





# Indian Chronicle

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## Time for reforms in India's aviation sector

The Ahmedabad Air India disaster provides a somber occasion to reflect on the unresolved problems and challenges facing India's aviation sector. Though the country has made significant strides in the development of airports, these are largely offset by huge infrastructure challenges. Aviation experts have repeatedly flagged several issues including inadequate capacity to handle increasing air traffic, leading to delays and congestion, and recurring problems with building maintenance. There are also concerns about the quality of construction and materials used, highlighting potential issues with airport infrastructure management. Furthermore, a mismatch exists between ambitious airport expansion plans and actual passenger demand, with some newly built airports remaining underutilised while others struggle to handle the growing number of passengers and flights. There is a need to upgrade airport infrastructure and Air Traffic Control (ATC) systems to support the rapid growth of the sector. On the one hand, the Indian aviation industry has emerged as a global powerhouse, becoming the world's third-largest domestic aviation market, but on the other, operational, infrastructural, financial and regulatory challenges stand in the way of unlocking its full potential. Despite initiatives like UDAN (Ude Desh ka Aam Naagrik), there is limited air connectivity to tier-2 and tier-3 towns, with major airports controlling air traffic and limited regional service. The lack of Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul (MRO) infrastructure forces airlines to rely on foreign services, making maintenance more expensive. The high operational costs, including rising fuel prices, put a strain on airlines, making it difficult to invest in infrastructure upgrades.

## Biogas plant in OU Women's hostels changes campus environment, reduces LPG, firewood consumption



GNS News Agency, June 17:Hyderabad: The installation of a biogas plant in the women's hostels at Osmania University (OU) has resulted in a noticeable reduction in LPG usage and firewood consumption, contributing to a more sustainable and eco-friendly campus.

In December 2024, the Mahalakshmi Biogas Plant was inaugurated on the premises of the Women's Hostel in OU. The plant was set up by Saahas under the ReSET CSR initiative funded by KPMG India. Operator of Ahuja Engineering Company, which installed the plant, Sandeep, explaining the process of generating biogas from food waste, said, "We have arranged designated bins in the mess at all the hostels. The plant processes 2 tons of wet (food) waste, which is collected daily from the mess of the hostels and is transported to the site through an electric vehicle." At the site, the bins are weighed and the food waste reaches the sorting table, where it is crushed in the crusher and mixed with slurry, fed to the digester tank. Here, anaerobic digestion takes place in the digester to form biogas, said the operator.

The biogas is generated in a tank and then passes through the H<sub>2</sub>S and water trap scrubber to absorb H<sub>2</sub>S and moisture. In this process, the biogas is purified to around 60% methane content. This purified gas is stored in the biogas storage balloons from where it is supplied to the kitchen through a pipeline system, Sandeep said. "We have provided biogas stoves to the kitchens for preparing food for hostel inmates. Through this biogas, food preparation can be done for 300 to 400 members," he said. "It was a challenging task for us to handle the food waste generated from the hostels, which used to be sent to those rearing cattle," Director, Campus Hostels for Women, Osmania University, Y Kalyana Lakshmi, told Telangana Today. This situation often led to unsanitary conditions and unpleasant odours in the area, she said. "After the biogas plant, we are saving on firewood and LPG gas for which every month, we used to spend Rs 40,000 to 50,000," the Director explained. • Conversion of biodegradable waste into clean energy • Around 350 kg of food waste and other dry waste is treated • Prevents the food waste from going to landfill • Reduces carbon emissions up to 85 tons per month • Saves Rs 40,000 from on firewood and LPG cylinders • Food waste from 15 hostels feeds the plant • Bio slurry is used as a fertiliser in campus gardens and green areas

## Sheikh Chand Pasha meets Telangana Sports Authority Chairman K. Shivakumar Reddy

"Serilingampalli Jun 17 Indian Chronicle Senior Congress party leader Sheikh Chand Pasha met Telangana Sports Authority Chairman Kotha Kapu Shivsena Reddy in his chamber and conveyed his greetings.



## Durability Gets an Upgrade; Power Gets a Boost—OPPO K13x 5G Launching on 23rd June 2025



Hyderabad:OPPO India is gearing up to launch the all-new OPPO K13x 5G on 23rd June 2025, designed especially for young students and early professionals who demand durability and all-round functionality without compromise. From drop-proof hardware to power-packed internals, the K13x 5G brings together unstoppable strength, smart design, and next-gen entertainment to deliver the toughest and most durable smartphone under ₹15,000—without losing its sleek appeal.

Inspired by Nature. Engineered for the Real World

Built on the foundation of aerospace-grade AM04 aluminum alloy, the 360° Damage-Proof Armour Body sets new standards in smartphone durability. Reinforced with Crystal Shield glass, a biomimetic Sponge Shock Absorp-

tion System, and IP65 water & dust resistance, the K13x 5G is certified tough by SGS Gold Drop Certification and MIL-STD 810H military standards. The innovative sponge-based shock absorption, inspired by over 700 million years of sea sponge evolution, mimics natural stress diffusion to reduce impact by up to 90%, offering superior internal protection without adding bulk. All of this ensures it's lightweight to carry, but strong enough to survive everyday chaos—from coffee spills and accidental drops to rainy-day commutes.

Battery That Keeps Up with Your Hustle

The 6000mAh battery is the largest in its class, engineered for all-day endurance. Enjoy uninterrupted streaming, extended calls, and hours of entertainment without constantly checking the battery bar. The K13x 5G also boasts a 5-year battery health guarantee, maintaining over 80% battery capacity after 1,700 charge cycles. With 45W SUPERVOOC fast charging in the box, it powers up to 30% in just 21 minutes, reaching 100% in 91 minutes—ideal for quick top-ups between lectures or meetings.

Immersive Entertainment, Smart AI Enhancements

For content lovers, the 120Hz ultra-bright display with 1000-nits peak brightness makes every scroll, stream, or game fluid and vivid—even under sunlight. The 50MP AI dual camera is backed by tools like AI Eraser, AI Unblur, AI Reflection Remover, and AI Clarity Enhancer for polished, professional results. Additionally, features like AI Summary, AI Recorder, AI Studio, and Google Gemini further enhance content creation and productivity by simplifying everyday tasks and unlocking creative potential. The latest ColorOS 15 elevates the user experience with a cleaner UI, smoother animations, and smart utility features like file docking, smart suggestions, and improved app transitions for a more intuitive and responsive interface. Connectivity stays rock solid even in low-signal areas, thanks to AI LinkBoost 2.0's 360° antenna system. Meanwhile, Glove Touch and Splash Touch ensure smooth usage in any scenario—be it rainy commutes, sweaty workouts, or cold mornings in gloves.

A Processor That Punches Above Its Weight

Under the hood, the MediaTek Dimensity 6300 5G processor delivers class-leading performance, enabling seamless multitasking, smoother gaming, and lag-free streaming. Built on a power-efficient 6nm architecture, it brings enhanced thermal control, AI-enhanced power management, and fast app responsiveness—making the K13x an overachiever in its segment. Whether you're gaming, binge-watching, or attending back-to-back online classes, the Dimensity 6300 ensures your experience stays fast and fluid.

## Press Information Bureau Government of India, Hyd



\*Yoga unites body, mind, breath and thoughts: Shri Om Prakash Swarna\*

\*'Yoga Sangam' Awareness program organised by PIB, CBC\*

\*A special awareness program 'Varta' on Yoga's Impact on Women's Wellness' was held\*

17th June, 2025:Yoga is an excellent spiritual practice rooted in the ancient Indian tradition. It aligns the body, mind, breath, and thoughts along a single path, according to renowned yoga guru Sri Om Prakash Swarna. In celebration of the 11th International Yoga Day, the Press Information Bureau and Central Bureau of Communication, of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, organised a yoga awareness program called 'Yoga Sangam.' Officials and staff from the central government offices complex at Kavadiguda participated in this event. Sri Om Prakash Swarna emphasised that yoga serves not only as a form of exercise but also as a holistic way of life. It offers physical practice while promoting mental tranquillity. By incorporating yoga into daily routines, individuals can enhance their physical health.

This comprehensive practice fosters overall well-being and mental peace. During the program, officials and employees at the central government office complex gained insights into adopting a healthier lifestyle, achieving mental calmness, and improving physical strength, stated PIB and CBC Additional Director General Smt. Shruti Patil. A special awareness program 'Varta' on 'From Hormones to Healing: Yoga's Impact on Women's Wellness' was held for women journalists and employees. Nearly 50 journalists & women employees attended the session, focusing on both physical and mental well-being. Ms. Shruti Patil, Additional Director General of PIB Hyderabad, welcomed the participants and highlighted the importance of holistic health practices like yoga. Dr. Vaishnavi from Nature Cure demonstrated yoga techniques, including pranayama and asanas for health issues. She taught breathing techniques such as

Nadi Shodhana and Anulom Vilom for stress relief, alongside stretches for back pain and digestion. Participants actively engaged and valued the initiative.

## Tribal women's societies are responsible for maintaining sand ramps. ITDA PO RahulShaik Sharief, Bhadrachalam,

June 16 (Indian Chronicle): ITDA PO Rahul said that under the auspices of ITDA and the State Mineral Development Corporation, tribal women should be given industrial support, and tribal women should run their own sand ramps and increase their livelihood, and the responsibility of managing them will be entrusted to them. The PO spoke at a meeting held with women's societies at the ITDA conference hall on Monday. He said that tribal women running sand ramps under ITDA limits should not trust contractors and benamis and entrust them with the management of sand ramps but should unite and take responsibility for sand extraction and management in Godavari at the production level so that the societies in the respective villages within the agency area can run their own sand ramps and thereby increase their livelihood. Under the pilot project, two societies have been selected and provided financial assistance of Rs. 50 lakh each. With the help of the authorities, a sand stock point will be identified in Godavari, and tippers, planning machines, and dozers will be rented. How many cubic meters of sand will be trans-



ported by tippers from the point where the sand is moved to the stock point... The women of the sand society should be fully responsible for their management from the point where the sand is moved to the stock point. They asked the tribal women about the problems there and gave much advice and many suggestions. PISA Special Officer Manidhar, Mineral Development Corporation Project Manager Shankar Nayak, and women of the societies participated in this program.

## "Probe Requested on Bathukamma Saree Expenses"

TDP Politburo Member Bakkani Narasimhulu



Hyderabad:Former BRS government distributed sarees to women during the Bathukamma festival. In many parts of the state, women protested stating that the sarees were of poor quality. The Youth for Anti-Corruption organization filed a query under the Right to Information Act, questioning how much the government spent annually on these sarees. The details obtained through RTI were published in various newspapers, revealing that thousands of crores of rupees were spent. However, it is unclear how and where this money was actually spent. It appears that public funds worth crores have been misused. Telugu Desam Party Politburo member Bakkani Narasimhulu demanded that the Chief Secretary of the Telangana Government conduct a thorough investigation and bring the facts to light.

## Kharif Crop sowing area surges to 89 Lakh hectares, boosting farmers' Prospects



GNS News Agency, June 17

New Delhi: The sowing area for kharif crops has risen to 89.29 lakh hectares this year, compared to 87.81 lakh hectares at the same point last year. This early-season increase of 1.48 lakh hectares signals the potential for higher crop production, which can boost farmer's incomes and help stabilize food prices. Key Crop Areas Rice: Sowing for rice has just started, with an area of 4.53 lakh hectares as of June 13, compared to 4 lakh hectares during the same period last year. Pulses: Areas for pulses like urad and moong have expanded to 3.07 lakh hectares from 2.6 lakh hectares, an increase of 0.49 lakh hectares that is crucial for controlling inflation through higher pulse production. Oilseeds: The area under oilseeds has grown to 2.05 lakh hectares from 1.5 lakh hectares, indicating a positive trend in the early part of the season. Coarse Cereals/Millet: The area for coarse cereals and millets (such as jowar, bajra, and ragi) has reached 5.89 lakh hectares so far. Impact of Monsoon Rains Improved monsoon rains have facilitated sowing on unirrigated lands, which constitute nearly 50% of the country's farmland. This boost in sowing areas under favorable weather conditions is expected to support a robust production season. Minimum Support Prices (MSP) On May 28, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved an increase in MSP for 14 kharif crops for the 2025-26 marketing season. This decision aims to guarantee fair prices to farmers and encourage increased production. Notable Increases Nigarseed: Increased by Rs 820 per quintal Ragi: Increased by Rs 596 per quintal Cotton: Increased by Rs 589 per quintal Sesamum: Increased by Rs 579 per quintal The MSP policy ensures that crop prices are set at a minimum of 1.5 times the all-India weighted average cost of production. For certain crops, farmers are forecasted to earn margins well above this threshold for instance, bajra at 63%, maize and tur at 59% each, and urad at 53%. For other crops, the expected margin remains at 50%. Total Cost Considerations The overall cost of production includes expenses such as: Hired human labor and bullock/machine labor, Rent for leased land, Input costs like seeds, and fertilizers, Irrigation charges and depreciation on farm machinery and buildings, Interest on working capital, diesel/electricity for pump sets, and other miscellaneous expenses, and



## Officials should work to ensure that all eligible people receive government welfare: ITDA PO Rahul Shaik Sharief



Bhadrachalam, June 16 (Indian Chronicle): Bhadrachalam ITDA PO Rahul has instructed the unit officials to work hard to ensure that every eligible tribal family gets government welfare schemes. PO Rahul received petitions from the tribals in the tribal darbar held at the ITDA conference hall on Monday. He instructed the unit officials to resolve those within his jurisdiction on the spot and send the remaining ones to the concerned authorities

and take special initiative to provide government welfare schemes to the eligible tribals as soon as possible. The petitions filed by the tribals include land disputes, personal and land issues, provision of seats in intermediate and fifth class in tribal gurukuls, permission to install boreholes through tribal development, permission to install boreholes, electricity and motors through tricar, widow pensions, change of names of padu pattas, loans to set up grocery shops and fancy stores, chronic diseases, financial assistance for higher education, etc. He said that all the applications submitted by the tribals will be registered online and efforts will be made to ensure that every eligible tribal gets government welfare schemes in phases. APO David Raj, DD Manemma, SOC Ravindranath, EE Tribal Welfare Harish, SO Bhaskaran, AO Sunnam Rambabu, DTRO SR Lakshminarayana, FAC Uday Kumar, PVTG Officer Manidhar, Manager Adinarayana, ICDS Supervisor Chandrakala, staff of other departments, and others participated in this program.

## The district should be made a drug-free district, and the youth should stay away from bad habits: Collector Jitesh V. Patil, SP Rohit Raju



“Bhukya Ranjith Naik, Bhadradi Kothagudem, June 17 (Indian Chronicle): District Collector Jitesh V. Patil called on everyone to cooperate in making Bhadradi Kothagudem a drug-free district. On Tuesday, a district-level anti-drug committee coordination meeting was held at the IDOC office conference hall along with District SP Rohit Raju. Speaking on the occasion, the collector said that students and youth should stay away from bad habits. The police should take strong measures to prevent the use of drugs. College owners and parents should focus on children to prevent the use of marijuana and intoxicants. He said that awareness should be created about the harms caused by the use of drugs and marijuana in parent-teacher meetings held in educational institutions. Awareness programs should be organized across the district through videos on the harms caused by marijuana use based on real incidents and how it affects their future. He said that awareness should be created with medical officials on the harms caused by drugs and narcotics. Those addicted to drugs and other narcotics should be identified and helped to break their habit through rehabilitation centers. The collector suggested that if any children in the vicinity are known to be addicted to drugs, they should immediately provide information. He said that strong measures should be taken to prevent the transportation, cultivation, and use of narcotics. He said that continuous surveillance should be established through checkpoints at the state borders. He said that necessary measures should be taken to prevent marijuana as well as Gudumba in the district. He said that the forest department officials should inspect the forest lands under their jurisdiction and inform the police authorities immediately if marijuana cultivation is found. The collector instructed the drug



inspector to check the stock details in the hospitals and medical shops in the district every month. He said that bad habits damage health and destroy the thinking process and thinking power. The Collector said that the future generation should not be attracted to drugs and should be informed about the good and bad in society. “PD actor who used and transported drugs will be registered.” District SP Rohit Raju. “District SP Rohit Raju said that the PD act of using or transporting drugs will be registered. He said that 3,500 kg of ganja has been seized so far this year across the district. He said that 24-hour surveillance has been set up through the Bhadrachalam check post to control the transport of ganja from the forest area to the district from Orissa via Seeleru and to prevent the transport of ganja. He said that for the first time in the state, two narcotic dogs have been made available to detect drugs. He said that he has also received an award at the state level for that. The SP explained that spiritual technology and special teams are being formed to curb drug trafficking in the district. He advised the officials to organize awareness programs for students and youth about drug use and to inform them about the punishments for their use. They should create awareness about the POCSO Act in schools. He said that drug testing kits will also be made available to prevent drug use. The SP said that a de-addiction center has also been made available in Bhadrachalam. Bhadrachalam ASP Vikrant Singh, Excise Superintendent Janaiah, Ilandu DSP Ramanamurthy, Kothagudem RTO Velasiri Venkataramana, District Medical Officer Bhaskar Nayak, District Education Officer Venkateswara Chari, District Intermediate Officer Venkateswarlu, District Agriculture Officer Baburao, concerned officials, and others participated in this review meeting.

## Applications invited for admissions to the 11th batch of DLED College: ITDA Project Officer B. Rahul



Bhadradi Kothagudem, June 17, (Indian Chronicle): Applications are being invited for admissions to the 11th batch of Tribal DLED College for the academic year 2025-27, ITDA Project Officer B. Rahul said in a statement on Tuesday. He said that the total number of seats in the college is 50 and the students who apply must be residents of the agency area and must have passed the intermediate with at least 45 percent marks. He said that students can apply from 16th of this month to July 10th. He said that the Tribal DLE ED College was started in the academic year 2014-15, that this college is the only special college established with the intention of preparing students from agency areas as teachers, and that the specialty of the college is that intermediate students in this college are selected on the basis of merit only without any qualifying exams, and that although this college was established in 2014 with permanent buildings in Ekapaka, it was later moved to Andhra during the bifurcation of the state, so this college was started in 2015 at the Tribal BED College in Bhadrachalam, and that from 2014 to today, 10 batches have been completed and a total of 450 students have been provided teacher training, and it is a matter of pride that almost 49 students have secured SGT jobs and taken up government jobs. He said that although there are a total of 50 seats in the college, only students from the Telangana Agency area are being given opportunities. He said that due

to the lack of a D.Ed college in Bhadradi Kothagudem district, the tribal D.Ed college has special recognition in the FLN training and other training conducted by SCRT. He said that as per the 2023 Supreme Court verdict, only those who have done D.Ed are eligible for SGT posts, the tribal B.Ed college has gained more importance. He said that the specialties of this college are, a special college set up for the students of the agency schedule area, seat allocation based on intermediate marks i.e. completely on merit, 100% distinction results every year, special hostel facility for women in the college premises, special library for students, experienced teachers in the teaching process and teaching DSC related topics along with the curriculum, conducting TLM workshops, seminars, debates, examinations, quality education, giving equal importance to theory and practical, there will be special supervision over each student.

Therefore, the candidates who apply should contact the Principal, DLED College, Charla Road, Bhadrachalam, he said, these applications will also be available at Utunur and Eturunagaram ITDAs. He requested that for more details, please contact Principal YKD Bhavani at phone numbers 9959575539, 9949493416.

## ED conducts raids in six States in drug trafficking linked money laundering case

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Tuesday (June 17, 2025) carried out simultaneous searches in six States as part of a money laundering investigation linked to a drug trafficking syndicate that was first detected by the Punjab Police, official sources said. More than 15 locations in Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan and Maharashtra were covered as part of a case registered under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), the sources said.

## Be alert for Godavari floods: District Collector Jitesh V Patil. “““““Bhukya Ranjith Naik



Bhadradi Kothagudem, June 17, (Indian Chronicle): District Collector Jitesh V Patil has ordered all departmental officers to be ready with all arrangements so that people do not face any inconvenience due to Godavari floods. On Tuesday, a review meeting was held at the IDOC office on the Godavari floods along with District SP Rohit Raju, ITDA PO Rahul, Additional Collector Venugopal and Bhadrachalam ASP Vikrant Singh. Speaking on the occasion, he said that life jackets, torch light, rope, hand mike, should be available in every officer's vehicle to rescue those trapped in the floods. He said that an advance flood management plan should be prepared to prevent any accidents. He said that rehabilitation centers should be set up to move people from flood-prone villages to safe areas. He said that people should be prepared to move people to rehabilitation centers in advance instead of waiting until they are flooded. He said that everyone at the village level should be alert to save people from floods. The officers of all departments were told to prepare comprehensive action plans on the issues given in the preparatory meeting. They were told to keep life jackets, rubber swimmers, canoes and boats ready to save people trapped in the floods. They ordered the District Civil Supplies Officer to keep all types of essential items in stock for the next three months, i.e. until the month of October. They said that sectoral and zonal officers would be appointed to monitor the flood relief measures. They said that the phone numbers of the people of the flooded villages should be made available to convey the flood information to the people. They said that the Panchayat Raj and Electricity Department officials should conduct an early inspection

of the flooded villages without any power interruption. They said that protective measures should be taken in the areas that are likely to be flooded and there should be no power interruption. They advised the Roads and Buildings Department officials to set up helipads in accordance with the use of helicopter services for emergency services. They said that sets should be made available for the use of mobile sets for emergency services. They said that the flood information coming from above the Godavari should be kept up to date and the people should be alerted. He said that the priorities for evacuating people from flooded areas to safer places should be communicated and awareness should be created in advance in the respective villages to avoid any difficulties. He instructed the officials to take steps to inform the affected areas in advance when the gates of projects like Kinnerasani are raised. He said that cooking staff should be kept ready to prepare food in the rehabilitation centers. He said that a flood control room should be set up in the Bhadrachalam Sub-Collector's office to work 24 hours a day, as well as control rooms should be set up at the mandal and district levels. He ordered that pregnant women should not face any difficulties during floods. He ordered that steps should be taken to prepare a list in advance and admit them to nearby hospitals, and that an ED calendar should be mandatory in every primary health care center. He instructed the medical department to make 108 ambulances available, and to conduct training on basic medical care and the steps to be taken in case of an accident for the staff. He said that people should not try to cross the streams and canals during floods and barricades should be erected. He said that people as well...

## Israel-Iran conflict: Trump says he wants Iran to give up entirely on nuclear weapons



GNS News Agency, June 17

U.S. President Donald Trump said he wanted a “real end” to the nuclear problem with Iran, with Iran “giving up entirely” on nuclear weapons, in comments he made to reporters on Air Force One on his way back from the Group of Seven summit in Canada. “Giving up entirely,” Mr. Trump told reporters early on Tuesday (June 17, 2025). “Iran cannot have a nuclear weapon; it's very simple.”

