensitive after the Dalits entered the temple. “What they are doing to the Daspara people is illegal in the 21st century. We cannot allow it. But if we use force things can become worse. That is why we conducted multiple rounds of meetings to reason with the villagers and come to a reasonable solution,” Jain says. Multiple meetings were held between February 24 and March 12 to bring about this change.

“As a member of this village, I cannot anger any party. We have to live together,” says Pulak Konar, the deputy pradhan of Gidhagram gram panchayat. As an elected member, Pulak used his relationship with his neighbours to liaison between the communities. He says, “It was like having a foot in different boats at the same time.” Rabindranath Chatterjee, from West Bengal’s ruling Trinamool Congress MLA of Katwa, and a six-time member of the Legislative Assembly rushed to the SDO’s office on March 11 to be a part of the negotiations. The meeting was attended by mandir committee members, Daspara representatives, TMC’s MLA from the Mongalkote Assembly constituency Apurba Chowdhury, the SDO, Block Development Officer, and the Officer In-charge of the Katwa police station. The police were cautious. “Force would have only brought on violence after we left. That is why it is crucial to raise awareness and change people’s minds to bring about bigger change,” Mithun Kumar Ghosh, the Inspector In-charge of the Katwa police station says. Between February 24 and March 12, the police were posted in the village and senior police officers were making regular visits to the neighbourhoods. Police officers stand on guard as the five residents of Daspara enter the temple. The developments at Gidhagram have brought to the fore questions of caste in West Bengal. Ranajit Sur, general secretary of the Association for Protection of Democratic Rights (APDR), a civil and human rights organisation, says “The incident at Gidhagram proves that caste exists in a very crude form in West Bengal.” The activist points out that a similar situation is precipitating at Debogram in Nadia where so-called upper caste people are not allowing Dalits to enter a temple. Meanwhile, faith in a deity and the desire to show up in front of Shiva drives the Dalits of Daspara. Suchitra Das, 30, has a 12-year-old son who is losing his vision. She believes that only god can help.

# TalentSprint launches Generative AI Programme for professionals



Hyderabad: TalentSprint has announced an executive-friendly, four-month Generative AI Foundations and Applications programme. Designed for both emerging and current working professionals, the programme offers cutting-edge AI skills and hands-on experience in the rapidly evolving world of Generative AI. With the Generative AI market projected to reach \$200 billion by 2032 and AI-generated data expected to account for 10% of all data by 2025, industries worldwide are shifting from data analysis to AI-driven content generation, a press release stated. TalentSprint’s GenAI programme covers AI fundamentals to advanced applications and the industry-aligned curriculum includes architectures, prompt engineering, retrieval-augmented generation, AI agents, and operationalizing AI applications, culminating in a real-world capstone project. The programme features 100% live, online interactive sessions led by expert faculty, with a strong emphasis on weekly labs, case studies, and hands-on projects. Participants also gain proficiency in over 10 industry-leading AI tools, equipping them to drive AI innovation in their fields.



# Why SEBI has warned investors against dealing with them



**SEBI Warning Against Trading Platform:** India’s markets regulator, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), has cautioned investors against dealing with ‘opinion trading platforms,’ a new segment in the country’s burgeoning online real money gaming and betting market, which allows users to win money by placing bets on the likelihood of a real-life event taking place. So far, such platforms – which are regulated in countries like the United States – largely went under the regulatory radar in India, but government agencies now appear to be turning their attention towards the sector. And that’s for good reason: the industry has so far raised more than Rs 4,200 crore in funding from over 35 investors which include Sequoia Capital (PeakXV), Elevation Capital, Accel Partners, Soma Capital and Y Combinator.

As per industry estimates, these platforms have registered transaction volumes of over Rs 50,000 crore a year with a user base of more than 5 crore people. Collective revenues for firms in the sector are projected to be over Rs 1,000 crore for the financial year 2024-25.

What are opinion trading platforms?

Opinion trading platforms provide their users or participants a platform to trade or enter into arrangements wherein the payout is dependent on the outcome of a yes/no proposition of happening or not happening of the underlying event. In some cases, opinion trading platforms are designed in a manner so as to resemble an investment platform as they use terminologies such as profits, stop loss, trading etc., terms closely associated with trades in securities. The sector in India has companies like Gurugram-based Probo and MPL Opinio. While the former offers questions on a varied set of sectors like sports, elections and cryptocurrency, the latter only deals with questions related to cricket matches.

How do opinion trading platforms operate?

These platforms allow participants to earn money by investing in their predictions on any sports, political, weather, or crypto events. Participants can bet on any event based on their predictions. If the predictions are correct, a participant makes money, and in case the prediction goes wrong they lose. For example, in a particular state election, an opinion trading platform will give the following option to its participants to bet on – “Will political party X win the election by a margin of N?” The answer will be yes or no. If a participant’s prediction comes out to be correct, they will win the money; and if it is wrong, they lose. Other question themes revolve around the outcome of live cricket matches and other sporting events, how an athlete is going to perform and if they will score a certain number of runs or score a set number of goals, and whether cryptocurrency like Bitcoin will touch a particular figure, among others.

What are SEBI’s concerns?

The markets regulator said that in general, opinion trading does not fall within regulatory purview of SEBI, as what is traded is not security. “Since none of the platforms providing opinion trading can qualify to be recognised stock exchange, and are neither registered or regulated by SEBI, any trading of securities on them is illegal (in case some of the opinions traded qualify as security),” it said. The regulator warned investors or participants that no investor protection mechanism under securities market purview will be available if they invest through such opinion trading platforms. Such platforms are liable to face action for violation in that case, SEBI said. It also advised recognized stock exchanges to initiate appropriate action for violations. The opinion trading sector is regulated across countries like the US, UK and Australia. In the US, Kalshi, the company that started the opinions trading segment – and from which Probo gets a lot of its inspiration from – is regulated by the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC), one the country’s two main stock market regulators. Although, it is worth noting that a similar prediction app called Polymarket has come under the scrutiny of the US Department of Justice allegedly accepting trades from US-based users. The company is not registered with the CFTC and as a result, can not legally allow US-based users to wager on the platform. India’s IT Ministry had come up with amendments to Information Technology Rules to regulate online gaming platforms, which could have had a bearing on firms like Probo. However, there is a question mark on the status of these rules. For now, these laws have no regulatory teeth, which furthers the problem of the legal lacunae that exists around online gaming in general, and opinion trading platforms in particular.

# Pahalgam attack aftermath: India closes airspace for all Pakistani aircraft

India has closed its airspace for Pakistani aircraft, days after a similar move by the neighbouring country in the wake of the Pahalgam terror attack. The Notice to Airmen (NOTAM) communicating this decision, issued on Wednesday evening, states that India’s airspace will not be available for Pakistan-registered aircraft and planes operated, owned, or leased by Pakistani airlines and operators, including military flights. The ban will be in place till the early morning of May 24, as per the current NOTAM. On April 24, Pakistan had closed its airspace for Indian aircraft and airlines after New Delhi’s strong diplomatic moves in response to the terror attack. Pakistan’s move is slated to affect over 800 West-bound international flights a week operated by Indian airlines from Northern Indian airports. These flights now face longer flight times, increased fuel burn, and a few other complexities related to crew and flight scheduling, an analysis of airlines’ schedule data shows.

