





# Indian Chronicle

English Daily

## It's time for de-growth

Every year on June 5, the world celebrates World Environment Day. Once a meaningful initiative, it has now lost its practical significance and has been reduced to tokenistic observations, as evident from the persistent and escalating environmental problems. This is also highlighted by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), Sixth Assessment Report, Synthesis Report, 2023, which states that the global surface temperature had already increased by 1.1 degrees Celsius above the pre-industrial era (1850-1900) in 2011-20, largely driven by the emission of greenhouse gases (GHGs).

The IPCC has also warned that the window to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius is rapidly closing. The year 2023 marked a dark point in the global climate crisis by becoming the hottest year ever recorded. It also witnessed an unbroken streak of seven consecutive months of record-high global temperatures. Oceans, which absorb the majority of excess heat from the atmosphere, reached unprecedented temperature levels, signalling a disturbing trend with profound implications for marine ecosystems. Accelerating climate change has unleashed a series of extreme weather events worldwide.

The Amazon rainforest, dubbed the 'lungs of the Earth', experienced a historic drought towards the end of 2023. By August 2024, the Mediterranean Sea reached a record-high temperature of 31.96 degrees C, while Saudi Arabia experienced an extraordinary snowfall caused by heavy rain and hail in November 2024.

This alarming situation is further exacerbated by the world political scenario, with the persistence of growth-obsessed leadership in major economies. Donald Trump's previous term as the US President demonstrated a decisive rollback of environmental protections, with 98 regulations reversed and enforcement actions by the Environmental Protection Agency reduced by 50 per cent.

## K.V. Muralikrishna Assumes Charge as TTD CV&SO



"June 5, Indian Chronicle Rayalaseema coordinator""K.V. Muralikrishna assumed charge as the Chief Vigilance and Security Officer (CV&SO) of TTD at the Sri Venkateswara Swamy Temple in Tirumala on Thursday.""Before taking charge, the CV&SO had darshan of Sri Venkateswara Swamy and then formally took charge at the Ranganayakula Mandapam. The temple officials presented him with Tirtha Prasadam.""TTD Additional CV&SO Venkata Shivakumar Reddy, Vigilance Officers Ram Kumar, Surendra, and other officials participated in the program.

## Hyderabad's Tarnaka junction under flyover to close for vehicles from June 6



GNS News Agency, June 5

Hyderabad: The Tarnaka junction under the flyover, which was reopened for vehicular traffic in April, will be closed again from Friday, June 6. The Hyderabad Traffic Police had reopened it on April 18 for vehicular movement, on a trial basis, to facilitate travel between Osmania University and Lalapet, and vice versa. During the trial period, traffic officials conducted simulation and drone-based studies, analysed Google data, tested various traffic signal timings, and reviewed road engineering aspects at the junction. Feedback was also gathered from commuters. All the studies indicated that it is not feasible to keep the Tarnaka junction under the flyover open. Authorities found it advisable to close the junction to ease traffic congestion, prevent road accidents, and ensure the safety of all road users. In light of this, citizens are advised to note that the Tarnaka junction under the flyover will be closed for vehicular traffic starting Friday.

## Krishna Pradeep's 21st Century IAS Academy to Host Grand Felicitation Ceremony for UPSC 2024 Rankers and Launch U3 Scholarship Test



Hyderabad: Krishna Pradeep's 21st Century IAS Academy, a pioneer in civil services coaching with over two decades of excellence, is excited to announce a grand felicitation ceremony honoring the outstanding UPSC 2024 rankers. This prestigious event will take place on June 8, 2025, at the renowned Sundarayya Vignana Kendram, Baghlingampally, Hyderabad. The ceremony will be graced by distinguished guests, including Justice N.V. Ramana (Former Chief Justice of India), Mr. G. Kishan Reddy (Hon'ble Union Minister of Coal & Mines), Mr. Ch. Vidya Sagar Rao (Former Governor of Maharashtra), and Mr. Shri Mahesh M. Bhagwat (IPS, Addl DGP, Law & Order). These esteemed dignitaries will join us in honoring the remarkable

achievements of our civil service rankers.

As a part of this momentous occasion, the academy will also facilitate one-on-one interaction sessions, offering aspiring civil servants the unique opportunity to engage directly with successful candidates. These sessions are designed to provide insights, guidance, and inspiration for the next generation of UPSC aspirants. In celebration of its 21st anniversary, the 21st Century IAS Academy is thrilled to launch the "Unlimited UPSC Utsav (U3) Scholarship Test." This initiative will provide lifetime access to the academy's comprehensive UPSC preparation resources and aims to support promising candidates across the nation. The U3 Scholarship Test will also take place on June 8, 2025, and is open to all aspiring civil servants. Demonstrating a strong commitment to inclusivity, the academy is proud to introduce its "Free for Female" initiative, which will offer free civil services coaching to the top 50 female aspirants. This effort aims to empower women and encourage greater participation in civil services, further promoting gender equality in this vital career path. Krishna Pradeep's 21st Century IAS Academy continues to set the standard for excellence in civil services training, embodying its mission to inspire and support the future leaders of our nation. We invite all media representatives to cover this significant occasion and join us on our journey towards a brighter future.

## Seed Ball Distribution Program on the Occasion of World Environment Day



Hyderabad: On the occasion of World Environment Day on 5th June, Telangana Prisons and Correctional Services Department in partnership with the IOCL Celebrated today's Seed Ball Distribution Program as part of commitment to environmental sustainability and green initiatives. This program was inaugurated by Dr. Soumya Mishra, IPS, Director General of Prisons & Correctional Services, at Fuel Outlet of Central Prison Chanchalguda. She emphasized the importance of collective action in environmental conservation and highlighted the department's innovative eco-friendly initiatives. The event focused on the noble cause of promoting greenery through seed ball distribution, encouraging afforestation and ecological restoration.

As part of future vision, the department has set a target to prepare 2 lakh seed balls during the upcoming season with the active involvement of inmates. These seed balls are being prepared by inmates of all jails, to create awareness among Jail inmates and strengthening the department's mission of reform and rehabilitation through meaningful environmental work. These seed balls will be distributed across Telangana through all 30 fuel outlets maintained by the Prisons Department, which will be distributed to the visitors of these outlets, and Jail Staff encouraging

## Tribal women gain livelihood through sewing training: ITDA PO Rahul



"Bhukya Ranjith Naik "Bhadradi Kothagudem "Indian Chronicle, June 4: ITDA PO Rahul said that tribal women will be provided livelihood through sewing training. On Wednesday, he visited the training center where tribal women are learning sewing at YTC in the ITDA premises. He asked the women what plans they are making to increase their livelihood after learning sewing. They wanted to learn the sewing training provided by the trainers for a month with attention and learn how to create various designs. After completing training, they want to set up their own sewing shop in the village without depending on anyone. He said that embroidery training will also be provided at the center in the coming days. He said that certificates will be issued to the women who have taken the training, and women in need will be provided with sewing missions at low interest

## World Environment Day in SVU



"June 5 Indian Chronicle Rayalaseema coordinator""On the occasion of World Environment Day on June 5th, a sapling planting program was organized in collaboration with the NSS Department, Student Welfare & Cultural Arts Department at SV University campus.

SVU Vice Chancellor Acharya Chippada Apparao and Registrar Acharya Bhupathi Naidu were present in the presence of the dignitaries. SVU Vice Chancellor Acharya C. H. Apparao Registrar said that the sapling planting program was organized for the future and health of the future gen-

erations and that they have taken a pledge to build a plastic-free society. NSS units of Engineering, Commerce and Management, Arts and Science colleges of SVU participated. Yesterday, the students who participated in the oratory and essay writing competitions on environmental protection at the university and won were awarded prizes by the Vice Chancellor and Registrar. Acharya Damodaram, Acharya Lakshamma, Acharya Prayaga, Acharya Jayachandra, Dr. Pathipati Vivek, retired professors, researchers and students are all welcome in this program.

## OPPO Releases 2024 Sustainability Report, Reaches its Climate Target Two Years Earlier than Planned



Hyderabad: Today, OPPO released its 2024 Sustainability Report on the 54th World Environment Day. The report—now in its fifth year of publication—announced that the company reached a peak in carbon emissions across its operations in 2022, two years ahead of its original climate target.

The report also outlines OPPO's efforts and achievements in building a more inclusive and sustainable future, focusing on five key areas: virtuous innovation, environmental protection, ecosystem engagement, operations and compliance, and employee care. Driven by its brand renewal – 'Make Your Moment', OPPO will propel sustainability to create an impact through green innovation and responsible technology. Making its Operations and Products Greener in line with its commitment to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050, OPPO has been actively exploring new models for reducing emission intensity. It achieved a 3.2% year-on-year reduction in Scope 1 & 2 emissions in 2024, equaling the annual sequestration capacity of about 5,14,320 mature trees. OPPO reduced Scope 3 emissions by 9.3% compared to the previous year by mobilising its supply chain partners.

OPPO also implemented green management practices across the entire lifecycle of its products. In 2024, the company introduced a lightweight packaging design across its entire smartphone product line and adopted recycled materials made from plant residues such as sugarcane and bamboo to replace traditional paper materials. OPPO also integrated innovative engineering solutions to improve the durability of its products. Engaging with Local Communities as a Corporate Citizen, OPPO India, in collaboration with AICTE, launched the Generation Green campaign to educate youth about the challenges of electronic waste management and the need for effective disposal for a sustainable future. The campaign evolved from raising awareness to becoming a practical action platform, engaging 476+ education institutions in India with over 10 lakh student advocates. 5000 interns from colleges were selected as changemakers to drive hands-on sustainability activities, such as awareness sessions, Community Engagements, E-Waste Art Installations, and Green Day celebrations. Additionally, over 10,339 kg of e-waste was collected through community-driven initiatives under the programme. Read more about the Generation Green Initiative

## Cold war brews between Mancheri, Nirmal Collectors and Telangana forest staff over farmers' rights



GNS News Agency, June 5

Adilabad: An unprecedented cold war is brewing between the district administration and Forest Department across the erstwhile Adilabad district. Mancheri Collector Kumar Deepak recently instructed police officials to register cases against forest personnel for allegedly harassing farmers cultivating forest land in Vemanapalli mandal. However, the police, after probing the allegations, recommended that the administration conduct a joint survey involving both the Forest and Revenue departments to resolve the issue amicably. Similarly, Nirmal Collector Abhilasha Abhinav reportedly directed forest officials to withdraw an order restricting vehicular movement through the Kawal Tiger Reserve. The order, imposed in view of increased tiger activity in the area, barred movement from 9 pm to 6 am. Locals expressed concern over the restrictions, citing inconvenience. District authorities also objected to the Forest Department collecting toll tax from motorists using roads passing through Kawal, arguing that forest officials were not authorised to collect tolls on roads constructed and maintained by the Roads and Buildings Department. The administration is said to have sought proof of any government order permitting such toll collection. The Forest Department also faced criticism for removing 22 huts allegedly erected illegally by tribal families inside the core area of Kawal. The demolition followed a complaint lodged by a local resident with Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF) RM Dobriyal. While forest officials acted based on the complaint, the move drew widespread criticism. Khanapur MLA and State Board for Wildlife member Vedma Boiju voiced displeasure over the restrictions in Kawal and the demolition of huts. He reportedly brought the matter to the notice of Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, who is said to have assured action to ease vehicular movement in the reserve at night. Sources indicated that the district administration, under pressure from local public representatives, has been instructing police and revenue officials to file cases against forest staff, accusing them of causing inconvenience to farmers in the name of plantation drives on disputed land. Forest officials, meanwhile, maintain that they are merely enforcing forest conservation laws and are being unfairly targeted.



## Aim to Plant One Crore Saplings: Amudala Thulasidas



June 5 Indian Chronicle Rayalaseema co-ordinator Amudala Thulasidas, the Tirupati Telugu Desam Party (TDP) Shalivahana Parliament President, expressed his immense satisfaction participating in the World Environment Day program today. He announced that following the directives of Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu to plant "One Crore" saplings across the state, a government-initiated tree-planting program was successfully conducted on M.R. Palli Seethamma Nagar Road. Amudala Thulasidas emphasized that nature is not the "property" of any single individual. He urged everyone to consider protecting "nature" as their "duty" and to plant at least one tree in front of every house, thereby becoming active participants in "environmental protection." He further quoted Chief Minister



Sri Nara Chandrababu Naidu, who stated that if our surrounding environment is "good," then everyone's health will also be good, which is why the "Swachh Andhra" program was launched as part of "Swachh Bharat." Thulasidas appealed to everyone to take their responsibility in reducing "plastic" pollution and to "gear up" for the comprehensive protection of the environment.

The program was well-attended by prominent Telugu Desam Party leaders, including APJ & BC Chairman, Tirupati Constituency Telugu Desam Party In-charge, and former MLA Smt. Mannuru Sugunamma; Batte Venkata Keerthi; State Yadava Corporation Chairman G. Narasimha Yadav; City Deputy Mayor R.C. Munikrishna; and City President Chinababu.

## Human Existence at Risk Without Trees: Srikalahasti MLA Bojjala Sudheer Reddy



Youth Should Embrace Tree Planting and Nurturing as a Fashion: TUDA Chairman Dollars Diwakar Reddy Appeals June 5 Indian Chronicle Rayalaseema co-ordinator \* On the occasion of World Environment Day, \*TUDA Chairman Dollars Diwakar Reddy, \*\*Srikalahasti MLA Bojjala Sudheer Reddy, and \*\*Greenery and Beautification Corporation Chairman Sugunamma\* collectively planted saplings and watered them at the Renigunta Old Check Post junction, under the aegis of the Tirupati Urban Development Authority. Following this, TUDA Vice Chairman Mourya administered the environmental protection pledge. Speaking on the occasion, "MLA Bojjala Sudheer Reddy" reminded everyone that environmental protection is a collective responsibility. He recalled that the visionary late N.T. Rama Rao had planted seeds via helicopters in many areas, developing them into forests. Similarly, the current Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu has also spearheaded the planting of crores of saplings across the state



under the "Harita Andhra Vision." He noted that his father, Bojjala Gopalakrishna Reddy, inspired by them, also planted millions of saplings in his constituency, and it is his foresight that has made Srikalahasti green today. TUDA Chairman Dollars Diwakar Reddy\* expressed concern that everyone is facing difficulties due to pollution outside their homes. He stated that planting trees is the only way to reduce pollution and ensure healthy human life. He advised the youth to take up tree planting and nurturing as a fashion. He announced that TUDA has decided to plant approximately 30 lakh saplings within its jurisdiction on the occasion of Environment Day. He also assured that the lakes in Renigunta would be developed using TUDA funds. He emphasized that for the next generation to thrive, the current generation must plant trees. The program was attended by various public representatives, officials from TUDA, Forest, and Environment Departments, and a large number of citizens. [3:15 pm, 5/6/2025] +91 96667 99952: \*

## SFI Calls for Clampdown on Junior Inter Private College Coace colleges i SFI Calls for Clampdown on Junior Inter Private College Coaching Mafia in Tirupati



Demands Revocation of Recognition for Colleges Engaging in Illicit Coaching Activities June 5 Indian Chronicle Rayalaseema co-ordinator The Students' Federation of India (SFI) today met with the newly appointed Regional Intermediate Officer (RIO), Rajasekhara Reddy, at his office, urging immediate action against a burgeoning "coaching mafia" operating under the guise of private junior intermediate colleges in Tirupati. The SFI district committee, while congratulating the RIO, presented him with a book by Comrade Sitaram Yechury. In their detailed representation, SFI leaders asserted that despite Tirupati's reputation as an educational hub, several private intermediate colleges are exploiting their status by functioning primarily as lucrative coaching centers (such as Unacademy, Aakash, and Allen). These institutions are allegedly charging exorbitant fees, ranging from "one lakh to three lakh rupees", for coaching programs tailored for JEE Mains, JEE Advanced, and various Medical Academies. SFI accused these colleges of flagrantly violating Intermediate Board regulations.