The air war between Iran and U.S. ally Israel — which began on Friday (June 13, 2025) when Israel attacked Iran with airstrikes — has raised alarms in a region that had already been on edge since the start of Israel's military assault on Gaza in October 2023. Mr. Trump said he may send U.S. Middle East Envoy Steve Witkoff or Vice President J.D. Vance to meet with Iran. However, he added that “it

depends on what happens when I get back”. When asked if Israel would slow down its attacks on Iran, Mr. Trump said, “You're going to find out over the next two days. You're going to find out. Nobody's slowed up so far.” Mr. Trump also said he had not seen any signs yet of North Korea or Russia getting involved to help Iran. The President added Washington was working on helping Americans who were trying to flee the region amid the Israel-Iran war. “We're working on that, we're doing the best we can,” he said. Since the Israeli strikes on Friday (June 13, 2025), the two Middle Eastern rivals have exchanged blows, with Iranian officials reporting more than 220 deaths, mostly civilians, while Israel said 24 civilians were killed. Israel, the U.S. and other Western nations have long sought to pressure Iran to curb its nuclear weapons development. Tehran denies seeking nuclear weapons and has said it has the right to develop nuclear technology for peaceful purposes, including enrichment, as a party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Israel, which is not a party to the NPT, is the only country in the Middle East widely believed to have nuclear weapons. Also read: Iran will pay ‘very heavy price’ for targeting Israeli civilians: Netanyahu Washington said Mr. Trump was still aiming for a nuclear deal with Iran. However, Mr. Trump also said he was not looking at a ceasefire between Iran and Israel and that he had not reached out to Iran for any peace talks. “If they want to talk, they know how to reach me. They should have taken the deal that was on the table — Would have saved a lot of lives,” Mr. Trump wrote on Truth Social about Iran.

## BJP demands Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar's resignation, CM points to tragedies under its watch

GNS News Agency, June 17

BJP President BY Vijayendra with party workers, who are wearing face masks with pictures of Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar and carrying a replica of the IPL trophy as they protest against the state government over the Bengaluru stampede. (ANI Photo) BJP President BY Vijayendra with party workers, who are wearing face masks with pictures of Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar and carrying a replica of the IPL trophy as they protest against the state government over the Bengaluru stampede. )The Karnataka BJP Tuesday held a protest at Freedom Park in the city, demanding the resignation of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, Deputy CM DK Shivakumar and Home Minister G Parameshwara over the Bengaluru stampede. During the demonstration, the BJP leaders reiterated their demand for a three-day special Assembly session to discuss the tragedy. Siddaramaiah, however, hit back at the Opposition by pointing to the tragedies that had taken place during the BJP's rule and said that the party had no moral authority to demand the resignation of leaders in Karnataka. Eleven people were killed in the stampede that took place on June 4 outside M Chinnaswamy Stadium, a day after Royal Challengers Bengaluru won their maiden Indian Premier League title. After the protest, Leader of Opposition R Ashok said the Karnataka High Court taking up a case suo motu regarding the stampede showed that the court did not trust the government. Commenting on multiple probes launched into the stampede, he said that there was no clarity on any of the investigations announced by the state. Ashok alleged that people lost their lives as “CM Siddaramaiah and his family (were) taking photos with cricketers”, contending that the government itself invited people to Vidhana Soudha. “Had they not issued such an

invitation, this tragedy would not have occurred,” he said, demanding a three-day special session of the legislature. Responding to the same, Siddaramaiah issued a statement saying, “BJP leaders in the state, first, to release a list of BJP leaders who resigned during similar incidents in the past before demanding our resignation.” Calling the stampede at Chinnaswamy an “unfortunate accident”, he said that the state government had accountability for the incident. “We have suspended senior police officers, including the Bengaluru city police commissioner, and transferred the chief of the state intelligence department. My political secretary has also been relieved of his duties,” he said. The protests by BJP leaders, despite measures taken by the government, make it evident that their motives are political and not driven by genuine concern for the people, he said. “Politicising tragedies is not new to the BJP. It is ingrained in their DNA to pounce like vultures over every incident of death, accident, or violence,” the CM said. Siddaramaiah said that he felt “compelled to expose their hypocrisy by bringing certain incidents during the BJP rule to the attention of the people. “In 2002, during the Gujarat riots, approximately 2,000 innocent people from various communities lost their lives. Despite prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's suggestion to take responsibility and resign, then chief minister Narendra Modi neither stepped down nor expressed any remorse to date. Those demanding our resignation should first address this,” he said. Siddaramaiah sought accountability over the terrorist attack in Pahalgam, the violence in Manipur over the last two years, the Morbi Bridge collapse in Gujarat that claimed 140 lives and the stampede at the Mahakumbh in Uttar Pradesh earlier this year.



# Goa GMCH incident: Maharashtra senior doctors write to PM Modi to end harassment against doctors



GNS News Agency, June 17

The Maharashtra Senior Resident Doctors' Association (MSRDA) on Tuesday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, citing the recent episode where the chief medical officer (CMO) of the Goa Medical College and Hospital (GMCH) was summarily "suspended" publicly by the state Health Minister Vishwajit Rane. Rane on June 7 reprimanded Dr Rudresh Kurtikar, CMO, Goa Medical College and Hospital, and ordered his immediate suspension for alleged 'misbehaviour' with a patient.

The Association has appealed to PM Modi for urgent redressal and safeguards for government doctors in the wake of the recent Goa GMCH incident. "The reasons allegedly remain unclear and unverified. While Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant later overturned this suspension, the damage to the dignity of the medical officer, and by extension, to the institution and the profession, was already done," MSRDA said in the statement. Dr Abhijit Helge, President, MSRDA, told The Indian Express that this episode is not merely a bureaucratic misstep. "It is emblematic of a disturbing trend where doctors are made scapegoats for administrative or political gain," Dr Helge said. "The very public nature of this humiliation, without due inquiry or protocol, sets a dangerous precedent. It sends a chilling message that the immense dedication and integrity with which doctors serve society can be disregarded in an instant," Dr Sarbik De, MSRDA general secretary, said.

In their letter to PM Modi, the association members have said that government doctors are the backbone of India's healthcare system. "From remote rural Primary Health Centres (PHCs) to the emergency rooms of over-crowded urban hospitals, they serve selflessly—often working 48-hour shifts, making life-and-death decisions, managing epidemics, and sacrificing personal comfort and family time, all for the greater good. They are trained for over a decade before they can stand independently as specialists. Yet, despite their noble service, they are increasingly being subjected to verbal abuse, physical assaults, threats, and now, public humiliation by individuals in power," the letter read. The GMCH incident is reminiscent of earlier instances — the assault on junior doctors in Kolkata in 2019 that led to nationwide protests; the manhandling of doctors in Telangana; and the public blaming of frontline healthcare workers during Covid-19. In all such instances, it was only after substantial outrage that steps were taken, the association doctors have said, while extending support to the doctors of GMCH Goa. The Indian Medical Association (IMA) has also written to PM Modi expressing deep concern and disappointment over the recent incidents in Goa and Jharkhand, where medical professionals were subjected to harassment by political leaders at Goa Medical College and Hazaribagh Government Medical College, respectively. "These distressing actions demonstrate blatant disrespect towards the medical community and contribute to an atmosphere of fear, mistrust, and demoralisation within our already strained healthcare system," Dr Dilip Bhanushali, National President, IMA, said in the statement on Monday. In its letter dated June 9, IMA has urged PM Modi to amend the Medicare Service Personnel and Medicare Service Institutions Acts across all states to make any form of violence or harassment against healthcare professionals a non-bailable offence, with a minimum punishment of seven years' imprisonment. It has also called for rigorous implementation of the recommendations issued by the National Task Force appointed by the Supreme Court regarding the protection and welfare of resident doctors and healthcare workers. "We need a public reassurance that will send a clear message that acts of intimidation or violence against doctors will not be tolerated, irrespective of the status or position of the culprits," IMA has said.

# Confusion reigns as Maharashtra college admissions are delayed despite early school board exam results

GNS News Agency, June 17

Despite school boards concluding exams early to expedite the results and ensure that the new academic year starts on time, there is chaos in admissions across courses in Maharashtra. Be it impending legal trouble in First Year Junior College (FYJC) admissions, additional CET for BBA/BMS courses or lack of clarity on changes in engineering admissions—students and colleges are left scrambling amid administrative confusion delaying the beginning of the new academic year considerably. This year, the Class 10 and 12 board exams were purposefully held much earlier, with results announced within the first 15 days of May. However, admissions to various courses are currently stalled due to reasons such as lack of coordination, systemic issues, and matters unrelated to students but impacting them the most.

This is the first year that the Centralised Admission Process (CAP) has been expanded statewide. Since the announcement, it has been riddled with various issues. Initially, the expansion was questioned due to challenges specific to rural parts of Maharashtra, where such an online system was seen as unnecessary. Now, a new controversy has emerged after the state government decided to apply SC/ST/OBC reservation to non-minority seats in junior colleges run by minority trusts, without any formal announcement for the same.

Several minority trusts are planning to challenge this decision in court, along with a separate petition to be filed by the Maharashtra Association of Minority Educational Institutions. The legal battle is expected to cause further delays in a process already stalled by systemic lapses, especially due to the huge number of admission applications coming from across the state. The admission schedule has already been revised three times within a month, with the latest revision adding 10 days to the delay. The principal of a junior college in the city said, "This sudden expansion has led to a huge jump in the number of admission applications for FYJC. Until last year, there would be a separate process per district, which dealt with close to 2.5 lakh candidates at a time. Now with a single system across the state, it's dealing with over 12 lakh applications at a time, requiring more time to process such a huge amount of data and thereby causing delay." Adding to this, the principal of a minority trust-run college said, "The expansion of CAP has already led to systemic issues, and amid that, the government decided to apply SC/ST/OBC reservation to admissions in minority institutions—which is forbidden by law. Had the government consulted stakeholders, these legal troubles could have been avoided." The state government's decision to hold a second round of the Common Entrance Test (CET) for professional undergraduate courses such as BCA, BBA,



BMS, and BBM—following a lukewarm response to the first round in April—has raised concerns about further delays in the admission process.

Even though there are over 1 lakh seats for these courses across Maharashtra, only 61,666 students appeared for CET. As a result, many colleges offering these courses expressed concern about large vacancies, prompting the decision to hold another round of CET. The date for the second CET is yet to be announced. Its registration, conduct, result declaration, and the subsequent CAP are expected to take considerable time, which colleges fear could throw the new academic calendar off track. However, some colleges believe that this may not be a solution as a prolonged wait could eventually lead to vacancies in traditional courses such as BCom. The principal of one of the colleges explained, "Many students aspiring to take admission to these professional courses generally take backup admissions in BCom. As soon as admissions to these courses are completed, such students are likely to leave their BCom seats. This will result in vacancies in the traditional stream." The MHT-CET result is expected on June 16, after which engineering admissions are set to begin in Maharashtra. However, the state government has announced plans to introduce major changes to the CAP for engineering, though no formal guidelines have been issued yet. With the MHT-CET result just days away, this delay in releasing the revised admission guidelines has left many colleges worried about a potential setback to the start of the academic year. "There are news reports about changes expected in the engineering admissions this year. But the government has not issued any formal guidelines for the same. Without knowing the new process, we are unsure if that will cause any issue but the uncertainty has certainly caused concerns of delay," said the principal of an engineering college in Mumbai.

# Mamata lays out new OBC list in West Bengal Assembly: 'No question of religion-based reservations'

GNS News Agency, June 17

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, while laying out the interim report of the West Bengal Commission for Backward Classes in the state Assembly, said, "Some people are trying to campaign that the state government is providing reservations on the basis of religion, which is baseless."

On Tuesday, she said in the Assembly, "We made the new list of OBC-A and OBC-B on the basis of a scientific benchmark survey conducted by the Commission and included those communities who are backward. There is no question of making a list of OBC categories on the basis of religion." Last year, the West Bengal government and other petitioners moved the Supreme Court after the Calcutta High Court, on May 22, 2024, cancelled all OBC certificates issued by the state since 2010, saying "religion indeed appears to have been the sole criterion" for granting OBC status to 77 communities.

The West Bengal government on March 18 this year informed the Supreme Court that a fresh exercise for the identification of Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in the state would be conducted, following which the Supreme Court agreed to adjourn the matter by three months and

take it up in July. In the Assembly session on Tuesday, Banerjee went on, "The Supreme Court gave us three months to make a fresh OBC list with a proper survey. Accordingly, the Commission conducted the survey and proposed a list of 140 communities. Out of that, 49 communities are in OBC-A list and 91 communities are included in OBC-B, while 50 communities are also being surveyed. We hope that survey will also be concluded within the time given by the Supreme Court." The West Bengal Cabinet on Monday gave approval to include 76 new castes to the Other Backward Class (OBC) list. The new castes would be added to the existing 64 ethnic groups on the OBC list, an official said. The recommendations to add more castes to the OBC list were made by the West Bengal Commission for Backward Classes (WBCBC). After the Chief Minister laid the bill, Leader of Opposition Suwendu Adhikari wanted to speak, but Speaker Biman Banerjee adjourned the house for one hour. After this, BJP MLAs started raising slogans against the state government. Adhikari claimed that the CM was "not ready to face questions from the Opposition. All MLAs and Ministers basically fled after the OBC list was laid out in the Assembly because they knew that in this list as well, Hindu communities have been deprived. We will continue our fight for them." Adhikari said.

# Former Delhi CM Atishi says detained by police; 'removed' from protest site at Bhoomiheen 'not detained', says DCP



GNS News Agency, June 17

Former Delhi chief minister Atishi was removed from the anti-demolition protest site in the Kalkaji area Tuesday after the police claimed that she was asking people not to vacate the houses at Bhoomiheen Camp. The Delhi High Court had earlier dismissed petitions by the slum dwellers against the impending eviction and demolition. Taking to X, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Atishi posted, "I have been detained at Baba Haridas Nagar police station (Jharoda Kalan), 43km from Kalkaji."

However, Hemant Tiwari, Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), South-East, said, "She (Atishi) has not been detained. She has been removed from the spot under section 65 of the Delhi Police Act." The police said they were

checking the situation at the site in view of the demolition to be carried out on Wednesday, when Atishi reached the Bhoomiheen Camp and instigated people, asking them not to vacate. After repeated reminders not to do so, officers had to remove her from the location to avoid unnecessary commotion, they said. On Friday, while deciding pleas by 417 residents of Bhoomiheen Camp in Kalkaji seeking the court's protection from demolition of their settlements and rehabilitation, the Delhi High Court said, "Encroachers cannot claim the right to continue occupying public land pending the resolution of their rehabilitation claims under the applicable policy, as this would unduly impede public projects."

Reasoning that the right to seek rehabilitation, as it is, is not an absolute constitutional entitlement "available to encroachers such as themselves", Justice Dharmesh Sharma added that "determination of eligibility for rehabilitation is a separate process from the removal of encroachers from public land." Of the over 400-odd petitioners, the high court granted some relief to around 30. The nearly three-decades-old slum cluster was home to migrants from UP, Bihar and West Bengal, among others. The petitioners first moved the court in 2023, claiming that the Delhi Development Authority (DDA), in "an arbitrary and illegal manner, proposed to demolish their jhuggi-jhopdis". On June 2, minutes before petitions to stay demolition of homes at the slum in Southeast Delhi's Govindpuri were heard by a vacation bench of the high court, the civic authorities had already started razing down the hutments.

# Want to visit Mars or plunge into a deep ocean bed? Startup shows the way

GNS News Agency, June 17

Suraj Aiar, founder-CEO of the QWR, said most of the curriculum, from fifth grade to the tenth, covering STEM to language learning to social sciences, has been made into immersive modules. Suraj Aiar, founder-CEO of the QWR, said most of the curriculum, from fifth grade to the tenth, covering STEM to language learning to social sciences, has been made into immersive modules. How can one transport a bunch of schoolchildren to the cold, dusty desert landscape of Mars? For an eight-year-old Pune-based startup, Question What's Real (QWR), the solution comes via a headset and deep technology. In special laboratories set up in several schools across the country, the company is empowering pupils to travel to the red planet, touch its rocky surfaces, explore canyons, volcanoes and impact craters and come back to tell the tale. QWR is a deep-tech, extended reality hardware manufacturing company that uses various technologies to blend real and virtual worlds. "The virtual reality system that we have basically converts most of the textbook knowledge into immersive interactive learning apps. Pretty much all the curriculum, from fifth grade to the tenth, covering STEM to language learning to social sciences, has been made into immersive modules," says Suraj Aiar, founder-CEO of the QWR.

The company has reached 700-800 schools in 19 states, including 89 across Maharashtra, of which half a dozen are in Pune. "The basic idea is that very complex concepts, such as the deep ocean and creatures who live there — things that we cannot see in real life — can now be rendered through simulation to have the child study these complex subjects," says Aiar. Depending on the class strength and curriculum, among other factors, the average cost goes up to around 10 lakhs to 20 lakhs per laboratory. Working with governments through schemes, such as Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan of the Ministry of Education and the PM Shri, which aims to strengthen the schools managed by central and state governments and local bodies, QWR has deployed its technology in areas such as Kohima in Nagaland and the interiors of Madhya Pradesh and West Singhbhum in Jharkhand, among other places. "We also have private schools but we have found the government to be a better promoter in rural India than private schools, who, mostly, still look at this innovation from a marketing lens," says Aiar.

The company has been growing 2.5 times year-on-year and the focus now is, mostly, on scaling. "Scaling ourselves is both vertical and horizontal. Vertical scaling means



coming up with a new generation of products and deploying them in existing markets. Horizontal scaling will entail exploring other new markets. At present, we are working on healthcare. We are excited to be working on providing Amblyopia therapy using virtual reality headsets," says Aiar. Another sector is defence, where QWR aims to enhance combat training and mission planning with immersive virtual environments. "VR will empower soldiers with realistic simulations, ensuring readiness and safety," says a statement on the startup's website, referring to virtual reality. QWR is a class-one make-in-India manufacturer, which means that more than 51 per cent of its bill of material and value adds are done locally. "We have our assembly unit and workshop in Pune, and we aspire to get to a certain threshold when it comes to the revenues, so that we can take leverage of schemes like the government's Production Linked Incentive to be able to compete with China in the global markets," says Aiar. Though he was born and raised in Mumbai, he made the strategic decision to move to Pune because the city is a bedrock of engineers. "I prefer hiring fresher engineers because ours is a new field. Because we are focused on enterprise, we found that Pune has the kind of enterprise customers that we deal with, both, in terms of partners as well as customers," says Aiar.

# India and EU committed to having Free Trade Agreement by end of this year, says Finnish envoy

GNS News Agency, June 17

Leaders on the Indian side and European side are now committed to the goal of having a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) by the end of this year and there is a good chance that this goal can be achieved, said Finland's Ambassador to India Kimmo Lähdevirta here on Monday. Vice president of Arvind Limited, Kulin Lalbhai, who has been appointed as the Honorary Consul of Finland was also present on the occasion. After inaugurating the Honorary Consulate, the Finnish ambassador interacted with media persons.

When asked about the recent visit of a delegation of the European Union (EU), prospects of FTA between India and EU and how soon could it be concluded, Lähdevirta said, "It really was historic. The whole collegium of the EU Commission visited India. It was a historic visit. I think it also created good momentum for the negotiations to go ahead. I think both leaders — on the European and Indian side are now committed to the goal of having an agreement by the end of this year. Of course, it still requires a lot of work. But I do believe that there is a good chance that this goal can be achieved... at the moment, I would say that the momentum and prospects are very good."

In a brief speech after inaugurating the Honorary Consulate, Lähdevirta said, "Last year Finland and India celebrated 75 years of diplomatic relations, and Finns have been present in India for at least as long as that even longer actually. Many Finnish companies have established their presence here in India, collaborating, manufacturing and innovating for decades with Indian partners, and they are here to stay." "The decision to open our Honorary Consulate here is a reflection of the deepening Finnish-Indian partnership, and growing business interest. Finnish companies are contributing to the state's growth and development goals through world-class technologies, sustainable solutions, and investments," he added.

"In Gujarat, our cooperation has traditionally focused on energy, but today, Finnish companies are engaged across multiple sectors: clean energy, circular economy, skilling, smart infrastructure, and sustainable design. And



Gujarat — with its world-class infrastructure, business-friendly environment, and innovation-oriented institutions — offers an ideal environment for these collaborations to flourish," he further added. According to the Finnish ambassador, there are over 100 companies operating in India and about 10 of them are active in Gujarat. He also said that the overall annual trade between India and Finland is around three billion Euros which includes trade in goods and services.

He added that Finland's export to India is more on the goods side and India's export to Finland is more on the services side. In the context, he also said that Finland is going to organise a roadshow in Helsinki next autumn to let people know about current India as well. He said that Finland wants to attract Indian students and healthcare personnel. Speaking on the occasion, Kulin Lalbhai said, "With this sort of opportunity and platform... of being a part of a dialogue with a country as exciting as Finland, it personally also projects an opportunity for me to get new exposure and try and contribute to this great relationship. And as Honorary Consul, there will be multiple things that I hope to work on. One of course is to bring Finnish companies and companies here together. It's a complementary economy, skill sets that we can bring together. We have started meeting many companies one on one and we hope to deepen these relationships and bring a lot of positives to both sides of the equation."



# ‘Flag march’ by Punjab govt employees demanding restoration of OPS in bypoll-bound Ludhiana West



GNS News Agency, June 17

Government employees from over 50 departments in Punjab are planning a large protest called a “flag march” in bypoll-bound Ludhiana West on Thursday, June 12. The protest, organised by the Purani Pension Bahali Sangharsh Committee (PPBSC) and the Central Provident Fund Employees Union (CPFEU), aims to demand the restoration of the Old Pension Scheme (OPS) for more than 2 lakh employees recruited after the implementation of the National Pension Scheme (NPS), popularly known as new pension schme, on January 1, 2004.Organisers accuse the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government in Punjab of failing to fulfil its pre-election promise to restore OPS within six months of taking office. They express frustration over government spending on advertising while neglecting employee issues. The protest is expected to include vehicle mobilisation and distribution of educational posters to raise awareness among voters ahead of the Ludhiana West Assembly bypoll on June 19.