All these flights were routinely flying over Pakistan on their way to various destinations to the west of India. The initial impact is already visible, with Indian airlines’ flights from North India to West Asia, the Caucasus, Europe, the UK, and North America’s eastern region switching from their routine paths to longer routes. Moreover, a number of Air India’s ultra-long-haul flights to and from North America are now taking technical halts – planned stops for refuelling or crew change – at European airports, breaking the journey of the otherwise non-stop flights. The impact of India’s airspace closure is unlikely to be as significant because, unlike India’s booming aviation sector, Pakistan’s struggling



flag carrier, Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), has a limited international footprint, and that too largely to the west of the country. According to airline schedule data from aviation analytics company Cirium, PIA operates just six flights a week – to and from Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia, from Lahore and Islamabad – that were routinely flying over India. And since tensions between India and Pakistan escalated last week following the terror attack, these flights were avoiding Indian airspace, taking a longer and circuitous route to Kuala Lumpur through the airspaces of China and other South-east Asian countries, as per flight tracking data. The Pakistani flag carrier has not been operating flights to any other country for which it would need to fly over Indian airspace. It does operate flights to China, but those take a northerly flight path, allowing them to enter Chinese airspace from Pakistani airspace directly. No other Pakistani airline operates any flight to the east of the country.

# Term deal for Russian oil off the table for now; US crude purchases to depend on commercial viability, says Indian Oil chairman Sahney

The prevailing geopolitical and geoeconomic uncertainties have evidently shelved a potential term deal for Russian oil that was being pursued by India’s public sector refiners. Government-owned oil refiner Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), which is also India’s largest refiner, is currently not in “any active negotiations” for a term deal with Russian oil majors like Rosneft, according to Indian Oil Chairman Arvinder Singh Sahney. On the question of increasing oil purchases from the US, given that the Donald Trump administration wants to increase American oil and gas exports and India is a major importer of crude oil, Sahney said that all purchase decisions would be purely on commercial basis, and there was no “mandate” for the company to buy more oil from any country. “As of now, we are not in any active negotiations... We are waiting and watching because every day things are changing. Every day the situation on tariffs, the situation on sanctions are changing... So, in these topsy-turvy conditions, I don’t think it is prudent to go in for a term deal with a new player... any new player,” Sahney told reporters in response to a question on the status of term deal negotiations with Russia. The company, however, remains open to inking term contracts with new suppliers, should the conditions allow, he added.

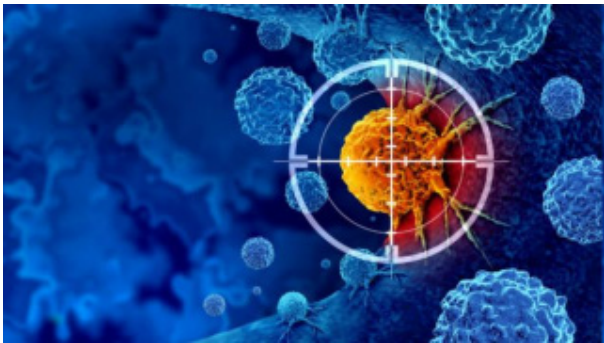
Term oil deals are usually annual supply agreements with fixed volume commitments at a predetermined pricing formula. Such contracts assure buyers as well as suppliers of steady supply and offtake, unlike spot market oil deals that are prone to higher pricing and supply volatility. Spot contracts, as the name suggests, are immediate purchases from suppliers or traders with the shortest-possible delivery cycle. A bulk of oil purchased by India’s public sector refiners—IOC, Bharat Petroleum Corporation (BPCL), and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation (HPCL)—is through term contracts. However, all the Russian oil being bought by these companies is on spot basis. As Russia is currently

India’s largest supplier of crude oil, the public sector refiners were understood to be negotiating a potential term contract for Moscow’s discounted oil. According to industry sources, private sector refining major Reliance Industries had inked a large term deal with Russia’s Rosneft in December 2024. This had led to speculation that the PSUs were also looking to seal term deals for Russian oil. But with fresh and stringent US sanctions hitting Russian oil trade in January this year and with the volatility in geoeconomic circumstances since Donald Trump took charge as US President later that month, the hopes of a term deal appear to have been dashed, at least for the time being.

India is the world’s third-largest consumer of crude oil and depends on imports to meet over 85 per cent of its requirement. From being a marginal oil supplier to India prior to the war in Ukraine, Russia is now India’s biggest supplier of crude, thanks to Moscow offering oil at significant discount after the West started shunning Russian oil. In 2024, Russian oil accounted for nearly 38 per cent of India’s total oil imports, per tanker data.

As for American crude, there has been speculation that India’s public sector refiners could be nudged by the government to increase imports of US oil. Sahney, however, said that there was no mandate for IOC to increase American oil purchases. This is not the first instance when Sahney has said so. In an interview with The Indian Express in February, he had said that IOC would be open to buying more American oil if it is commercially viable and competitively priced. The US is India’s fifth-largest source of crude oil imports, behind Russia, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. “There is also potential to increase imports of American crude, especially for Indian Oil, as our refineries are very versatile. We have 10 refineries and they have different feed (crude oil) requirements.

# Lancet study shows drug resistance three times higher in cancer patients: What are risk factors?



Infections caused by drug-resistant bacteria are the second leading cause of death in cancer patients, according to a new study published in The Lancet Oncology. Researchers analysed over 1.5 million pathogens (including over 50,000 from patients with cancer) and found that counts of different antimicrobial-resistant bacteria were between 1.2 and three times greater in outpatients with cancer. The study is significant because it is the first large multi-centre study to quantify AMR bacteria in outpatients with cancer in the US. The bacteria was isolated from adults aged 18 and older, with and without cancer, at 198 outpatient facilities.

The authors have highlighted that the higher counts of AMR bacteria in outpatients with cancer may be due to the use of antibiotics they received during chemotherapy. Study co-author and Fellow of the Infectious Diseases Society of America (FIDSA) Vikas Gupta, says AMR is a growing global health crisis. “Given the rising rates of AMR globally, more specifically in India, and the increasing drug resistance in vulnerable cancer populations, there should be careful consideration about antibiotic stewardship. This means optimising the use of antibiotics, maximising their efficacy while minimising their harm. Additionally, surveillance ef-

forts to quantify AMR among the cancer-affected population must be undertaken because cancer incidence is projected to increase,” he says. What the study says Data was collected between April 1, 2018, and Dec 31, 2022. Across all evaluated pathogens, outpatients with cancer had significantly higher AMR rates per 1,000 pathogen isolates for P aeruginosa and Enterococcus spp compared to non-cancer outpatients. The results are not unexpected for Dr Abdul Ghafur, consultant in infectious diseases, Apollo Hospital, Chennai and coordinator of the Chennai Declaration on AMR (not attached with the study). “Cancer patients are at a higher risk because they visit hospitals and healthcare facilities much more frequently than non-cancer patients — before the diagnosis, during the diagnostic process, and later for chemotherapy, radiotherapy, outpatient visits and multiple admissions. With each hospital visit, each admission, and each infection episode, the exposure to antibiotics increases. Naturally, more infections require a higher antibiotic exposure, which means a higher risk of developing drug-resistant bacterial infections,” he says.