They highlighted that these institutions are not conducting regular intermediate classes but instead operate full-day coaching sessions, only holding actual intermediate classes for a mere three months before examinations. The student body further alleged that these colleges are "evading government taxes" by masquerading as educational institutions while effectively running coaching centers, thereby outright "deceiving thousands of parents and students." SFI specifically cited several colleges as examples of this alleged malpractice, demanding swift action: \*Raju Junior College (Code 09382):\* Accused of colluding with Allen Medical Coaching Center, collecting lakhs in fees, and operating in blatant disregard of Intermediate Board norms. SFI demanded its "immediate sealing." \*BVK Groups of Educational Institutions:\* Alleged to be engaging in similar large-scale fraudulent activities by partnering with coaching giants like Unacademy under the facade of a junior college. SFI called for a "comprehensive investigation" into these institutions.

\*Madgi Junior College (Code 09053):\* Brought to the RIO's attention for allegedly collecting exorbitant fees illegally under the guise of "special school classes" (for grades 6-12), running a significant racket. \*Geetham Junior College (Code 09129):\* Accused of misleadingly advertising intermediate classes while colluding with Aakash Medical Academy coaching, collecting millions in fees. SFI emphatically demanded the immediate revocation of recognition for all colleges involved in these illicit practices. The delegation included SFI District President Akbar, District Secretary Bhagat Ravi, District Vice President Vinod Kumar, and district leaders Veeresh, Siva, Thimmappa, and Malli, among others.

## Landowners in Telangana left in lurch as Bhu Bharati deadlines keep shifting

Hyderabad: The Congress government's much-hyped Bhu Bharati portal, introduced with the promise of resolving long-pending land disputes, is fast losing credibility among landowners. Despite a series of public assurances and carefully set deadlines, the ground reality remains unchanged for thousands still awaiting redressal.

Launched to replace the Dharani portal, Bhu Bharati was touted as a transparent and people-centric solution to fix irregularities in land records and registrations. However, more than two months into its rollout, the portal is yet to deliver tangible relief to a majority of complainants. In February this year, Revenue Minister Ponguleti Srinivasa Reddy declared that around 2.45 lakh pending applications under

the Dharani system would be cleared through 'Revenue Sadassulu' (meetings) held between March 1 and 7. Subsequently, the Bhu Bharati portal was officially rolled out on April 14, with pilot projects initiated in four mandals.

The government aimed to resolve all land-related issues by May 1 in these areas. However, by late April, the deadline was extended to June 2, coinciding with Telangana Formation Day. But the Minister extended the deadline once again for resolving all land-related issues to August 15, leaving landowners in limbo. Earlier this month, officials claimed 60 per cent of issues in pilot mandals had been addressed, most linked to Sada Bainamas.

## Lawyers India Organization Petitions Telangana Ministers: Seeks Immediate Redressal of Advocates' Long-Standing Grievances.



PS Ashokan Indian Chronicle Manthani June, 5 In a decisive move to address the persistent challenges faced by the legal fraternity in Telangana, a delegation from the Lawyers India Organization submitted a detailed memorandum to State Ministers Duddilla Sridhar Babu and Komatireddy Venkat Reddy. The representation appeals for swift governmental intervention on key demands impacting over 50,000 advocates and their families across the state. The delegation urged the ministers to place these critical issues on the agenda of the upcoming Telangana State Cabinet Meeting scheduled for Thursday evening. Among the foremost demands is the immediate reinstatement of health cards—worth up to ₹10 lakhs per family—as committed in the Congress Party's election manifesto. Key Demands Highlighted in the Memorandum Include: A monthly stipend of ₹5,000 for junior advocates to support their early professional years Release of notary notifications, pending for an extended period Allotment of house sites to eligible advocates across the state Establishment of dedicated parking facilities for differently-abled advocates in the under-construction High Court complex Implementation of accessibility infrastructure in accordance with the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, within the High Court premises Systematic and time-bound redressal of other legal professionals'



concerns This initiative is seen as a crucial step towards enhancing the welfare and dignity of the legal community in Telangana, who play an indispensable role in upholding justice and the rule of law. Prominent Participants in the Delegation: Ponnamm Ravinder, National General Secretary, Lawyers India Organization Inumula Satyanarayana, Telangana State Convenor Ale Narasimha, State General Secretary Senior High Court Advocates Antony Reddy, Kumaraswamy, and other key legal dignitaries

## PEDDAPALLI DISTRICT BADMINTON CHAMPIONSHIP -

2025 Selection Tournament for Telangana State Championship

PS Ashokan Indian Chronicle Manthani June, 5 Peddapalli, Telangana — The Telangana Badminton Association of Peddapalli District, in collaboration with the Badminton Association of Telangana and the Sports Authority of Telangana State (SATG), is proud to announce the Peddapalli District Badminton Championship - 2025, a prestigious selection tournament for the upcoming Telangana State Badminton Championship. The championship will be held on 14th and 15th June 2025 at the RCOA Club, CER Club, Godavarikani. This tournament will serve as the official selection platform for categories including Mini Sub-Junior, Sub-Junior, Juniors, Men, Women, and Masters. Gracing the occasion with their esteemed support are: Sri Duddilla Sridhar Babu, Hon'ble Minister for IT, E&C, Industries, and Commerce, Government of Telangana, and President of BAT Makkan Singh Raj Thakur, MLA, Ramagundam Sri Pullela Gopichand, General Secretary, Badminton Association of Telangana Key Rules & Guidelines: 1. All matches will strictly follow BAI/BAT regulations. 2. Events with fewer than six entries will be subject to cancellation. 3. Players may register for up to three events. 4. Only feather shuttles will be used in the matches. 5. All participants will receive a participation certificate. 6. Winners and runners-up will be awarded merit certificates. 7. Selected players will represent Peddapalli District in the Telangana State Badminton Championship 2025. 8. Participants must report at least 30 minutes before their scheduled match. 9. An original Date of Birth certificate or proof is mandatory for all players (except BAI-registered players). 10. Matches will be played in the format of 15 x 3 games, with scoring extended up to 21 points. Entry Fee: Singles: ₹300 Doubles: ₹500 For further information and registration, please contact: ?? 9396540067 / 8328509690 / 9110565124 This event promises to showcase emerging talent from the district and is a stepping stone for many young aspirants to make their mark



at the state level. We invite all sports enthusiasts and players to participate and support this celebration of skill, sportsmanship, and athletic excellence.

## \*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE\*



AP LAW CET and PGL CET-2025 Exams Conclude Peacefully Across Andhra Pradesh June 5 Indian Chronicle Rayalaseema co-ordinator The Andhra Pradesh LAW CET (Law Common Entrance Test) and PGL CET (Post Graduate Law Common Entrance Test) for the year 2025 were conducted successfully and peacefully across the state on Thursday. Prof. V. Uma, Vice-Chancellor of Sri Padmavati Mahila Viswavidyalayam (SPMVV), Tirupati, formally released the question papers. Addressing the occasion, she announced that a total of 21,251 candidates

appeared for the examinations at 133 designated centers throughout Andhra Pradesh.

Following the commencement of the exams, Prof. Uma visited the Chadalawada Ramanamma Engineering College in Tirupati, one of the examination centers, to oversee the arrangements. Prof. Sitakumari, the Convener for LAW CET-2025, extended her gratitude to all individuals and departments whose cooperation and support ensured the smooth and orderly conduct of the LAW CET-2025 examinations.



# Centre’s expert panel recommends environmental nod for twin-tunnel road near Wayanad landslide site in Kerala



GNS News Agency, June 5

The Union Environment Ministry’s Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC) on infrastructure projects has recommended environmental clearance for the 8.75-km-long twin tunnel road proposed between Kozhikode and Wayanad district in Kerala, close to areas affected by the disastrous 2019 and 2024 landslides. The four-lane tunnel road is proposed between Anakkampoyil-Kalladi-Meppadi and will require blasting for construction in the fragile Western Ghats.

In early April, the expert panel had deferred a decision on the proposal and had directed the Kerala Government to submit studies on the geology, landslides, and water drainage in the project area. During a meeting on May 14, the panel appraised these studies and recommended conditional clearance for the project.Key among the conditions was to follow the recommendations of the Central Institute of Mining and Fuel Research (CIMFR) to mitigate the impacts of tunnelling and blasting. In its geological study, the institute had said that tunnelling activities during construction, including vibration from blasting, can lead to landslips if it is uncontrolled. “To manage this, a vibration monitoring

plan shall be implemented before tunnelling starts, including demarcating impact areas and regulating blasting charges,” the minutes of the EAC’s May 14 meeting noted.One of the conditions laid down in the clearance recommendation stated that the Kerala government would have to implement all recommendations of CIMFR to mitigate blasting impacts, and a compliance report would have to be submitted.

The EAC also directed the Kerala government to establish the Appankappu Elephant Corridor, to facilitate the movement of elephants from South Wayanad, Nilambur North Forest division towards the Silent Valley National Park. It was also directed to commission a monitoring study on the endemic and endangered Banasura Chilappan bird found above the proposed tunnel.Additionally, the EAC has asked the state government to construct elephant underpasses at two locations as well as animal passages, such as culverts, for smaller animals.Following the devastating July 2024 landslide in Chooralmala-Mundakkai areas in Wayanad that killed 298 people, local environmental groups such as the Wayanad Prakruthi Samrakshana Samithi have opposed the tunnel road, fearing ecological hazards.The EAC has itself noted that the tunnel alignment passes through highly vulnerable terrain, prone to landslides, including the 2019 Puthumala landslide area. Besides, the project area includes villages demarcated as ecologically sensitive areas by the Centre in its draft notification on the protection of Western Ghats.The proposed 8.75-km tunnel road was cleared in March by the State Expert Appraisal Committee (SEAC), as the project size mandates appraisal only at the state level. However, the central-level EAC was appraising the project as the tenure of the members of the State Environment Impact Assessment Authority, which grants final approvals on the SEAC’s recommendation, had ended.

# Top police brass in coastal Karnataka changed in wake of communal murders

GNS News Agency, June 5

In the wake of a fresh cycle of communal murders in the coastal regions of Mangaluru and Dakshina Kannada over the last month, the Karnataka government after being under pressure from its local party unit, has effected a series of changes to senior police officers deputed to the region.On Thursday, the government appointed Deputy Inspector General-rank officer C H Sudhir Kumar Reddy as the new Mangaluru police commissioner, in place of the incumbent Anupam Agrawal.Reddy, who served previously as the superintendent of police (SP) of the Dakshina Kannada region, is currently a joint director in the state intelligence department.He is considered to have extensive knowledge of the coastal region and is regarded as a no-nonsense police officer.The government also appointed the current SP for the coastal Udupi region, K Arun, as the new SP of the neighbouring Dakshina Kannada district in place of the incumbent officer, N Yathish.Arun is considered to be familiar with policing the communally polarised coastal region on account of a fairly successful tenure of 21 months in the neighbouring coastal Karnataka region.While Agrawal served a 21-month tenure as Mangaluru police commissioner, Yathish held the Dakshina Kannada post for less than a year.Agrawal has been moved to the Economic Offences unit of the CID, and Yathish is yet to be posted.The Karnataka government has also appointed former Mangaluru deputy commissioner for law and order, Hariram Shankar, who is currently with the state intelligence department, as the new SP for the Udupi region.The order for the change of guard of the top police brass for the coastal Karnataka region came on a day when many leaders of the minority unit of the ruling Congress party in coastal Karnataka submitted resignations to protest three communal killings in the region.The cycle of murders occurred after a lapse of nearly three years.Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah held a breakfast meeting with senior Congress leader B K Hariprasad on Thursday to ostensibly discuss the communal murders in coastal Karnataka.Hariprasad, who hails from the region and enjoys the confidence of the All India Congress Committee, is reported to have suggested strong measures to control the law and order situation.“We discussed the Mangaluru situation in particular,” Siddaramaiah said after the meeting with Hariprasad. “We have to restore the communal harmony in the region. Hindus and Muslims should not hold hatred for each other. I have asked Hariprasad to travel to Mangaluru,” Siddaramaiah said.

“The CM has discussed the Mangaluru issue extensively,” Hariprasad, who hails from an OBC community in coastal Karnataka, said after the meeting.The current Dakshina Kannada in-charge minister, Dinesh Gundu Rao, also reportedly visited Siddaramaiah and sought to be relieved of his charge.Rao, who is the state health minister, represents a constituency in Bengaluru.The recent murders and the cycle of violence in the latest communal murder in coastal Karnataka, a sand supplier and mosque secretary in the Bantwal region of Dakshina Kannada, Abdul Rahim,



32, was murdered on May 27. Three people, Deepak Poojary, 21, Prithviraj, 21, and Chiranthan, 19, all residents of Bantwal, have been arrested so far.A friend of the victim, Kalandar Shafi, 29, who was severely injured in the attack, is under treatment at the ICU of a hospital.The attack came on the heels of the murder of a criminal history sheeter, Suhas Shetty, 32, who was a Bajrang Dal activist and a key accused in the July 2022 murder of Mohammed Fazil in Surathkal.Naushad alias Chotte Naushad, one of the accused in Shetty’s murder, was attacked with stones in the Mangaluru Central Prison on May 19.Prior to Shetty’s murder, Mohammed Ashraf, 36, a vagabond, was lynched by a mob in Mangaluru on April 28 for a slogan he raised.Coastal Karnataka has a long-running cycle of communal murders perpetrated by gangs that enjoy the political patronage of communal groups in the religiously polarised region.Shetty’s murder was allegedly committed at the behest of Mohammed Adil, Fazil’s brother. Fazil, 23, was murdered at a clothing store in Surathkal on the outskirts of Mangaluru city on the evening of July 28, 2022.In the wake of Rahim’s murder on May 27, Karnataka Additional Director General of Police (Law and Order) R Hitendra had stated that the police would take “extraordinary steps” to regulate the law and order in coastal Karnataka.The ADGP said the coastal region had not witnessed a series of murders for three years.