Speaking to The Indian Express, PPBSC convener Jasvir Singh Talwara said, “Employees from across Punjab will gather in Ludhiana West to expose the unfulfilled promises of the AAP government, even after more than three years in power.”Sukhjeet Singh, convenor of the Punjab unit of CPFEU, said, “Before coming to power, Bhagwant Mann’s AAP had assured NPS employees that OPS would be restored within six months of forming the government. However, even after three-and-a-half years, the employees have received nothing beyond an incomplete notification.”Both Talwara and Sukhjeet accused the government of spending crores of rupees on hollow advertising campaigns to build its image, while failing to allocate funds for restoring OPS. “This has led to widespread anger and resentment among more than two lakh government employees in the state,” they said, adding that extensive preparations have been made to bring this issue to the public’s attention through the march.Sources reveal that officials and leaders from the ruling party have allegedly advised employees not to gather in large numbers in the poll-bound Ludhiana West constituency on June 12.Responding to this, Talwara questioned, “When political parties can organise roadshows, why can’t we protest against the false promises made by the state government? We are being approached by authorities not to bring in more than five vehicles. Our appeal to the voters of Ludhiana West is to vote for anyone but the AAP. It is time to teach this arrogant government a lesson.”The Ludhiana West bypoll follows the death of Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) MLA Gurpreet Gogi Bassi, who died on

# Bengaluru gold smuggling case: After ED and CBI probes, Kannada actor Ranya Rao now faces I-T investigation

GNS News Agency, June 17

The Income Tax (I-T) department will investigate the wealth of Kannada actor Ranya Rao, who was arrested in a gold smuggling case, with a special court for economic offences in Bengaluru Monday allowing its application to question her in prison.The special court dismissed the objections raised by Rao’s lawyer and permitted the I-T department to question her in prison from 10 am to 5 pm between June 11 and June 13.The assistant director of I-T (Investigations) applied last week seeking court permission to record the statement of Rao, 33, at the Bengaluru Central Prison regarding her earnings from alleged gold smuggling activities.The I-T department argued that the actor, who was arrested on March 3 from the Bengaluru International Airport for smuggling 14.2 kg of gold worth Rs 12.56 crore, was involved in the smuggling activity by using resources generated from “unexplained sources and cash”.It sought to probe the unexplained sources by recording her statement in prison over a three-day period.B S Girish, the counsel for Rao, argued that the provisions of the Customs Act and the I-T Act are distinct, and so she cannot be compelled to give a statement under the provisions of the I-T Act, which would be contrary to Article 22 of the Constitution.The special public prosecutor of the I-T department, however, argued that I-T authorities are empowered to investigate and that she needs to be probed about the huge cash she allegedly mobilised and circulated for acquiring and selling gold from Dubai.“The objections of the accused No.1 as to the statement U/s.131(1) of the Act is contrary to Article 22 of the Indian Constitution cannot be accepted as the Act very much permits the recording of statement as a part of investigation, in view of the applicant being vested with powers of a civil court,” the special court ruled Monday.“The other objections as to the Customs Act and IT Act being distinct enactments in itself will not come in the way to permit the applicant/Department to investigate into the allegations against the accused No.1 on the basis of credible information,” the special court said.On May 3, The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) arrested Rao from the airport on her arrival from Dubai with concealed on her body.On March 9, the DRI arrested Telugu actor Tarun Konduru, a US passport holder, after he was identified as an alleged accomplice of Rao in the gold smuggling racket.On March 26, the DRI arrested Sahil Jain, 27, a hawala dealer and associate of Rao, who allegedly received the gold smuggled by the actors and transferred funds through the hawala route to Dubai for the purchase of more gold.The DRI alleged that Jain played a central role in disposing of 49.6 kg of gold worth Rs 40.13 crore, smuggled from Dubai by Rao, between November 2024 and February 2025.

She is alleged to have used airport protocol services available to her father to escape customs checks and detection at the Bengaluru airport on arrival from Dubai.The DRI also alleged that Rao and her associates smuggled 100 kg of gold in the 2024-25 period.It said Jain is part of a sophisticated smuggling network operating in India and abroad.A prosecution complaint was filed against him by the agency in a Kolkata court on March 5, 202, in a case

January 10 due to an accidental discharge of a firearm at his home. The major candidates in are Sanjeev Arora (AAP), Bharat Bhushan (Congress), Parupkar Singh Ghuman (Shiromani Akali Dal), and Jiwan Gupta (Bharatiya Janata Party).

Talwara said, “The AAP already has 93 MLAs. Winning one more will not change much for them, but losing this seat will send a strong message that they must take employee, farmer, industrial and public issues seriously.”Ajitpal Singh Jassowal, a PPBSC member, said large-scale mobilisation of vehicles and cadre is being organised, with duties assigned at the block level. “During the flag march, employees will also distribute posters highlighting the AAP government’s betrayal and breach of trust. These are meant to educate voters and encourage them to make an informed choice,” he said.

The AAP promised the implementation of OPS in its 2022 Punjab election manifesto. Later, ahead of the Himachal Pradesh elections in October 2022, employee unions in Punjab threatened to protest at the Ridge in Shimla to expose the non-implementation of OPS by the AAP government in Punjabm at a time when the AAP was contesting in Himachal Pradesh.To pacify protest plans, the Punjab government made a verbal announcement of OPS implementation just ahead of the Shimla protest. A formal notification followed on November 18, 2022, shortly before Punjab employee unions planned a four-day protest in Gujarat, also a poll-bound state then, to expose the AAP’s inaction. Both protests were postponed after this, but as of now, OPS still has not been implemented.“Unlike Himachal Pradesh, where OPS was implemented after the Congress government came to power in December 2022, Punjab continues to ‘study the possibilities’,” said Talwara.“Now, they are asking us to switch to the unified pension scheme, but our demand is for full implementation of OPS.”Sukhjeet explained the technical differences between the two pension schmes and said, “Under OPS, employees used to contribute to the General Provident Fund (GPF) up to 50 per cent of their salary, with a minimum of Rs 2,000 per month. This money was retained by the state government, and the scheme provided a fixed, lifelong monthly pension—50 per cent of the last drawn salary—adjusted for inflation through dearness allowance (DA).”In contrast, he said, under NPS, 10 per cent of the basic salary is deducted from the employee, and the government contributes 14 per cent. “This corpus is then invested through the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA), which comes under the Centre. Upon retirement, 60 per cent of the corpus can be withdrawn, while the remaining 40 per cent is converted into a monthly pension payout.”Union members assert that the pension from NPS is far less than that from OPS and not lifelong.Leaders such as Ranbir Singh Uppal, Lakhwinder Singh Bhaur, Karamjit Singh Tamkot, Jaswinder Singh Jassa, Jagseer Singh Sahota, Varinder Vicky, and Bikramjit Singh Kaddon have been holding meetings at various locations to mobilise employees and finalise arrangements for the June 12 march.As Ludhiana West prepares to go to polls on June 19, all eyes will be on the show of strength by Punjab’s government employees, and whether their collective voice leads to a renewed push for restoring OPS.



A Bengaluru court has allowed I-T department's application to question Ranya Rao in prison for three days in connection with the gold smuggling case.

involving the smuggling of 41.64 kg of gold.The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Enforcement Directorate (ED) are also investigating the gold smuggling case from criminal and money laundering angles and have registered cases.

The ED recently carried out searches on properties, including offices of an education trust belonging to Karnataka Home Minister G Parameshwara on the grounds that there had been monetary transactions between the trust and Rao.The trust, headquartered in Tumakuru in Karnataka, is alleged to have made a payment of Rs 40 lakh towards her credit card bills.Courts in Bengaluru granted Rao, Konduru, and Jain statutory bail after the DRI failed to file prosecution complaints (chargesheets) against them within 60 days of their arrest.

However, the accused trio remain in prison on account of the Union Department of Revenue invoking the Conservation of Foreign Exchange and Prevention of Smuggling Activities (COFEPOSA) Act, 1974, against them on April 22.The COFEPOSA Act allows the preventive detention of persons for a period of up to one year.Last month, her mother H P Rohini filed a habeas corpus plea in the Karnataka High Court over the continued detention of her daughter.The matter was, however, adjourned by two weeks on June 3 after the court was informed that the advisory panel for confirming the COFEPOSA detention order of Rao was yet to meet.

# Amid rise in licence applicants, Pune RTO to set up 3 new driving test tracks at these locations



GNS News Agency, June 17

The Pune Regional Transport Office (RTO) has announced plans to establish three additional driving test tracks at Dive Ghat near Saswad, Hadapsar, and Alandi Road to address the rising pressure on existing facilities and reduce the waiting period for licence applicants. The new tracks will be in addition to the current automated facility at the Institute of Driving Training and Research (IDTR) near Nashik Phata.At present, those applying for two-wheeler licence must visit the Phulewadi RTO and applicants for four-wheeler and heavy vehicle licence need to visit the sensor-based testing tracks at IDTR. Learner’s licence tests

are conducted at the Sangamwadi RTO, and an online test option is also available from home.

The authorities decided to open the additional test tracks considering the rising number of licence applicants and the inconvenience faced by those living away from Pimpri Chinchwad.Speaking to The Indian Express, Swapnil Bhosale, Deputy Regional Transport Officer, said, “This decision has been taken considering the increasing number of vehicle licence applicants and to address the gap between demand and available infrastructure, as the current testing track was inadequate to handle the volume efficiently. The upcoming tracks will help us distribute the testing load and cut down waiting periods gradually.”“The new facilities will incorporate the same advanced sensor-based technology currently operational at the IDTR track and include automated evaluation systems designed to assess driving competency standards across all locations. Also, each new centre will feature separate tracks for two-wheeler and four-wheeler testing within the facility itself. And the choice of locations is strategically planned to provide geographical coverage, taking into account Pune’s expansion,” added Bhosale.Welcoming the move, Vaibhavi Patil, 18, a resident of Undri, said, “A new facility in Hadapsar would make it convenient and hassle-free to give the driving test near my home rather than travelling around 25 km to IDTR near Kasarwadi.”

# Power bill demand of Rs 1.91 crore ‘wholly unnatural and arbitrary’, Allahabad High Court gives relief to Sambhal MP, directs that electricity supply be restored

GNS News Agency, June 17

Sambhal Electricity Theft SP MP Ziaur Rahman BarqSamajwadi Party MP Ziaur Rahman Barq was earlier booked for allegedly instigating protesters during the violence that had broken out in the area on November 24.The Allahabad High Court has directed the Uttar Pradesh Power Corporation Ltd (UPPCL) to restore power supply at the house of Sambhal Member of Parliament, Zia Ur Rehman Barq.In a significant relief to the Samajwadi Party MP, the Allahabad High Court also stayed the operation of an electricity bill demand of Rs 1.91 crore raised by the UPPCL, terming it “wholly unnatural and arbitrary”, in its June 4 order.The matter was heard by a division bench comprising Justices Saumitra Dayal Singh and Sandeep Jain. The court was hearing a writ petition filed by the Sambhal MP challenging the assessment order dated May 15, 2025. The court also directed the restoration of the electricity connection, subject to a deposit of Rs 6 lakh and timely payment of future bills.“Subject to the petitioner depositing Rs.6 lakhs within a period of two weeks from Wednesday, the effect and operation of order dated 15.05.2025, shall remain stayed and the electricity connection of the petitioner, that may have been temporarily disconnected, may be restored forthwith and be maintained subject to timely payment of future bills,” read the court order.Barq was represented by advocates Bidhan Chandra Rai and Stuti Rai, who argued that the UPPCL lacked jurisdiction to assess electricity usage for “a period of 12 years”, asserting that the maximum permissible assessment period under the law is one year.

“Submission is that even if the inspection report and



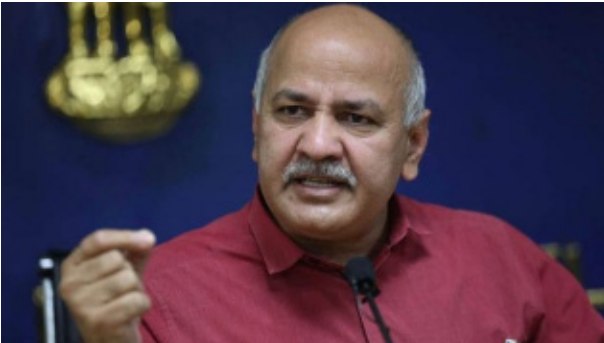
adverse facts allegedly found therein are accepted, no jurisdiction arose with the respondent authorities to make assessment for a period of 12 years,” the court order read.The order further said that the maximum period for which assessment may have been made could not exceed one year. “By breaching the statutory period of assessment, wholly unnatural and arbitrary demand of Rs.1 crore 91 lacs has been raised. The petitioner cannot be made to deposit 50% of such illegal demand to maintain an appeal,” said the order passed on June 4.The court granted three weeks to the UPPCL to respond and fixed the date of next hearing as July 2, 2025.The fine was imposed on the MP after allegations of power theft at his residence, on December 19. On the same day, he was charged with large scale electricity theft and the power supply to his residence was disconnected.

# After Manish Sisodia skips ACB summons, officials ask him to appear on June 20 in classroom construction ‘scam’

GNS News Agency, June 17

The Anti-Corruption Branch (ACB) of the Delhi Government Tuesday again summoned former AAP minister Manish Sisodia in connection with the alleged corruption to the tune of Rs 2,000 crore in the construction of classrooms in government schools when the party was in power.Sisodia was summoned on June 3, and had to appear before ACB officials on June 9, but he could not do so, citing prior engagements. ACB has now asked him to appear on June 20.On Monday, after the Aam Aadmi Party leader’s counsel said he would file a reply via email, ACB officials said that once he does so, they will see whether a summons will be issued again.

On April 30, ACB registered a First Information Report (FIR) against Sisodia and Satyendar Jain over alleged corruption in the construction of classrooms. While Sisodia held the finance and education portfolios, Jain had charge of the Public Works Department, which was the agency at the helm of the construction work, sources said.Officials said the alleged scam, which is to the tune of Rs 2,000 crore, pertains to the construction of 12,748 classrooms or



semi-permanent structures during the tenure of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government.Officials said the project was reportedly awarded to some contractors associated with the AAP, and significant deviations and cost escalations were observed. They added that the consultant and architect for the project were appointed without following due procedure, and cost escalations were carried out through them.

# ‘Millions unable to realise reproductive goals’: UNFPA State of World Population Report 2025 reveals crisis of fertility aspirations

GNS News Agency, June 17

One in three adult Indians (36%) face unintended pregnancies, while 30% experience unfulfilled desire for having either more or fewer children. Notably, 23% faced both, according to the United Nations Population Fund’s (UNFPA) 2025 State of World Population (SOWP) Report released Tuesday morning.“Vast numbers of people are unable to create the families they want,” Dr Natalia Kanem, executive director of UNFPA, told reporters at a virtual media conference. “The issue is lack of choice, not desire, with major consequences for individuals and societies. That is the real fertility crisis, and the answer lies in responding to what people say they need: paid family leave, affordable fertility care, and supportive partners,” Kanem said.

This year’s report, ‘The real fertility crisis: The pursuit of reproductive agency in a changing world’ has called for a shift from panic over falling fertility to addressing unmet reproductive goals. SOWP 2025 underlines that millions of individuals are unable to realise their real fertility goals. This is the real crisis, not underpopulation or overpopulation. And, the answer lies in greater reproductive agency – a person’s ability to make free and informed choices about sex, contraception, and starting a family.The report draws on academic research and new data from a UNFPA–YouGov survey spanning 14 countries, including India. The report

finds that one in five people globally expect not to have the number of children they desire. Key drivers include the prohibitive cost of parenthood, job insecurity, housing, concerns over the state of the world, and the lack of a suitable partner. A toxic blend of economic precarity and sexism plays a role in many of these issues, the report shows.Key findings from the UNFPA–YouGov Survey 2025, an online poll with 14,000 respondents, reveal multiple barriers to reproductive autonomy in India. Financial limitations are one of the biggest barriers to reproductive freedom. Nearly four in 10 people say financial limitations are stopping them from having the families they want. Job insecurity (21%), housing constraints (22%), and the lack of reliable childcare (18%) are making parenthood feel out of reach.Health barriers like poor general well-being (15%), infertility (13%), and limited access to pregnancy-related care (14%) add further strain. Many are also holding back due to growing anxiety about the future—from climate change to political and social instability. Nineteen per cent faced partner or family pressure to have fewer children than they personally wanted.The report challenges global narratives around ‘population explosion’ versus ‘population collapse’. Replacement-level fertility, commonly defined as 2.1 births per woman, is the rate at which a population size remains the same from one generation to the next.



# Russia launches one of war's largest air attacks on Kyiv



KYIV, - GNS News Agency, June 17 Russia launched one of its largest air strikes on Kyiv in over three years of war and struck a maternity ward in the southern city of Odesa in attacks that killed at least two people, officials said on Tuesday.The overnight strikes followed Russia's biggest drone assault of the war on Ukraine on Monday and were part of intensified bombardments what Moscow says is retaliation for attacks by Ukrainian forces on Russia.The Reuters Daily Briefing newsletter provides all the news you need to start your day. Sign up here.Loud explosions shook Kyiv and blasts and fires lit up the sky in the early hours of Tuesday morning, leaving palls of heavy smoke over the city, Reuters witnesses said.At least four people were treated in hospital after seven of the capital's 10 districts were hit, city officials said."Today was one of the largest attacks on Kyiv," President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said. "Russian missile and Shahed (drone) strikes drown out the efforts of the United States and others around the world to force Russia into peace."

Zelenskiy urged Ukraine's allies to take steps to force Russia into peace, and Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha called for immediate new sanctions and air defence systems.Although Moscow and Kyiv have held two rounds

of direct peace talks in recent weeks, the only tangible progress has been an agreement on exchanges of prisoners of war, and Russia has continued to advance along the front line in eastern Ukraine.Moscow and Kyiv blame each other for the lack of progress towards ending the war, which has raged since Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022, and U.S. President Donald Trump has expressed frustration with both sides.

overnight at four airports serving Moscow, at St Petersburg's Pulkovo Airport and at airports in nine other cities after the Defence Ministry said Ukraine had launched more drones at Russia, officials said.Flights in Moscow and some other cities were later restored but restrictions were still in place in St Petersburg at 0430 GMT. No damage was reported.Ukraine's air force said Russia had fired 315 drones across the country, of which 277 were downed. All seven missiles launched by Russia were also brought down, it said.Air raid alerts in Kyiv and most Ukrainian regions lasted five hours until around 5 a.m. (0200 GMT), according to information released by the military."A difficult night for all of us," Timur Tkachenko, head of Kyiv's city military administration, said on Telegram.Moscow has intensified attacks on Ukraine following Kyiv's strikes on strategic bombers at air bases inside Russia on June 1. Moscow also blamed Kyiv for bridge explosions on the same day that killed seven and injured scores.Over the past week, Russia has launched 1,451 drones and 78 missiles to attack the country, according to Ukrainian air force data.In the southern port of Odesa, an overnight drone attack hit an emergency medical building, a maternity ward and residential buildings, regional governor Oleh Kiper said on Telegram.Two men were killed in the attack on the city but patients and staff were safely evacuated from the maternity hospital, he said.Both sides deny targeting civilians but thousands of civilians have been killed in Europe's worst conflict since World War Two, the vast majority of them Ukrainian.Writing by Lidia Kelly in Melbourne and Anastasiia Malenko in Kyiv; Editing by Chris Reese, Saad Sayeed, Lincoln Feast and Timothy Heritage

# Trump administration deploys Marines to Los Angeles, vows to intensify migrant raids

LOS ANGELES/WASHINGTON, GNS News Agency, June 17 The Trump administration on Monday ordered U.S. Marines into Los Angeles and intensified raids on suspected undocumented immigrants, fueling more outrage from street protesters and Democratic leaders who raised concerns over a national crisis.Some 700 Marines based in Southern California were expected to reach Los Angeles Monday night or Tuesday morning, officials said, as part of a federal strategy to quell street demonstrations opposing the immigration raids, which are a part of a signature effort of President Donald Trump's second term.The Reuters Tariff Watch newsletter is your daily guide to the latest global trade and tariff news. Sign up here.Although their mission to protect federal personnel and property is temporary filling the gaps until a full contingent of 4,000 National Guard troops can reach Los Angeles - the deployment is an extraordinary use of military force in support of a police operation, and it comes over the objection of state and local leaders who did not request help.

Meanwhile, U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem pledged to carry out even more operations to round up suspected immigration violators, extending a crackdown that provoked the protests. Trump officials have branded the protests as lawless and blamed state and local Democrats for permitting upheaval and protecting undocumented immigrants with sanctuary cities.The military and federal enforcement operations have further polarized America's two major political parties as Trump, a Republican, threatened to arrest California's Democratic governor, Gavin Newsom, for resisting the federal crackdown.California sued the Trump administration to block deployment of the National Guard and the Marines on Monday, arguing that it violates federal law and state sovereignty.The top Democrat on the Senate Armed Services Committee, Senator Jack Reed, said he was "gravely troubled" by Trump's deployment of active-duty Marines.

"The president is forcibly overriding the authority of the governor and mayor and using the military as a political weapon. This unprecedented move threatens to turn a tense situation into a national crisis," Reed said."Since our nation's founding, the American people have been perfectly clear: we do not want the military conducting law enforcement on U.S. soil," he said.The announcement that Marines would be deployed was made on the fourth straight day of protests. Late on Monday police began to disperse hundreds of demonstrators who gathered outside a federal detention center in downtown Los Angeles where immigrants have been held. Police said arrests were being made.National Guard forces had formed a human barricade to keep people out of the building. Then a phalanx of police moved up the street, pushing people from the scene and firing "less lethal" munitions such as gas canisters. Police had used similar tactics since Friday.U.S. Marines are known as the first American forces to establish a beachhead in U.S. military interventions, and as the last forces to leave any occupation.Though military forces have been deployed domestically for major disasters such as Hurricane Katrina and the attacks of September 11, 2001, it is extremely rare for troops to be used domestically during civil disturbances.Even without invoking the Insurrection Act, Trump can deploy Marines under certain conditions of law or under his authority as commander in chief.The last time the military was used for direct police action under the Insurrection Act was in 1992, when the California governor at the time asked President George H.W. Bush to help respond to Los Angeles riots over the acquittal of police officers who beat Black motorist Rodney King.Newsom contends it is his charge as governor to call in the National Guard, labeling Trump's action as "an unmistakable step toward authoritarianism."Trump in turn said he supported a suggestion by his border czar Tom Homan that Newsom should be arrested over possible obstruction of his administration's immigration enforcement measures. "I would do it if I were Tom. I think it's great," Trump told reportersThe protests so far have resulted in a few dozen arrests and some property damage.What is happening effects every American, everyone who wants to live free, regardless of how long their family has lived here," said Marzita Cerrato, 42, a first-generation immigrant whose parents are from Mexico and Honduras.Protests also sprang up in at least nine other U.S. cities on Monday, including New York, Philadelphia and San Francisco, according to local news outlets.In Austin, Texas, police fired nonlethal munitions and detained several people as they clashed with a crowd of several hundred protesters.