In cancer patients, the AMR crisis is not a “silent pandemic” but a very visible, overt pandemic. Since patients are immune-compromised, infections have more severe consequences. “At our cancer centre, approximately 20% of E. coli and 40–50% of Klebsiella isolates are carbapenem-resistant. Mortality is notably higher in cancer patients infected with drug-resistant bacteria compared to those infected with drug-susceptible strains. This trend holds true in both cancer and non-cancer patients,” says Dr Ghafur, arguing for a well-designed antibiotic policy at the hospital level to reduce mortality.

He also argues for a detailed data collection from patients to formulate an antibiotic use policy. “In cancer patients, antibiotic therapy must begin without delay — there is no time to wait. “With the right data, one can make an informed choice to improve patient outcomes,” he adds.

# Chennai’s HIIT dance routine helps adolescent girls beat obesity: Why a new study has lessons in preventive health

Thirty-nine-year old Sujatha, a homemaker in Chennai, simply loves dancing to Prabhudeva’s “Vikkalu Vikkalu.” Inspired by her daughter, she doesn’t miss this 10-minute dance workout based on High-Intensity Interval Training (HIIT) on Fridays. “The fast calorie burns and a variety of stretches have improved my flexibility,” she says. Meanwhile, these short dance sessions have not only kept 15-year-old Sarah Michelle energetic despite long hours at school and coaching classes, they have also increased her muscle mass, lowered her appetite for junk food and improved her sleep.

A study has demonstrated the benefits of a new fitness routine called THANDAV, (Taking High-Intensity Interval Training [HIIT] And Dance to Adolescents for Victory over Non-communicable Diseases [NCDs]). This was devised by Dr Ranjith Anjana Mohan of the Madras Diabetes Research Foundation and first tested among 23 girls, aged between 10 and 17, to see if it could neutralise sedentary behaviour among school-going adolescents and improve their metabolism with a fun and crisp routine. Subjects reported that this short- burst activity was not only easy to fit into school schedules but could keep their weight in check. To validate this finding further, she conducted trials across two schools in Chennai with 108 girls aged between 13 and 15. One school did the THANDAV while the other served as a control. Over a 12-week period, the girls in the THANDAV group could increase their daily step count by 1073 steps, reduce their body fat by 2% and improve muscle mass. Additionally, participants reported significant reductions in both systolic and diastolic blood pressure, along with a drop in resting heart rate by 3 bpm (beats per minute).

What is THANDAV?

This involves short bursts of intense activity followed by cooldown time — with dance moves set to popular songs from Bollywood, Mollywood and Tollywood. Doing this thrice a week for even 10 minutes gives you all the metabolic benefits of running 60 minutes a day every day of the week. HIIT regimens have been proven to significantly reduce body fat mass, weight and improve cardiovascular fitness in both adults and adolescents. The 10-minute HIIT routine consists of four loops to be done on four hit tracks, including a two-minute high energy (80-90 per cent heart



rate) to 30-second low cooldown (50-60 per cent heart rate) moves. The movements are choreographed in a simple and repetitive manner so that they can be done in a loop without much stress. “While we had seen weight loss before, this time the major takeaway was an increase in muscle mass, essential for foundational health that can prevent chronic illnesses in adult years. Besides, this intervention is easy to stick to and prevents childhood obesity and diabetes. It can be accommodated even between exam schedules when students tend to negotiate physical activity. That’s why one in four teens is obese,” says Dr Anjana. But what impressed her the most was this fitness routine resulted in positive behavioural changes in the girls. “They reduced junk food intake, ate more at home, cut down their sitting hours by almost 200 minutes and increased the sleep duration by almost 47 minutes. The benefits of lifestyle correction at this age can cascade into adult years,” she adds. According to study authors, Type 2 diabetes occurs at younger ages in Indians compared to Caucasians. In fact, adolescents make up 14.2% of Type 2 diabetics. That’s why regular physical activity becomes even more important for Indian teens. Currently, around 25.2 per cent of adolescents do not meet moderate-to-vigorous physical activity guidelines, with urban residents (38%) and girls (29.3%) being less likely to be active. “Girls have to face many cultural and societal barriers but this routine blends seamlessly into their lives. They can even do this at home,” says Dr Anjana. The programme, which has already benefited over 10,000 women and girls since its launch in October 2023, has the potential to be scaled widely across schools and communities.

# This cancer drug helped patients recover without chemo or surgery: Why this US immunotherapy trial holds out hope

Imagine needing no surgeries, experiencing none of the side-effects that come with chemotherapy or radiation, and being able to have a healthy baby afterwards — this was the experience of patients with rectal cancer who received a novel immunotherapy as part of a phase II clinical trial at US’ Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Centre. Nearly 80% of all the trial participants — and all rectal cancer patients — showed great results with the immunotherapy drug, dostarlimab, and did not have to undergo surgery, chemotherapy or radiation. This is significant considering that these conventional treatments for cancer patients, especially those with rectal cancers, can lead to life-altering consequences such as incontinence, need for a colostomy bag (a bag for passing faeces from an alternate opening), and infertility. Three of the 117 trial participants were able to conceive and deliver babies.

The study enrolled 117 patients with cancers that had a specific mutation — 49 with rectal cancers and 54 with other solid cancers such as oesophageal, stomach, colon, and prostate among others. Among the 54 patients with cancers other than rectal, 35 were found to be cancer-free after treatment. And, only two of the patients needed any surgical intervention. Even in the patients who did end up needing surgery, the tumour shrunk and sometimes even at a lower stage, according to the researchers. The response of the drug was long-lasting with recurrence-free survival at two years at 85%. When it comes to patients with rectal cancer, the drug worked like a miracle. All 49 patients were found to be cancer-free after treatment. None of the patients needed to undergo surgery. The recurrence-free sur-

vival at two years for this group was even higher at 96%. This therapy is not meant for all types of rectal or other solid-tumour cancers — it can work only for “mismatch repair deficient” cancers. Mismatch repair is a process which helps cells to keep a check on errors made while copying the genetic data from one to the other. A mismatch repair deficiency leads to errors going unrepaired, a higher number of genetic mutations and cancers. Up to 10% of the rectal cancers and solid tumour cancers could be mismatch repair deficient. Immunotherapies can regulate the checkpoint — a protein that decides the response of various immune cells. Dostarlimab acts on the protein PD-1 — or Programmed Cell Death-1 — to block its functioning. This protein, among other things, suppresses the activity of immune T-cells. So the drug prevents the immune system from engaging the brakes on the T cells.

Why are the findings significant?

Therapies such as this ensure minimal damage to cells other than the cancerous ones and offer a personalised regime. Importantly, this study shows that in cancers with particular mutations, immunotherapy may be enough to treat the patients. At present, the immunotherapy drug is used alongside other treatments. This will minimise the damage to other organ systems and complications.