“In addition to regular preventive measures, some extraordinary steps are being taken. I have given instructions to the Dakshina Kannada and Mangaluru police officers,” he said.In the previous high-profile cycle of murders in 2022, an 18-year-old from Kerala, Masood B, was killed in the Bellare village on July 20; a BJP youth leader from the same village, Praveen Nettaru, 32, was killed on July 26 in an apparent act of revenge; and Fazil, 23, was killed on July 28 in retaliation.The Karnataka government also ordered the formation of a Special Action Force (SAF) to tackle communal crimes in the Dakshina Kannada, Udupi and Shivamogga districts.It will have three companies – one each for the three communally sensitive districts of the state.The 248 posts for SAF are being carved out from the Anti-Naxal Force (ANF), whose strength of 656 personnel will now be reduced to 376.The government has decided to reduce ANF numbers as the last known Naxals in the region surrendered in January 2025.

# A photography exhibition puts the spotlight on the oldest Buddhist site in Jammu & Kashmir

GNS News Agency, June 5

Artefacts yielded from an excavation of Ambaran between 1999 and 2000, an archaeological site in Jammu’s Akhnoor, form the subject of an ongoing photography exhibition at Delhi’s National Museum.Titled “Ambaran: The Historic Buddhist Citadel of J&K” the show by journalist and photographer Vijay Kranti features images of terracotta heads, pottery, coral jewellery and silver coins.

Situated on the bank of Chenab, the site is located at the entry point of Akhnoor, about 30 km north of Jammu. Kranti notes that the Buddhist site, most probably a monastery, remained active for about 900 years between the 2nd century BC and 7th century AD, a period belonging to the Pre-Kushan, Kushan and Post-Kushan Gupta periods.One of the photographs show a circular stone and brick base which helped archaeologists conclude the existence of a spoked wheel stupa. “It was the most distinguishing proof,” the exhibition notes, adding,

“This circular base of eight-metre diameter, presents eight spokes, distributed in typical geographic Buddhist style, is supported on the outside by a 1.20 metre thick wall of baked bricks.”A version of the exhibition was showcased in 2011, first in Delhi and then in Jammu, after Kranti was invited by the late Congress politician from the state, Madan Lal Sharma, to photograph the findings in order to put

Akhnoor on the map. “As a photographer, I have always been interested in the Buddhist way of life, as a result of which I had extensively photographed Tibet and its people. When I was invited to photograph Ambaran, I was more than happy to take it up,” says Kranti adding,

“When I reached there, I realised that the artefacts lay scattered across different locations in Jammu.”While some were displayed in the small one-room Site Museum at Ambaran, some were at the Dogra Art Museum in Raja Mandi and others at the local ASI office in Gandhinagar. “In the end, I had a good collection of artefacts to be photographed,” says Kranti.

While the pottery items – basins, bowls, spouts, lids, lamps, storage jars – point towards a noteworthy terracotta workmanship, figure moulds show the skills of the artisans in carving statues and reproducing them in large number. If gold caskets evidence the burying of precious things along with bodies, iron nails establish the knowledge of metal-lurgy during this period.

Besides photographs, the exhibition also features images of scenic locations from present-day Akhnoor, including the Gurdwara Shri Tapo Asthan, Jia Pota Ghat and the Akhnoor Fort. “I believe Jammu has been left out of the tourist circle. I wanted to show people that there are equally beautiful, if not better, places there as well,” says Kranti.

# BEd admissions in Maharashtra: CET Cell to conduct state-level entrance test on June 20



GNS News Agency, June 5

In an important update for aspiring teachers, admission to the four-year BA/BSc-BEd (Integrated) course in Maharashtra will be based on a state-level entrance test to be conducted by the state’s Common Entrance Test (CET) Cell on June 20 and not a national-level entrance test.In March, the state government had announced the discontinuation of the four-year BA/BSc-BEd (Integrated) course starting from the 2025-26 academic year, as it was going to be replaced by the Integrated Teacher Education Program (ITEP), a new four-year teacher training program in line with the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) guidelines. Admission to the ITEP course in Maharashtra was going to be based on a national-level entrance test conducted by the National Testing Agency (NTA).

# Delhi HC directs PWD to clean Dhaula Kuan drain used by soldiers of Rajputana Rifles to reach parade ground from barracks

GNS News Agency, June 5

Delhi, High Court, PWD,The bench on Friday directed the PWD to clean the ‘malba’ (debris), while recording that the Delhi government has given in-principle approval for the construction of a foot overbridge. The Delhi High Court Friday directed the Public Works Department (PWD) to clean up the drain in Dhaula Kuan through which soldiers of the Rajputana Rifles have to pass four times a day.

A bench of Justices Prathiba Singh and Manmeet Pritam Singh Arora on May 26 had taken suo motu cognisance of a newspaper report wherein it stated that over 3,000 soldiers of the Rajputana Rifles have to pass through a drain which is foul smelling and filthy when they move out of their barracks and go to the parade ground.The bench on Friday directed the PWD to clean the ‘malba’ (debris), while recording that the Delhi government has given in-principle approval for the construction of a foot overbridge. However, the court was informed that, considering the vehicular movement in the vicinity, the design of the foot overbridge will take some time to be finalised.The court stated that apart from designing, tendering, and constructing the foot overbridge, the drain must also be cleaned, and that photos of the same must be placed before the court on June 18.The



court noted that there’s a possibility of mud accumulating in the area during the monsoons and added that “after the monsoons”, cleaning shall be done on a daily basis.The bench also issued notice to the deputy commissioner of police (traffic) and directed the official to look into the feasibility of creating a zebra crossing and setting up a traffic signal in a manner that vehicular movement is not obstructed and at the same time the regiment can cross the road from the barracks to their parade ground.

# High court strikes down Punjab formula for premature release of prisoners

GNS News Agency, June 5

The Punjab and Haryana High Court has ruled that parole must be deducted from the total sentence, including remission, and not from the actual sentence, which covers only the time spent in custody while considering eligibility for premature release of prisoners. Setting aside the Punjab government’s October 2024 order denying life convict Rupinder Singh’s release, the court directed a fresh assessment of his case within four weeks.Justice Harpreet Singh Brar, who delivered the ruling on May 29, also struck down the state’s 2020 formula that excluded parole from the actual sentence. “The formula prescribed in meeting dated 16.07.2020 is held to be invalid, being in direct contravention of Section 3(3) of the Act of 1962... It is directed that the parole period shall only be subtracted from the total sentence and not from the actual sentence,” the court said.

The court found the state’s formula—actual custody during undertrial plus custody post-conviction, minus the parole period—lacked legal backing and contradicted the Punjab Good Conduct of Prisoners (Temporary Release) Act, 1962. Section 3(3) of the Act states: “The period of release under this section shall not count towards the total period of the sentence of a prisoner.”Interpreting this, Justice Brar clarified, “Actual sentence must be interpreted to mean the real time spent by a prisoner behind bars. and therefore, has two parts only i.e. (i) Actual time undergone in custody as an undertrial and (ii) Actual time undergone as a convict. Thus, the quantum of actual sentence is a matter of fact, a constant number... Total sentence, for the purpose of premature release, would include the actual sentence undergone by the prisoner and the remission earned by him.”

The court held that Singh’s case must be considered under the 1991 premature release policy, which requires 10 years of actual imprisonment and 14 years, including remission. Citing Raj Kumar vs. State of Uttar Pradesh, 2024(9) SCC 598, the court said, “The State having formulated Rules and a Standing Policy for deciding cases of premature release, it is bound by its own formulations of law... It must strictly abide by the terms of its policies bearing in mind the fundamental principle of law that each case for premature release has to be decided on the basis of the legal position as it stands on the date of the conviction.”The



court also referred to Avtar Singh vs. State of Haryana, 2002 SCC (Cri.) 504, noting, “Ordinarily, the period of temporary release of a prisoner on parole needs to be counted towards the total period of detention, but this condition can be curtailed by legislative act, rules, instructions or terms of the grant of parole.” As no such legal change had been made, the court said Section 3(3) remained applicable.Rupinder Singh was convicted of murder on August 11, 2014, by the Sessions Court in Hoshiarpur under Section 302 of the Indian Penal Code. His conviction was upheld by the high court on October 3, 2019, and by the Supreme Court on November 22, 2019.

Seeking premature release under the 1991 policy, Singh’s case was considered by the court on January 16, 2024. The state later challenged this, and on March 24, 2025, the Supreme Court allowed it to file a review petition. The key issue was whether over three years of Singh’s parole should be deducted from his actual time served or from the total sentence. The state’s 2020 clarification favoured the former, delaying his eligibility.Singh’s lawyers, Nandan Jindal and Tushar Sabherwal, argued that the 2020 clarification was applied retrospectively and violated constitutional rights under Articles 14, 19, and 21. They cited Jai Kishan @ Bhola vs. State of Punjab (2022) and Baljeet Singh @ Rangl vs. State of Punjab (2022). Deputy Advocate General Pardeep Bajaj, appearing for the state, relied on Rohan Dhungat vs. State of Goa (2023 AIR SC 265), but the court held it was not applicable due to differences in state laws.Justice Brar noted, “The objective behind the Act of 1962 is humanitarian in nature... Ensuring that the incarcerated have healthy roots in the society greatly assists in their rehabilitation and reintegration.”

# AAP announces Jagdish Chavda, party’s Gujarat scheduled caste wing president, as candidate for Kadi by-polls

GNS News Agency, June 5

Jagdish Chavda, gujarat news, AAP, schedule caste, indian express A young face, Jagdish Chavda is the chairman of the Gujarat AAP’s Scheduled Caste wing.The Aam Aadmi Party, on Friday, announced Jagdish Chavda as its candidate for the by-election of Kadi assembly constituency of Gujarat’s Mehsana district. A young face, Chavda is the chairman of the Gujarat AAP’s Scheduled Caste wing.The announcement was made by state party president Isudan Gadhvi.

In a statement, Adhvi said, “The national and state leadership have decided to announce young and fighting face Jagdish Chavda as its candidate for the Kadi assem-

bly constituency. He has raised the voices of all the communities not only in Kadi but across the state. He is also the state president of AAP’s Scheduled Caste wing. I am confident that Jagdishbhai and the entire team of AAP will fight the election strongly and win.”The by-elections of Kadi and Visavadar assembly constituencies are scheduled on June 19.While Kadi constituency fell vacant after the demise of sitting BJP MLA Karshan Solanki, the Visavadar constituency in Saurashtra fell vacant following the resignation of sitting AAP MLA Bhupendra Bhayani, who later joined the BJP.The AAP has already appointed its senior state leader Gopal Italia as party candidate for the Visavadar constituency. Meanwhile, the Congress and BJP are yet to announce their candidates for the two seats.



# ‘Saboot gang not happy with what India achieved’: BJP’s Sambit Patra slams Congress leaders for remarks post-Operation Sindoor



GNS News Agency, June 5

A day after it accused Congress communications in-charge Jairam Ramesh of putting terrorists and Members of Parliament in the same category, the BJP launched an attack on the party for allegedly bringing down the morale of the Indian armed forces and common citizens on multiple occasions. BJP national spokesperson Sambit Patra, quoting news articles acknowledging the might of India’s retaliation against Pakistan following the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack, accused the Congress of being a “saboot gang” in cahoots with Pakistan. “In this climate, it is painful that there are political parties and especially the Congress who, in the beginning, said they are standing with the nation and with the government but they did not actually stand by either for a single day. From day one, Rahul Gandhi, Jairam Ramesh and several of their leaders, including Robert Vadra and the entire Congress leadership, have raised questions regarding the Indian Army and its valour,” Patra alleged. “This saboot gang is not happy at what India has been able to achieve (in Operation Sindoor)... just think about it: Jairam Ramesh, who is the right-hand man of the Gandhi family, makes a statement that terrorists are roaming around here, MPs are roaming around there (in foreign countries). In one breath, you have put terrorists and MPs in the same category?” he asked.

Adding that these delegations also included Congress MPs, Patra further asked, “Did you not think about the fact that the MPs who are travelling as part of foreign delegations are not on vacation but have been deputed to effectively put forth India’s stance (on Operation Sindoor) on the world stage? And that these include your MPs too?” Acknowledging that Congress MPs too were “effectively communicating” India’s stance on the world stage, Patra took on senior Congress leader Sonia Gandhi for “shedding tears for terrorists.” “There used to be a time when terrorists used to be called to the PMO; at Sonia-ji’s instruc-

tions, the then PM used to call terrorists to his office and home. They used to be welcomed and given gifts. We should also recall how Sonia-ji used to cry seeing the bodies of dead terrorists... days when Rahul Gandhi used to party after attacks like 26/11... Such people are saying this today?” he asked.

“It saddens me that Rahul Gandhi, Revanth Reddy and (Jairam) Ramesh-ji are all asking how many of India’s planes have been downed since day one. Is this a question worth asking? Indian armed forces destroyed nine terrorist hideouts — there is satellite imagery of this which has been provided. All the facts were presented in the DGMOs’ press conference. There were before and after images,” he said. The same was the case with the 11 Pakistani airbases attacked by the Indian armed forces, he said, adding that all these were presented with proof. “If a plane is downed, there is wreckage to prove it; there are satellite images of it too. When a plane is downed, ripples are sent through the international world order... Experts weigh in on it — but did anything like this happen?” he asked. Patra then quoted Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif’s statement admitting that India had attacked Pakistani military bases with BrahMos missiles even as it was preparing to retaliate against India’s strikes at nine locations on the intervening night of May 9 and 10. “Rahul Gandhi, why are you asking us for a report card or proof when your own friend... Shehbaz Sharif himself has provided it?” he also asked. All these statements, Patra alleged, were “synchronised”, with the Congress’s senior leadership on the one hand saying that it stood by the government even as its other leaders gave statements questioning the necessity of war and India’s decision to suspend the Indus Waters Treaty. “Just think about it: Rahul Gandhi did not ask even once how many Pakistani airbases had been destroyed, how many terror camps were destroyed or how many terrorists were killed,” he alleged. “The country knows that there are two camps in the Congress party — one which is supporting Pakistan and the other which consists of leaders who do want to raise their voice for the sake of the country but are not able to do so because of you... your Jai Hind Yatra, where it is asked how many Indian planes were downed, seems more like a Jai Pakistan Yatra,” he added. Taking on West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee’s comments questioning Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Operation Sindoor, Patra asked, “She is asking whether PM Modi is everyone’s husband? What kind of language and statement is this? I would just like to say that PM Modi is everyone’s sewak and brother, there is no doubt.” “What is also undoubtable is that all these Bangladeshi and Rohingya infiltrators entering India have been given shelter only by you,” he alleged.