Before the Los Angeles dispersal, several hundred protesters outside a detention center chanted "free them



all," flew Mexican and Central American flags, and directed sometimes-vulgar insults toward federal officers.At dusk, officers had running confrontations with protesters who had scattered into the Little Tokyo section of the city. As people watched from apartment patios above street level, and as tourists huddled inside hotels, a large contingent of LAPD and officers and sheriffs deputies fired several flash bangs that boomed through side streets along with tear gas.Homeland Security said its Immigration and Customs Enforcement division had arrested 2,000 immigration offenders per day in recent days, far above the 311 daily average in fiscal year 2024 under former President Joe Biden."We conducted more operations today than we did the day before and tomorrow we are going to double those efforts again," Noem told Fox News' "Hannity." "The more that they protest and commit acts of violence against law enforcement officers, the harder ICE is going to come after them."Reporting by Jane Ross, Jorge Garcia, Brad Brooks and Arafat Barbakh in Los Angeles and Idrees Ali and Phil Stewart in Washington; Additional reporting by Sandy Hooper, Joel Angel Juarez, Kanishka Singh, Ismail Shakil, Doina Chiacu, Steve Holland, Nandita Bose, Lizbeth Díaz, Noé Torres, Alexia Garamfalvi and Dietrich Knauth; Writing by Andy Sullivan, James Oliphant and Daniel Trotta; Editing by Mary Milliken, Ross Colvin, Michelle Nichols, Rod Nickel, Leslie Adler and Michael Perry

# Telangana community in US celebrates unity and culture at vibrant get-together

Detroit, Michigan (USA): The spirit of unity and joy filled the air as more than 350 families from Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, residing in Metro Detroit area, came together for a lively community get-together organised by Global Telangana Association, Detroit Chapter at Shiawassee Park in Farmington Hills, here on Saturday.

The event, organised by Global Telangana Association's Detroit chapter, showcased the authentic culinary traditions of Telangana. The organisers emphasised the importance of fostering togetherness in today's fast-paced world.

"This gathering is more than just a celebration — it's a reminder of the strength we draw from our shared values and mutual respect," said GTA (USA) president, Praveen Kesireddy, in his welcome address.The occasion, which also marked the 11th anniversary of Telangana Formation, brought people of all ages together for a full day of cultural performances, sports and games, interactive activities and heartfelt camaraderie, reinforcing the bonds within the neighbourhood.Attendees were treated to melodious musical Telugu folk songs that highlighted the cultural heritage of Telangana. Children participated in fun-filled games. The food that was served contained an array of Telangana delicacies, like the flavorful Bhagara rice, soupy chicken curry, spinach and mango dal, the signature pachi pulusu, beetroot raita, spicy mutton curry, rohati pachadi (chutneys), curd rice, crispy snacks and sweet delicacies, some of them prepared on-site even before the crowds swelled. Each dish reflected the essence of Telangana's vibrant food culture among others, adding a flavourful touch to the festivities.A highlight of the afternoon was a raffle draw, musical chairs and lemon spoon race for ladies, and races for children under-10 years, which truly engaged the large gathering. Sound of laughter and chatter of families and friends was on display.

# Israel commits 'extermination' in Gaza by killing in schools, UN experts say



VIENNA, GNS News Agency, June 17- U.N. experts said in a report on Tuesday that Israel committed the crime against humanity of "extermination" by killing civilians sheltering in schools and religious sites in Gaza, part of a "concerted campaign to obliterate Palestinian life."The United Nations Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel was due to present the report to Geneva-based U.N. Human Rights Council on June 17.The Reuters Daily Briefing newsletter provides all the news you need to start your day. Sign up here.

"We are seeing more and more indications that Israel is carrying out a concerted campaign to obliterate Palestinian life in Gaza," former U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay, who chairs the commission, said in a statement."Israel's targeting of the educational, cultural and religious life of the Palestinian people will harm the

present generations and generations to come, hindering their right to self-determination," she added.The commission examined attacks on educational facilities and religious and cultural sites to assess if international law was breached.Israel disengaged from the Human Rights Council in February, alleging it was biased.When the commission's last report in March found Israel carried out "genocidal acts" against Palestinians by systematically destroying women's healthcare facilities during the conflict in Gaza, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the findings were biased and antisemitic.In its latest report, the commission said Israel had destroyed more than 90% of the school and university buildings and more than half of all religious and cultural sites in Gaza."Israeli forces committed war crimes, including directing attacks against civilians and wilful killing, in their attacks on educational facilities ... In killing civilians sheltering in schools and religious sites, Israeli security forces committed the crime against humanity of extermination," it said.The war was triggered when Hamas-led militants killed 1,200 people in Israel in a surprise attack in October 2023, and took 251 hostages back to the enclave, according to Israeli tallies.Israel responded with a military campaign that has killed over 54,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza health authorities.Harm done to the Palestinian education system was not confined to Gaza, the report found, citing increased Israeli military operations in the West Bank and East Jerusalem as well as harassment of students and settler attacks there."Israeli authorities have also targeted Israeli and Palestinian educational personnel and students inside Israel who expressed concern or solidarity with the civilian population in Gaza, resulting in their harassment, dismissal or suspension and in some cases humiliating arrests and detention," it said.

# Bangladesh's Awami League denounces targeted killings of prison activists

GNS News Agency, June 17  
Dhaka: The Awami League has strongly condemned a series of mysterious and deliberate killings of its activists across several prisons in Bangladesh. The party's statement, released on June 10 in Dhaka, accused the interim regime led by Muhammad Yunus of orchestrating a covert campaign to terrorize and eliminate its members. According to eyewitness accounts and leaked reports, these fatalities include instances of deliberate medical negligence, forced poisonings, chemically induced cardiac arrest, solitary confinement, and severe physical torture, all carried out under the guise of routine administrative procedures.

The party further alleged that these brutal actions are part of what it calls the "Yunus Doctrine," a strategy meant to cripple the grassroots strength of a movement that once played a pivotal role in securing Bangladesh's independence. The Awami League contends that these targeted killings are not random events but rather a well-coordinated effort by a shadow authority linked to Yunus, intended to send a powerful message of fear and suppress future electoral resistance.In a particularly distressing development, the ruling party highlighted the recent jail execution of its leader, Ali Azgar, as a stark example of the regime's ruthless tactics. The Awami League also reported that at least 21 of its members have died in custody since Muhammad Yunus assumed power, pointing to systemic abuse within environments that should be the safest under national law and international human rights standards.



Demanding justice and accountability, the Awami League called for immediate national action, including judicial inquiry commissions, independent investigation teams under Prime Minister's Office supervision, and the presence of international human rights observers. The party stressed that these investigative measures are essential not only to expose the perpetrators of these crimes but also to safeguard the legacy of Bangladesh's liberation movement. Underlining the leadership of Sheikh Hasina, whose moral authority as the daughter of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman resonates with the nation's history, the Awami League expressed its unwavering belief that only she can restore justice and put an end to these heinous acts.

# Israeli navy attacks docks in Yemen's rebel-held port city of Hodeida

GNS News Agency, June 17  
The Israeli navy attacked docks in Yemen's rebel-held port city of Hodeida on Tuesday (June 10, 2025), likely damaging facilities that are key to aid shipments to the hungry, war-racked nation.The Israeli military said navy missile ships conducted the strikes, the first time its forces have been involved in attacks against the Houthi rebels. Tuesday's (June 10, 2025) attack comes as the Houthis have repeatedly launched missiles and drones targeting Israel during its war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

The Houthis announced the attack via their al-Masirah satellite news channel. They said the attack targeted docks there, without elaborating. On Monday (June 9, 2025), Israel issued online warnings to Yemenis to evacuate from Ras Isa, Hodeida and al-Salif ports over the Houthis' alleged use of seaports for attacks."The port is used to transfer weapons and is a further example of the Houthi terrorist regime's cynical exploitation of civilian infrastructure in order to advance terrorist activities," the Israeli military said in a statement on Tuesday (June 10, 2025.)Hodeida also is the main entry point for food and other humanitarian aid for millions of Yemenis since the war began when the Houthis seized Yemen's capital, Sanaa, in 2014.The Houthis have been launching persistent missile and drone attacks against commercial and military ships in the region in what the group's leadership has described as an effort to end Israel's offensive in Gaza.From November 2023 until January 2025, the Houthis targeted more than 100 merchant vessels with missiles and drones, sinking two of them and killing four sailors. That has greatly reduced the flow of trade through the Red Sea corridor, which typically sees \$1 trillion of goods move through it annually.Israel launches second strike on Yemen's Sanaa airport; targets Houthi militants



The Houthis paused attacks in a self-imposed ceasefire until the U.S. launched a broad assault against the rebels in mid-March. President Donald Trump paused those attacks just before his trip to the Mideast, saying the rebels had "capitulated" to American demands.Early Tuesday, U.S. Secretary of Defence Pete Hegseth wrote on the social platform X that U.S. Navy ships had travelled through the Red Sea and its Bab el-Mandeb Strait "multiple times in recent days" without facing Houthi attacks."These transits occurred without challenge and demonstrate the success of both Operation ROUGH RIDER and the President's Peace Through Strength agenda," Mr. Hegseth wrote ahead of facing Congress for the first time since sharing sensitive military details of America's military campaign against the Houthis in a Signal chat.It's unclear how the Houthis will respond now that an attack has come from the sea, rather than the air, from the Israelis. Meanwhile, a wider, decade-long war in Yemen between the Houthis and the country's exiled government, backed by a Saudi-led coalition, remains in a stalemate.

# Sean 'Diddy' Combs' ex says he was violent and forced a sex encounter after public apology in 2024

GNS News Agency, June 17  
Sean "Diddy" Combs forced his ex-girlfriend to have a "freak-off"-style sexual encounter with a male sex worker last year after chasing her around her California home, putting her in a chokehold, punching her in the face and kicking down doors, the woman testified Monday (June 9, 2025).Testifying for a third day under the pseudonym "Jane," the woman said Mr. Combs erupted after she accused him of cheating on her. After beating her, Jane said, Mr. Combs invited a sex worker over, gave her an ecstasy pill and told her: "You're not going to ruin my night like this."Jane, whose injuries included a black eye and welts on her forehead, said she'd planned June 18, 2024, as a romantic night with Mr. Combs, but now remembers it as a very terrible day."It's also one of the more recent examples of Mr. Combs acting violently toward a woman while seeking to fulfill his sexual desires — happening amid the federal investigation that led to his arrest last September.

Mr. Combs has pleaded not guilty to sex trafficking and racketeering charges that could put him in prison for life.As Jane left the witness stand Monday, she told jurors: "I just pray for his continued healing." The couple broke up after Mr. Combs' arrest, but she said he still pays her rent.Just a few weeks after Jane alleges Mr. Combs beat her, he publicly stated that he was "committed to being a better man every day" after video leaked of him attacking his former longtime girlfriend Cassie, the R&B singer whose real name is Casandra Ventura, at a Los Angeles hotel in 2016.The Associated Press doesn't name alleged victims of sexual abuse without their consent unless they have shared their identities publicly, as Cassie has.Jane's testimony is expected to fill the bulk of the trial's fifth week, as prosecutors move closer to the end of their presentation before the defense gets its turn.Jane, who faces questioning Tuesda from Mr. Combs' lawyers, said the rapper and entrepreneur followed her to a bathroom .



# All you need to know about: Hernias



A hernia occurs when an internal organ or tissue pushes through a weak spot in the surrounding muscle or tissue wall. Hernias can occur in the abdomen, upper thigh and groin areas. Inguinal hernia, femoral hernia, umbilical hernia and hiatal hernia are among the most common types. A previous surgical incision site is also a common site for a hernia to develop.According to the ‘Global burden of 369 diseases and injuries in 204 countries and territories, 1990–2019: a systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease (GBD) Study 2019’ published in The Lancet, inguinal, femoral, and abdominal hernia comprise disorders in which portions of the digestive tract protrude through defects in the walls of the abdominal cavity. These occasionally lead to life threatening acute complications, but more commonly are asymptomatic, or cause chronic or intermittent pain. Symptomatic hernia is surgically repaired.

Studies have indicated a surge in the global prevalence of hernia cases. While one analysis of data from the 2019 GBD Study found that the global prevalence of hernia cases rose by 36% from 1990 to 2019 (‘Global, regional, and national burden of inguinal, femoral, and abdominal hernias: a systematic analysis of prevalence, incidence, deaths, and DALYs with projections to 2030’ published in the International Journal of Surgery), another analysis found that males, older adults, and low-income and middle-income countries such as India and China, had heavy hernia burdens (‘The global, regional, and national burden and its trends of inguinal, femoral, and abdominal hernia from 1990 to 2019: findings from the 2019 Global Burden of Disease Study – a cross-sectional study’).

What are the symptoms of hernia?

One of the most common and recognisable symptoms of hernia is a visible bulge or lump in the affected area. Most commonly, hernias occur in the abdomen, groin and pelvic

floor. Very often, it can appear when a person strains or lifts objects or coughs.An inguinal hernia is characterised by a bulge in the groin area - for instance, a part of the intestine can protrude through a weak spot in the abdominal wall cavity appearing at the groin. Discomfort or pain, especially while coughing, bending over or lifting objects are some of the symptoms.According to the European Hernia Society, an abdominal wall hernia is defined as a protrusion of the contents of the abdomen through a defect in its wall. Primary ventral hernias are commonest in the midline of the abdomen. These are called umbilical or epigastric hernias, depending on their location. While an umbilical hernia is a hernia in the umbilicus (tummy button), and epigastric hernia is any other hernia in the middle of the tummy. Umbilical hernias, though common in babies, can also occur in adults.The American College of Surgeons says that about 10% of abdominal hernias are umbilical hernias. Among the common symptoms are a visible bulge on the abdomen, especially when coughing or straining; pain or pressure at the hernia site, increasing sharp abdominal pain and vomiting can mean that the hernia is strangulated. If strangulated, this is a surgical emergency and immediate treatment is needed, it said.

How are hernias diagnosed and treated?

Doctors can diagnose hernias through a physical examination. During the examination, they may check for bulges or protrusions when a patient stands or coughs. Imaging tests such as ultrasounds may also be used to confirm the diagnosis. Treatment options for hernias include surgical procedures - open and laparoscopic repairs. Other options include watchful waiting and lifestyle changes. In open hernia repair, the surgeon makes an incision in the groin and pushes the protruding/herniated tissue back into the abdomen. The weakened wall is repaired and usually a surgical mesh is reinforced, to reduce the chances of recurrence.

What is the way forward?

The study in the International Journal of Surgery made an observation that predictions until 2030 indicate an increase in hernia prevalence, particularly among males, with a simultaneous expected decrease in hernia-related death rates and disability-adjusted life years.It emphasised that considering the ongoing global burden of hernias, the need for continuous monitoring and adaptive health strategies is evident. “Effective reduction in hernia impact will require persistent research and proactive healthcare approaches,” it said.

# U.S. Defence Secretary Hegseth faces Congress for first time since Signal leaks, Marine deployment to Los Angeles

U.S. Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth is expected to field sharp questions from members of Congress about his tumultuous start as Pentagon chief, including his sharing of sensitive military details over a Signal chat, in three separate Capitol Hill hearings beginning Tuesday Lawmakers also have made it clear they are unhappy that Mr. Hegseth has not provided details on the administration's first proposed defence budget, which President Donald Trump has said would total \$1 trillion, a significant increase over the current spending level of more than \$800 billion.

It will be lawmakers' first chance to ask Mr. Hegseth about a myriad of other controversial spending by the Pentagon, including plans to spend hundreds of millions of dollars on security upgrades to turn a Qatari jet into Air Force One and to pour as much as \$45 million into a parade recently added to the Army's 250th birthday bash, which happens to coincide with Mr. Trump's birthday on Saturday.Lawmakers may quiz Mr. Hegseth on the latest searing images coming out of the immigration raid protests in Los Angeles. Mr. Hegseth has deployed about 700 active-duty Marines to assist more than 4,100 National Guard troops in protecting federal buildings and personnel. But there are questions about what the troops will have to do and how much it will all cost.Under the Posse Comitatus Act, troops are prohibited from policing U.S. citizens on American soil. Invoking the Insurrection Act, which allows troops to do that, is incredibly rare, and it's not clear if Mr. Trump plans to do it.The commandant of the Marine Corps, Gen. Eric Smith, will be on Capitol Hill testifying at a separate budget hearing at the same time as Mr. Hegseth and is likely to face similar questions.

What Hegseth has focused on so farMr. Hegseth has spent vast amounts of time during his first five months in office promoting the social changes he's making at the Pentagon. He's been far less visible in the administration's more critical international security crises and negotiations involving Russia, Ukraine, Israel, Gaza and Iran.Most recently, Mr. Hegseth directed the renaming of a Navy ship that had honoured Harvey Milk, a slain gay rights activist who served as a sailor during the Korean War. His spokesman, Sean Parnell, said the renaming was needed to ensure “the names attached to all DOD installations and assets are reflective of the commander-in-chief's priorities, our nation's history, and the warrior ethos.”

Mr. Hegseth has posted numerous videos of his morning workouts with troops or of himself signing directives to purge diversity and equity programs and online content from the military. He has boasted of removing transgender service members from the force and firing so-called woke generals, many of whom were women.He was on the international stage about a week ago, addressing an annual national security conference in Asia about threats from China. But a trip to NATO headquarters last week was quick and quiet, and he deliberately skipped a gathering of about 50 allies and partners where they discussed ongoing support for Ukraine.Use of Signal messaging app

Mr. Hegseth's hearing Tuesday before the House Appropriations Defence Subcommittee will be his first public appearance on Capitol Hill since he squeaked through his Senate confirmation with a tie-breaking vote. It was the closest vote of any Cabinet member.While he has talked a lot about making the military more lethal, it was his use of the unclassified, unsecured Signal messaging app that quickly caught public attention.Set up by then-national security adviser Mike Waltz, a group chat included Mr. Hegseth and other senior administration leaders and was used to share information about upcoming military strikes in Yemen.The chat became a public embarrassment because the editor-in-chief of The Atlantic, Jeffrey Goldberg, was inadvertently added to it. Mr. Waltz took responsibility for the gaffe, but Mr. Hegseth was roundly criticised for sharing details about the military strikes in this chat and in another one that included his wife and brother.Multiple investigations are looking into his use of Signal. The Defence Department's acting inspector general has been looking into the initial chat at the request of the Republican and Democratic leaders of the Senate Armed Services Committee. The Pentagon's watchdog is also reviewing whether any of Mr. Hegseth's aides were asked to delete any Signal messages.Controversial Pentagon spendingWhile any number of those issues could come up at the House Armed Services Committee hearing Thursday, money issues are

# Kota’s forgotten students: What happens when you don’t crack JEE Advanced



The coaching centres of Rajasthan’s Kota, often dubbed India’s coaching capital, claimed four of the top ten ranks in the JEE Advanced results announced last week. As photos of the toppers flood city banners and the media celebrates them with interviews, a large section of city’s students — those who didn’t make it through the country’s toughest engineering entrance exam — are left crestfallen, confused and conflicted.

For K. Seema, who gave up her passion for writing short stories to devote herself entirely to the exam this year, it was a rude shock to find she missed the cut-off by two marks. A native of Jaipur, she lived in a hostel affiliated with her coaching centre in Kota. Her performance at the weekly tests were so good that she started dreaming of a settled life in half a decade. “It was the only way out for our family to escape poverty. My parents are blue-collared workers, and as a family, we firmly believed that an IIT seat and a good job would help us move up the economic ladder,” she said. There are options — going to IIT, MIT or even taking a gap year, often called the “13th batch” in Kota dictionary. But confused and derailed by the near miss, students like Seema slip into a state of despair. Seema has not been answering the calls from her friends and relatives and is currently uncertain about her future. “Should I try again this year for a rank or settle for a private engineering college in Jaipur? What if I don’t get it next year? I would have wasted lakhs of money for my family, who saved it by sacrificing their basic needs,” she said.On average, 15–20% of JEE–Advanced qualifiers in recent years have reportedly trained in Kota. Though many who don’t make it fall into despair and take years to recover, some do see the positives in the intense training and dedication they learned here.If present trends are any indication, however, Kota culture may have run its course. According to industry experts, student enrolment in Kota fell sharply in 2024, with numbers ranging between 85,000 and 1 lakh. This marked a significant decline from the usual annual intake of 2 to 2.5 lakh students in previous years. The reason is largely attributed to the charged ecosystem and what it does to students, especially ones who don’t make the cut in JEE Advanced and Mains.

In Kota, for every student who cracks the JEE, there are dozens who don’t. Behind the banners of toppers and celebration lies a quieter, heavier reality—of far more students grappling with disappointment than with success. In a city obsessed with ranks, the struggles of those who didn’t make it remain unheard and unseen.Alumni of these coaching centres who didn’t crack the exam know there’s a world beyond the IIT dream. Having internalised discipline and grit during their time in Kota, many have upskilled through college and work and some have gone on to outshine even the IITians.Nishant Soni stayed away from playing keyboard for two years when he was studying for more than ten hours a day to crack the JEE exam in 2012. “I joined the coaching centre in 2010 with a dream of becoming an IITian as my father is a professor in Physics. I have been exposed to an educational upbringing and I wanted to honour him,” Nishant said. When he got a rank of 1.2 lakh, he was so demotivated that he did not want to talk to anyone. He received no support from the coaching centre and the professors, as they were busy celebrating the toppers. “They are focussed on their marketing with successful students. Coaching centres do not bat an eye to the students who do not make it,” Nishant added.

These coaching centres, however, helped Nishant build discipline and understand the true value of hard work;

# A new water harvesting model promises to help Rajasthan’s farmers



In the dry heartland of Rajasthan, a transformative rural water conservation model is set to benefit farmers in the upcoming monsoon. Those behind the initiative, which relies on 50 scientifically designed and climate-resilient farm ponds at Kukas village in the State capital of Jaipur, claim it has a 10-crore-litre seasonal monsoon run-off conservation potential. The village panchayat in Jaipur district’s Amber block is the second place in the State selected for the rainwater harvesting enterprise, following the successful installation of farm ponds in the rainfed land of Dausa district. As many as 250 ponds dug in the agricultural land of Dausa have enabled the farmers to get perennial crops.Nearly 99.4% of the agricultural cultivable land in Jaipur is dependent on groundwater for irrigation. The district extracts 2.22 times the water recharged through rain every year. The project in Kukas emphasises the sustainability and livelihoods of peasants, with a focus on the availability of water for irrigation.

The initiative involves constructing 10-foot-deep, plastic-lined ponds on 5% of each farmer’s land, reinforced with fencing.The ponds are designed to capture rainwater, ensuring year-round irrigation for rabi and kharif crops and enabling the return of sustain-

able livestock rearing and horticulture.Person behind initiativeAn alumnus of the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Kharagpur, Vipra Goyal, who has been working with the farmers, said while the construction of 50 ponds had been completed recently, 25 more were being dug to secure sustainable water supply to the rural households, which would help about 50,000 villagers in the region in the long-term.