What are the challenges?

While the medicine is already available and in use in India — albeit alongside other treatments — the cost is one factor that keeps it out of reach for most. Each dose of the drug can cost as much as \$ 11,000.



## Can Arsenal come back against PSG in the UEFA Champions League?



GNS News Agency, May 5

Arsenal vs PSG Champions League PSG's Fabian Ruiz, left, controls the ball past Arsenal's Leandro Trossard during the Champions League semifinal first leg soccer match between Arsenal and Paris Saint-Germain at Emirates Stadium in London, England,

Can the Gunners come back ?

A one-goal arrear is not unsurmountable. PSG's historic tendency to crumble in clutch moments and their own resoluteness to fight back from the brink would infuse comeback ambitions. But there are multiple impediments

Where do the goals arrive?

Even without a centre forward or a phalanx of goal-happy forwards, Arsenal mustered to score the fourth-most goals in the league. A diverse range of the cast has provided the strikes, yet they have sorely missed the laser-eyed precision of a natural goal-scorer. To compound their woes, PSG's goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma was infallible at the Emirates. But somehow, if they manage to beat him and score a goal, PSG's back-line could creak, and in front of the baying home crowd, they could melt. Arsenal's likeliest avenue seems the set-piece, an art they

had super-specialised, and where PSG seems a fraction susceptible. Arsenal have a clear height advantage and clever movements inside the box to make the dead-ball swipes count.

How to stop Kvaratskhelia?

The Georgian, with the fleetest of feet and quickest of wits, was the best player on the field in the first leg. A supreme technician, he troubled Jurrien Timber, the right back, with both pace and trickery, ghosted through heavily guarded mazes without putting even a strand of hair out of place. His outside of the boot passes took some getting used to for the Arsenal defenders, as he assisted a goal, hatched several chances and nearly won a penalty. Not just in the attacking front, his interceptions and pressing helped PSG when defending too. His quietest period—towards the end of first half and the start of the second—was the times Arsenal buzzed. Towards the end, Timber seemed to get a gauge on Kvaratskhelia, but was still far from comfortable with him. Sadly, there are not many alternatives either. Ben White briefly returned and could offer more attacking impetus, but is prone to making rash challenges.

How to control the midfield?

Marshalled by the immaculate Vitinha, the midfield trio of PSG, Fabian Ruiz and Joao Neves as his comrades, bossed Declan Rice and Co. They outmuscled and out-thought them, worked harder and showed more intelligence. Arsenal suffered from the absence of Thomas Partey, whose absence due to suspension forced Rice to assume a more withdrawn role, depriving them of cutting edge. Partey would return for the second leg and invariably bolsters Arsenal's midfield, but they would require immense work rate to overshadow Vitinha and friends'. Disrupting the midfield balance is essential to destabilise PSG's structure, which dishevelled the Arsenal's press and pushed them onto the back foot for most of the game.

## Rohit Sharma on his Test batting: 'All written in destiny; happy with my Test cricket record'

GNS News Agency, May 5

Rohit Sharma, MCG, India's captain Rohit Sharma watches the ball after playing a shot during play on the last day of the fourth cricket test between Australia and India at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, Melbourne, Australia. The big question in Indian cricket is whether Rohit Sharma will continue to play Test cricket. India are set to tour England for a 5-Test series in June and Rohit's recent record in Test cricket has been poor. He struggled on the tour of Australia, averaging just 6.20 in 5 innings and also dropped himself for a Test. In the Test series prior to that, against New Zealand at home late last year, he averaged just 15.16 in three Tests.

But it's clear that Rohit intends to play the Test series in England. He had already indicated as much in a chat with Michael Clarke a couple of weeks ago where he talked about his hope that both Mohammad Shami and Jasprit Bumrah would be injury-free and be fresh for the England series. In a latest chat, he spoke about the England series and also about his Test batting career in general. "I haven't thought much about the England tour yet. IPL is going on now. We want to win the IPL. My thoughts are all about this. I have said before also, focus on what's going on now. I believe in that," Rohit said in a chat on journalist Vimal Kumar's YouTube channel. Rohit averages 40.57 from 67 Tests. That drops to 31.01 in Tests outside India. He averages 24.38 in Tests in Australia and 16.63 in Tests in South Africa but the average jumps to 44.66 in Tests in England, where India play next. As an opener, he averages nearly the same (44.54) in Tests in England.

When he was asked whether he is satisfied with his overall performances in Test cricket — the obvious reference being that he has performed much better in white-ball cricket, Rohit turned philosophical. "As long as you play a sport, you will never be happy with the performances! I am happy with what god has given me rather than think about



why I didn't do this, that. It's all written in the destiny — you will get this amount. Whatever I do, I am going to get only this. I don't want to be hyper self critical with Test cricket; I am happy with what I have done," Rohit said. "You don't have to live to keep other people's expectations; it's about what you want. What the world thinks expects doesn't matter as they are not part of my journey. No one knows how I have dealt with training, handled ups and downs in my life, no one apart from your close ins don't know about. I don't keep unreal expectations, it's simple and it's my expectations." In the last two years, he has led India to the ODI world cup final in 2023, and won the Champions Trophy and T20 world cup. But on the downside, he was the captain when New Zealand achieved a historic whitewash, winning all three Tests in India, and also led the team in Australia where they lost 1-3. Asked if the captaincy pressures and recent criticism has affected his personality, Rohit said: "I have understood the system: when you do well, the reaction is too much and same when you don't do well. Too much on both times. What can I do about this? Just go with it. If you don't do well., get ready for criticism. I am not saying one shouldn't criticise but you have to be mindful of criticism. Just that it shouldn't be personal and should not have any agenda. One who is sensible knows how to criticise."

## Tyrese Haliburton's father, Giannis Antetokounmpo clash after Pacers hand Bucks first round exit

GNS News Agency, May 5

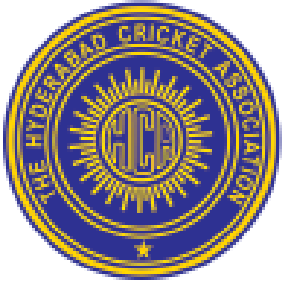
NBA Playoffs Milwaukee Bucks forward Giannis Antetokounmpo, left, is separated from Indiana Pacers players forward Obi Toppin, second from right, and guard Bennedict Mathurin, right, after Game 5 of an NBA basketball first-round playoff series in Indianapolis. In the first round of the NBA Playoffs, the Indiana Pacers took down the Milwaukee Bucks 4-1 with the final game in the series ending 119-118 for the Pacers. In the final moments of the game, Pacers' guard Tyrese Haliburton scored the winning bucket over Bucks' franchise player Giannis Antetokounmpo. After the moment when the players were shaking hands, Haliburton's father was caught on camera having a confrontation with Antetokounmpo.