# ‘My paan shop is also my writing desk’: Meet Pintu Pohan, Bengali author of over 200 works

GNS News Agency, June 5

In the heart of Behala’s Madanmohan Tala, amid the hum of traffic and chatter, stands a small paan shop with an extraordinary tale. Behind its humble counter is 47-year-old Pintu Pohan — a prolific Bengali writer whose literary achievements have defied poverty, social ridicule, and years of struggle. In 1998, with Rs 1,500 in savings, he set up his paan shop which would become both his livelihood and his writing desk. While serving customers over the years, he managed to write 12 novels and over 200 short stories and poems. While ten of his books have been published, eight of them are children’s storybooks. His works have been published in some of West Bengal’s most respected magazines, including Dosh, Anandamela, Anandabazar, Sananda, Suklara, and Nabakallol. “I used to send my stories to various publications but it took 15 years of continuous struggle for my first writing to get noticed. Then the rest followed.” His love for literature took root when he was in Class IV. But being born into a family of daily wage earners, financial hardship forced him to abandon formal education after joining Jogesh Chandra College. “I have done everything; from selling fish and flowers to working as a mason and an electrician,” said Pohan, who earned as little as Rs 30 – Rs 60 a day in his early years but I never let go of his pen.

In 1998, with ₹1,500 in savings, Pohan set up his paan shop — which would become both his livelihood and his writing desk. Despite mockery and disbelief from those around him, Pohan remained focused on his dream. “People laughed at me for writing at a paan shop,” he recalled. “But I wrote anyway, between serving supari and betel leaves.” Pohan added, “I didn’t get a job, so I continued with my paan shop to run my family. I sit here for nearly 16 hours. That is how I created my own world — penning sto-



ries from this very spot, a world that no one can take away from me.” Determined to complete his education, he enrolled at Netaji Subhas Open University and completed his bachelor’s and master’s degrees in Bengali in 2012 and 2015, respectively — all while managing his shop. He also pursued diploma courses in Hindi and computer studies, hoping to secure a stable job, but found little opportunity. For a brief period, Pohan looked after the literature pages of two Bengali newspapers. However, both the newspapers eventually ceased operations, once again leaving him without platform. Undeterred, he devoted himself fully to literature. His notable children’s books include Thakurdar Ascharya Galpo, Aanta Buri Panta Buri, Ilishkheko Bhoot, Parulmashir Chagolchana, Kochuripanan Bhela, Dukhirampurur Dukhi Manushera, Noton Noton Payraguli and Jhinook Kumar. His novel, Tunir, is inspired by his own life, while Bhajogobindopurer Naton Agantuk Ebong presents a collection of 124 stories. “We have published majority of Pintu Pohan’s books, which have garnered considerable popularity, particularly among children,” said Ashok Manna of Manna Publications.



A woman has filed a civil suit against Maruti Suzuki and one of its dealerships in Chandigarh for refusing to transfer the ownership of her old car and allowing a third person to have control of and run the vehicle without getting it noted in the name of the new owner.

had been transferred in the name of the new purchaser. However, she found out that the used car has not so far been transferred, and is lying at an undisclosed place, but in her name on paper. On following up with the company and dealership, she was informed her car was handed over to a local car dealer — Jainendra Bhalla of Sector 47, Chandigarh — and he further sold the vehicle to some unknown person. Kaur said that despite her repeated requests, Bhalla has not given any assurance that he will get the vehicle transferred in

# Surat Mayor writes to District Collector to ‘remove illegal ponds’ from Kakra creek’s banks; DC says ‘have demolished some’



GNS News Agency, June 5

Surat Mayor writes to District Collector to ‘remove illegal ponds’ from Kakra creek’s banks; DC says ‘have demolished some’ To address flooding during the monsoon season in city areas, Surat Mayor Daxesh Mavani has written to Surat District Collector Dr Sourabh Pardhi, requesting the removal of “illegal ponds.” (Express File Photo) To address flooding during the monsoon season in city areas, Surat Mayor Daxesh Mavani has written to Surat District

Collector Dr Sourabh Pardhi, requesting the removal of “illegal ponds” on the banks of the Kakra creek at Khajod and Bhimpore, since they “obstruct” the natural flow of creek water into the Mindhola river. Speaking to The Indian Express, Dr Sourabh Pardhi said, “We have demolished some of the ponds on the banks of Kakra creek... We have received a complaint from the Mayor and we will again send a team and get it checked.” The letter, a copy of which is with The Indian Express, states, “... The seamless, smooth water flow from Kakra creek to Mindola river is being obstructed day by day due to the large number of illegal shrimp ponds made around 200 metres from both banks, and also at Bhimpore village where creek water meets Mindola river. This results in a bottleneck-like situation, which causes floods during monsoon in the low-lying areas in Limbayat zone and Bhimpore village. If such encroachments are removed... such floods can be averted.” Later, Mayor Mavani said, “There are over thousands of ponds on the banks of Kakra creek which obstruct the free flow of water. Only a few ponds were demolished by the collector and his staffers... The public questions us due to flood-like situations every monsoon, we have to give answers to them.”

# Yamuna, air pollution: How BJP govt in Delhi tackled major environmental challenges in first 100 days

GNS News Agency, June 5

In the runup to the 2025 Delhi Assembly elections earlier this year, the BJP centered much of its campaign on a green turnaround: a cleaner Yamuna in three years, no garbage mounds by 2027, and breathable air. Now, 100 days after taking office, the new government can point to several first steps — a Cabinet nod for Delhi’s first cloud-seeding trial to curb air pollution; tighter deadline for decentralisation and enhancement of sewage treatment plants (STPs); mandatory anti-smog guns and dust monitors at major construction sites; and 24x7 waste processing at landfill sites. What was promised? The BJP’s poll manifesto called for nothing less than a revival of the Yamuna’s “former glory”. It pledged to clean up the river within three years in power, instituting a dedicated “Yamuna Kosh” fund, and to develop a riverfront similar to the one in Gujarat at Sabarmati river. The party vowed full treatment of wastewater from major drains, like Barapullah, Shahdara, and Ghaziipur, before they empty into the river, along with expanding sewage treatment capacity. What has been done? The 2025-26 Budget has earmarked Rs 9,000 crore for water-and-sewer upgrades, including ₹250 crore to replace corroded mains in trans-Yamuna zones and funds for 13,000 JJ-cluster and 2.5 lakh colony household sewer connections.

A third-party STP audit has also been ordered, Delhi Environment Minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa told The Indian Express during an interview this week. So far, five STP-upgrades inherited from the previous government have inched past the 90%-cent mark. The Delhi Jal Board (DJB’s) 100-day tracker lists the status of their upgradation: Meanwhile, the DJB has mapped its next tranche of the Budget allocation: a Rs 3,104-crore package of 40 decentralised STPs and 330 km of trunk sewers, which serve as the main artery for transporting wastewater to a treatment plant, aimed at 416 unauthorised colonies and 115 villages in the Najafgarh, Chhatrapur, Matiala, Bijwasan, Mundka, Narela and Bawana belts. The project’s first-year outlay of Rs 613 crore has been booked under the Centre’s AMRUT 2.0 scheme, while the remaining expenditure will



be split over 2026-27, The Indian Express reported on May 8. Similarly, the Delhi Pollution Control Committee rolled out a 14-point dust mitigation plan on May 22, focusing on water sprinkling, installing of particulate matter pollution monitors as well as proper disposal of construction and demolition waste. The body made it mandatory for projects equal to or larger than 500 square metres to register on its portal for monitoring. Sirsa also ordered in May for the vehicles inside forest and protected areas to be transitioned to electric-run. He also said that tendering of 70 mechanical road sweepers for cleaning of Public Works Department roads is in progress. In another key measure, the government has revised tree felling and pruning SOP. Intensifying its crackdown on end-of-life vehicles monitoring, AI cameras have also been installed at 90% of fuel stations. Sirsa in the interview with The Indian Express also said that pre-emptive notices have been sent to such vehicle owners in neighbouring states. From November 1, all transport or commercial goods vehicles not compliant with BS-VI, CNG, LNG, or EV (electrical vehicle) standards will be banned from entering Delhi. Following the Centre for Air Quality Management in NCR and Adjoining Areas (CAQM) directions, the government will stop fueling all end-of-life vehicles after July.

# With Carnac and Vikhroli bridges set to open in 10 days, Mumbai eyes an easier commute

GNS News Agency, June 5

Carnac Bridge and Vikhroli Bridge in Mumbai are set to become operational within the next 10 days. The new Carnac Bridge is being rebuilt after the old one was demolished in 2022. In good news for Mumbai residents, two key bridges, one in the island city and the other in the suburbs, Carnac Bridge and Vikhroli Bridge, respectively, are set to become operational within the next 10 days.

What is the plan?

The new Carnac Bridge is being rebuilt after the old one was demolished in 2022. The old Carnac Bridge became operational in 1868 and since then has remained a key east-west connector in South Mumbai, joining P D Mello Road with Masjid Bunder. The Vikhroli Bridge will connect the Eastern Express Highway in the east with Lal Bahadur Shastri (LBS) Marg in the west of Vikhroli in Mumbai’s eastern suburbs. The idea of building this bridge was conceived in 1997, however, construction could only begin in 2018. The Vikhroli Bridge will be 480 metres long and will have four vehicular lanes along with footpaths. This will be India’s longest bridge, having an open-web-girder system passing above railway tracks. Once operational, the Vikhroli ROB will bring down commute time to seven minutes. Today, it takes 25-30 minutes. The new Carnac Bridge will have four vehicular lanes – double the number of lanes present in the previous structure. The new bridge will be equipped with modern-day signage and lighting. Once operational, the Carnac Bridge is expected to decongest South Mumbai roads, significantly bringing down east-west commute time to 5-7 minutes. At present, it takes 30-40 minutes during peak hours. The initial cost of the Vikhroli Bridge project at



the time of issuing the work order stood at Rs 70 crore. However, owing to multiple delays, the cost now stands at Rs 180 crore. The construction work is expected to be completed by May 31, following which it is expected to become operational by the first week of June. The new Carnac Bridge is being built at a cost of Rs 60 crore. The construction work is in the final stages and will be completed by June 10, following which the bridge will be opened for vehicular movement. “Both the bridges had met with several hurdles since they were in the ideation stage. That is why the two projects got delayed by many years. At present, these projects are on track, and work is going on at full pace. The bridges will bring down the traffic woes in the suburbs and island city significantly,” said Abhijit Bangar, Additional Municipal Commissioner (Projects).

# Myntra creates over 20,000 employment opportunities

GNS News Agency, June 5

New Delhi: Fashion and lifestyle e-commerce platform Myntra on Friday said it has created over 20,000 employment opportunities through its partners to cater to the expected surge in demand during its 22nd edition of the End of Reason Sale (EORS) beginning on Saturday.

The new roles will support logistics, customer service, and last-mile delivery operations to meet the expected surge in demand. The hiring includes approximately 4,500 delivery partners and 1,000 customer service agents. Around 22 per cent of the new warehouse workforce are women, fulfilling roles such as sorting, grading and packing across the fulfilment centres in Bengaluru, Mumbai, Kolkata .





# US proposes 60-day ceasefire for Gaza; hostage-prisoner swap, plan shows



GNS News Agency, June 5

The U.S. plan for Gaza, seen by Reuters on Friday, proposes a 60-day ceasefire and the release of 28 Israeli hostages - alive and dead - in the first week, in exchange for the release of 1,236 Palestinian prisoners and the remains of 180 dead Palestinians. The document, which says the plan is guaranteed by U.S. President Donald Trump and mediators Egypt and Qatar, includes sending humanitarian aid to Gaza as soon as Hamas signs off on the ceasefire agreement. The Reuters Tariff Watch newsletter is your daily guide to the latest global trade and tariff news. Sign up here. The aid will be delivered by the United Nations, the Red Crescent and other agreed channels. The White House said on Thursday that Israel had agreed to the U.S. ceasefire proposal. Israeli media said Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told the families of hostages held in Gaza that Israel had accepted the deal presented by Trump's Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff. The prime minister's office declined to comment. The Palestinian militant group Hamas said it had received the Israeli response to the proposal, which it said "fails to meet any of the just and legitimate demands of our people" including an immediate cessation of hostilities and an end to the humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

Hamas official Basem Naim said the Israeli response "fundamentally seeks to entrench the occupation and perpetuate policies of killing and starvation, even during what is supposed to be a period of temporary de-escalation". However, he said Hamas' leadership was carrying out a "thorough and responsible review of the new proposal". The U.S. plan provides for Hamas to release the last 30 of the 58 remaining Israeli hostages once a permanent ceasefire is in place. Israel will also cease all military operations in Gaza as soon as the truce takes effect, it shows. The Israeli army will also redeploy its troops in stages. Deep differences between Hamas and Israel have stymied previous attempts to restore a ceasefire that broke

down in March. Israel has insisted that Hamas disarm completely, be dismantled as a military and governing force and return all 58 hostages still held in Gaza before it will agree to end the war. Hamas has rejected the demand to give up its weapons and says Israel must pull its troops out of Gaza and commit to ending the war. Israel launched its campaign in Gaza in response to the Hamas attack in its south on October 7, 2023, that killed some 1,200 people and saw 251 Israelis taken hostage into Gaza, according to Israeli tallies. The subsequent Israeli military campaign has killed more than 54,000 Palestinians, Gaza health officials say, and has left the enclave in ruins.