Farmer Ram Phool of Kacherawala village, near Kukas, told The Hindu that he planned to sow crops like groundnuts and chaula (cowpeas) following the inflow of water into the pond installed at a corner of his land spread across eight bighas (nearly five acres). “One has to dig as much as

he is now working as a Senior DevOps Engineer and consultant in a Canadian multinational company named Telus. “I reconciled to the idea that it is not my potential to get into an IIT. Everyone is not meant to crack IIT,” he said, adding, “Cracking IIT is not the only way to become successful. Though mediocre in my academics throughout my life, I am earning almost equal to what IITians are earning today. So the whole point is to become successful in life and not just successful in cracking an exam.” In reality, many of these students succeed. “Many students who didn’t crack the exams come back after a few years having found meaningful careers in completely different fields – film, entrepreneurship, teaching, design, public service and more. They talk about how stepping away from the rigid coaching system helped them rediscover their real interests. But unfortunately, these stories are rarely highlighted because they don’t fit the conventional definition of success,” Dr Ghasi Ram Choudhary, former Head of the Political Science Department at Government College, University of Rajasthan, said. Rahul Sharma, another Kota product who gave the exam twice, 25 years ago, says that the coaching centres always project the JEE as a do or die situation. “In the second attempt, I secured 4,600th rank. But, at that time, there were only 3,000 positions and I did not make it to IIT,” Rahul Sharma, who has launched a tech startup, said.A native of Kota, he was under the pressure from his childhood to bag the rank. His days would start with going to the school and end with finishing the assignments given by the coaching centres. “For more than 12 hours a day, we would study. Even CBSE schools in Kota were not strict; they used to allow us to go to coaching centres from the afternoon. Basically, students would choose such schools,” Rahul said. When he found out he did not make it even in the second attempt, Rahul Sharma was heartbroken. “You feel the sting when toppers are celebrated. I have put in all my efforts and no one appreciated it,” Rahul said.

A scientific paper titled EPH270 Kota: The Emerging Suicide City of India said that the culture of competition has been generating excessive stress and anxiety among students, proving detrimental to their mental health. “Recent statistics reveal that the suicide rate among coaching students is on rise with 32 suicides officially recorded in 2023 and 17 suicides officially recorded in Kota till May 2024,” the paper said, adding that the coaching institutes are developing effective counseling module/intervention strategy for students to overcome stress and stop resorting to suicide.Institutes such as Allen Career Institute, Resonance, and Motion have collaborated with platforms like YourDOST to provide counseling to students. “After the Rajasthan government issued guidelines a year and a half ago, most centres appointed therapists—something that was earlier handled by teachers. There is one therapist for every 500–600 students in our institute. We also offer regular motivational sessions to support students, and every teacher acts as a mentor for a batch of about forty students, who can reach out to her to share any of their problems,” said a faculty member from a reputed coaching centre, seeking anonymity.Then, why are students still dying by suicide? In May 2025, the Supreme Court sharply reprimanded the Rajasthan government and Kota police, asking, “Why are these children dying by suicide, and only in Kota?” — describing the situation as “serious” and demanding accountability for the rising student deaths.

Coaching centres attribute the suicides to constant pressure from families, peers, and society. “Most of the pressure comes from parents, and it’s very negative. Many of them come from humble backgrounds. In the advanced batch, which is segregated with the cream of intelligent students, 90 percent make it to IIT. However, in the bottom-tier batches, none of them do. Yet they come here and spend two years only to succumb to parental pressure,” the faculty member added. However, such measures in Kota are too little, too late. In most of the centres, teachers are hired and trained for their academic knowledge, not for their ability to offer emotional support or career advice. “Students are not encouraged to talk about failure or alternatives beyond engineering and medicine. These conversations are either avoided or treated as distractions. There’s a pressing need to train educators to engage with students more holistically,” says Dr Ghasi Ram Choudhary.

# A new water harvesting model promises to help Rajasthan’s farmers

500 feet to extract groundwater in our area. I was growing bajra earlier as it needs less water,” said the 58-year-old farmer.Kukas sarpanch Radheyshyam Meena said the sustainable irrigation model will help farmers in his area to diversify into cultivating more profitable and water-efficient crops. “

The model offered to us has great potential to make farmers self-reliant. They are set to get a better yield with the year-long water supply,” said Mr. Meena.

Catching rainwaterMr. Goyal said 14 lakh to 21 lakh litres of good seasonal monsoon run-off was flowing unutilised at every farm of one hectare in Jaipur. “In areas like Amber block, lacking river and canal networks, farm ponds offer the most

viable solution. The continuous irrigation will also help in recharging the groundwater,” he said.The IITian, who had earlier organised awareness programmes about farm ponds through ward sabhas, gram sabhas, and camel cart rallies in Dausa, said the continuous availability of water could pave the way for dairy and food processing units, as well as market linkages for agricultural produce.

He has sought the Central government’s endorsement to partner with multilateral agencies for grant-based infrastructure and capacity building.Mr. Goyal previously worked with the NITI Aayog. He has partnered with a two-wheeler manufacturing company to raise funds for the installation of ponds in Kukas



With a change in guard, what is next for Sri Lanka?

State of India’s undertrial prisoners, plans to ease sentencing



Parliament staff in Sri Lanka who had been hoping for days off this week have had their leave cancelled. There are dozens of security clearances to be arranged, desks to be assigned, a workshop on parliamentary procedure to be organised, an information desk to be staffed, and no hours to waste. It is an all-hands-on-deck situation. When your country chooses to elect 160-odd first-timers in a 225-member house, these are the breaks. For the first time, a visually-impaired person will take oath as a legislator. Parliament staff, used to producing materials in Sinhala, Tamil and English, will now have to make these available through audio.

These are extraordinary times in Sri Lanka. While the proportional electoral system has been in place since 1977, no single party had secured two-thirds of the seats in the 225-member house. The National People’s Power (NPP), a centre-left outfit that has existed only since 2019 and had only three MPs in the last parliament, now has 159 — roughly 70 per cent of the legislature. Even the Rajapaksas, in their headiest years, soon after Mahinda Rajapaksa’s government ended the 26-year civil war, had fallen short of this mandate. Back then, the Rajapaksas also had on their side the powerful Sinhala-Buddhist nationalists who, for decades, had essentially argued that while Tamils had Tamil Nadu and Muslims had the Arab world, this was the Sinhalese Buddhists’ only homeland, and that minorities should live on sufferance.

The NPP freshers now flooding into parliament, meanwhile, defy collective description by the old, racially-charged metrics. There are dyed-in-the-wool Sinhalese leftists, a Tamil trade unionist and a school principal from the northern city of Jaffna, two women from the Malaiyaha Tamil community, a young Muslim MP hailing from the largely-Sinhalese deep south — all set to be led in the house by Prime Minister Harini Amarasuriya, a woman with a PhD in social sciences, hailing from Colombo. This, in a nation that had largely been beset by elite and family rule since independence. That the political consciousness that brought this mass change proliferated in 2022’s colossal protests, is almost inescapable. Though the protests had primarily been born of anti-Rajapaksa rage in the midst of a harrowing economic crisis, braided into the movement was a range of other progressive critiques. That political elites had worked in lockstep with the wealthy, to enrich both groups at the expense of regular people was one allegation. That sowing racial discord had been a long-time strategy to divide and rule ethnic groups that otherwise shared a common economic plight was another. Other questions bubbled: Why did Sri Lanka have so few women in parliament, though it boasted of having had the first elected female head of state in the world? Why was the clergy so influential?

Free markets need free speech

SEBI recently published a proposal to regulate digital platforms such as YouTube and WhatsApp that allow the dissemination of securities-related information. SEBI-regulated financial intermediaries may then “associate” only with “finfluencers” who share information on such platforms. Digital platforms seeking SEBI’s recognition must implement measures such as taking down, blocking and preventing the sharing of securities-related content posted on these platforms, blacklisting entities identified by SEBI and regular reporting requirements to SEBI. As provocative as media reports of finfluencers misleading investors may be, the impulse to regulate speech must meet a high threshold. Free speech is a fundamental right, and the power of the state, especially unelected regulators, to impose “reasonable restrictions” on it must not be exercised lightly.

SEBI’s proposal warrants reconsideration for three main reasons. First, the regulation of speech can undermine the virtuous process of price discovery facilitated by the securities market. Second, it entails a disproportionate expansion of SEBI’s powers, without demonstrating that its existing powers are insufficient to deal with mis-selling. Third, the proposal warrants parliamentary oversight. A key public good that a securities market produces is a price discovery process. The price discovered through trading in the public markets benefits everyone, whether or not they participate in the trading process. This price signal is a product of all kinds of views in the market — optimistic, pessimistic and even neutral. Controlling information dissemination undermines this price discovery process.

For example, when Hindenberg published a report about Adani group firms’ securities being overvalued, the Adani promoters published their reasons for why the report was misleading, and analysts (many among them, finfluencers) came up with their own opinions of what was true. Using this information, many people chose to sell, their counterparties chose to buy and others chose to hold the securities of Adani firms. Importantly, people made their own decisions based on the views they believed to be accurate. If their decisions prove to be wrong, they will correct their biases, and if they prove correct, this will increase their trust in the source of their information. Imagine a situation where the regulator restricted any side, the short-sellers, the Adani promoters or the analysts, from disseminating their views, apprehensive that they might be misleading. If this restricted information did turn out to be accurate, only a few people would benefit from it. Not all speech in this marketplace will fit in the black-and-white zone of true and false. The veracity of every statement may not be known at the time of making it, and may or may not be discovered over time. In the cacophony of this marketplace, each speculator’s credibility is then built on her previous guesses. Pre-empting public speculation will deprive people of the benefit of the “good” speculators and the opportunity to form an opinion. The existence of many views is key to an efficient price discovery process. That said, speech in the securities market is already regulated. Fraudulent, manipulative or deceptive speech in connection with securities is prohibited under the SEBI Act, with the possibility of criminal prosecution.

In 2003, SEBI enacted regulations that define some conduct as fraudulent, unfair or misleading. In particular, disseminating misleading or false “information or advice” through digital media, which is likely to influence investor decisions, is deemed to be a manipulative, fraudulent or unfair trade practice. Over the years, the list of such con-

It was easy to dismiss these ideas as mere progressive fantasies at odds with Sri Lanka’s political culture. But there are now hard electoral results. Many of the most virulent Sinhalese-Buddhist nationalists shrank even from contesting in the parliamentary elections, a mix of internal polling and a general reading of the room leading them to the conclusion that people would vote for their removal. Many who did contest, lost. This new parliament has the greatest proportion of women it has ever had (still paltry, at less than 15 per cent, but double the number in the last parliament). And NPP has outperformed the Tamil nationalist parties even in most minority-dominant regions, winning more seats in the Jaffna, Vanni, and Trincomalee districts than any other party. Partly, this is down to the traditional Tamil parties’ waning influence while Sri Lanka’s economic crisis depleted household purchasing power in regions that were already among the poorest. It also results from Tamils’ willingness to give NPP a chance, though it has done little to improve their lives yet. In that, they and the southern populace that has turned to NPP en masse, are alike.

This vote is an experiment in remaking the nation, just as it is a repudiation of establishment politics. Perhaps devolving power to minority provinces can co-exist with better living standards across the mostly-Sinhalese south. Perhaps a party largely aligned with the south, but which seeks to replace corrupt elites, can improve quality of life for minorities too. Over the past few months, there has been far less of the usual electoral rhetoric that demonises minorities. These polls have reshaped the genre, however briefly. Early signs from the NPP are that the party understands it is merely the beneficiary of a political consciousness that centres accountability. “The people have given us this huge win because they’ve believed in us,” spokesperson Tilvin Silva told journalists. “But if we don’t hold on to the weight of that responsibility and we fail, then there is no one else to come to the rescue.” Sri Lanka remains in the midst of an economic crisis. Child malnutrition has worsened over the past few years, while the new government and the IMF work out the details of the country’s path back from debt defaults, and the bankruptcy it declared in 2022. Sri Lanka has voted for an alternate vision, but if IMF-imposed austerity continues to suppress economic freedom in the homes of regular people, where does the country turn next? The ethno-nationalists who have held sway for a century, have not been vanquished — merely driven back. In the north and east, citizens will also rightly expect land long-held by the military to be returned to them, and for expanded language rights to be the starting point of NPP’s rule. Steps toward a nation less riven by ethnic divisions are only tentative and yet, for the moment, ethno-religious critique against the state and the socio-economic critique have dovetailed. This is an island that, in the late 1980s, had simultaneously had Tamil nationalists fighting for a separate state in the north and east, while socialists attempted violent revolution in the southern provinces. It’s long been argued that equality of economic opportunity is key to producing social change in Sri Lanka. But previous liberal projects have largely refused to make economic rights a component of their calls for justice. A protest movement largely born of, and propelled by, the middle and lower-middle classes has created conditions necessary for what appears to be a more progressive, and pluralistic, government to sweep into office. If these are gains, economic wellbeing in homes across the island is critical to consolidating them.



As provocative as media reports of “finfluencers” misleading investors may be, the impulse to regulate speech must meet a high threshold. Free speech is a fundamental right

tent deemed manipulative, fraudulent and unfair practices has expanded, and the standard of proof has lowered from “knowingly” to “carelessly” indulging in such speech. As a result, in many cases, neither knowledge, intention nor the level of care matter for a speech to qualify as fraudulent, manipulative, deceptive or unfair. Most importantly, these regulations apply to anybody, not just SEBI-regulated entities. From the mid-2000s, SEBI further tightened the controls on securities market-related speech by mandating that those who wish to advise or opine on securities be registered as investment advisors or research analysts with SEBI. All client-facing persons associated with investment advisors and research analysts must pass qualifying exams and meet other eligibility criteria. Given their wide applicability, these regulations would squarely require finfluencers to register themselves with SEBI. Violation of these regulations entails civil and criminal consequences and non-monetary sanctions by SEBI. It recently used these powers to penalise unregistered finfluencers, and even settled some of these cases with hefty amounts. Given SEBI’s existing powers to punish unregistered finfluencers, the motivation to also regulate digital platforms on which finfluencers share information is unclear. Finally, SEBI proposes to issue a “circular” to regulate finfluencers’ speech on digital platforms. There are several problems with this unilateral expansion of jurisdiction. The SEBI Act empowers SEBI to regulate securities market intermediaries, such as brokers, mutual funds, investment advisors, stock exchanges, and so on. The primary regulator for digital platforms is MeitY under the Information Technology Act, which specifically regulates including misinformation on these platforms. An expansion of SEBI’s jurisdiction to an entity that is not a securities market intermediary ought to be approved by Parliament. SEBI cannot give itself new powers except through parliamentary law. It is important to avoid potential jurisdictional conflicts with MeitY. Finally, from a principal-agent perspective, the expansion of an unelected regulatory agency’s powers must be subject to legislative oversight. Circulars do not undergo such oversight. Given that the regulator published its proposal as a consultation paper, it seems to continue to believe in the virtues of the marketplace of ideas.



Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday said that undertrials who have spent more than a third of the maximum prescribed sentence for the crime they are accused of committing should be released before Constitution Day (November 26). Highlighting the new relaxed provisions on bail for first-time offenders in the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 (BNSS), Shah said: “Samvidhaan Din se pehle, yeh desh ke jailon mein ek bhi kaidi aisa na ho jisne apni ek tihayee sazaa kaat li hai aur abhi usko nyay nahi mila hai. (Before Constitution Day, we want to make sure there isn’t a single prisoner in the jails of India who has spent one third of his sentence in prison and still hasn’t received justice.)” What does Section 479 of the BNSS, which provides relaxed bail standards for first-time offenders, state? What has the Supreme Court said on the matter? And what is the state of undertrials in India? Data on undertrial prisoners in India. Data on undertrial prisoners in India. It states that a prisoner who is not accused of offences punishable with death or life imprisonment shall be released on bail if she has “undergone detention for a period extending up to one-half of the maximum period of imprisonment specified for that offence under that law”.

This same standard was provided under the previously applicable Section 436A of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 (CrPC). But the BNSS has also relaxed the standard further in cases concerning “first-time offenders” — requiring such accused persons to be released on bail after they have spent one-third of the maximum possible sentence in prison. It states, “Provided that where such person is a first-time offender (who has never been convicted of any offence in the past) he shall be released on bond by the Court, if he has undergone detention for the period extending up to one-third of the maximum period of imprisonment specified for such offence under that law”. The provision, however, clarifies that an accused “shall not be released on bail by the Court” if there are pending investigations or trials into more

Encouraged by best friend, Tina Datta advocates for egg freezing: ‘I am very open about this concept’

After entrepreneur Upasana Konidela and global icon Priyanka Chopra, actor Tina Datta spoke about egg freezing and why all women must consider it. “I am very open about this concept. One of my best friends told me to get this thing done. I feel every girl in her 20s should freeze her eggs. That time, your eggs are so fertile, and you get the right amount. It’s the best time, and before 35, all girls should freeze their eggs,” Datta told Galatta India. However, she refrained from confirming if she opted for it. Should women freeze their eggs in their 20s or 30s? To better understand, we asked Dr Shobha Gupta, medical director and IVF specialist from Mother’s Lap IVF Centre in New Delhi and Vrindavan.

What is egg freezing?  
Egg freezing, also called oocyte cryopreservation, is a process where a woman’s eggs are extracted, frozen, and stored for future use. It allows women to preserve their fertility until they’re ready for pregnancy. “The process involves hormone injections to stimulate egg production, followed by an egg retrieval procedure. The eggs are then frozen at subzero temperatures. This technology has become popular among women who want to delay parenthood for personal or professional reasons. Egg freezing offers women greater control over their reproductive future, providing a reliable option to balance career and family life without compromising fertility,” said Dr Gupta.

What is the right age to freeze eggs?  
The best age to freeze eggs is often between 30 and 34, said Dr Gupta. “This is because egg quality and quantity are usually higher in the early to mid-30s, which can increase the chances of a successful pregnancy. As women age, particularly after 35, the quality and quantity of eggs tend to decline significantly. Freezing during this optimal age range helps preserve eggs when they are most viable, thereby maximising future success rates,” elucidated Dr Gupta. Freezing eggs too early, such as in the 20s, “may not yield additional benefits and may increase overall costs due to extended storage fees”. Dr Gupta said that “the right time in your life can be an empowering option for women who want to extend their reproductive potential, ensuring that their fertility goals align with their life plans”.

Why not after 35?  
Freezing eggs before 35 is often recommended because egg quality and fertility naturally decline with age, especially after 35. By freezing eggs earlier, women can “preserve” eggs in a younger, healthier state, which increases the likelihood of successful fertilisation and healthy pregnancies later. “The procedure, known as oocyte cryopreservation, is particularly advantageous for those who wish to delay parenthood for personal, professional, or health reasons. However, freezing too early may not be necessary if pregnancy is planned within a few years, as the fertility decline is more gradual until the late 30s,” described Dr Gupta. According to Dr Gupta, choosing to freeze eggs before the age of 35 can be a proactive step for women who want to protect their reproductive options in an uncertain future.

What to consider before freezing eggs?  
Important factors include age, cost, storage fees, and future reproductive goals. Egg freezing typically involves hormone injections and an egg retrieval procedure, so physical and emotional readiness is critical. “Financially, the process can be costly and isn’t usually covered by insurance. Additionally, women should evaluate how this choice fits into their life plan, as future circumstances may evolve,” noted Dr Gupta. Before freezing, women should assess their reproductive timeline, financial capacity, and the support systems in place to make informed decisions about fertility preservation.

Is it safe and easy?  
Generally, egg freezing is safe, with some mild side

than one offence or in “multiple cases” relating to the same person. Top court’s interpretation

In August, a Bench of Justices Hima Kohli and Sandeep Mehta held hearings on the issues faced by undertrial prisoners in the case In re: Inhuman conditions in 1382 prisons. The case began as a PIL after former Chief Justice of India R C Lahoti sent a letter to the court, highlighting issues such as overcrowding in prisons, unnatural deaths of prisoners, and the inadequacy of trained prison staff. Since 2013, the court has been hearing issues relating to prisons in this case. Senior Advocate and amicus curiae (‘friend of the court’ appointed by the Bench to assist the court) Gaurav Agrawal submitted on August 13 that Section 479 of the BNSS “needs to be implemented at the earliest and it will help in addressing overcrowding in prisons”. Noting that the new provision was “more beneficial”, the court on August 23 ordered that Section 479 would apply “retrospectively” to cases that were registered against first-time offenders even before the BNSS came into effect on July 1, 2024. Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati communicated the Centre’s agreement to this measure before the order was passed. The court ordered all state governments and Union Territories to file affidavits within two months detailing “the number of undertrials who would be entitled to extension of the benefit of Section 479 of the BNSS, the number of applications moved before the concerned Courts for their release and the number of undertrials actually released by the date of filing of the affidavits”. The court also ordered jail superintendents to send reports with this data so that the states and UTs could collect them for their final affidavit. Notably, Section 479 already places a duty on the superintendent of the jail to send an application to the court for releasing a person on bail under this section once the relevant time period — either half or one-third of the maximum sentence — has elapsed. However, on October 22, a new Bench comprising Justices Hrishikesh Roy and S V N Bhatti noted that only 19 out of the 36 states and Union Territories had filed responses detailing the steps taken to implement the court’s August order.

On November 19, the SC once again ordered all jail superintendents to identify all undertrial prisoners, especially women, who would be entitled to bail under Section 479 of the BNSS so that courts can consider granting bail in these cases. India’s undertrial prisoners According to the National Crime Records Bureau’s report Prison Statistics India 2022 (published in December 2023), of the 5,73,220 people incarcerated in Indian prisons, 4,34,302 are undertrials against whom cases are still pending. That amounts to nearly 75.8% of all prisoners in India. Of the 23,772 women in prisons, 18,146 (76.33%) are undertrials, the report notes. The report does not record how many undertrial prisoners were first-time offenders. As of December 31, 2022, around 8.6% of all undertrial prisoners had been in prison for more than three years.



effects like bloating, mild discomfort, or mood changes due to hormone therapy. The procedure is noninvasive and has low risk, but as with any medical procedure, rare complications are possible, said Dr. Gupta. “Egg freezing has evolved significantly, making it safer and more accessible,” said Dr Gupta.

How much does it cost?  
The cost of egg freezing can range from 1,50,000 to 2,50,000 per cycle, with additional annual storage fees. “Also, the cost varies from centre to centre. Multiple cycles may be needed for optimal results, potentially increasing costs. While insurance may cover egg freezing for medical reasons, elective egg freezing is often not included, pointed out Dr Gupta. Dr Gupta advised, “The cost of egg freezing is a considerable investment, and women should weigh this financial commitment carefully in planning for their reproductive goals.”