After the match, the Greek centre was asked about his version of events. "At the moment I thought he was a fan," Antetokounmpo said. "But then I realised it was Tyrese's [father]. I love Tyrese. I think he's a great competitor. [But] it was his dad ... Coming in the floor and showing me his son, a towel with his face, [and saying], 'This is what we do. This is what we F-ing do. This what the F we do.' I feel like that's very, very disrespectful," said Giannis on his take of the incident. The former NBA MVP and NBA Champion admitted that he felt very disrespected by Haliburton's father coming towards him and celebrating in



his face the way he did. "I'm happy for him, I'm happy for his son, and I'm happy that he's happy for his son," Antetokounmpo later added. "That's how you're supposed to feel. But coming to me and disrespecting me and cursing at me I think is totally unacceptable, totally unacceptable." After the incident, Haliburton said he spoke to his father and agreed that what transpired was wrong. John Haliburton then went on Instagram and posted an apology to Giannis for his actions. "I sincerely apologize to Giannis, the Milwaukee Bucks and the Pacers organization for my actions following tonight's game," John Haliburton posted on social media. "This was not a good reflection on our sport or my son and I will not make that mistake again."

Nizamabad – Rural. Armoor, Kamareddy, Mancheri, Adilabad, Sirpur, Thandoor, Chennur, Mahabubnagar, Gadwal, Jachchela, Narayanpet, Nagarkurnool, Sangareddy, Medak, Siddipet, Zaheerabad, Gajwel, Khammam, Kothagudem, Gowthampur and Palvanah,.



## Rohit Sharma explains why his parents don't come to the stadium for his games



GNS News Agency, May 5

Rohit Sharma's wife and his daughter are often spotted in the stands during his games to egg him on. But the Indian captain's parents have rarely ever been spotted in the stands watching their illustrious son playing for either Team India or for the Mumbai Indians franchise, which he has led to five IPL titles. In a recent interview, Rohit Sharma explained why his parents rarely ever make an appearance at his games. "Usually they prefer watching matches from home because they get too nervous at stadiums," Rohit said in an interview with journalist Vimal Kumar. "They don't like leaving the house too much."

Rohit Sharma revealed that despite their reluctance,

there were two special occasions in his career where he had managed to persuade his parents to come to the ground. One of those two times was when he captained India for the first time against Sri Lanka at the Wankhede in 2017. He also added that the second time he had managed to convince his parents to come to the Wankhede Stadium, it was an even more special occasion. "I told them that when a stand with my name is inaugurated at the Wankhede Stadium, they have to come and sit in it," Rohit Sharma said. The Mumbai Cricket Association decided to honour the 38-year-old with a stand in his name at the Wankhede, renaming the Divecha Pavilion Level 3 stand. Rohit also spoke at length about the MCA naming a stand at the Wankhede after him. "When people call me 'The King of Mumbai,' I genuinely appreciate it. It's their love, and I don't take it for granted. I never thought I'd come from where I did and reach a place where people say that about me. A stand being named after me at Wankhede—it was emotional. That ground is everything to me. I wasn't even allowed inside it as a kid. 20+ years ago, we weren't allowed to enter. And now, to have a stand in my name—that's huge. Wankhede is where I've grown. I've practiced, I've struggled, I've been scolded there. It's emotional. Playing there always feels different. The fans love cricket. They even cheer for foreign players like Warner or Smith. Because Mumbai fans love good cricket—that's the legacy of Mumbai cricket," he said.

## Sunil Narine, no longer a mystery spinner but still a match winner

GNS News Agency, May 5

The day before the IPL auction of 2012, KKR captain Gautam Gambhir made only one demand to the team management. "Even if you buy just one player make sure it's Sunil Narine." The management was initially skeptical, given the tendency of mystery spinners to fade away once the batsmen decoded them. "We had all seen him in the Champions League the year before and there was an element of mystery about him, but some of us still had doubts. But he kept calling me and repeated the same line," assistant coach Vijay Dahiya had told this newspaper.

Like fireflies, they dazzle by the night and fizzle out by dawn. But Gambhir was so insistent on the Trinidadian, they eventually shelled out 10 fold his base prize and swooped him, just to please him. In the next 13 years, Narine not only vindicated the unshakeable faith of his captain, but also has emerged as the club's evergreen totem, arguably its most prolific cricketer, agelessly evolving with time, ceaselessly reinventing with the altering tunes of the game. So much so that he had exceeded Gambhir's own estimations of the shy boy, who just kept smiling and nodding in his first few weeks with the franchise. Gambhir, in a promotional event, recently waxed eloquent on him: "He taught me about sacrifices. He has gone through in his jersey which no cricketer would ever go through. I have seen his fears and insecurities and how he has bounced back and emerged as the greatest bowler in the IPL." Numerous times was he reported for suspect action, banned from the Champions League final of 2013, he remodelled his action, shut his ears to the barbs about his allegedly "bend" arms, forsook the variations that made him an overnight sensation, revamped his craft, from the run-up to release, to such an indistinguishable degree that he is an entirely different bowler to the one that Gambhir first cast his eyes on. He has shed the mohawk, budgeted the gold chains and amulets, and eschewed the repertoire of twinkling variations. A wild goatee has sprouted. A tattoo on the neck has sprung.

Yet, he continues to decide matches. At Kotla against Delhi Capitals, the team's playoff hanging by a slim thread, he struck 27 off 16 balls, equally edgy and thrilling, snaffled three wickets for 29 runs, and effected the run out of KL Rahul, the hosts batting mainstay, with a direct hit. His form has fluctuated this season — only 178 runs and 10 wickets — but when KKR found themselves on the precipice, Narine planted the kiss of life. The most fascinating narrative arc of his career though has been how he has simplified himself to such an extent that he has stripped the game to its basics. His batting could fall into the tail-enders' happy slog, all heaves, slashes and swipes. There is little pretence of convention, even though his slender frame and overlarge helmet betray his lower-order forebears. He judges the lengths, decides the shot and just swings the blade through a clean, firm line. The simplicity — and its success — makes bowlers over-think. Like the one-handed slug off Dushmantha Chameera, where his bat, coming down from a classically Caribbean high back-lift, suddenly gained speed when the ball approached him. First he betrays an impression that he is a trifle late on the ball, before his hands gain sudden speed and he has too much time to hoist the ball



into the stands.

The methods have fetched him 1,712 runs, but more than three-fourth of those runs had arrived from 2017, when he began to open. As much as the runs, the pace of scoring had mattered more. His strike rate of 166.70 is better than his compatriot Kieron Pollard's (147), Australian Glenn Maxwell (155) and just beneath fellow Knight Andre Russell (173). But add to his tally 208 wickets — the most for a single franchise, level with Nottinghamshire's Samit Patel — and he is undoubtedly one of the finest all-rounders in the league. In the three titles his club won, Narine's haul read 488 runs and 17 wickets (2024), 24 (2012) and 21 (2014) scalps. He is the fourth highest wicket-taker in the league too, the only one with an economy rate (6.77) of less than seven in top-10. Few though would have purchased wickets with as many varied tools as Narine has. In the nascent days, the carrom ball stung, in the mid-phase, the flippers and sliders wreaked havoc, and in the autumnal bloom, straighter ones, off breaks and off-cutters instigated the damage. The old toy makes an occasional cameo, as Faf du Plessis discovered. It's a different version, floatier and slower, the ball stopping than fizzing. An over-spun off-cutter consumed Axar Patel while an off-break that spat distorted the stumps of Tristan Stubbs.