Israel has come under increasing international pressure, with many European countries that are usually reluctant to criticise it openly demanding an end to the war and a major relief effort. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said on Friday that Israel is blocking all but a trickle of humanitarian aid from entering Gaza, with almost no ready-to-eat food entering what its spokesperson described as "the hungriest place on earth". Witkoff told reporters on Wednesday that Washington was close to "sending out a new term sheet" about a ceasefire by the two sides in the conflict. "I have some very good feelings about getting to a long-term resolution, temporary ceasefire and a long-term resolution, a peaceful resolution, of that conflict," Witkoff said then. The 60-day ceasefire, according to the plan, may be extended if negotiations for a permanent ceasefire are not concluded within the set period. Senior Hamas official Sami Abu Zuhri said on Thursday the terms of the proposal echoed Israel's position and did not contain commitments to end the war, withdraw Israeli troops or admit aid as Hamas has demanded. The Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, a private group backed by the United States and endorsed by Israel, said it had distributed a total of more than 1.8 million meals this week and it expanded its aid distribution to a third site in Gaza on Thursday. GHF plans to open more sites in coming weeks. The group, heavily criticised by the United Nations and other aid groups as inadequate and flawed, began its operation this week in Gaza, where the U.N. has said 2 million people are at risk of famine after an 11-week blockade by Israel on aid entering the enclave. There were tumultuous scenes on Tuesday as thousands of Palestinians rushed to distribution points and forced private security contractors to retreat. The chaotic start to the operation has raised international pressure on Israel to get more food in and halt the fighting in Gaza. French President Emmanuel Macron said on Friday that his country could harden its position if Israel continues to block humanitarian aid to Gaza. Reporting and writing by Samia Nakhoul and Hatem Maher Additional reporting by Ali Sawafta in Ramallah and Washington and Cairo teams Editing by Michael Perry, Clarence Fernandez and Frances Kerry

# How Russian fortunes stranded by US sanctions rocked Liechtenstein



VADUZ, GNS News Agency, June 5, Liechtenstein, Liechtenstein is examining tightening control of scores of Russian-linked trusts abandoned by their managers under pressure from Washington, according to several people familiar with the matter. The country, one of the world's smallest and richest, is home to thousands of low-tax trusts, hundreds of which have links to Russians, two of the people with direct knowledge of the matter said, putting it in the crosshairs of Western efforts to sanction Moscow. The Reuters Tariff Watch newsletter is your daily guide to the latest global trade and tariff news. Sign up here. Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the U.S. Treasury has sanctioned several Russian oligarchs, including Vladimir Potanin, and a long-time ally of Russian President Vladimir Putin, Potanin's Interros holding company did not respond to a request for comment, while Timchenko could not be reached. That sanctioning has prompted other directors fearing such punishment to quit hundreds of Russian-linked trusts, according to several people familiar with the matter, exposing a far wider problem with Russian money in the tiny country with a population of about 40,000. The episode, in a sleepy Alpine enclave ruled by a billionaire royal family, also shows how deep and opaque Russia's business ties to Europe remain more than three years after Russia's invasion of Ukraine. It is a setback for the microstate that had long sought to shed its image as a safe haven for foreign wealth. The mass resignations have put scores of trusts in limbo, essentially freezing swathes of Russian wealth. The trusts are the linchpin for fortunes, including yachts or property, that are scattered around the globe. Their suspension puts that property beyond reach, a further potential lever over Russia, amid attempts by U.S. President Donald Trump to strike a peace deal. Reuters has spoken to several people with direct knowledge of these events, who asked not to be identified because of the sensitivity of the matter. They outlined how a push by Washington had led scores of directors to quit trusts with links to Russia and

how the government was scrambling to resolve the crisis. Liechtenstein's newly elected government is seeking to fix the issue, according to people familiar with the matter, underscoring the continued pressure from Washington over Russia sanctions, despite U.S. President Donald Trump's earlier suggestions he could ease them.

Liechtenstein also sees its handling of sanctions enforcement as something that could influence its government's efforts to lower newly imposed U.S. tariffs on exports, said one person with direct knowledge of the discussions. A Liechtenstein government official said 475 trusts were affected by the defections, although added that not all were linked to Russians or sanctioned individuals. That official said Liechtenstein's justice department was seeking to install new managers to 350 trusts, while 40 were being liquidated and unsuccessful attempts had been made to appoint a liquidator to further 85 trusts. This episode strikes at the trust industry, a critical pillar of Liechtenstein's roughly 770 billion franc (\$930 billion) financial centre that underpins the country's economy. Local banks, the government official said, were also affected, without elaborating. Banks are particularly vulnerable because the United States has the power to throttle them by cutting off their access to the dollar, threatening a wider crisis. The episode has confronted the country with its biggest crisis since 2008, when leaked customer data at LGT Bank, owned by the country's princely family, exposed widespread tax evasion. The government is now examining options to centralise the management of the deserted trusts under its watch and tightening supervision of trusts. The Liechtenstein official also said the country's authorities were in contact with their international counterparts and that no trust assets would be released to sanctioned individuals. Liechtenstein, sandwiched between Switzerland and Austria, is dominated by its royal family, whose castle towers over the parliament. It is tied closely to Switzerland, using its franc currency, but also enjoys freedom to do business in the European Union's single market. The country, criticised for hiding the fortunes of the wealthy in the past, had reformed and joined the International Monetary Fund. Once home to roughly 80,000 tax trusts, it now hosts about 20,000, said two people familiar with the matter - equivalent to roughly one trust for two residents. Pressure on Liechtenstein follows a similar push against neighbouring Austria and Switzerland. As one of Reuters' chief correspondents, John focuses on stories at the intersection of industry, the economy, finance and politics. From around Europe, chiefly London, Germany and Brussels, he has reported about the fallout of war, the energy crisis, China's sanctions regime, economic rescue efforts for Afghanistan, money laundering in the Baltics, corporate frauds and bank scandals. He has also covered the 2008 economic crash and aftermath, the European Central Bank, European politics and banking.

# France may toughen stance on Israel if it continues blocking Gaza aid, Macron says

SINGAPORE, GNS News Agency, June 5 - France could harden its position on Israel if it continues to block humanitarian aid to Gaza, French President Emmanuel Macron said on Friday, reiterating that Paris was committed to a two-state solution to resolve the Israel-Palestinian conflict. "The humanitarian blockade is creating a situation that is untenable on the ground," Macron said at a joint press conference in Singapore with Prime Minister Lawrence Wong.

The Reuters Tariff Watch newsletter is your daily guide to the latest global trade and tariff news. Sign up here. "And so, if there is no response that meets the humanitarian situation in the coming hours and days, obviously, we will have to toughen our collective position," Macron said, adding that France may consider applying sanctions against Israeli settlers. "But I still hope that the government of Israel will change its stance and that we will finally have a humanitarian response". Under growing international pressure, Israel partially ended an 11-week long aid blockade on Gaza last week, allowing a limited amount of relief to be delivered under a system that has been heavily criticised. French President Emmanuel Macron arrives in Singapore. Macron said Paris is committed to working towards a political solution and reiterated his support for a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestinian conflict.

The existence of a Palestinian state "is not just simply a moral duty but also a political necessity," Macron told re-



porters in Singapore, in comments broadcast on French TV. Macron is leaning towards recognising a Palestinian state, diplomats and experts say, a move that could infuriate Israel and deepen Western splits. French officials are weighing up the move ahead of a United Nations conference, which France and Saudi Arabia are co-hosting between June 17-20, to lay out the parameters for a roadmap to a Palestinian state, while ensuring Israel's security. Israel launched its campaign in Gaza in response to a Hamas attack in its south on October 7, 2023, that killed some 1,200 people and saw 251 hostages taken into Gaza, according to Israeli tallies. The war since then has killed more than 54,000 Palestinians, Gaza health authorities say.

# UK man appears in court over Liverpool parade incident that hurt dozens

GNS News Agency, June 5

Item 1 of 2 A prison van believed to be transporting Paul Doyle, the 53-year old charged with multiple offences including dangerous driving and causing grievous bodily harm after a car drove into a crowd at Liverpool FC's trophy parade, arrives at Liverpool Magistrates' Court in Liverpool, Britain, [1/2] A prison van believed to be transporting Paul Doyle, the 53-year old charged with multiple offences including dangerous driving and causing grievous bodily harm after a car drove into a crowd at Liverpool FC's trophy parade, arrives at Liverpool Magistrates' Court in Liverpool, Britain, May 30,.... Purchase Licensing Rights, opens new tab Read more LIVERPOOL, England, May 30 (Reuters) - A British man appeared in court on Friday charged with causing grievous bodily harm after a car ploughed into a crowd of Liverpool soccer fans injuring almost 80 during this week's Premier League title victory parade. Paul Doyle, from the West Derby area of Liverpool, is charged with seven offences including dangerous driving and two counts of causing grievous bodily harm with intent. The Reuters Tariff Watch newsletter is your daily guide to the latest global trade and tariff news. Sign up here. The 53-year-old appeared at Liverpool Magistrates' Court on Friday morning and confirmed his name, address and date of birth. Prosecutor Philip Astbury told the court: "These charges arise from events around about 6 p.m. on May 26 ... in the city centre." As significant crowds left the waterfront after the parade for the local football team, this defendant, say the crown (prosecution), drove deliberately at



people amongst the crowd as they tried to leave the area."

Doyle was remanded into custody ahead of a further hearing at Liverpool Crown Court later on Friday. He was not asked to enter a plea to any of the seven charges. The incident took place in Liverpool's packed city centre on Monday evening, as about a million people had come out to celebrate Liverpool's title win and watch an open-top bus parade featuring the team and its staff with the trophy. Police have said the incident, which left a total of 79 people injured, was isolated and not an act of terrorism. Seven people remained in hospital in a stable condition as of Thursday evening. Reporting by Phil Noble in Liverpool and Sam Tobin and Sam Tabahriti in London; editing by William James and Michael Holden

# Chinese students face anxious wait for visas under US crackdown

GNS News Agency, June 5

Item 1 of 3 Postgraduate student Lainey, who is waiting to resume visa process to study a PhD in the U.S., walks out of her university campus, during an interview with Reuters, in Beijing, China May 30, 2025. REUTERS/Tingshu Wang Postgraduate student Lainey, who is waiting to resume visa process to study a PhD in the U.S., walks out of her university campus, during an interview with Reuters, in Beijing, China May 30, 2025. REUTERS/Tingshu Wang Purchase Licensing Rights, opens new tab - Caught in the middle of Washington's renewed visa crackdown on Chinese international students, Beijing postgraduate Lainey is anxiously waiting to resume the visa process to study a PhD at her dream school, the University of California. "We feel helpless and unable to do anything," said the 24-year-old sociology student, who declined to give her surname for privacy reasons. The Reuters Tariff Watch newsletter is your daily guide to the latest global trade and tariff news. Sign up here. "The situation in North America this year is not very good. From applying for my PhD until now, this series of visa policies is not very favourable to us. But we have no choice but to wait." The U.S. State Department said on Thursday it would not tolerate the "exploitation" of American universities or theft of U.S. research and intellectual property by Beijing. Spokesperson Tammy Bruce did not elaborate on how many Chinese students would be affected by a new plan announced on Wednesday to "aggressively" revoke visas. The visa crackdown is the latest in a series of moves targeting the international student community, especially Chinese nationals, who make up roughly 1 in 4 of all international students in the U.S., as the Trump administration pursues its headline immigration agenda. If applied to a broad segment of the 277,000 Chinese students already at U.S. colleges, the visa revocations could disrupt a major source of income for universities and a crucial pipeline of talent for U.S. technology companies. Chinese students make up 16% of all graduate science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) students in the United States. The announcement on Chinese student visa holders came af-



ter the Trump administration ordered its missions worldwide to stop scheduling new appointments for student and exchange visitor visa applicants. If the visa appointment system is not resumed soon, Lainey wishes to defer enrolment for a year. "Although everyone says the U.S. admissions system may be biased against Chinese students, in reality U.S. schools are indeed the top in terms of academic quality," she said. "I may also consider (applying to) some places outside the U.S., such as Europe, as well as Hong Kong and Singapore." The measures are a sign of the increasing spillover from a bruising trade war between the two global superpowers, and threaten to derail a fragile truce reached mid-May in Geneva. A Friday editorial by China's state-owned Global Times newspaper said the new visa measures raised "the spectre of McCarthyism" and likened them to an "educational witch-hunt". "In recent years, the suppression of Chinese students has increasingly become an important part of the U.S. strategy to contain China," the commentary said. Potentially even more damaging than the immediate economic impact for the U.S. could be a long-term erosion of the appeal of U.S. universities and the subsequent brain drain. International students - 54% of them from India and China - contributed more than \$50 billion to the U.S. economy in 2023.

# Trump aims to exceed first term's weapons sales to Taiwan, officials say

WASHINGTON/TAIPEI, GNS News Agency, June 5

The United States plans to ramp up weapons sales to Taipei to a level exceeding President Donald Trump's first term as part of an effort to deter China as it intensifies military pressure on the democratic island, according to two U.S. officials. If U.S. arms sales to Taiwan do accelerate, it could ease worries about the extent of Trump's commitment to the island. It would also add new friction to the tense U.S.-China relationship. The Reuters Tariff Watch newsletter is your daily guide to the latest global trade and tariff news. Sign up here.

The U.S. officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said they expect U.S. approvals for weapons sales to Taipei over the next four years to surpass those in Trump's first term, with one of the officials saying arms sales notifications to Taiwan could "easily exceed" that earlier period. They also said the United States is pressing members of Taiwan's opposition parties not to oppose the government's efforts to increase defense spending to 3% of the island's economic output. The first Trump administration approved sales of approximately \$18.3 billion worth of weapons to Taiwan, compared with around \$8.4 billion during Joe Biden's term, according to Reuters calculations.

The United States is Taiwan's most important international backer and arms supplier despite the lack of formal diplomatic ties between Washington and Taipei. Even so, many in Taiwan, which China claims as its own, worry that Trump may not be as committed to the island as past U.S. presidents. On the election campaign trail, Trump suggested Taiwan should pay to be protected and also accused the island of stealing American semiconductor business, causing alarm in Taipei. China has vowed to "reunify" with the separately governed island, by force if necessary. Taiwan's government rejects Beijing's sovereignty claims, saying only the island's people can decide their future. The U.S. officials said administration officials and Trump himself were committed to "enhancing hard deterrence" for Taiwan. "That's where the president is. That's where all of us are," one U.S.

official said, adding that they were working closely with Taiwan on an arms procurement package to be rolled out when Taiwan secured domestic funding. Taiwan's Presidential Office told Reuters the government is determined to strengthen its self-defense capabilities and pointed to its proposals to increase defense spending. "Taiwan aims to enhance military deterrence while continuing to deepen its security cooperation with the United States," Presidential Office spokesperson Wen Lii said. Taiwan's defense ministry declined to comment on any new arms sales, but reiterated previous remarks by the island's defense minister, Wellington Koo, about the importance of "solidarity and co-operation of democratic allies." China's foreign ministry reiterated its opposition to U.S. arms sales to Taiwan on Friday, with spokesperson Lin Jian telling reporters that the United States should stop creating "new factors" that could lead to tensions in the Taiwan Strait. Taiwan's President Lai Ching-te and his Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) aim to increase defense spending to 3% of GDP this year through a special defense budget. But the island's parliament, controlled by opposition parties the Kuomintang (KMT) and the Taiwan People's Party (TPP), passed budget cuts earlier this year that threatened to hit defense spending. That triggered concerns in Washington, where officials and lawmakers have regularly said the U.S. cannot show more urgency over Taiwan's defense than the island itself. "We're messaging pretty hard (in Taipei) to the opposition. Don't get in the way of this. This isn't a Taiwanese partisan question. This is a Taiwanese survival question," one of the U.S. officials told Reuters. Three people in Taiwan with direct knowledge of the situation confirmed that the U.S. government and U.S. congressional visitors have been pressing the opposition parties in Taiwan not to block defense spending, especially the coming special defense budget, which is expected to be proposed to parliament later this year. "As long as they knew there were people from the opposition in the room, they directly asked them not to cut the defense budget," one of the people said.



# A U.S.-like DOGE for India is not far-fetched



The United States President, Donald Trump, made headlines when he announced a U.S. Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) with its focus primarily on cost reduction. Yet it is a move that opens a broader discussion on streamlining government operations in developing economies through dedicated efforts to drive efficiency in governance.