Hyderabad's real estate shows signs of slowdown, unit sales dip significantly

Hyderabad: Hyderabad’s real estate market has shown signs of slowing down in 2024, as unit sales in the first half of the fiscal year experienced a notable decline. According to the latest ANAROCK data, between April and September 2024, the city saw a drop of nearly 7 per cent in the number of homes sold compared to the same period in 2023. Despite a sharp rise in the average ticket size of homes sold — up by 37 per cent, from Rs 84 lakh to Rs 1.15 crore — the total volume of units sold fell from nearly 30,000 to just over 27,800. This drop in sales volume suggests that the once-booming luxury real estate market in the city may be facing a cooling period. The city’s performance stands in contrast to the ongoing boom in other major cities. Bengaluru, for instance, recorded a 44 per cent increase in the average ticket size of homes sold, while NCR saw a staggering 56 per cent rise. Hyderabad, while witnessing a substantial growth in the value of homes sold, lagged behind in terms of the pace of growth. According to data, the total sales value in the city rose from Rs 25,059 crore to Rs 31,993 crore, yet this did not fully compensate for the decline in volume. The slowdown in Hyderabad’s real estate sales is further highlighted when compared to other cities in the top seven real estate markets across India. NCR and Bengaluru have maintained strong growth in the luxury segment, driven by steady demand for high-value properties. NCR saw the highest growth in ticket size, rising from Rs 93 lakh to Rs 1.45 crore between April and September 2024. Bengaluru, with a similar rise, moved from Rs 84 lakh to Rs 1.21 crore. Meanwhile, cities such as Pune and Chennai have also reported growth in the average ticket size of properties sold, though the increases were more modest compared to those in Bengaluru and NCR.



# Clearing the air on Delhi’s pollution crisis



Since 1984, when M.C. Mehta filed a public interest litigation petition, there has been a flurry of activity to combat air pollution beginning in October and then a long lull. A lot has been achieved, but the growing economy and population have outpaced these measures. This is not unique to Delhi. Los Angeles established its air pollution control programme in 1947 and currently remains among the worst in the U.S., both for PM 2.5 and ozone. The lesson is that urban toxicity is a ‘wicked problem’ where the problem itself is debated and requires long-term measures. The National Green Tribunal (NGT) began the process of taking a new look at an old problem by asking the government to list the causes of air pollution. However, the National Clean Air Programme, launched in 2019 with its “collaborative and participatory approach,” focus on monitoring, set targets, emergency measures, and inclusion of international organisations, has made minimal impact.

The Supreme Court held the right to a clean environment and good health is an inherent part of the fundamental right to life and personal liberty. This is the context of judicial review moving from guiding government decisions to implementing them. The court has asked pertinent questions: despite compliance reports why results on the ground are negligible and what the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM), set up in 2021, is doing? It has been dealing with the symptoms developing linear solutions and not responding to interdependent causes driven by rapid urbanisation. The challenge is to move away from coordination between discrete administrative units and enforcement, which is also the standard response of the Delhi government, to transformative action. The population of the city and the surrounding area significantly contributes to year-round toxicity because of vehicular emissions and traffic congestion. Driven by sunlight and low temperatures, a photochemical reaction combines hydrocarbons from the partially unburned exhaust of automobiles with nitrogen oxides, a combustion by-product, to form ozone. This concentration of particulate matter (PM 2.5) causes serious health problems. Dispersed sourcesIn Delhi, Los Angeles, and Beijing, 60% of toxicity comes from vehicles. Another 20% comes from soil dust and less than 20% is from other sources. Stubble burning is temporary and official data show its share in Delhi’s PM 2.5 was less than 1% on October

17, prompting the Delhi government to set up committees for dust control.

The usual response to point sources of pollution — legislating new technology and enforcing stringent prosecution — does not work for dispersed sources, which have a strong societal component and few viable options. For example, 35 years ago, when new vehicle emission standards were being discussed, Rahul Bajaj argued that his foreign collaborator was not parting with technology and that he needed two years to develop his own. The government successfully explained the situation to Parliament and the court. Today, the farmers of Haryana and Punjab are in a worse situation. To conserve groundwater, they are required to delay sowing, reducing the time between harvesting and planting the next crop, and technological solutions have not worked. The Supreme Court is not adjudicating between the fundamental rights of the farmers and those of the residents of Delhi to implement a management plan. We have a case of goal displacement, with Haryana and Punjab being pushed to bear the burden of providing clean air to Delhi, even as Delhi itself is not being similarly prodded. Delhi is facing the classic bureaucratic response to a complex political problem. Cosmetic steps, unverified claims, statistical compliance, and shifting responsibility, were earlier noted by the NGT. This raises the question of whether the CAQM can discharge a political function for the needed hard choices.

A review of Beijing’s approach to controlling air pollution by the United Nations Environment Programme provides useful lessons. The population sizes of both cities are comparable, and Delhi shares with Beijing, and other cities, the three stages of dealing with urban air pollution as a long-term task. It begins with end-of-pipe air pollution control, gradually moving to integrated measures targeting primary pollutants, with the government playing the main role. Later, the focus shifts to secondary pollutants, or particulate matter leading to toxic smog, primarily PM2.5, which requires a regional mechanism, our current stage. The similarity ends there. The UN review points to Beijing’s technological management system, which builds public awareness to deal with toxicity. First, forecasting severe smog levels through warnings issued at least 24 hours in advance with over 1000 PM 2.5 sensors throughout the city to accurately monitor high-emission areas and periods. Second, Beijing has over 30,000 low-floor buses, five times the number operated by Delhi Transport Corporation. Third, both Beijing and Delhi, as transit centres with no peak-hour traffic, require additional measures to manage regional transportation. The Court should be mandating the Graded Response Action Plan and the preparation of a toxicity management plan for the national capital and surrounding areas with budgetary allocations and political endorsement rather than episodic prosecution of farmers or requiring smog towers. Mukul Sanwal served as policy adviser to the Executive Director of UNEP and later to the Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC and was closely associated with Inter-Agency Relations in the Chief Executives Board of the UN

# From best friends to foes: the bitter Trump-Musk fallout

Just as we were making sense of President Donald Trump’s new ban on travel to the U.S. by citizens from 12 African and West Asian countries, the dramatic collapse of the alliance between billionaire CEO of Tesla and X, Elon Musk, and President Trump took the internet by storm. The partnership that demonstrated the deliberate yet effortless bond between power and capital, also exposed how either reacts to any perceivable threat. The Guardian’s columnist Jonathan Freedland wrote that “Musk and Trump are enemies made for each other — united in their ability to trash their own brands”. What drove this wedge between the two men — one, the most powerful leader and the other, the one of the richest businessmen — prompting them to trade such rage and bitterness in public? Watch this video to understand the controversial bill that sparked sharp disagreement between the two. Also read Smriti S. on the rise and fall of the partnership between Mr. Trump and Mr. Musk.

San Francisco is suing President Donald Trump, claiming an executive order over immigrant-protecting “sanctuary cities” is unconstitutional and a severe invasion of the city’s sovereignty. Demonstrators torched cars and scuffled with security forces in Los Angeles June 8, 2025, as police kept protesters away from the National Guard troops President Donald Trump sent to the streets of the second biggest U.S. city. Unrest broke out for a third day, with protesters angry at action by immigration officials that have resulted in dozens of arrests of what authorities say are illegal migrants and gang members.

The Hindu editorial noted: “Many of the people seeking entry into the U.S., from countries that had seen American military intervention, such as Haiti and Afghanistan, are fleeing war, persecution and systemic violence. They are not national security threats but victims in search of refuge. By shutting America’s doors on them, and immigrants in general, Mr. Trump is not making the U.S. safer. Rather, he is turning a country, which historically welcomed immigration and has benefited from it, into an insular, paranoid, self-doubting republic.” Amid Israeli forces’ relentless attack on Gaza, its members stopped a Gaza-bound aid boat carrying Greta Thunberg and other activists early Monday and diverted it to Israel, enforcing a longstanding blockade of the Palestinian territory that has been tightened during the war with Hamas. “The selfie yacht of the celebrities is safely making its way to the shores of Israel,” the Foreign Ministry said in a social media post. The British-flagged yacht Madleen, operated by the pro-Palestinian Freedom Flotilla Coalition, sought to deliver some aid to Gaza.

The tolerance for Israel’s brutality is certainly waning in many parts of the world. Tens of thousands of demonstrators marched through the streets of Rome on Saturday against the war in Gaza in a protest called by Italy’s main opposition parties, who accuse the right-wing government of being too silent. Our London correspondent Sriram Lakshman reports on the mounting pressure on the U.K. government of Keir Starmer to take a stronger position against Israel’s actions in Gaza. It was on full display recently, with MPs, including those from the governing Labour Party, quizzing the government on its positions and accusing the Israeli government of Benjamin Netanyahu of genocide.atch: Justifying Operation Sindoer | Was multi-party delegation a success? — our latest episode of Worldview with Suhasini Haidar takes a closer look at the mandate for Multi-party delegations abroad, and whether it was mission accomplished. Muhammad Yunus, head of Bangladesh’s interim government speaks to members of the media at the COP29 U.N. Climate Summit, Wednesday, Nov. 13, 2024, in Baku, Azerbaijan. (AP Photo/Sergei Grits) Muhammad Yunus, head of Bangladesh’s interim government speaks to members of the media at the COP29 U.N. Climate Summit, Wednesday, Nov. 13, 2024, in Baku, Azerbaijan. Bangladesh: Delivering his Id speech on June 6, 2025, the Chief Adviser to the interim government of

# GM crops can help fight hunger — depending on how they are farmed



The world’s population is growing and more people need more food. But indiscriminately expanding agricultural land and practice is not desirable. Cutting forests to plant more crops will only push already-fragile ecosystems over the edge. Dousing fields with pesticides is similarly toxic and depletes soils and groundwater. The genetically modified (GM) crops provide a way out. In the 1990s, researchers found a way to modify a plant’s genome and make specific changes that prevented insects from eating them. In the Bt cotton grown in India and Bt brinjal in Bangladesh, scientists added a gene from the bacterium Bacillus thuringiensis to the plants’ genomes, making them produce a toxin that kills some insects. Weeds threaten farms but spraying herbicides to kill them may kill the crops as well. Now there are herbicide-tolerant (HT) GM crops immune to some weed-killing substances, helping farmers kill the weeds alone. Researchers can also modify crops to have higher yield and/or more nutrients, reducing the need to plant more crops.

The advent of GM crops has helped farmers practise sustainable methods while increasing food production. But depending on the kind of GM crops being grown, there are still broader, longer term effects. Frederik Noack, an economist at the University of British Columbia (UBC), Canada, and others delved into the scientific literature surrounding how farming GM crops may affect human health and the environment. Their review, published in Science in August, said there are negligible adverse health effects of actually consuming GM crops whereas the farming methods have complex effects. “What’s complicated about GMs is you’re not just adding a new genetic organism, you’re also adding a whole suite of management changes that come along with it,” Risa Sargent, an ecologist at UBC and one of the review’s authors, said. “The evidence is that those management changes are the risk, not the genetics of the organism per se.” The use of insecticide-resistant crops, like ones with the Bt toxin trait, has shown low levels of risk and resulted in farmers spraying less insecticides. “To me, this trait is one of the more positive stories about GM,” said Devang Mehta, a plant biologist at KU Leuven in Belgium. “If you look at India ... you see a reduction in insecticide use. Farmers are getting less poisoned by those insecticides because they don’t use those insecticides anymore.” This is important because Indian farmers often lack specialised protective gear. Profit versus the environmentIn some cases, however, pests can develop resistance to the Bt toxin over time, leading to increased pesticide use. This can be countered by diversifying the kinds of Bt crops being planted, including areas where non-Bt crops are planted side-by-side, or by adding more genes to bolster the plant’s resistance to pests.

“If we put in just a single resistance gene, you place a lot of pressure on the pathogen to overcome that gene, but if you create a stack of multiple resistance genes, it’s much more difficult for the pathogen to overcome it,” said Brande Wulff, a plant and food scientist at the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST), Saudi Arabia. The effects are more nuanced with HT crops, however. They are generally made to resist a specific broad-spectrum herbicide. The farmers benefit because they don’t need to expend more labour and money to mechanically remove the weeds: they can just use the herbicide and not worry about their crops dying. This also reduces tilling, where farmers turn the soil over to kill some weeds before planting crops. Tilling can release carbon trapped in the soil, so no-till agriculture reduces carbon emissions to some extent. But only a few major companies are developing most of these HT crops in the U.S., so farmers don’t have much say in which herbicide to use. “GM can be whatever you want it to be. But what it will be depends on who develops it,” Noack said. “The benefit of [HT crops] for the company is that they also sell the herbicide. You can only use that specific herbicide.” The most prominent one companies sell now is glyphosate. There is no straightforward answer to whether these for-profit companies always keep the envi-

ronment in mind when they develop and sell their HT crop seeds and the accompanying herbicide.

For every solution, a problemAccording to the review, farmers adopting HT crops hasn’t mitigated herbicide use; in some cases it has even led to an increase, especially of glyphosate. “Initially, people thought glyphosate would be less toxic because it decays pretty fast if it gets into the environment,” said Noack. “Now, very recent studies are showing that it’s actually really harmful for human health.” A lot of the increased use is also driven by weeds rapidly developing resistance against the herbicides. The more farmers are driven to using a specific herbicide, including glyphosate, the more the weeds can become resistant. “It’s a little bit similar to the antibiotic resistance in medicine, right? Where if you constantly use the same antibiotic, you have a big problem because the bacteria become resistant to that,” Mehta said. “... if you use the same herbicide over and over in your field, you are building that problem slowly.” To counter the weed’s resistance to glyphosate, some GM crops have additional modifications that equip them to also resist dicamba, a broad-spectrum herbicide. However, dicamba is potentially more toxic to humans and good at spreading around. “If you are the neighbour of the farmer who uses that herbicide, and you don’t plant GM crops, it just kills all of your crops,” Noack said. “The general problem is each time we come up with a new pesticide, we’ll create problems downstream.” Somewhere in the middleScientists ascertain a pesticide’s toxicity by testing its short-term effects on rats, although that doesn’t reveal the full extent of its effects. “That’s of course a very different question than to see what’s the long-term impact on infant health,” Noack added. “If it’s causing cancer, we won’t see that in the rat population because the rats won’t live long enough to show that.” “Industry wants the release right away. They’ve developed some new technology. They want to be able to sell it, which makes sense. That’s the capitalistic driver of it,” Sargent said. “But we can’t just give pesticides to people and see what happens. Often it takes years and years of very careful science to tease out the impacts.” Noack believes another reason resistance develops and spreads is if the farmers all plant the same crops and use the same herbicides. Crop rotation — where farmers plant different crops in the same area — can help reduce the reliance on agro-chemicals and lower resistance. Sargent suggested using evidence-based precautionary measures of pest management, which involve not excessively using herbicides to kill every weed in the field. “Let’s say a complete ban on pesticides is one extreme, and probably our current agricultural system in many places is the other extreme. Somewhere in the middle is an approach such as ... or integrated pest management,” she said. “The protocol is that there’s a certain level of accepted weeds in a field that would be determined between a ... specialist and the farmer working together.”

‘A very black and white way’The few companies that make and sell HT crops have monopolised their production. It’s prohibitively expensive to regulate GM crops (more than \$40 million for a single GM trait to be regulated and eventually commercialised), leaving most government institutions and smaller companies behind. Modern tools like CRISPR help scientists make targeted changes to a plant’s genome, cutting the cost of development. People are also more accepting of GM when the plant doesn’t have foreign genes. But the costs of regulation and ensuring nothing harmful enters the market is still too high for institutions that don’t only work for profit. “I think the problem is that a lot of the regulations, including in India, are based on ‘is it a GM or is it not a GM’. It’s not about whether it’s herbicide, insecticide or nutrition,” said Mehta. “They don’t care about the trait, they care only about the method, which is a very black and white way of doing things.” The review also found more data is required to assess the true impact of GM on biodiversity. In some places, the number of insect pollinators has dropped but whether that’s due to GM crops or to urbanisation, climate change, and/or other drivers of habitat loss is unclear. “We have very little longitudinal data on species trends for almost any species. For most insects, most amphibians, most mammals, how would you possibly go back and say, ‘here are the clear effects on biodiversity’ when we have almost no data?” Sargent asked.

Another confounding factor is that a lot of the research on GM and biodiversity is sponsored by industries, according to Sargent, which is muddying the waters. Mark Tester, a botanist at KAUST, said many of the potential environmental effects attributed to GM crop-farming are not unique to GM: they’re just the natural consequences of agriculture. “You can think of it as a war between agriculture and nature, where we’re trying to feed eight billion people,” he

# Behind air crisis: High baseline pollution, multiplicity of factors



New Delhi Both pollution and the political blame game around it have become toxic clichés in Delhi. What would it take to actually bring down pollution in Delhi to permissible levels? According to the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) this would work out to an AQI (Air Quality Index) reading of up to 100. Building a quantitative correspondence between pollution levels and its causes requires the use of a modelling exercise. For Delhi, these estimates are given by the Decision Support System for Air Quality Management in Delhi (DSS). DSS calculates the contribution by feeding a model with data on different sources of pollution, such as the number of fires recorded in Punjab and Haryana, the air quality in Delhi’s neighbouring districts, and other satellite-based indicators of pollution (and as we learnt on Tuesday, DSS also uses some off-the-wall measures, such as the number of weddings in Delhi, and assuming that fireworks will be used in each). These factors are then made to interact with

meteorological factors such as temperature, humidity, wind direction and speed to generate an estimate of air quality and the contribution of different factors.

If one were to believe the DSS numbers, what would it take to bring Delhi’s pollution levels within NAAQS levels?

On November 17 (the AQI on the day was 441 and it is the latest data available from the DSS), even halving each source of pollution would not bring the AQI down to permissible standards, an HT analysis of DSS data shows. DSS has 29 sources

of pollution in its model. The biggest contributor to Delhi’s PM2.5 concentration on November 17 was the “Others” category, which contributed 29.4%. Completely removing the pollution from this source would bring down Delhi’s AQI by a big amount — from 441 to 372. However, an AQI of 372 is also in the “very poor” category, and not very far from the “severe” category, which begins at 401. Similarly, the second and third biggest contributors to Delhi’s air pollution on November 17 were Delhi’s own transport sector (17.2%) and stubble-burning in neighbouring

states (13.1%). Just stopping all transport in Delhi on the day would bring down AQI to 401 and just dousing all the fires in Punjab and Haryana would bring down the AQI to 411, both of which would still land Delhi in the “severe” category. In fact, even if all sources were halved, Delhi’s AQI on November 17 would only be 323. To be sure, this analysis needs to be read with the fact that AQI levels show a diminishing relationship with rise in air pollution levels and therefore reducing pollution from very high to high levels would have muted impact on AQI reduction..



# Apple researchers show how popular AI models ‘collapse’ at complex problems

A new research paper by a group of people at Apple has said that artificial intelligence (AI) ‘reasoning’ is not all that it is cracked up to be. Through an analysis of some of the most popular large reasoning models in the market, the paper showed that their accuracy faces a “complete collapse” beyond a certain complexity threshold.

The researchers put to the test models like OpenAI o3-mini (medium and high configurations), DeepSeek-R1, DeepSeek-R1-Qwen-32B, and Claude-3.7- Sonnet (thinking). Their findings showed that the AI industry may be grossly overstating these models’ capabilities. They also benchmarked these large reasoning models (LRMs) with large language models (LLMs) with no reasoning capabilities, and found that in some cases, the latter outperformed the former.

“In simpler problems, reasoning models often identify correct solutions early but inefficiently continue exploring incorrect alternatives — an ‘overthinking’ phenomenon. At moderate complexity, correct solutions emerge only after extensive exploration of incorrect paths. Beyond a certain complexity threshold, models completely fail to find correct solutions,” the paper said, adding that this “indicates LRMs possess limited self-correction capabilities that, while valuable, reveal fundamental inefficiencies and clear scaling limitations”.

For semantics, LLMs are AI models trained on vast text data to generate human-like language, especially in tasks such as translation and content creation. LRMs prioritise logical reasoning and problem-solving, focusing on tasks requiring analysis, like math or coding. LLMs emphasise language fluency, while LRMs focus on structured reasoning. To be sure, the paper’s findings are a dampener on the promise of large reasoning models, which many have touted as a frontier breakthrough to understand and assist humans in solving complex problems, in sectors such as health and science. Apple researchers evaluated reasoning capabilities of LRMs through four controllable puzzle environments, which allowed them fine-grained control over complexity and rigorous evaluation of reasoning: Tower of Hanoi: It involves moving n disks between three pegs following specific rules, with complexity determined by the number of disks. Checker Jumping: This requires swapping red and blue checkers on a one-dimensional board, with complexity scaled by the number of checkers. River Crossing: This is a constraint satisfaction puzzle where and actors and n agents must cross a river, controlled by the number of actor/agent pairs and boat capacity. Blocks World: Focuses on rearranging blocks into a target configuration, with complexity managed by the number of blocks. “Most



of our experiments are conducted on reasoning models and their non-thinking counterparts, such as Claude 3.7 Sonnet (thinking/non-thinking) and DeepSeek-R1/V3. We chose these models because they allow access to the thinking tokens, unlike models such as OpenAI’s o-series. For experiments focused solely on final accuracy, we also report results on the o-series models,” the researchers said. The researchers found that as problem complexity increased, the accuracy of reasoning models progressively declined. Eventually, their performance reached a complete collapse (zero accuracy) beyond a specific, model-dependent complexity threshold. Initially, reasoning models increased their thinking tokens proportionally with problem complexity. This indicates that they exerted more reasoning effort for more difficult problems. However, upon approaching a critical threshold (which closely corresponded to their accuracy collapse point), these models counter-intuitively began to reduce their reasoning effort (measured by inference-time tokens), despite the increasing problem difficulty. Their work also found that in cases where problem complexity is low, non-thinking models (LLMs) were capable to obtain performance comparable to, or even better than thinking models with more token-efficient inference. With medium complexity, the advantage of reasoning models capable of generating long chain-of-thought began to manifest, and the performance gap between LLMs and LRMs increased. But, where problem complexity is higher, the performance of both models collapsed to zero. “Results show that while thinking models delay this collapse, they also ultimately encounter the same fundamental limitations as their non-thinking counterparts,” the paper said. It is worth noting though that the researchers have acknowledged their work could have limitations: “While our puzzle environments enable controlled experimentation with fine-grained control over problem complexity, they represent a narrow slice of reasoning tasks and may not capture the diversity of real-world or knowledge-intensive reasoning problems.”

# Sebi offers settlement for brokers facing action in algo trading

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has offered a settlement scheme for brokers who were undergoing regulatory action for being associated with algo trading platforms. The scheme is going to apply to brokers dealing with proceedings before the regulator and the Securities Appellate Tribunal. The Sebi move is to provide a route to the brokers to conclude these matters in an expeditious manner. The scheme which commences on July 16 will conclude on September 16, Sebi said in a statement. This scheme aims to provide a settlement opportunity to stock brokers linked with specific algo platforms against whom proceedings have already been initiated by Sebi and are currently pending before any authority or forum like the Adjudicating Officer, Securities Appellate Tribunal or the courts.