The Kotla haul captured the essence of his bowling these days. As though he were on a self-demystification journey. He ambles in from a three-step run up, like reaching for a cup of coffee in the morning. The bowling arm is hidden behind the torso, just to create a make-belief air of mystery, and then loops the ball into the batsman. The ball does nothing fantastical after landing. Most of them are loopy off-breaks that turn a smidgeon. Sporadically, for old times' sake, he flicks a carrom-ball. The Narine of sliders and flippers, the leg-break and the wrong ones, with a beautiful bag of deception, seems a lonely planet, a fragment of a memory. His deceit is more nuanced than nerve-bursting. This could be his story too — the mystery spinner who became a semi-orthodox off-spinner. He resorts to more conventional methods — shuffles the angles, mixes the pace, alters the degree of his loop, uses the depth and breadth of the crease, plays with the batsman's mind, and relies on natural variations. Precision and accuracy — which were his virtues in the mystery days too — are more pronounced. And more than a decade later, Gambhir's insistence on Narine the day before the auction of 2012 continues to pay rich dividends.

## 'It has to sit up there with the greatest achievement': Michael Vaughan on Vaibhav Suryavanshi's feat of youngest T20 centurion

GNS News Agency, May 5

It has been a week since Vaibhav Suryavanshi became the youngest cricketer to hit a T20 hundred with his knock of 101 runs against Gujarat Titans last week. With the record coming up at the age of 14 years and 32 days for the Rajasthan Royals cricketer, former England captain Michael Vaughan has termed it being 'one of the greatest achievements in cricket'. Vaughan also reassured the term used for Suryavanshi across the cricketing circle calling the youngster 'Boss Baby'. "Boss Baby. That's what we are calling him everywhere. I am up for the debate. Where does this stand in cricket? I know when you look at Brian Lara's 400. That's incredible. Then there is Stuart Broad's eight wicket-haul at Trentbridge. Incredible. I am sure of some of the bowling performances too which I must have forgotten. He has to sit up there with the greatest achievement. 14-year-old. My number one moment has to be him hitting the six off his first ball a couple of games ago. A game or two later, he smacks a hundred. The second fastest hundred in IPL has been hit by a 14-year-old. So this has to be the moment," Vaughan told Club Prairie Fire podcast on Youtube. Suryavanshi had also hit the second-quickest century in IPL history only to be behind Chris Gayle record of an IPL century in 30 balls. Suryavanshi also matched the record of most sixes by an Indian batsman in an IPL innings apart from having the highest boundary percentage in a T20 century with 94 runs in his century coming through



sixes and fours. When asked about whether the BCCI would think about taking Suryavanshi to England for the five-Test series, Vaughan shared that it can wait. "India plays that much white-ball cricket that it can overlap with the Test team at times. There will be opportunities. My advice would be, do not rush him. Just let him play. IPL is a lot of pressure enough, just let him enjoy it for a while. We are all going to see him play for India, it's just a case of whether he will be 14, 15, or 16. I've a feeling he will probably beat Sachin's record to play for India. But I wouldn't be rushing him," added Vaughan. Former Australian wicket-keeper Adam Gilchrist, who holds the record of being the oldest cricketer to hit an IPL century at an age of 39 years and 184 days, also praised the young star and agreed with his knock being the greatest achievement in cricket. "



## How many times will Saif Ali Khan facilitate the destruction of Bollywood (after restoring it)?



Many years ago, Netflix announced a grand prequel series to SS Rajamouli's landmark Baahubali films. A cast was assembled and paraded before the press in Singapore; the series was even given a title: Baahubali: Before the Beginning. It was filmed at Ramoji; people were taken on tours of the set. But the final show was deemed unworthy of Netflix's server space, and, in an admirable display of creative integrity, it was decided that the project be revamped before being shown to the world. A new creative team was brought on board, and the entire thing was redone with a different cast. Remarkably, even the 2.0 version failed to meet Netflix's high standards — we are, after all, talking about the same streamer that nodded in approval when presented with Jewel Thief: The Heist Begins — and the mega-budget project, on which hundreds of crores had already been spent, put out of its misery.

Imagine how bad the Baahubali show must've been to be buried by a platform that thought stuff like Mrs Serial Killer, Maharaj and Nadaaniyan was fit for consumption. It isn't the only thing that Netflix has pulled the plug on, by the way. One of contemporary Bollywood's biggest unsolved mysteries — other than Amitabh Bachchan's decision to distance himself from Brahmastra — revolves around the (completed) Abbas-Mustan project Penthouse. Nobody, not even cast member Cyrus Broacha, knows what happened to it. They even released promotional stills. The nation wants to know. The nation probably also wants to know why they couldn't just cancel Jewel Thief as well. The movie marks a full-circle moment for the Hindi film industry; one of those 'water finds its level' situations. And Saif Ali Khan would know exactly what's happening; he's been here before.

He was, of course, the star of Netflix's first original streaming series out of India, Sacred Games. Those were the days. How full of hope we were. How excited Anurag Kashyap was. But then, only two years later, our favourite Nawab headlined the Prime Video show Tandav, which changed everything. While the show could've cratered the Andheri-Goregaon area through sheer terribleness alone, Tandav destroyed the streaming industry for entirely different reasons. What was once seen as a haven for ambitious storytellers, a place where everybody could get paid a fair wage for pushing creativity in the right direction, turned into a hopeless hellhole where ideas go to die. Which brings us to Jewel Thief, a movie that truly embodies the current state of the Hindi film industry. Not only does it take Jaideep Ahlawat — the single biggest star that Indian streaming has produced — and reduce him to a dancing meme, the movie seems to cater to the exact opposite crowd that Netflix was supposed to have cultivated. Jewel Thief isn't merely a reflection of the state that Bollywood finds itself in, it's a reflection of what Bollywood thinks of you, the viewer. You aren't capable of appreciating films like Masaan and The Disciple, it seems to be saying; heck, you aren't even capable of appreciating Gangs of Wasseypur or The Lunchbox

## Jackky Bhagnani says his family mortgaged properties to produce Bade Miyan Chote Miyan: ‘Nobody can understand our pain’