Going beyond the narrow, cost-focused American proposal, India could reimagine government efficiency through the lens of enhanced service delivery and governance. While India has made significant strides in advancing its economic and social agendas, the country still faces persistent challenges in addressing bureaucratic inefficiencies, excessive regulatory red tape, and misallocation of resources in public spending. 'Minimum government and maximum governance' are still a far cry from reality. There are often outdated practices embedded in standard operating procedures (SOPs) across government departments. Many of these non-value-adding activities, originally designed for valid operational contexts, have lost relevance in the wake of digitisation or changes in upstream and downstream processes. Despite no longer serving their intended purpose, they continue to be performed, leading to unnecessary delays and inflated costs. Such inefficiencies not only slow down the execution of critical government programmes but also undermine their overall impact and cost-effectiveness. To tackle these issues, India could benefit from establishing a dedicated government efficiency department — a body that would focus on identifying inefficiencies, cutting waste, eliminating rework, and enhancing accountability across all levels of governance. This broader mandate could transform how citizens interact with government services while modernising administrative processes. Lessons from within India

There are lessons to be learnt from within the country. India's private sector has undergone a remarkable transformation over the past decades. Many Indian companies have demonstrated standards of world-class efficiency, often outperforming global competitors. These organisations have successfully implemented modern management techniques, digital transformation, industrial engineering and lean operations while operating within the Indian context. Similar changes are not seen in public governance, with many government departments still operating on legacy systems and processes designed decades ago. While private companies have dedicated departments focusing on continuous improvement, digitisation and customer satisfaction, government departments often lack structured mechanisms for service enhancement.

As India aims to become a developed economy, the quality of government service delivery and ease of citizen interaction with administration will play crucial roles. Such a dedicated efficiency department could provide the structured approach needed to transform government operations, focusing not just on how efficiently services are delivered but also on fundamentally improving what is delivered to citizens. India's bureaucratic machinery, based on the Weberian model, despite being well-intentioned, is often perceived to be cumbersome and slow. This inefficiency translates into delays in the execution of projects that are crucial for economic growth and development. Public spending in India is often plagued by inefficiencies, with a significant portion of the Budget allocated to welfare programmes, subsidies, and public services. An efficiency department could focus on minimising waste and maximising the impact of these programmes. By implementing a systematic approach to detect and prevent leakages, inefficiencies, and misuse of funds, this department could ensure that India's already scarce public resources are directed where they are needed most.

In today's digital age, technology can play a pivotal role in driving efficiency across government operations. India has already demonstrated remarkable success with several large-scale digitisation programmes, such as Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT), Aadhaar, land records digitisation across many States, and the Passport Seva project. These initiatives have streamlined processes, reduced inefficiency, and significantly enhanced service delivery. However, despite their success, these programmes have largely operated in silos, lacking mechanisms for a cross-pollination of ideas, expertise, and best practices.

# The cheapest way to prevent NCDs: reducing salt consumption

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), more than 70% of deaths in low- and middle-income group countries are due to non-communicable diseases (NCDs). Poor lifestyles, smoking, the use of alcohol, lack of exercise, air pollution, and other factors contribute to this figure. It is of paramount importance to prevent NCDs, as their treatment can be a huge burden to the health budget of a country. One of the easiest and most cost-effective ways of preventing NCDs is reducing salt consumption in the population. Salt consumption, the WHO says, should be less than 5 grams per day from all sources: this includes natural sources, salt added while cooking, and hidden salt in processed and packaged food. Indians consume way above the recommendation at around 8 to 11 grams per day. It is important to clarify the confusion between sodium and salt. Two grams of sodium is equal to 5 grams of common salt. The relationship between salt and blood pressure is well known. High salt intake leads to increased blood volume, and unless the endothelium (lining of the blood vessels) produces nitrous oxide, the blood vessel fails to dilate, leading to hypertension. This is called salt-sensitive or resistant hypertension and is genetically determined. However, what is not common knowledge is that salt-resistant hypertension can become salt-sensitive over time. High salt in the absence of hypertension can also lead to endothelial dysfunction. All NCDs have a common pathology of blood vessel damage. The ill effects of hypertension: contributing to heart attacks, strokes, and kidney failure are well known. And so, it is essential that salt intake is followed to the recommended level even in the absence of hypertension.

Each new government initiative often starts from scratch and often depends heavily on the private sector to build systems and frameworks. This not only leads to higher costs but also delays to implementation and a missing of opportunities for leveraging proven solutions from existing projects. A centralised government efficiency department could act as a repository for institutional knowledge, technical expertise, and reusable digital infrastructure. By facilitating the sharing of best practices and standardised processes across Ministries and departments, this body could reduce redundancy, lower costs, and accelerate the implementation of new initiatives. By championing digital transformation across ministries, an efficiency department could help India keep pace with technological advancements while also cutting down on the costs and the delays associated with manual processes.

Modifying a department that exists Interestingly, there is no need to build such an organisation from scratch. There already is the central government's Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG) under the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions. While the current mandate for DARPG primarily focuses on administrative reforms, disseminates successful good governance practices and grievance redress, much like the PM GatiShakti National Master Plan (for multi-modal connectivity, a platform to bring 16 Ministries including Railways and Roadways together for integrated planning and coordinated implementation of infrastructure connectivity projects with the aim integrate and facilitate the last mile connectivity), it could be expanded to spearhead broader government-wide efficiency agenda. Drawing inspiration from the private sector, where centralised efficiency teams often act as innovation hubs to streamline operations and implement transformative practices, DARPG could adopt a similar role in governance. In corporations, such teams focus on integrating technologies, optimising workflows, and eliminating waste to improve both financial and operational performance. Translating this model to the public sector, DARPG could lead initiatives to identify inefficiencies, benchmark performance, and implement solutions that drive cost savings and enhance service delivery across departments and States. By leveraging its existing structure and expertise, the department could serve as a centralised body to standardise processes, eliminate redundancies, and foster cross-departmental collaboration. It could develop and house best-in-class digital capabilities for governance, creating reusable frameworks, platforms, and tools that can be cross-leveraged by various Ministries and State governments. Additionally, DARPG could institutionalise the use of process improvement methodologies such as Lean, Six Sigma, and data-driven decision-making tools. By embedding these practices into governance, the department could enable continuous improvements in efficiency and accountability, paving the way for a government that is both agile and citizen-centric. The Indian bureaucracy

Unlike the political appointments to executive administration in the U.S., India operates under a system of permanent bureaucracy, wherein civil servants hold long-term positions independent of the political leadership, ensuring continuity, institutional memory, and stability in governance. Rather than uprooting the system, India's challenge lies in empowering and expanding the mandate of such institutions to drive efficiency without compromising the stability and consistency that permanent bureaucracy provides.

The path to operationalising this setup faces two formidable and intertwined challenges. First, the deeply entrenched bureaucratic structures, which have evolved over decades, often resist transformative changes that could alter existing power dynamics and administrative processes. Career bureaucrats, accustomed to traditional hierarchies and established workflows, may view such initiatives as threats to their autonomy and discretionary powers. Second, India's federal structure adds another layer of complexity, where the delicate balance between central and State authorities must be carefully maintained in consonance with the spirit of cooperative federalism. Any efficiency initiative would need to navigate the highly sensitive and political constitutional division of powers and respect State autonomy. Success would depend on creating a framework that not only addresses bureaucratic concerns through meaningful engagement and clear incentives but also provides enough freedom and flexibility for States to adapt implementation to their local contexts while maintaining core efficiency standards. Political will and public trust would be critical to enable success of such a programme. While the journey toward such reforms would certainly be challenging, the potential benefits make it an opportunity worth exploring. As India moves forward in the 21st century, a commitment to government efficiency could be one of the most powerful tools for achieving sustainable development and a harbinger of inclusive growth. Milind Kumar Sharma is Professor in the Department of Production and Industrial Engineering at MBM University, Jodhpur, Rajasthan. Sharad Sharma works with a "Big 4" and is an executive PhD scholar at MDI Gurgaon. The views expressed are personal

There are more than 100 studies that have shown the benefit of salt reduction in the population. Studies from Japan, Portugal, and Finland are the oldest. A study from the U.K. showed a reduction of strokes by 24% and heart attacks by 18% when salt intake was reduced. The latest and the largest study from China, showed a considerable reduction in strokes with the use of low-sodium salt substitutes. The other ill effects of salt, such as kidney stones, worsening of Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), stomach cancer, and osteoporosis, must be included in the benefits of salt control. The first step is creating awareness at all levels of the general population, health providers, the government, and food manufacturers. The best way to find out daily salt consumption is by estimating urine sodium over 24 hours. In general, the salt we eat is removed from our urine. Only a very small quantity is lost in faeces or sweat. It is a common misconception that with increased sweating, the body requires more salt: only more water is required. Unfortunately, only about 3,000-odd people have been studied for urinary sodium excretion, which is miniscule considering our population. Studies using dietary recall are not reliable, however, knowing the average family consumption may help to monitor and advise accordingly. Salt meters have been used in some countries but do not help in determining salt in traditional Indian foods. Studies from our country still show that the majority of salt is added while cooking at home. But this is likely to change, since eating out and consumption of packaged food have been on the rise. The average person cooking at home needs to be educated on the skill of lowering salt through the use of spices and condiments to improve taste.

# Why is the Internet giving Lewis Hamilton a digital bath at the Ganges?



My chronically-online self is usually unfazed by Internet absurdities. However, the time has come to let you know that one particular trend has got my goat: Having to type sentences like 'Prayagraj-based entrepreneur Deepak Goel gives snans (baths) to celebrities like Logan Paul, Sydney Sweeney, Lewis Hamilton, and Virat Kohli at the Narmada and Ganga rivers'. It's all downhill from here, isn't it? Back in January and February, when the Maha Kumbh Mela was being celebrated in full swing in Uttar Pradesh, Deepak Goel, an entrepreneur, saw an opportunity that you and I didn't. When the world was rushing to dip themselves into the Ganges, Deepak put out a video on Instagram introducing himself. "Hi, I'm Deepak Goel from Prayagraj and I am performing digital snans for people. All you have to do is send me a WhatsApp picture of yourself. I will take a printout and dip you five times. I come here every day," he declared.

Earlier, the dips came at a hefty price. When the Kumbh was taking place, Deepak could be seen standing at the ghats by the river with his pants rolled up, holding up passport sized images of strangers who wanted their sins to be washed away. He charged ₹1,100 for a picture. Since February 23, the end of the fest, the service has been largely free though. One only needs to pay ₹25 to cover the cost of printing the photo out and conveyance. "I offer digital snan services at Sangam-Prayagraj, Narmada-Jabalpur and at Haridwar. For Sangam-Prayagraj, you only have to pay ₹25 per photograph. There can be many people in one photograph also," he says.

Since February, the entrepreneur has been flooded with requests — gag and serious ones alike — for digital

salvation. It has also invited several spoof spin offs. Do you have a broken leg but still wish to work those abs? Go to the digital gym where someone places your photo on a treadmill for cardio? A parody account @digitalgym01 has 608k views on their first video already. Can't drink a peg of whiskey because your parents or partner disallows you from doing so? A digital peg by YouTuber Mister Param is the way to go. Deepak's video of a snan of American influencer and wrestler Logan Paul, his wife Nina Agdal and their child Esme, has gotten nearly 5 million views. Pop-culture content creator @thepjexplained sent a collage of himself and actress Sydney Sweeney, known for her striking beauty, and requested a dip. In a television interview, Deepak said that he was using advanced technology to help facilitate the wishes of those who could not be present at Prayagraj for this festival. "Old people who cannot travel need to be accommodated somehow. People say that I am using advanced technology for this," he said. How kind.

I ended up saving a number of his videos so my algorithm now only shows me an odd mix of F1 and Maha Kumbh reels. The ones that cracked me up the most were requests from Westerners like Alex, a woman from Kent, who paid \$20 for this; and from forlorn Formula One fans who prayed for Ganga-fuelled victory laps of drivers like Charles Leclerc and Max Verstappen. "'Charles', 'Charles', 'Charles'. How many of you have requested him. Hope he wins the race tomorrow," Deepak said in all seriousness, announcing the date: May 24 and location: Sangam Prayagraj. Curiosity got the best of me so I wrote to the man on WhatsApp requesting an interview. I am upset to report that I only received an automated reply from an account with a profile photo that reads 'Digital Snan Guru'. For your sake, dear reader, I have sent him my photograph and ₹25 on Google Pay, hoping to see if this experiment works. Let us if he can wipe my sin slate clean. At least this way, I will end up taking a bath. Chad: A 'Chad' is usually a generic, attractive, young white man who is supposedly muscular and cocky. Now, the term is synonymous with male entitlement and is often used to describe the incel community. For example, Henry Cavill is a hot Chad. Are you wondering about what's happening on Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), Reddit and Discord? Pop it like it's hot, a fortnightly column from The Hindu, catches you up on everything pop culture. All you need to do, is tune in.

# Awadh's last mirasins struggle to keep their musical heritage alive



## With more people opting for film music at weddings, these women singers may be the last custodians of their community

Umrana Niyazi hunkers down in her small verandah with her paan daan (betel leaf box) and sings Chhap tilak sab cheeni... mohse naina milaik (You have taken away my identity, my beauty, and everything that was mine... just by locking eyes with me), written and composed by Sufi poet and mystic Hazrat Amir Khusrau in braj bhasha, a western Hindi dialect. Her husky voice floats out into the lanes of old Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, where she lives. "Now people rarely call us to sing at mehfilis [gatherings]. Times are changing but I hope our songs will continue to resonate with people. Otherwise, how will we survive?" asks the 51-year-old, who hails from the Mirasi community, a group of traditional singers and dancers commonly found in northern India and Pakistan. The word 'mirasi' comes from the Arabic word, 'miras', meaning heritage. In Awadh, the Mirasins, or female singers, are traditionally invited to sing at auspicious events such as births, Aqeeqah (where a newborn's hair is shaved for the first time), Bismillah (when the child reads the Quran for the first time) and weddings. Umrana and her sister Farzana, 45, are perhaps the last custodians of the musical heritage of the Mirasins, who enjoyed great popularity in the 19th century, when there was a surge in cultural nationalism. In response to the colonial rulers' disdain for Indian culture, talukdars, landowning Indian aristocratic families, began supporting artists, including the Mirasins, who became linked with their patron families.

"Though considered socially inferior to women from 'respectable' families, they received the patronage of nobles and royals," says Rana Safvi, historian, translator and author of The Forgotten Cities of Delhi and Shahjahanabad: The Living City of Old Delhi. Mirasins played a special role during weddings as they were invited to sing at every function. It would begin at the bride's home with Milad recitations in praise of the Prophet, followed by the haldi ceremony. There were songs to welcome the baraat (groom's party) and, after the nikaah (wedding), songs were sung to bid farewell to the bride.