The concerned stock brokers may settle the proceedings and seek an expedited conclusion to their cases by availing of the benefits of this scheme. However, Sebi clarified that actions initiated against stock brokers, who choose not to avail this settlement opportunity, will continue in accordance with the law. Over 100 brokers earlier reportedly received Sebi warnings for allowing APIs (application programming interface) of an algo provider, which allegedly provided assured returns. Earlier, trading applications provided by several brokers allowed their clients to use API — a software that allows two applications to communicate with each other. After they are installed, APIs get the authorisation to perform a host of functions in the trading account, such as placing buy and sell orders or cancelling orders. Sebi issued a circular in 2022 prohibiting stockbro-



kers from any association with platforms offering assured returns.

Market regulator Sebi is conducting an extensive investigation into Jane Street’s derivatives trading activity over the past three years, examining whether the global quantitative trading giant attempted to manipulate India’s benchmark stock indices, according to a Reuters report. The probe — said to be SEBI’s most far-reaching into an international trading firm — comes amid the regulator’s broader efforts to temper the heightened activity in India’s booming derivatives market. The investigation is focused on Jane Street, its Singapore-based affiliate Jane Street Singapore Pte, and JSI Investments, its Indian unit. SEBI is reviewing the firms’ algorithmic trading strategies, particularly in relation to the NSE’s Nifty 50 index and its banking sector counterpart.

# Consumers’ loss, farmer optimism: In US, trade war sees key groups at odds

Trump administrationThe Budget Lab estimates that Americans are facing an overall average effective tariff rate of 15.6 per cent at present — the highest since 1937 April was one of the most important months in the world’s economic history, with the Trump administration’s reciprocal tariffs coming into force on April 2 before being put on pause for 90 days a week later. The threat of the reciprocal tariffs, however, has seemingly had the opposite effect as American companies stocked up ahead of the tariffs’ rollout. Data released last week showed that while the US’ goods and services trade deficit in April 2025 fell a record 55 per cent from March 2025 to a 19-month low of \$61.6 billion, the deficit for the first four months of 2025 was up 66 per cent compared to a year ago.

The basis of Trump’s reciprocal tariffs was that it would help bring down the US’ trade deficit with various countries. Take India, for instance, which enjoyed a total trade surplus of \$46.09 billion with the US in 2024. However, India’s merchandise trade surplus with the US for the first four months of 2025 increased by 45 per cent to \$23.29 billion, with imports from India up 29 per cent according to latest data from the US Commerce Department. In January-April 2025, the US imported \$9.49 billion of advanced technology products from India, up 86 per cent from a year ago. American consumers have, for a long time, been considered the biggest losers in the Trump administration’s pursuit of balanced trade. According to the non-partisan policy research centre The Budget Lab at Yale, American households, on average, are facing a consumption loss of \$2,500 in 2025 when prices are measured in 2024 levels. “The post-substitution price increase settles at 1.3%, a \$2,100 loss per household,” The Budget Lab at Yale said.

The Budget Lab estimates that Americans are facing an overall average effective tariff rate of 15.6 per cent at present — the highest since 1937 — with segments such as clothing and textiles being affected the most. In the short run, shoe and apparel prices for US consumers are up 31



per cent and 28 per cent, respectively. Despite the pain from tariffs, some in the US are still upbeat; in fact, more so than in several years. The Purdue University-CME Group Ag Economy Barometer index climbed to a four-year high last month, suggesting improved sentiment among farmers due to a “much more optimistic view of US agricultural export prospects, combined with a less negative view of tariffs’ impact on 2025 farm income than respondents provided in either March or April”. Exports are indeed on American farmers’ minds, with Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins having recently visited Italy as part of her “aggressive travel agenda to promote American agriculture worldwide”. The trip to Italy follows one to the UK in May 2025, with India, Vietnam, Japan, Peru, and Brazil on Rollins’ schedule over the coming months.

Rather ironically, even as US and Chinese officials meet in London on Monday to add to the preliminary agreement that was agreed last month, American farmers have over the years, grown somewhat skeptical of how beneficial free trade is. As per the Purdue University-CME Group Ag Economy Barometer, 18 per cent of producers in May 2025 either disagreed or strongly disagreed when presented with the statement that ‘free trade benefits agriculture and most other American industries’. Back in December 2020, the corresponding number was just 7 per cent.

# As COVID-19 cases register an uptick in India, a look at the vaccine stock position

Over the past few weeks, headlines around India and Southeast Asia have centered around a virus that the world has wanted to forget: Covid-19. At first, an uptick in cases in Hong Kong, Singapore and other parts of the region caused concern. Gradually though, India too, witnessed a surge in cases, with numbers as of Thursday, June 5, standing at 4,866, and fatalities at 51.

Doctors and experts have said time and again that there is no reason to panic — spikes and dips in Covid-19 cases are expected; the virus they say, is co-circulating with other seasonal infections and no major waves are expected. Misinformation in fact, is harder to battle, they point out. Residents however, are raising questions about the Covid-19 vaccines: it may be recalled that India launched the world’s largest Covid-19 immunisation drive in January 2021. To date over 220 crore doses of Covid-19 vaccines have been administered in the country as per the Co-WIN dashboard. These were primarily of the two vaccines available then, AstraZeneca’s Covishield and Bharat Biotech’s Covaxin. Rajiv Bahl, Director General of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), the country’s nodal scientific body, has said there is absolutely no need to initiate mass booster doses for Covid-19 vaccination at present, and neither is there a direction from the Central government for this. Speaking about the rising number of Covid-19 cases in India, Dr. Bahl however noted that individual doctors could recommend booster doses to patients on a case-to-case basis, depending on the needs of individuals.

He further explained that the need for mass vaccination, while not felt at present, could arise, with perhaps a mutation in the virus or its spread. “For that, India already has the capacity to scale up production and provide for the general public. We have done this before and there is no need to panic,” he said, reiterating that as of now there was no need for individuals to rush in to get a booster vaccine. Since vaccines used in 2021 and 2022 have now fallen into disuse and expired, there are no stocks at present, a government official said, adding however that the government could direct manufacturers to produce more stocks as and when necessary. Most States, including Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and West Bengal have no stocks or supplies of the vaccine at present either in the government or private sector.

As of now, the variants of Covid-19 doing the rounds in India are descendants of the Omicron variant, first reported in November 2021. The emerging sub-variants - NB.1.8.1 and LF.7 - that are driving the current COVID surge are descendants of JN.1, a sub-lineage of the Omicron BA.2.86 variant. In Kerala for instance, a senior Health Department official said: “Almost all of the samples sent for whole genome sequencing from the State have shown that the circulating virus variant is LF.1, one of the descendants of Omicron, the immune evasiveness of which is quite well known.” These sub-variants, doctors say, are, so far, causing mild illnesses. P. Senthur Nambi, senior consultant, Infectious Diseases, Apollo Hospitals, Chennai, said that most of the Covid-19 patients he had seen so far have done well. “Most of them had only an upper respiratory infection. Gone are the days when Covid-19 affected the lungs causing pneumonia and breathing difficulties. These patients were managed based on their symptoms and most of them did not require any Covid-specific antiviral medications. Prior exposure to the infection, the effects of the vaccines taken or a combination of both factors with vaccine-induced antibodies could be playing a protective role,” he explained. Cases this time around have mostly been mild, the ICMR has maintained, with reported symptoms akin to those of the common cold or seasonal flu, including fever, cough, sore throat, runny nose, headache, fatigue, body aches, and loss of appetite. “The key difference with these new strains,” said Sujana Bardhan, consultant (tuberculosis & chest diseases), Narayana Hospital, RN Tagore Hospital, Kolkata, “is their speed, not their severity. Hospitals are well-prepared and the healthcare system remains under no immediate strain. Nonetheless, the importance of basic preventive measures cannot be overstated.”

“By the time Omicron ran its course, almost all of our population had been exposed to the virus. Even when this antibody protection wanes, the long-term immune memory remains. This innate immunity plus the vaccine-derived immunity through good coverage of the initial two doses means that most people have strong hybrid immunity against Covid-



19,” the Kerala health department official said, adding that the previous vaccines may not even be very effective against the Omicron variants — they would however, offer protection against serious forms of the disease. Though two indigenously developed nasal vaccines specifically targeting Omicron variant from Bharat Biotech and Indian Immunologicals as well as another indigenous mRNA vaccine for the Omicron variant were made available in the Indian market, the uptake was low, doctors said. Kiran Madala, a Hyderabad-based doctor, part of an international group of genetic epidemiologists under the COVID Treatment Exchange Organisation, said the current World Health Organization guidelines recommend vaccines primarily for individuals above 70 to 80 years of age, those who are immunocompromised, and patients with multiple comorbidities. Children, especially those aged two to six years, do not need vaccination unless they have underlying health issues or are immunosuppressed. Dr. Nambi in Chennai said some patients, those who have travel obligations, have requested the vaccines, but none are available at present. “But I wish that there was an option of vaccination, not for the general population in large but for two subsets of patient groups in whom the infection could cause problems,” he said. The first group of patients are those who have not received any Covid-19 vaccine due to various factors and had no Covid-19 infection in the past. So, they will neither have natural immunity or vaccine-induced immunity. Though a weakened virus, it could cause complications such as pneumonia leading to hospitalisation especially if they are over 65 years of age,” he said. The second subset of patients are those with underlying comorbidities such as heart ailments, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease with poor lung function and immune-compromised persons including those who have undergone organ transplants. “Other coronaviruses such as the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome did not last long, but we are still talking about Covid since the end of 2019. So, a vaccine will be beneficial for these two groups of persons in the long run from the public health perspective. But this being a mutating virus, we will need to modify the vaccines on a regular basis,” Dr. Nambi observed. T. Jacob John, retired professor of clinical virology at Christian Medical College, Vellore also said that the elderly and immunocompromised people needed to be vaccinated again, irrespective of whether they were fully vaccinated (two doses and a booster) or had been exposed to the virus earlier. “These people are vulnerable even with mild variants as their immune systems are weak, and they are at greater risk of complications.”

State governments however have taken a more cautious stance: “Whether vaccination is required or not depends on many factors, said T. S. Selvarajayagam, T.N. Director of Public Health and Preventive Medicine. “We need to study the epidemiology of the current cases before commenting on the requirement for vaccination now.” Kerala has said it was “not advocating for or against Covid booster shots” because of the lack of epidemiological data that booster doses offered enhanced protection against emerging immune-evasive variants. Overall, doctors say, there were not many takers for the booster dose offered even during the height of the pandemic: according to the Co-WIN dashboard, 22.74 crore doses of the precaution dose have been administered, far fewer than the first two doses. “We are doubtful if people would want to get vaccinated now when the situation is not alarming,” said R. Ravindra, managing director of Suguna Hospital, Bengaluru. The Delhi High Court, earlier this week, directed the Central government to submit a thorough status report detailing its actions regarding the policy for sample collection, collection centres, and transportation of samples.

# Potassium in your plate: Dietary choices that matter

People pay far more attention today than they used to, about what they put on their plates. For many, food is not just a source of sustenance; it is a lifestyle. Be it a hearty spinach salad or greasy French fries, what people consume every day defines their health. While there is significant awareness about several micronutrients, including vitamin A, vitamin C, vitamin D, iron, and calcium, a potent mineral that does not get as much attention is potassium. Potassium is an electrolyte, or a substance that carries an electrical charge when dissolved in a liquid like blood. It plays a supportive role in several functions such as nerve signalling, contraction and relaxation of muscles, cellular metabolism, and blood pressure modulation. It can also prevent kidney stones, enhance muscle health, and maintain bone health by preventing too much calcium from leaving the body through urine. Maintaining ideal levels of potassium in the body, especially for patients with chronic kidney disease (CKD), is important for staying healthy and preventing complications. Excess potassium can lead to a condition called hyperkalaemia, and hence, diet regulation is important.

How much potassium does the body contain and need?

The human body contains between approximately 40 and 50 mmol of potassium for every kilogram. The total amount depends on how muscular the person is, as 90% to 95% of potassium is found within the cells of the muscles and bones. Most of the potassium consumed (80%-90%) is excreted through urine, and the rest through sweat and stools. The amount of potassium needed also varies, depending on age and gender. For adult men and women (19 years and above), the recommended intake is 3.4 g and 2.6 g, respectively. However, this needs to be adjusted in patients with Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) or any other conditions that affect potassium excretion.

What foods are rich in potassium?

Some foods rich in potassium include: fruits such as oranges, bananas, honeydew, cantaloupes, grapefruit, apricots, and some dried fruits such as raisins, dates, and prunes; vegetables such as broccoli, spinach, mushrooms, cucumbers, peas, zucchini, leafy greens, pumpkins, potatoes, and sweet potatoes; juices of tomato, orange, apricots, prunes, and grapefruits; dairy products like milk and yogurt; fish including cod, trout, tuna, halibut, and rockfish; meats such as chicken, beef, and turkey; kidney beans, soybeans, lima beans, pinto beans; lentils; almonds, cashews, peanuts,



and walnuts, as well as brown and wild rice and whole grains

What happens when there is too much potassium?

Hyperkalaemia is a condition that occurs when excessive amounts of potassium accumulate in the blood. The most common reasons for this are a diet with too much potassium, CKD, and certain medications. Without timely intervention, it can result in life-threatening heart problems. The symptoms vary based on the severity. Mild hyperkalaemia causes non-specific signs such as numbness, muscle weakness, nausea, and tingling. If the levels are extremely high, it can cause shortness of breath, chest pain, heart palpitations, or vomiting, and patients require emergency care. Since potassium-rich foods are beneficial for the heart, in patients prone to hyperkalaemia, it is important to consider other measures, such as potassium binders that attach excess potassium to stools rather than a low-potassium diet. This approach ensures patients receive adequate nutrition while maintaining potassium levels. Patients must undergo regular checkups and consult a nutritionist to create a tailored diet that balances the benefits and risks of potassium while considering treatment options to ensure they receive heart-healthy foods. Other than potassium binders, treatment options for hyperkalaemia include diuretics to encourage urination, medication management, intravenous therapy to protect the heart, and dialysis. Potassium is an indispensable component of health due to its beneficial impact on the heart, nerves, and kidneys. However, being mindful of how much is consumed is key, especially in patients with CKD. By being aware and following a structured diet along with the right medication, patients can gain optimal benefits from this essential mineral without suffering from any complications.



# Australia will bring their toys to play in WTC Final but South Africa will match them: Neil McKenzie throws down gauntlet

GNS News Agency, June 17

The upcoming World Test Championship final will mark quite a pivotal moment in the future of Test cricket for South Africa. With the increasing attraction of T20 franchise leagues across the world offering lucrative amounts, the red-ball format has become an afterthought outside the big three (India, England and Australia). South Africa, not long ago, at the beginning of the WTC cycle, sent their "provincial team" to New Zealand to accommodate the players who had SAT20 gigs.Neil McKenzie, who played 58 Tests for South Africa in a nine-year career, spoke on whether he thinks Temba Bavuma's men can beat defending champions Australia and what the WTC Final and Test cricket overall means to the country in a chat with .Everyone's really excited in South Africa and can't wait for the 11th of June. We've gone through a little bit of a slump in terms of Test cricket, in the last couple of years. So it's nice to be back competing for the championship.There have been a few questions raised on the path which South Africa has reached the final of the WTC finalIt's not South Africa's fault or any of the other nation's' fault. That's the scheduling. Yes, they haven't played against Australia or England, but they've had some quality results. Winning in Bangladesh was quite clinical, especially having to sort of almost give up on the New Zealand (2023-24) tour because of the SA20.

There has been sharp criticism from former players about the way South Africa didn't send their main team to New Zealand because of SA20. How do you view that?We know what a big money spinner it is (SA20), and it's really important for South African cricket. So you can have money to develop grassroots and your provinces, and have pipelines. So everyone understood it. It wasn't ideal sending a second, third string to New Zealand. You don't just want to hand out caps, and your Test side has to be your ultimate side.

We've seen some of the other countries where they're playing a lot of young players in their Test side because of the T20 system and guys choosing to go that route, which is a personal choice for a lot of players. That team that went to New Zealand was all those guys who didn't get a gig in the SA20 sides. So that's taken out a lot of your core players. So it was probably a provincial team that went to play Test cricket.How do SA players view Test cricket with SA20 and all franchise money that can be made? We have seen Anrich Nortje deny a central contractA guy like Andrew Nortje, he's a fast bowler, bowling 150 km an hour. He knows his body. He's not 21 anymore. So he's got some choices to make in terms of what's best for him. Obviously, we'd love to see him playing in the SA20 and Test cricket. But he's had a couple of injuries. I never look down on anybody in terms of their decisions they make. Everyone's got their reasons. But as an ex-player, I want South Africa to have at their call their best resources for Test cricket.We've got a few more all-rounders coming through the system, which gives our team a lot of balance in terms of Marco Jansen, Wian Mulder and some of those younger batters. If you look at how they're coming through there, all of them have got Test 100's, and there's competition for places, which hasn't always been the case over the last couple of years. If you think of South African cricket and you think of



all the wins in the history that we've had, there's always been competition for places, and it's hard to crack a position, where in the last couple of years, I don't think that competition for places has been there.It could have been a bit of Kolpak (to play in County cricket in England), it could have been a couple of T20 leagues, but there's that hunger now. A lot of those players are playing T20 as well. South African cricket is being clever in terms of allowing them to go earn their bucks, but managing players. So there's a give and take. Players can't just take, take, take in terms of, 'I want to do this league, that league'.

What do you think of Temba Bavuma as captain, which makes him tick?

Temba's been good. He's found his little niche in terms of how he wants to captain. And there's always that time where you've got to find your feet, know how you want to lead.And he's gone about it, not going away from his personality. He's led in terms of the batting department the last couple of years, shown grit, gets stuck in, and been consistent in his performances. So that's one way to lead.

He has a quiet demeanour, but there's a steeliness; your core skill has to be leading from the front, whether you're a captain or not. So he's been leading the batting department. And he's making a good pair with Shukri Conrad as the coach. So they've got a World Cup final to show for their efforts and hopefully a win at the end of the Test match.Australians are serial winners. What do you think South Africa will need, apart from obviously playing well, to beat this side?It's just doing the basics well, playing against a well-drilled experienced Aussie side that has been there before and done it. You don't have to go there to try and do something different. South Africa got a blueprint of how they want to play.You do the analysis on the opposition and try and find little chinks or little opportunities, which you can sort of get through to them. But South Africa should just focus on themselves, enjoy the occasion and sort of play as a team, which they've done. That character, that resilience, that pride playing for your country, that will come out just to fulfil your role.And with these tight Test matches there, you've got to stay in it. And if you are on top, you've got to try and stay on top, really push the hammer down because you know Australia, they've got an experienced bowling line-up and a few world-class batters – a few very X-factor batters. They'll be bringing their toys to play. South Africa is going to match them, and they'll have a lot of support at the home of cricket, Lord's.

# R Ashwin fined for outburst on umpires during TNPL game

GNS News Agency, June 17

Former Indian cricketer R Ashwin has been fined 30 per cent for a breach of the code of conduct during the Tamil Nadu Premier League game between Dindigul Dragons and Tiruppur Tamizhans held on Sunday. "There was a hearing conducted by the match referee after the game," a TNPL official told Cricbuzz. "Ashwin was fined 10 per cent for showing dissent towards the umpires and 20 per cent for misuse of equipment. He accepted the sanctions."

What happened?

The 38-year-old who plays for Dindigul Dragons was judged LBW off the bowling of Sai Kishore, who plays for Tiruppur Tamizhans. Ashwin was seen in a long argument with the umpire Venkatesan Krithika, and he was thundering off the field and was seen hitting his pads in anger with the bat. "Ashwin is saying 'he has bowled this from over the stumps, ma'am', arguing his case that it was pitched well outside leg stump," said one of the commentators on AIR during the incident.

Why couldn't Ashwin use DRS?

The TNPL has two DRS per innings, and when this incident happened in the fifth over, Ashwin's team, Dindigul Dragons, had exhausted both their reviews, that too in the first over. Ashwin's opening partner, Shivam Singh, used both the DRS options in a valiant attempt to overturn two legitimate calls made by Venkatesan Krithika for a wide. With the new leg-side wide rule in place, Shivam was guilty of moving across, which the umpire noticed and called it a



fair delivery. But Shivam in consultation with Ashwin, took DRS in the hope that it would be ruled a wide and ended up losing both the reviews.

Who won the game?

Dragons could not put on much of a score after Ashwin fell. Ashwin's 18 is the second-highest score alongside RK Jayant. Shivam Singh, with his 30, was the top scorer as the Dragons were bundled out for a mere 93 runs from 16.2 overs. Esakkimuthu A was the pick of the bowlers for Tamizhans with four wickets, with M Mathivannan picking three wickets. Skipper Sai Kishore too chipped in with a couple.Tamizhans chased the total in 11.5 overs for the loss of one wicket. Tushar Raheja with his 39-ball 65 was the top scorer of the innings. Ganeshan Periyaswamy was the lone wicket-taker for Dragons.

# Carlos Alcaraz vs Jannik Sinner: Five standout points from epic French Open final

GNS News Agency, June 17

AlcarazWinner Spain's Carlos Alcaraz, right, and second placed Italy's Jannik Sinner pose with trophies after the final match of the French Tennis Open at the Roland-Garros stadium in Paris. "Today there were few moments of the match that, I mean, the level was insane," was Carlos Alcaraz's assessment as he basked in the glow of returning from a two-set deficit for the first time and defending his title against Jannik Sinner in Sunday's French Open final.A breakdown of those moments:Sinner 1-0 sets lead, 6-6, 3-2\* in tiebreaker (Match time: 2 hours, 6 minutes)The Italian felt no pressure of blowing the previous lead, he raised his game in the shootout. The standout point came as he was dictating the terms from the baseline when both players powered the ball to each other before he scrambled Alcaraz's feet with an angled, disguised, pinpoint forehand winner down-the-line.Sinner 2-0 sets lead, 1-2, \*15-0 (Match time: 3 hours, 21 minutes)Having given up an early break, this match showed no signs of turning, certainly not by the looks of how Sinner was commanding the baseline. He pulverised a few crosscourt backhands to set up a down-the-line ripper, Alcaraz got to everything and put him in a bit of trouble with his agility before Sinner rained down a smash.Alcaraz returned to his strategy of mixing spins and depth to unsettle the Italian and followed it up with the finesse of drop shots, doing so with phenomenal guile. This was the third such instance in the same service game.If



there was any chance of Alcaraz losing his composure after failing to serve out the match himself, he knocked it out with this gutsy point to take into the breaker. He responded to a couple of massive Sinner inside-out forehands, defending on his backhand, before hitting a sensational running backhand crosscourt passing shot. He cupped his ears, the crowd roared, the level was, indeed, insane.2-2 sets equal, 6-6, Alcaraz leads tiebreaker 3-0\* (Match time: 5 hours, 23 minutes)The match tiebreaker is where Alcaraz definitively asserted his superiority, none more so than on this point. He returned Sinner's serve with gusto, followed it up with a delicate drop shot, and then, instead of letting the approach shot fall (it may have gone out) pulled off an inexplicable over-the-head, behind-the-shoulder forehand crosscourt volley on the run. Jaws dropped.