When the Akshay Kumar and Tiger Shroff-starrer film Bade Miyan Chote Miyan was released back in 2024, it made a lot of noise for its whopping reported budget of Rs 400 crore. However, the film failed to resonate with the audience and couldn't even reach its break even point. According to industry tracker Sacnilk, the film earned just Rs 111.49 crore worldwide in 56 days of its theatrical run. Bade Miyan Chote Miyan's failure was also notable, with several members of the film's crew alleging non-payment of dues from Vashu Bhagnani's Pooja Films. The producer filed an FIR against film's director, Ali Abbas Zafar, for alleged financial fraud and mismanagement of funds. Around the same time, it was also reported that Vashu Bhagnani had sold Pooja Films' Mumbai office to repay a debt of Rs 250 crore. Now, Vashu Bhagnani's son, actor-producer Jackky Bhagnani, has opened up about the film's failure. In an exclusive conversation with SCREEN, Jackky revealed his family had to mortgage their properties to make the film. Speaking about the film's failure, Jackky said, "For me, it has been a huge learning. We invested a lot of money and I realised that just scale is not good enough. Somewhere, we felt that the content that was made didn't resonate with the audience at all. The public is always right. If didn't resonate then I have to go back to the drawing board and understand why did this piece of content didn't resonate with the audience. I have to take that with a pinch of salt and not make that mistake in the future." Addressing the controversies around the film, the actor-producer shared, "I would like to say that the returns are not even less than 50%. I don't think anyone can understand what our pain was." He further revealed, "As a family, we have mortgaged our properties to make this film. We realise that there is no point in saying anything or speaking anything." Without taking Ali Abbas Zafar's name, Jackky shared, "We invested with faith hoping a good piece of content is made and the audience will like it. The honest truth is all of this is noise, if the film did well, no controversy would have happened. It is not my nature to take sides but all I would like to say is it was tough times and it is very important that we should all be very conscious of each other's money." The film, also starring Prithviraj Sukumaran, Manushi Chhillar,

any more. This what you deserve. It's like Kunal Kapoor's cop character in Jewel Thief. In a regular movie, he'd have been a laughing stock for his ineptitude. But because Jewel Thief surrounds him with a couple of actual morons, he seems smarter by comparison.

That's how Bollywood works. That's how movies like Stree 2 and Chhaava get a pass. We've been so conditioned to accept absolute garbage, the minute we see something that displays the bare minimum of competence, we make it a mega-hit. Before joining hands with his son to destroy every last morsel of originality that this town had remaining, Saif went through a similar cycle in the theatrical space, not once but twice. He was, after all, a crucial part of generation-defining films such as Dil Chahta Hai and Omkara — these movies genuinely altered the course of the industry. But then, he also headlined Tigmanshu Dhulia's Bullett Raja and Sajid Khan's Humshakals. In Jewel Thief, he plays Rehan, a suave man who has been disowned by his dad for his career choices. You can't really blame uncle; no self-respecting middle-class Indian father would approve of their first-born becoming a 'chor'. Rehan is hired by Ahlawat's character to steal a priceless ruby, while Kapoor's scowling cop and his two cronies chase him across the globe. Gentleman thieves have a rich legacy in cinema; in recent years, the archetype was resurrected by the Netflix show Lupin, which itself was based on the character Arsène Lupin. Created as France's answer to Sherlock Holmes, Lupin also inspired a series of Japanese anime shows and films, which, interestingly enough, have counted Hayao Miyazaki and Takashi Yamazaki as directors over the years. All of this is to say that Bollywood's penchant for originality remains intact. Not to validate calls for a more 'rooted' Hindi cinema — 'rooted' is just code for 'misogynist' — but Jewel Thief is particularly uninged, even by Bollywood's already unreal standards. Even though the movie is supposedly set in real locations, it looks like a fever dream (derogatory). Why, for instance, do directors Kookie Gulati and Robbie Grewal — wonder who was fired first — insist that the very recognisable Griffith Observatory in Los Angeles is in Turkey or something?

Here's a movie that introduces its 'villain' with a scene in which he murders a dog. It's designed as an intimidation tactic, an arm-twisting manoeuvre to get Rehan to do his bidding. There's an unwritten rule in cinema that says 'don't kill dogs and children on screen'. Some lines simply cannot be crossed. Not a single audience member, regardless of their socio-economic background, would forgive an act this vile. To be clear, it's not that Hindi filmmakers have a disregard for rules. The bigger issue is their skewed idea of morality. They're convinced that murdering babies and innocent animals wouldn't bother us, because it doesn't bother them. This is why, in the last six months alone, we've seen infants being graphically killed in movies such as Marco and Emergency. To make matters worse, after killing his dog, the villain is promoted to a parallel lead for the next hour or so. Weirder still, he's a part of the dance number that plays over the end credits. Bollywood has been in trouble before, but it hasn't been in trouble this deep in about 25 years. They say that writers are underpaid, and yet they keep turning to the same six people for scripts. After being handed trash in return, they decide to go ahead and produce it. And when the trash project predictably implodes mid-production, they carry on. Serious introspection is necessary, you'd agree, when an industry that won't think twice before greenlighting movies like this keeps Neeraj Ghaywan in the lurch for a decade; that doesn't allow masterpieces by Dibakar Banerjee and Aamir Bashir to even see the light of day. Netflix actually abandoned the Banerjee project, but for it to produce a movie like Jewel Thief with our subscription money isn't all that different from taxpayer funds being used to erect public Wi-Fi towers that'll never work. Who are we kidding, though; perhaps it's for the best that we don't get free Wi-Fi. All we'd do with it is watch Jewel Thief. Post Credits Scene is a column in which we dissect new releases every week, with particular focus on context, craft, and characters. Because there's always something to fixate about once the dust has settled.



Alaya F, and Ronit Roy, revolved around two former soldiers racing against time to save India from an imminent attack by a vengeful scientist. Promoted as a science fiction action film, Bade Miyan Chote Miyan failed to resonate with the audience. It was given the same title as the 1998 film starring Amitabh Bachchan and Govinda. However, it failed to recreate the magic from 25 years ago.

## Jenna Ortega wants to direct a script she's been working on for 10 years

Los Angeles: "Wednesday" star Jenna Ortega says she has been working on a script for nearly a decade and now feels ready to get behind the camera for the project. In a conversation with Abel Makkonen Tesfaye, known professionally as the musician The Weeknd, for the V Magazine, the actor said she believes it is the right time to bring the project to life. "I have a script that I've known that I was going to make for almost 10 years. It's weird because it's something that I thought of when I was younger and when I first started out in this field, and it's only now that I'm actually starting to take the steps to get it made, which is really interesting," Ortega said.

## Funeral at Nargis' house made Balraj Sahni feel like a 'corpse', got special permission from cops during jail time to shoot a film



The 1940s was a very tricky time for Hindi cinema. While there was one section of the moviemaking folks who made it their mission to entertain the masses during stressful times, there was another section where actors, writers and filmmakers participated in the freedom struggle in their ways. But, the struggle didn't end after August 1947. The country was in political disarray and those who had learnt to fight for their rights continued to do so for getting rid of British rule wasn't enough. Balraj Sahni, one of the upcoming actors in those days, who had worked with Mahatma Gandhi at Sevagram, lived with Rabindranath Tagore at Shantiniketan and worked with the likes of TS Eliot and George Orwell at the London office of BBC, was one of the prominent members of the Communist Party in India, and also a member of Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA), where he worked with the likes of Prithviraj Kapoor and Ritwik Ghatak, found himself behind bars for participating in a protest march. After a party meeting in 1949, when the party workers took to the streets, Balraj was arrested by cops. He spent months in a prison and strangely, was allowed to shoot for a film with Dilip Kumar and Nargis during his time in prison.