Mirasins also sang at the bridegroom's home — while he tied the headress or sehra, and when family members applied surma to his eyes. During the wedding, when families and friends gathered to bless the newlyweds, the Mirasins sang a Persian composition by Hazrat Sarmad Shaheed Shahana Mubarakbaad. "Mirasins play a crucial role in preserving our cultural heritage. Their songs are a repository of our history," says Safvi. Umrana and Farzana are part of the third generation of their family keeping the

tradition alive. Umrana remembers a time when Mirasins were paid generously. "We travelled to Aligarh for a wedding in 1996 and received ₹81,000. It was a golden time for us," says Umrana, who has been singing for almost 30 years without any formal training. Her grandmother and mother were invited to sing at functions in Hindu homes, too. "We sang Dadra, Thumri, and songs about Sawan, Basant, and Holi for wealthy Hindu families. But we are not invited any more," she says. Modernisation, gender norms contribute to decline

Patronage to Mirasins has been on a decline since the early 2000s. Many patrons, especially the talukdars, passed away or relocated to urban areas. As society modernised, traditional arts like those of the Mirasins came to be viewed as outdated, especially those performed by women from marginalised communities. In some areas, growing religious conservatism has discouraged musical traditions, particularly those involving public performances by women, labelling them inappropriate. In a male-dominated society, the Qawwals or male singers from Mirasi families who perform at dargahs, enjoy a higher status and earn more. "We don't get paid well because we can't perform on stage like men," explains Umrana, adding that the men also use more musical instruments.

Traditionally, women in the Mirasin community were not allowed to play any musical instruments other than the dholak, which they learned informally. "One person plays the dholak while the rest of us sing. If we had access to more musical instruments, we could enhance our songs and performances," says Farzana. As people migrated to cities, film music began gaining popularity. "Many prefer to play film songs at their functions rather than traditional ones. I fear the Mirasins will eventually fade away from our society," says Riyaz Ahmed, a 45-year-old Qawwal, who has been singing since the age of 20. An heirless heritage The next generation is not interested in carrying on the tradition. "My children don't want to sing at people's homes like we do. My son says that the little fame and name I have earned is not enough to fill our stomachs," says Farzana. "I feel sad but understand why they are reluctant to take up a profession that is in danger of disappearing altogether." Umrana, who is unmarried, supports her three sisters and brother, and struggles to make ends meet. But she can't imagine doing any other work. "Singing has been my entire life. However, when I meet good people through my work, I try my hand at matchmaking. If I am lucky, I earn generous amounts from both parties," she says.



# Only the second animal to find its way by polarised moonlight found



Many nocturnal animals, including insects like ants and bees, follow the moon's position to find their way when they go foraging. But the moon waxes and wanes in a cycle and can be obscured by clouds or overhanging tree canopies, so the animals can't always directly track its position. Now, for the first time, scientists at Macquarie University, Sydney, have found that two nocturnal bull ant species (*Myrmecia pyriformis* and *Myrmecia midas*) make their way at night with the help of polarised moonlight, which, while being dimmer even than moonlight, contains unusual patterns that can point the way. This is also only the second instance of an animal being found to use polarised moonlight to orient itself.

Seen from the ground, both sunlight and moonlight contain characteristic polarisation patterns. The way these patterns are oriented in the sky, rather than the location of the light source alone, allows animals to use it as a compass. The study found the nocturnal bull ants were able to detect and use polarised moonlight throughout the lunar cycle for foraging, even under a crescent moon when moonlight is 80% less intense. The polarisation patterns in moonlight are also a million-times dimmer than in sunlight. So while many animals are known to use the latter, very few use the former. The first animal found to use polarised moonlight was the dung beetle. Scientists already knew *M. pyriformis* and *M. midas* ants used polarised sunlight to navigate, but this light fades as the sun sets. The study's researchers were also aware most of the foraging *M. midas* ants returned overnight while the night-time activity of *M. pyriformis* ants increased on full-moon nights. The e-vector pattern

The sun and the moon both emit unpolarised light. Light is an electromagnetic wave, with the electric field oscillating perpendicular to the magnetic field, and both fields oscillating perpendicular to the wave's direction of motion. When the light moves through the earth's atmosphere, it is scattered by particles in the air and becomes polarised. Polarisation denotes a specific orientation of the electric field. Both sunlight and moonlight scattered in the atmosphere become linearly polarised, meaning the electric field oscillates in a single, fixed plane perpendicular to the wave's motion. The scattered light is also oriented 90° to the incident light. As numerous light waves are scattered in this way, an unusual pattern emerges in the sky when seen through a filter that can detect polarised light. This is called the e-vector pattern. "[W]hen the sun/moon is near the horizon, the pattern of polarised skylight is particularly simple, with uniform direction of polarisation approximately parallel to the north-south axes," the researchers wrote in their paper. The stability of this pattern gives an animal that can detect it a natural compass. The researchers created linearly polarised light and cast it on a population of nocturnal bull ants in the wild, then tracked the ants' ability to orient themselves relative to their two nests, located more than

50 metres apart. Under full, waxing, and waning moon conditions, the researchers rotated their polariser clockwise by 45° and later counterclockwise by 45°. In each instance, the e-vector of the light falling on the ants changed. The ants responded by adjusting their path to the left and later to the right. Once the foragers crossed the area where the researchers' light was being cast, they adjusted once more to reorient themselves according to the e-vector pattern in the sky.

The researchers used paired tests to compare the magnitude of these shifts between the initial orientation and the filter exit and again between the filter exit and the reorientation. The paired tests are a statistical tool with which researchers can determine whether paired observations — shift magnitudes in this case — differ between two samples. "Shift magnitude is the number of degrees the ants alter their headings under the filter," Cody Freas, a doctoral student at Macquarie University and one of the study's co-authors, said. While the nocturnal bull ants were found to use polarised moonlight throughout the lunar cycle, their heading shift magnitudes dropped during the waning phases. The researchers called this finding "unexpected". Likewise, foraging ants had substantially higher shift magnitudes during the waxing full moon and waxing quarter moon phases compared to the waning phases. Under the new moon, when the ambient moonlight e-vector disappeared, the paths of the foraging ants didn't change significantly when the polarisation filter was rotated in either direction. The ants also didn't reorient their paths to a meaningful degree once they exited the filter. The researchers used another statistical test to compare the differences in shift magnitudes when the filter was rotated clockwise and counter-clockwise across lunar phases. Shift magnitudes, vector distances During the full moon, when moonlight reaches 80% of its maximum intensity, the shift magnitudes were 36.6° to 43° at Nest 1 and 21.5° to 28.9° at Nest 2. According to Freas, the difference between the two nests is likely due to the long distance that foragers at Nest 1 traversed on their trip to the foraging tree, 6 m, versus 2.5 m from Nest 2. "At short vector lengths, like at Nest 2, the vector, which is informed by the sky compass, becomes less reliable," he said, adding that the longer the distance, the more "powerful" the guidance is. "Thus, if the ant walks 6 m to the foraging tree, we can say that the ant has a 6-m vector pointing back to the nest. This vector also [shrinks] as the ant travels in the nest direction. It's an updating estimate of how far away the nest is at any point. So when we release an ant halfway home, it still has the vector from where it was captured (6 m)." According to Clarke Scholtz, emeritus professor of entomology at the University of Pretoria, South Africa, and Marie Dacke, a professor of sensory biology at Lund University, Sweden, "The methods used in the study are appropriate." Neither was involved in the study. "While we cannot compare solar and moonlight polarisation navigation in outbound ants ..., striking similarities occur when comparing solar and moonlight polarisation navigation in ants homing to the nest," the researchers wrote in their paper. "... it remains unknown if these ants are tracking their lunar polarisation compass by using a time-compensated lunar compass, or if the compass is updated with reference to other cues, such as the panorama, throughout the night," they added. Honeybees and desert ants have been known to use such cues together with sunlight. They said future research could check whether the ants have a way to say where the moon is after specific intervals by "exposing or blocking access to the sky and familiar panorama for set time periods when the moon is naturally visible overnight..."

# Sri Lankan Govt blames unrest provokers for spate of violence in country; vows action

The Sri Lankan Government said ) that the recent killings in the country, including that of a prominent underworld figure, appear to be an attempt to undermine the ongoing investigations into high-profile criminal cases such as the 2019 Easter Sunday suicide bombings. The government's response came following this week's courtroom shooting that left the underworld figure dead. The incident sent shockwaves across the country, leading to the Opposition probing the government's measures to tackle the spate of violence. "Most of these are done by gangs now resident in neighbouring countries," Ravi Seneviratne the secretary to the Ministry of Public Security told reporters on Saturday (February 22, 2025).

Mr. Seneviratne said the government has felt that recent killings were an attempt to sabotage the ongoing investigation into high-profile cases of the past, including the revived investigation on the 2019 Easter Sunday suicide bombings. "We will take stringent action against those who are behind this move to create unrest in the country," said Mr. Seneviratne. On April 21, 2019, nine suicide bombers carried out a series of blasts that tore through three churches and as many luxury hotels in Sri Lanka, killing 273 people, including 11 Indians. Sri Lanka's new President Anura Kumara Dissanayake in September last year said he would reopen an investigation into the terror attacks after meeting with the head of the Catholic Church Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith, who has been critical of the investigation into the attacks. Blaming both former Presidents Gotabaya Rajapaksa and Rani Wickremesinghe for the incident, Mr. Ranjith slammed the investigation as a political cover-up of



the attacks. Former President Maithripala Sirisena had appointed a high-level probe committee following pressure from the church. The probe found Sirisena guilty and ordered him to compensate SRs 100 million (₨27,443,756) to the victims' relatives. Then defence top brass were also found guilty of criminal negligence for ignoring prior intelligence warnings from India. Police chief Priyantha Weerasuriya on Saturday (February 22, 2025) said there have been 17 shooting incidents and 5 stabbings since January. The police have identified 57 organised crime gangs operating and manned by around 1,400 gang members. During the press conference, the police chief and enforcement officials faced intense questioning regarding the incident in which two criminal suspects died while in police custody. The police this morning said the two were shot dead by the police when the two criminals tried to grab police weapons in their bid to escape.

# Come summer, sighting the shy, pint-sized members of the Rallidae family gets easier

GNS News Agency, June 5

As humans are christened around birth, before their character becomes manifest and their frame takes complete shape, there is always the possibility that their name might suggest the opposite of what the people around them largely perceive their character to be or that it is in embarrassing contradiction to their physical structure. Birds being named after their prominent features that are out there for the universe to see, the alignment between what they are and what they are called comes with the accuracy of railroad track geometry. Zapornia pusilla — Baillon's crake in watercooler conversations — is as spot-on as a binomial name can get.

When fed into Latin, pusilla comes out denoting "very small". The Baillon's crake can be missed in the field, when it is at a distance, as the magnification of the human eye is woefully short of what it takes to pick up this tiny creature. The other factor is the Baillon's crake's predisposition to present less of itself: it moves about furtively and slides into the reeds at the slightest suspicion of being noticed. But if you are keen on observing the Baillon's crake or the



ruddy breasted crake in the field, in Chennai, this would be the best time to put in efforts towards that end. These birds live amidst reeds, the bulrushes, which are likely to lose their density now as they would shrivel and go brown, leaving wide gaps, thereby reducing the cover for these tidily birds to stay inscrutable. This Baillon's crake — captured in photographs at Perumbakkam wetland on February 12, 2025 — had to come out of hiding to rinse itself in water and had to continue in the public glare to dry itself.

# Meet Kani Kusruti at her Goa home: “My friends tease me that ‘this is Kani’s era’; I think I’m just an average actor”



You can't find Kani Kusruti easily. Her house is off a highway, down a winding, forested lane in Goa, with no signposts. Google Maps will take you only so far and no further. Through the trees, I spot a likely house, and after ringing the bell, and waiting, I call her. "Are you in front of a yellow house or a green house?" she asks, in a tone which feels like she's said the same thing a million times over. The first is her office, the second is home: no one's at work, it's a public holiday. I head to the house with the green facade, and there she is, the actor who has had a brilliant 2024, with two of her films still being feted around the globe.

As Anila, the mother of a difficult 18-year-old in Shuchi Talati's Sundance breakout 'Girls Will Be Girls', she gives us a complex character rarely seen in Indian cinema. When Mira (Preeti Panigrahi) invites her crush Sri home (Kesav Binoy Kiron), it is Anila's unexpected third-wheeling between the two which heightens tensions, leading to an even more unexpected resolution. In Payal Kapadia's Cannes winner 'All We Imagine As Light', she becomes Prabha, a Malayali nurse, trying to find her comfort zone in alien Mumbai, and turning into a supportive figure to the younger, flightier Anu (Divya Prabhu), even as she finds solace in Parvaty (Chhaya Kadam), an older colleague from her hospital.

In two web-series, also out last year, she plays that character who effortlessly catches the eye regardless of the length of the role — as a wildlife conservation officer in Richie Mehta's 'Poacher' which is even smaller than the nimble martial arts expert in Abhishek Chaubey's 'Killer Soup' — she makes you miss her when she's not on screen. For someone who has been on the best actress lists of some of the toughest-to-please film critics not just in India, but internationally, Kani comes off as a remarkably reluctant actor. "Acting is not my passion", she says, as we settle down for our chat. She slides to the floor which seems like her natural habitat; I join her, "It was never my passion. It's only in the last seven to eight years that I've started looking at it as something I can do." As a child in Trivandrum she remembers going to the 'first day, second show', a weekly ritual, with her parents. Being out and about at night was more of a joy than the film itself, during which she usually nodded off, waking up only when a vigorous dance came on. Clowning, moving her body, manipulating puppets, using masks, were more her thing, and that she found in theatre. Or rather, theatre found her. Once, she was part of a street theatre during a protest her activist parents took her to. They wanted a child actor, so she did it, just for a lark. Then, when she was 10 or 11, her father asked her to pack her bags — this, during school term — and deposited her at a theatre workshop where she was the youngest participant, zoning out in theory classes and enjoying the practical parts, which included making papier-mâché puppets and doing exercises, which opened up her mind. The workshop ended with a performance, which she remembers as being spectacular. With that began her deep association with theatre. When she was at a theatre school in Thrissur, an actor's physicality, while playing a spider, left a deep impact. Physical theatre touched her the most and she began savouring live performances, traditional dance forms (Koodiyattam, Kathakali, Bharatanatyam) and music, both Carnatic and Hindustani.

"Cinema was never for me," she says, laughing, "I was always falling asleep, honestly!" For a time, it seemed that theatre wasn't going to be for her, either. "At 15 or 16, I was this shy, embarrassed girl, wanting to be in everyone's good books. It was only when her 'very progressive' parents pushed her to test her limits did she agree, and that theatre experience, a slapstick comedy, helped her get over her initial inhibitions. "I thought this isn't bad, I can do this, and then came the next experience, in a dark, serious play. Those exercises had a significant impact on me, I began thinking about why I was really doing theatre, am I laughing at the jokes I like, why am I sad, who am I pleasing, am I just pleasing other people, is it coming from a place of compassion, why am I scared to question things even when the other person is wrong."