# India produce heavy-metal hockey but finishing lets them down in another painful defeat against World No 1 Netherlands

GNS News Agency, June 17

His face bloodied, Jugraj Singh — smashed on the forehead by a Dutch stick — rolled on the ground, calling for help. Moments later, on the other end of the ground, Abhishek squealed as he went down after being fiercely hit in the abdominal region. Soon after half-time, Manpreet Singh clattered into an outstretched Dutch midfielder, as both chased a free ball, feeling the impact near his knee. And then, with just 1 minute, 37 seconds left in the match, Sumit held his face after being accidentally punched by Floris Wortelboer. After a point, the Pro League match between India and the Netherlands at the Wagener Stadium in Amstelveen became too painful to watch. But those knocks must not have hurt India as much as the end result—a 2-3 defeat to the Olympic champions.

For, the gegenpressing, ball-stealing India produced some of their best heavy-metal hockey and created heaps of chances from open play and set pieces. But profligacy in the 'D', once again, was their undoing.This was a highly tactical match as the Netherlands shadowed every Indian player, sticking to their man-marking ethos. They choked India for space and doubled it up by being physical. India countered this with quick, fast pressing and crowding the centre of the field, thus forcing the Netherlands to attack from wider areas, to prevent direct forays on the goal.India started so sharply and with such high energy that they entered the Dutch 'D' nine times in the first 10 minutes. A lot of it was because of the pressing and smart steals in the Netherlands' half of the field.

Abhishek, playing his 100th international, dispossessed Joep de Mol on the left flank mid-way through the first quarter, ran into the 'D' and unleashed one of his trademark hits from the top of the semicircle. It went just wide of the post but the move was the first warning sign for the Netherlands.In the minutes that followed, India never allowed the home team a patient moment on the ball. As soon as the ball would rest on a Dutch stick, there would be a blue shirt closing down, bending low and ready to tackle.It was one such steal in the 20th minute that led to the opening goal. Manpreet Singh dispossessed a Dutch attacker at half line on the left flank, in front of the dug-outs. The ball rolled forward towards Shilanand Lakra, who artistically lifted it over the onrushing defenders to enter the 'D', and play it towards Abhishek on his right. The forward took a second to compose himself and then slotted it over the Netherlands' goalkeeper to give India the lead.For India coach Craig Fulton, who has made field goals and attack his priority, this would have been a pleasing sight.But it didn't last too long. India were in a similar position even on Saturday, when the Netherlands came back to win 2-1. On Monday, even though they looked flummoxed by the speed of India's pressing and attack, the Netherlands never looked like losing



control.Four minutes later, the world No 1 were on level terms. A wobbly ball from the baseline made its way in front of the goal, beating everyone along the way including the goalkeeper Suraj Karkera. Manpreet had a chance to swat it away but he couldn't connect with the ball and behind him, Thijs van Dam pounced on it to make it 1-1.

India conceded another soft goal three minutes into the third quarter as Tjep Hoedemakers, who constantly made brilliant runs behind the defensive line along with Terrance Pieters, hit a shot that brushed Krishan Pathak's hip and looped into the goal.Once again, India were being punished for not being able to convert their chances, which allowed the Netherlands to take the lead. Their wastefulness in front of the goal would get worse as the match progressed.India barely put a foot wrong in the midfield battle but lacked the finishing touch — both, in open play as well as through penalty corners.The team earned four consecutive corners in the third quarter. Harmanpreet Singh, the scorer of India's only goal a couple of days ago, drew a splendid save from the goalkeeper on one occasion but could not convert either of the opportunities.

Minutes later, India earned two more corners. This time, Jugraj stepped up but he too could not flick the ball into the goal. With six minutes left in the match, Jugraj, who had a bandage plastered across his forehead to stop the bleeding, converted the corner after a deflection off his low flick wrong-footed the Dutch goalkeeper.The goal injected life into the players and almost immediately after restart, India once again stole the ball high up the pitch. Lalit Upadhyay was released one-on-one with the goalkeeper from the consequent counter-attack.The veteran forward tried to go for the spectacular by lobbing the six-foot-tall goalie Maurits Visser, who had stepped out of the goal. Upadhyay, instead, ended up putting the ball over the goal.It was a costly miss as in the 57th minute, India were penalised after Jugraj stick-tackled a Dutch attacker, resulting in a corner. Jip Janssen, one of the finest exponents of the art, did not need another invitation; his flick was too quick and precise for Karkera to stop, sealing a hard-fought win for the hosts and a bruising defeat for India.

# 'I hit hard but he...': What Jannik Sinner shouted to his coaches after losing a point to Carlos Alcaraz in epic French Open final?

GNS News Agency, June 17

In the past, Sinner himself has spoken about some of the tough losses he has had. (AP Photo)In the past, Sinner himself has spoken about some of the tough losses he has had. Something interesting happened in the fifth and deciding set in the epic 2025 French Open men's singles final between Jannik Sinner and Carlos Alcaraz. Sinner was trailing 1-3 and had crawled back to 30-30 after losing the first two points on Alcaraz's serve.The Italian crunched a deep return, almost at the foot of Carlos, and followed it up with a fine backhand down the line and seemed to be in control of that point soon with a couple of backhands. However, Carlos not only got on top of a kicking ball but slammed a deep feisty forehand that Sinner put out.

This is when Sinner turned and shouted to his box. The commentator too cottoned on to the moment, saying, "this is the first time I have seen that (reacting to his team) from him. Unflappable for 4-and-half hours ... "The 101-year old Italian sports newspaper Corriere dello Sport caught what Sinner told his box where his coach Simone Vagnozzi and super coach Darren Cahill were sitting. "I hit hard but he returns hard, damn it," was what he shouted, the newspaper reported.In 2022, he had taken his countryman Simone Vagnozzi as his coach and later added Cahill, the former coach of Andre Agassi and Lleyton Hewitt. Last year



Vagnozzi had spoken to ATP Tour website about him.

"Jannik wants to win everything," Vagnozzi said. "Just yesterday we lost 20 bucks each, Darren and I, because he hit the ball can with his serve on the first try. If we say to him, 'You get 20 Euros if you do it the first time and 15 Euros if you do it on the second', [he always] does it on the first!"In the past, Sinner himself has spoken about some of the tough losses he has had. "I think I've learned a lot from the losses I had, especially one year ago here," Sinner said. "I learned, and I had to accept to learn from myself, [from] my body language. I worked a lot on that."

# Nitish Kumar Reddy, Shardul Thakur miss opportunities to make claim for place in Leeds Test

GNS News Agency, June 17

Nitish Kumar Reddy turned his head back in disbelief. He thought he had executed the textbook forward defensive to a gentle nipbacker from George Hill. His head was still, hands close to the body and the front foot reasonably forward. But the ball had just enough mischief, and precision, to sneak through a microscopic gap between the pad and ball to hit the stumps. A few overs later, Shardul Thakur saw Hill disarray his set of furniture too, keeping the race for the seam-bowling slot for the first Test on a knife's edge. Kumar had stuttered to 42, surviving a dropped catch and looking vulnerable to Hill's military medium offerings; Thakur had freewheeled to 34, before his misjudgment.

Both rued the squandered opportunity to stake their claims, as they watched Tanush Kotian stroke an unconquered 91 and Anshul Kamboj compose his first-class best of 51 not out, enabling India to declare on 417/7. By then England Lions had resigned to the remoteness of surmounting the target of 439 in only 38 overs. Dim was the prospect of India's bowlers wrapping up the Lions in a session. And so it ended, in a tame draw.Stakes remained only for Thakur and Reddy to pluck a few wickets to push up the queue. But they barely got a sniff in the second innings, even as Kamboj continued to leave sizeable footprints on the tour. In the imminent future, both Thakur and Reddy could face sterner competition from the Haryana seamer.

But as it is, neither Reddy nor Thakur would feel they are certainties for the Leeds Test. Reddy, predominantly a batting all-rounder, is the frontrunner after his comeuppance in the Australia tour. Whereas his benign pace on hard tracks where the ball barely moved consigned him to irrelevance, his bowling would be of immense significance in England.On moisture-laden England surfaces, he could interrogate batsmen more tellingly. But in both games, he

struggled with his lines, not so much his lengths. He regularly plugged the fuller lengths, maintained a delicious inward shape into both left and right-handed batsman, coaxed subtle swing in the air and seam movement off the surface. But he fluffed his direction indiscriminately, leading to leg-side trash.

With the bat, he has looked comfortable when the sun was out and the ball traversed straight lines. But when the skies turned gloomy, so did he. In the morning session, the late swing of Hill and the bustle of Josh Tongue concerned him. The latter beat both the edges and fluffed him into poking at a ball that exploded from length. Tom Haines, who had just moved to first slip, dropped the straightforward offering. Thereafter, he slashed anything marginally short through the third-man fence, before he slog-swept Farhan ahmed over deep midwicket. Just when he seemed utterly unbeatable came the nip-backer that would leave him repenting another missed opportunity (134 runs in four) to nail the all-rounder's seat.For Thakur to upend him in the line and claim the prize, he required a pile of runs, as much as the wickets. So far, despite fairly pleasant circumstances, he could muster only 80 runs in three innings. Monday presented the best chance, with the surface docile and bowlers blunted.

He smoked Alam for a brace of sixes either side of the sight-screen, after caressing Eddie Jack through sweeper cover. But he, like Reddy, floundered when it seemed that he had at least a half-century for the taking.More worryingly, his bowling was not penetrative enough to trouble batsmen in both games. He stitched economical spells, an attribute teams wish from a third-fourth seamer, but he required the power of the wickets to barge into the Test line-up. Neither Thakur nor Reddy, thus, have so far made a compelling case for inclusion in Leeds.



# Vidya Balan says Vidhu Vinod Chopra cast her as Parineeta after seeing anger in her eyes, thought she was giving him gaali: Parineeta turns 20

Over two decades ago, Vidya Balan was at an Enrique Iglesias concert in Mumbai when she got a call from producer Vidhu Vinod Chopra. He said he wouldn't wait till the concert was over and instructed her to walk out. When an irritated Vidya complied, she heard the words, "You are my Parineeta," as Hero played in the background. "I can be your hero, baby" has been Vidya's motto ever since, as the actor has headlined films at a time when her contemporaries were happy playing the second fiddle. In fact, she's the first female actor after Dimple Kapadia (Bobby, 1975) who was launched into the movies as the titular character. "I'm not complaining," she says, laughing, in an exclusive interview with SCREEN on the 20-year anniversary of her debut film, late Pradeep Sarkar's 2005 period romance Parineeta.

Pradeep Sarkar had worked with you on three music videos before he launched you in his directorial debut Parineeta. He was your mentor, and wrote the script with you in mind. Did you feel then your debut would be a cakewalk? I didn't know how it worked. I didn't come from the business. I didn't have any friends here who could tell me the producer also had a say. I didn't know what the role of a producer is, besides putting in the money. Studios were new at that time, so I didn't know what their contribution was. In Dada's very first meeting with Vidhu Vinod Chopra, he told him, "I want to cast a star. it's the title role. Are you crazy? You want to cast a newcomer?" So Dada came back to the office. We were one big team and we had this shared dream. So when he told me, I was heartbroken, but I didn't let him see that. I told him, "If you're going to make the film you wanted, you should go ahead." Then I came out of the office and cried. It came so close, and it's not happening again! They spoke to a lot of actors. They showed great interest, but Dada wasn't convinced. And Vinod Chopra is also a director, right? He understood Dada's conviction and said, "Okay, I'll give you a chance to audition her."

You gave quite a few auditions then. Did you get frustrated of why Vinod Chopra can't see what Pradeep Sarkar did in you?

No, I didn't. As a matter of fact, I had gone through a spate of rejections in the South, where I'd signed the films and then they didn't materialize. So I thought maybe this isn't going to work out for me. But with every audition, I was giving my best. It's rubbish that I gave some 40 auditions and 17 makeup trials. That's far from true. There were three or four tests. But I was a bit frustrated because at one point, they wanted to do a modern take on Parineeta so we did a scene in that setup. Then they said they wanted to see it in

a traditional setup. And Saif Ali Khan was also there because they wanted to see our chemistry. He had just had Hum Tum (2004) so it was amazing Saif did this. They even got me to do a lip-sync test. Then they changed the hairstyle. Then Binod Pradhan, the cinematographer, came to me and said, "I've shot you in so many ad films. When the camera comes on, you always enjoy yourself. But I'm not seeing that enjoyment in you. You're not being yourself. Forget about it, film hui ki nahi hui, you just enjoy yourself. Baki dekha jayega. And actually in that test, I did that and that was the clincher. So I'll always be grateful to Binod Pradhan for saying that to me at the right time.

Have you asked Vinod Chopra after that what was the clincher for him?

The first shot of Parineeta has me turn into the camera and the title appears. We were trying to do that shot for the audition because they wanted an indescribable emotion there. I was so frustrated by then because it wasn't just Parineeta, but also three years of not working before that. I'd reached my wit's end. Vinod Chopra said he saw anger in my eyes in that shot. He said, "Tu mujhe gaali de rahi thi, mujhe dikh raha tha" (laughs). That's not true, but my frustration and anger would've shown. That's the reason he gave me the part.

I believe Saif was also not convinced of a newcomer being cast opposite him initially. Did you feel that while working with him?

I was just happy Saif and Sanju (Sanjay Dutt) agreed to do the film with me finally, whatever their reasons. But I have to say, Saif and I didn't have any conversations on that film. We hardly spoke with each other. Also, Saif was going through some personal stuff then (divorce with Amrita Singh) so he was preoccupied between takes. It's not like we struck a friendship. I think maybe that also helped the chemistry in the film. I've said a million times, and I'll say it a million times again, when I say superstar, for me, it means Sanjay Dutt. He's just larger than life. He's just so wonderful, I absolutely love him. Saif Ali Khan and Vidya Balan in Parineeta. Saif Ali Khan and Vidya Balan in Parineeta.

Is there anything common between you and your character Lalita?

The fact that she's very patient (laughs). I don't know if I'm as patient 20 years since, but at that time, I was definitely a very patient person considering all that I was going through. I've got a lot of resilience in me. And when I love, I love deeply.

How much do you miss Pradeep Sarkar today?

## Aamir Khan defends son Junaid Khan's Maharaj and Loveyapa performances, says he refuses his help: 'His career matters to me more than mine'



Actor Aamir Khan made his debut in the 1988 film Qayamat se Qayamat Tak, and after a multi-decade career filled with blockbusters and era-defining films, his son Junaid Khan decided to follow in his father's footsteps. Junaid has featured in two films as of yet, Maharaj (2024) and Loveyapa (2025), and much to his dismay, the actor hasn't had the best start in Bollywood. Both films received a lot of backlash for their narratives and also the lack of one, while Junaid faced a lot of heat. In a recent interview, Aamir defended his son and praised his skill as an actor, pointing out that he has the ability to completely transform himself for a particular role.

## Amitabh Bachchan shuts down trolls taking digs at his late-night tweets, responds to 'umar ho gayi hai': 'Mere maran ki baat karne ke liye...'

Amitabh Bachchan shuts down trolls mocking his late-night tweets. Amitabh Bachchan shuts down trolls mocking his late-night tweets. Veteran superstar Amitabh Bachchan is quite active on social media. His witty replies on X (formerly Twitter) are widely known among fans. Recently, the 81-year-old actor got involved in a heated exchange with trolls, who were asking him to sleep on time and mocking him for being active on social media late at night. He didn't hold himself back and served them in style. In the wee hours on Monday, June 9, Amitabh wrote in a tweet, "T 5405 - Gadgets break... Longevity lasts!!!" While some users engaged positively with his random thought, a few people took the opportunity to make fun of Big B. Replying to his post, a user wrote, "Samay se so jaya karo, warna lambi umar bhi nahi tikegi". To which the actor replied, "Mere maran ki baat karne ke liye dhanyawaad, ishawar ki kripa (Thank you for talking about my death, by God's grace)." Mentioning a reference from the title song of his hit film Shahenshah, another troll commented, "Andheri raaton mein Shaehshah kyun jaag rahe ho, so jaiye ab umar ho gayi apki," implying that the actor should take care of his health, keeping his advanced age in mind. Amitabh instantly gave a witty reply and wrote, "Ek din tumhari bhi umar ho jaayegi, ishawar ne chaaha (One day, you'll grow old too, if God wills)." Meanwhile, on the professional front, Amitabh



Bachchan was last seen in the Tamil action drama Vettaiyan in 2024, which featured Rajinikanth in the lead role. Directed by TJ Gnanavel, the film also starred Fahadh Faasil, Rana Daggubati, Manju Warrier, Ritika Singh, Dushara Vijayan, and Abhirami in pivotal roles.



He was my mentor in every way. I never thought he'd not be around for the 20th anniversary! It's crazy when you think of it. He went very young. I feel angry and frustrated sometimes because he never took care of his health. His wife kept doing her best to keep him healthy, but there's only so much one can do, right? But he was so obsessed with his work.

Parineeta also established your image as a deeply rooted Indian actor. Had they gone ahead with the modern take, do you think your career would have shaped differently?

I don't know if it'd have been different, but I like the path my career took and the kind of work I got. I played an author-backed role in my first film, that's a big deal! For someone who doesn't belong to this business, I got the opportunity to do this! So they saw what I could do with that. I may not have gotten the opportunities I did had I started any other way. Also, at heart, I'm most comfortable being an Indian. I don't know how to describe that adequately, but I romanticize everything that's Indian. So I'm very glad they went that route. I love the way the women dressed in that era, in the 1960s. We didn't see being feminine and sensual as being weak in cinema at that time. I was getting to explore that. Since it was a love story, and I was being wooed by two men, they had to really make me look my

best. Every strain in Parineeta is like a painting. Since you got such a grand debut, did you struggle with sustaining your momentum post Parineeta?

Not at all! I had Lage Raho Munna Bhai, which was a massive success. I did seven films in the next two years. I worked with some of the biggest filmmakers — Mani Ratnam (Guru, 2007), Nikkhil Advani (Salaam-E-Ishq, 2007), Rajkumar Santoshi (Halla Bol, 2008). I was working with some big actors and banners. I was over the moon! I also got substantial parts. Some of those films worked, some didn't, but I was still receiving a lot of love. Then in 2007-08, I realized I needed to now take the next leap in my career. I don't think it was a conscious decision, but I responded to the opportunity that came my way. When Ishqiya (2010) happened, I jumped into it head long. I really enjoyed it. And that pretty much set the tone for the rest of my career.

In these 20 years, what have you learnt about how the film industry works? And what have you learnt about yourself?

I remember Siddharth (Roy Kapur, producer, husband) told me a few years ago, and it struck me that it's so true. The film industry is the most accepting of places. It doesn't matter what your religious belief or sexuality is, where you live, what you eat, what the colour of your skin is, or the size of your waist is. Nothing matters. It's a place of equal opportunity.

## Samay Raina dresses up as a groom, asks audience to 'stop being so sensitive' in video with Krsna and Seedhe Maut after India's Got Latent controversy.



Apart from being tied to the controversial comment made on his show, comedian Samay Raina is also known for his love for music and hip-hop specifically. He has added another entry to his list of collaborations with DHH (Desi Hip-Hop) artistes with an appearance in the music video for 'Sensitive', a song performed by Krsna and rap duo Seedhe Maut. The song also references India's Got Latent and how easily the country takes offence. The song is a part of Krsna's latest mixtape 'Yours Truly', and all three rappers made fun of censorship and sensitive audiences in the country.

The song starts with an audio byte of Samay from the controversial show India's Got Latent, which got shut down and removed from YouTube after it received a lot of backlash for jokes that were deemed inappropriate and vulgar. Encore ABJ, who is part of the duo Seedhe Maut, starts the song off with his verse that talks about the difference in

levels of comedy that is allowed in India and the West. He points out in one of the bars that while the foreign comedians can joke about anything, Indians are too busy fighting within themselves. In the video Samay is dressed as a groom, and Krsna, Encore and Calm are all three dressed as band players from an Indian wedding. Even the name of the band that is performing at the wedding is named 'Sensitive Band.'

The trio all together sing "Stop being so sensitive" in the chorus section while Samay dances to drum beats similar to what you hear at a wedding. The second verse is helmed by Calm, who alleges that there are many more important things that the government and authorities should be working on rather than handing out bans and citations to people speaking their minds. Krsna comes into the song posing as a news anchor and says that many news organisations would rather debate on trivial issues than actually report something worthwhile. He doubles down and states that these organisations are against the idea of true freedom, while Samay can be seen with his mouth taped shut.

All four men use the music video to take jabs at the authorities for their actions regarding the India's Got Latent row. The controversy began when famous podcast host Ranveer Allahbadia asked a contestant a question which was later deemed insensitive and inappropriate. The fallout of the entire episode affected the show, the venue at which it was hosted, and many of the comedians who had made guest appearances. Samay and Ranveer were right in the middle of the storm as police cases were filed against both of them, and they experienced a lot of online bashing and personal hazing as well.

## 'No ego between Ranbir Kapoor, Ranveer Singh': Karan Johar says stars hang out together; reveals he has no 'gile-shikve' with Kartik Aaryan anymore

Ranbir Kapoor and Ranveer Singh are often pitted against each other on social media. However, their close friend and filmmaker Karan Johar has clarified that there's no ego clash or unhealthy competition between the two actors. In an interview with Bollywood Hungama, he revealed that both Ranbir and Ranveer give him feedback about each other's films. Karan also opened up about his past feud with actor Kartik Aaryan and his experience of finally collaborating with him in the upcoming film, Tu Mera Main Teri Main Tera Tu Meri. During the podcast, Karan Johar was asked if casting either of them creates a tiff between him and Ranbir or Ranveer. To which, he replied, "Everybody is understanding of each other, there is no ego. This is all very old school of looking at it in that gaze or lens. I don't look at it like that, I am sure they don't either." The director further added that the trio has always maintained a close friendship. "I remember when I did Ae Dil Hai Mushkil, Ranveer watching the film, coming to my house and telling me about his thoughts. It was so wonderful. I also remember Ranbir giving me feedback on Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani. We are friends more than anything else. We have hung out with each other. We have chatted with each other. We talk shop, but we also talk about our personal lives and feelings. All of us are a bunch of people who are here to tell stories, make movies, and learn and imbibe from each other,