At this time, Balraj had appeared in a few films, and was, by no means, a movie star. In fact, a couple of weeks before this, he had signed a film called Hulchul, in which he was to star with Dilip Kumar and Nargis. He was going to play a jailor in the film and as a part of his preparation, he visited Mumbai's (then Bombay) Arthur Road prison, not knowing that he would be housed here in the immediate future. Balraj recalled this incident in his autobiography 'My

## Fawad Khan's Instagram account remains visible in India, Hania and Mahira's blocked

Mumbai: The Indian government is tightening the noose around the Pakistani nationals after the horrific Pahalgam terrorist attack. In a follow-up to several Pakistanis being sent across the border back home, the tough action is now bleeding into the digital landscape as well, with the Instagram accounts of many Pakistani artists now stand blocked and inaccessible in India. The accounts of Pakistani actors, including Hania Aamir and Mahira Khan, are no longer accessible to users in India. The text on the Instagram pages of these artists reads, "Account not available in India. This is because we complied with a legal request to restrict this content." However, the Instagram account of actor Fawad Khan, and 'Pasoori' hitmakers Ali Sethi and Shae Gillare still accessible, raising doubts if the authorities are still catching up on certain accounts or if the blockade is based on the GPS location.

After the terror attack in Baisaran valley of Pahalgam last week, tensions have escalated between India and its neighbour Pakistan, which is known for its notoriety of nurturing terrorism on its land since time immemorial. At least 26 tourists from different parts of India, and foreign nationals were killed in the dastardly attack. The terrorists allegedly sponsored by Pakistan used second generation phones, and used SMS for communication to evade modern day surveillance. The attack has shadows of China as well, which has called for an "unbiased" probe into the matter, subtly hinting that they stand with Pakistan's denial of the attack. One of the terrorists is reportedly a former Pakistani commando, and is on the run as the National Investigation Agency of India continues to probe the attacks. After an all party meeting, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given a free hand to the defence forces to take the call on the mode, time and route of action against Pakistan which has long troubled not just India but several countries across the globe.

In addition to being a constant source of threat to India, Pakistan first opened its land to the Mujahideen from Afghanistan at the behest of the US during the USSR and Afghan war. The Mujahideen were trained in Pakistan to counter the advancing USSR, which entered Afghanistan

Filmy Autobiography' and shared that he spent the first two months of his jail time in Bareilly Jail. He was then given the tag of 'A class' as a prisoner, which gave him certain privileges within the prison system, and two months later, he was transferred to Arthur Road prison where the same jailor presided who earlier gave him a tour of the facility. As Balraj spent days and night locked in a jail for participating in a protest, producer K Asif, who was the director of Mughal-E-Azam, was making arrangements so Balraj could shoot for his film even during his time in prison. "K Asif had managed to procure a peculiar order from the police commissioner. Whenever they wanted me at the studio, I might be allowed to go there under police escort," he shared and recalled that on days when he had to shoot, other prisoners would give him lists of things that he were to bring back. Someone wanted a picture of Dilip Kumar and Nargis, and someone else wanted a pack of bidis. K Asif would make arrangements so Balraj could carry all the goods back to the prison. Even the jailor was invested in this project for Balraj was going to play a jailor on screen, and he felt like his reputation was at stake.

On one such day, when Balraj reached the studio at 6 am, he got to know that the shoot had been called off because Nargis' mother had passed away. Since all the film stars were going to be there at her house, Balraj requested the inspector who was escorting him to take him to her house. He agreed, and this turned out to be a transformative experience for Balraj. "Standing there in the midst of so many friends and colleagues, I realised that I had become almost a stranger to them. The way they were all looking at me, I might have been a corpse, which had suddenly emerged from a coffin," he wrote and said that this was the day when he "resolved to never leave the world of films." After six months, when he got out of jail, he was mentally and physically exhausted. Balraj was no longer welcome to participate in Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA) activities, which had become his second home by this time. "In their eyes, I had become a traitor and a renegade. Although I was reluctant to accept the charge, it nevertheless broke my spirit. I felt I had become old in the prime of youth," he wrote. Two years after the release of Hulchul, Balraj appeared in Do Bigha Zamin, the role that changed his life and is still considered as one of the most accomplished works by an actor in Indian cinema.



to secure the Communist Afghan government. While the USSR collapsed after the Afghan-USSR war, student leaders from Afghanistan soon took the Mujahideen under their wings under the group Taliban. Soon, Taliban consolidated power in Afghanistan through its road network and the illegal poppy trade of the country. Pakistan also unleashed hell on its own citizens of East Pakistan leading to the India-Pakistan war of 1971 after which Indira Gandhi carved Bangladesh out of Pakistan. And now, as per latest reports, Pakistan-sponsored terrorists were also behind the attacks on the Indian and American embassies in Kabul in 2008 and 2011, a concert hall in Moscow in 2024, and bombings across London in 2005. While New Delhi continues to gather evidence in a bid to expose the deadly terror network of Pakistan, Iran, Pakistan's neighbour along its western border, has offered to mediate the talks between India and Pakistan.

## Misha Agrawal died by suicide after losing social media followers, confirms family; Taapsee Pannu says she feared this day would come

Days after the death of content creator Misha Agrawal, her family has confirmed that she died by suicide. On Wednesday, Misha Agrawal's elder sister, Mukta Agrawal, took to the creator's Instagram handle to share she was upset after losing her follower count on Instagram, and was stressed about accumulating 1 million followers on the platform. Sharing a screenshot of Misha's wallpaper, Mukta wrote, "Her phone wallpaper says everything. Her only aim of life." Misha, who had about 3.5 lakh followers at the time of her death, had ambitions of hitting the 1 million mark, which also reflected on her wallpaper. Her post read, "My little baby sister had built her world around Instagram and her followers, with a single goal of reaching 1 million followers and gaining loving fans." "While her followers started decreasing, she became distraught and felt worthless." Mukta revealed Misha was depressed since April, and would often cry to her. "Jijja, what will I do if my followers decrease? My career will be over." She added, "I tried to console her, explaining that this isn't her entire world, it's just a side job, and if it doesn't work out, it's not the end. I reminded her of her

talents, her LLB degree, and her preparation for PCSJ, telling her that she will become a judge one day and doesn't need to worry about her career." Mukta advised her to view Instagram as mere entertainment and not let it consume her. "I urged her to focus on her happiness and let go of anxiety and depression. Unfortunately, my little sister didn't listen and became so consumed by Instagram and followers that she left our world forever." At the end of her post, Mukta revealed that Misha took her own life. "She became so overwhelmed that she took her own life, leaving our family devastated." In response to this development, Taapsee Pannu wrote, "This is something I long feared seeing the obsession of a lot of people around. Fear that a day will come the numbers here will overpower the love of life. Fear that desperate need of virtual love will blind u towards the real love around you. And this instant gratification and validation of likes n comments will overtake the degrees which make u worth much more. It's heart-breaking to see this. Misha Agrawal died on April 24, just two days before her 25th birthday. Her sister made the revelation through a post on Misha's handle, which read: "Misha Agrawla, April 26, 2000 – April 24, 2025.