Growing up, she was always encouraged to doubt and question. There were no dogmas. "My parents never forced me to do anything I didn't want. They opened up spaces and facilitated my thinking. My father always used to say life is for living. He was an atheist, and I came to it on my own, after having gone to both the temple and the church. My mother spoke to me about love, romance and sexual abuse. Both of them said I could do whatever I wanted after 18; till then we would have discussions. They have shaped me slowly and surely," she says. She calls them by their first names: Maitreyan and Jayasree. "My father was a monk at an ashram where he met my mother. By then he was disenchanted with the gurukulam, and was gravitating towards communism and the Communist party. My mother never wanted to get married." When they got together, they continued as they were, in a live-in relationship — two individuals who thought about things very differently. "When my mother changed her mind about not having a child, she told my father, it's okay if you don't want to, I'll have anyone's child, and my father thought, anyway I will have to bring up the child, so might as well have my own, so I came along," she says, with a laugh. This awareness of life's little absurdities is a running thread in our conversation. Kani was fascinated by philosophy, learnt Sanskrit, went to theatre school in Paris, and finally began taking on film roles as they gave her a chance to make the kind of money she wouldn't be able to in theatre.

RKani Kusruti at home in Goa (Photo: Veepul Rege) She speaks of her early roles after her return from Paris with disinterest — the kind of films being made in Kerala at the time didn't resonate with her. At this point, I find myself breaking in: So, what is her passion? What is it that floats her boat, which she seems to want to row to different shores?

The answer is instant. "Science. I love science. I wanted to study maths and physics. Later, I loved biology

even more. Then came the realisation that acting is also something I can do. I would love to be a doctor, but I turn 40 this year, and it is too late to go back and do everything from scratch. I love, love health care. When I was taking care of my grandmother in her last few months, I really enjoyed everything about it — giving her a bath, taking her to the toilet. I think I would be very happy working in palliative care," she says. So when did this phase of saying yes to cinema begin? After 2013, Kani found that Malayalam films were getting "better". "And then I met Anand (Gandhi, director of 'Ship Of Theseus'), and we were dating, I came to Mumbai with him, but I didn't like it. I didn't speak Hindi, so I said no to the offers that came my way. I think in Malayalam, I read in Malayalam. If there is a definition of a regional actor, that is me. One role which I really liked was in the web-series 'OK Computer' (2021). It was whimsical, quirky, something I hadn't done before. Then Covid happened, and we were here, in the house, locked down." After a bit of prodding from Anand, Kani auditioned for 'Maharani' (2021-), a Sony Liv show, in which her character has to speak broken Hindi: her personal secretary to Huma Qureshi's inexperienced chief minister soon caught our attention.

Even as we speak, Kani is mugging her lines for the fourth season of the series. Her Hindi may now be better than her French, she says, but she is still "as scared" when acting in the language. "I have humongous respect for actors who are more global. But I'm connected culturally only to Kerala," she says, aware of the irony of her calling herself a regional actor whose journey has been decidedly global. Which is, perhaps, why she felt so much at home doing Payal's film, which mines her ability to reach deep into a character to bring up the truth: Prabha is one of the most authentic portrayals of a Malayali woman of her kind. "I used to spend time with the nurses at my mother's clinic, they were like my didis. I don't know if my portrayal of a nurse is authentic — only a nurse can say so — but I have known many women like Prabha." All of that knowing, plus the director's wanting a mix of real and not-so real, she's poured into her Prabha, her contained resilience is both harrowing and heartbreaking. Both Payal and Shuchi describe Kani as being extremely collaborative. Payal calls her captivating. "I respect her so much and even if I don't cast her, I will always consult her," she says. Shuchi speaks of her having that rare quality of being able to reflect the multiple intentions that people carry within them. Kani says the two are very different in their approach — Payal sticks to pretty much what she wants, Shuchi is extremely open, can shoot two scenes diametrically opposite each other — but both respect process, a word she uses frequently to differentiate between the cinema she likes doing, and doesn't. All three sound like a mutual admiration society. Kani and Anand are no longer together, she tells me, but he is still her closest friend with whom she can discuss everything. The house that Kani lives in, is also home to Anand and his partner (Shreya Dudheria, filmmaker and TV director), and another couple, Zain Memon, the creator of the popular board game Shasn, and his partner. The fivesome, if there's such a word, work and play together. They are best friends, coming together when they need to, retreating to their corners when in need of privacy. "They have been teasing me, this is Kani's era, and we're just living in it, but I'm so bad at taking compliments, I keep wondering if all this praise is disproportionate. I think I'm just an average actor. If any of the fantastic actors I was surrounded by and grew up with get the same opportunities that I have, they too would do the same." I ask her if it isn't awkward for her to share the same space as Anand and his partner. "It did take us some time to understand how to transition but now we are close family," she says. Her parents come and go — they have their own relationship with Anand, and just like her, they continue to remain close. So, is she living her best life? "Absolutely. I love being home," she says, as she looks at the space around us, the westerling sun reminding us of the passing time. By now, we have been chatting for a few hours, as she talks about her love for Goa. "Even when I was a child, whenever I came here, I used to say I want to live in Goa. It has the same geography as north Kerala, which I love. The same laterite soil, the same dense trees," she says. Kani takes me out to the back porch, laden with creepers and plants, some of which she has planted. The entrance has a large jamun tree. A brown dog named Chinku lies under it. It's his home, too. On the wall close to the door jamb, a moth has settled, its earthen colours matching with the surroundings. I show Kani a photo I took of the moth. She opens her photo gallery, and there's a photo of the same moth: we laugh at the coincidence. But there's also something completely right about it. She really is a creature in sync with her surroundings, at home in her world.

# UPI powers 84pc of digital transactions in India, set to triple by 2030

New Delhi: Amid a surge in digital payments where nearly four out of five payments in the country were conducted on the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) in FY24, UPI has emerged as the dominant force driving financial inclusion, merchant adoption and cross-border transactions. According to a new industry report, UPI now drives 84 per cent of all digital transactions in India. The report by fintech consulting and advisory firm The Digital Fifth, UPI represents more than just a payment system — it's an entire financial ecosystem shaping India's digital-first economy. "With UPI handling 16 billion transactions a month and projected to grow 3x by the end of 2030, the role of robust, high-resilience switching infrastructure becomes paramount," according to Sameer Singh Jaini, Founder and CEO of The Digital Fifth. Real-time fraud detection, cloud-native architecture, and scalable, dual-core switches are no longer optional; they are essential to ensuring frictionless, secure, and fail-proof digital payments as India continues its journey toward a truly cashless, globally connected economy, he mentioned. UPI transactions surged 4 times from 2021 to 2024, reaching 172 billion transactions annually. It now dominates digital payments, far outpacing card-based and wallet transactions. With 30 million+ merchants onboarded on UPI, the merchant-to-consumer (P2M) segment is growing at 67 per cent on-year, outpacing peer-to-peer (P2P) transactions and signalling UPI's transition into the primary retail payment system, the report mentioned. According to the RBI, digital payments across India recorded a double-digit jump of 11.1 per cent year-on-year (YoY) as on September 2024. According to the report, the share of the UPI in the country's digital payments has surged from 34 per cent in 2019 to an impressive over 83 per cent in 2024, with a remarkable CAGR (cumulative average growth rate) of 74 per cent over the last five years.







# Sharp surge in number of rural women able to do online banking, UPI a key enabler



More women in rural areas are able to conduct online banking transactions, with a new survey by the statistics ministry showing that the proportion of females that could perform them surged to 30.0 per cent in the first quarter of 2025, sharply higher than 17.1 per cent in 2022-23.

According to the results of the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation’s Comprehensive Modular Survey: Telecom, 2025, released Friday, there has been a marked increase in the number of Indians in rural areas who have been engaging in online banking, with the rise being particularly noteworthy among young women. As per the survey’s results, 51.4 per cent of females in rural areas in the 15-24 years age bracket reported the ability to perform online banking transactions, more than double the 19.6 per cent in 2022-23 as per the ministry’s Comprehensive Annual Modular Survey for 2022-23 (July-June), released in October 2024. To be sure, a higher proportion of rural men, too, said they could do online banking, with the figure for those in the 15-24 years age bracket rising to 73.3 per cent from 40.2 per cent in 2022-23. The statistics ministry did not test or check the skills reported by the respondents while conducting the survey. Rising penetration in urban areas, where online banking penetration levels were higher to begin with, the increase was of a smaller magnitude, with 62.4 per cent of respondents aged 15 years and above saying they engaged in online banking, up from 50.6 per cent in 2022-23. At the all-India level, 48.9 per cent of persons aged 15 years and above said they could conduct online banking transactions, up from 37.8 per cent in 2022-23. The survey, part of the 80th round of the National Sample Survey (NSS), was conducted in the first three months of 2025 and covered the entire country except for some villages in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. The total number of households surveyed was 34,950 – 19,071 in rural areas and 15,879 in urban areas – while the total number of persons contacted was 1.42 lakh, with 82,573 in rural areas and 59,492 in urban areas.

# GDP growth slows in January-March quarter to 7.4%, shows govt data

The latest GDP growth figures came days after NITI Aayog CEO BVR Subrahmanyam announced that India had overtaken Japan to become the fourth-largest economy in the world. India’s gross domestic product (GDP) growth slowed in the January-March quarter to 7.4 per cent, according to the government data released on Friday. The full-year numbers also captured a slowdown in India’s economy as govt data for FY25 showed growth tapering to 6.5 per cent against 9.2 per cent in FY24.

The growth in the January-March period was lower than the 8.4 per cent expansion in the year-ago quarter. The latest GDP growth figures came days after NITI Aayog CEO BVR Subrahmanyam announced that India had overtaken Japan to become the fourth-largest economy in the world. Subrahmanyam had also asserted that the overall geopolitical and economic environment is favourable to India. “We are the fourth largest economy as I speak. We are a USD 4 trillion economy as I speak,” he said. Citing International Monetary Fund (IMF) data, Subrahmanyam said, India today was larger than Japan. Till 2024, India was the fifth-largest economy in the world. “It is only the US, China and Germany which are larger than India, and if we stick to what is being planned and what is being thought through, in 2.5-3 years, we will be the third largest economy,” Subrahmanyam said. The GDP numbers come mere days before the Reserve Bank of India’s Monetary Policy Committee meets in the first of June. A possible rate cut will be on the discussion table when they do, and the GDP figures are likely to play a role in the decision-making, along with other variables such as the monsoon and the ever-changing

# Fin Min suggests RBI to exclude small-ticket borrowers from draft gold loan norms, rollout from Jan 1

After concerns raised by Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin, the Department of Financial Services (DFS) under the Union Ministry of Finance has written to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to consider the requirements of small gold loan borrowers and exclude those borrowing below Rs 2 lakh under the draft gold loan norms. The Ministry has also stated that such guidelines will need time to implement at the field level and hence, should be rolled out from January 1, 2026. “Draft Directions on Lending Against Gold Collateral issued by the @RBI have been examined by @DFS\_India under guidance of Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs Smt. @nsitharaman. @DFS\_India has given suggestions to the @RBI to ensure that the requirements of the small gold loan borrowers are not adversely affected,” Finance Ministry said in a post on social media platform X (formerly Twitter) on Friday.

Earlier this week, Stalin wrote to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman against the restrictions on gold loans saying that the gold-backed loans serve as a primary source of timely, short-term agricultural credit, especially for small and marginal farmers. “Small and marginal farmers often lack formal land titles or verifiable income documentation. For such households, pledging household gold has been a viable and dignified route to access institutional credit,” he said. On Thursday, Stalin had posted on X stating that the RBI has proposed needless restrictions on gold loans, making it harder for poor and middle-class families to access credit with self-respect. “This is not ornamental gold. It is their shield against life’s uncertainties...this is not merely a regulation. It is a blow to their dignity and survival,” he had said. DFS has suggested to the RBI that small-ticket borrowers below Rs 2 lakh may be excluded from the requirements of these proposed directions to ensure timely and speedy disbursement of loans for such small-ticket borrowers. RBI is reviewing the feedback received on the Draft guidelines. It is expected that concerns raised by various stakeholders, as well as the feedback received from the public, will be duly considered by the @RBI before

The increased adoption of online banking, especially in rural areas, will be a boost to the government and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), with the authorities having pushed heavily on financial inclusion over the last couple of decades. In its annual report for 2024-25 (April-March) released on Thursday, the RBI said it will conduct a survey on the usage of digital payments in the current fiscal. Findings from the survey will be used to further enhance financial inclusion and make payment systems more effective, the central bank said. Unified Payments Interface (UPI) was the clear leader when it came to the channel through which Indians are conducting online banking, with 86.7 per cent of those in rural areas and 74.4 per cent in urban using only UPI for the same. Only 18.0 per cent of Indians aged 15 years or more used UPI, internet banking, and other channels.

The statistics ministry also sought responses on households’ online purchases, specifically for goods. As per the survey, 24.5 per cent of Indian households bought something online in the previous 30 days, with the figure being 16.0 per cent for rural households and 39.4 per cent for urban. Among those urban households which did make online purchases in the prior month, 52.4 per cent bought both food and non-food items, while 37.6 per cent bought only non-food goods. In rural areas, the purchase of non-food items was more prevalent, with 75.7 per cent of respondents buying only them. Phone and internet Underpinning the growth in online banking and purchases has been the prevalence of mobile phones and access to internet, with as many as 85.7 per cent of respondents aged 15 years or more having used a mobile phone in the three months prior to the survey, with 70.2 per cent of respondents owning a mobile phone at the time the survey was conducted. Mobile phone ownership was higher in urban areas (81.2 per cent versus 64.6 per cent in rural) and among men. In January-March 2025, 83.9 per cent of males surveyed owned a mobile phone compared to 56.2 per cent females. At 79.9 per cent, most mobile phone owners possessed a smartphone, with more than 90 per cent of Indians in both rural and urban areas under the age of 29 owning a smartphone. As would be expected from the wider adoption of online banking and purchases, the use of internet has also increased in the last couple of years, especially in rural areas: 57.6 per cent of females and 72.1 per cent of males, respectively, used the internet in the three months before the survey, up from 42.6 per cent and 59.5 per cent in 2022-23. Almost 93 per cent of respondents who used the internet in the three months prior to the survey did so at least once a day, with mobile phones overwhelmingly favoured.



ing global scenario. India’s real Gross Domestic Product picked pace sequentially to grow 6.2 per cent in October-December 2024 (Q3 of 2024-25 or FY25) compared with 5.6 per cent in July-September 2024 (Q2), aided by accelerating consumption demand, quarterly GDP estimates released by the National Statistics Office had shown. In Q3 of 2023-24, the GDP had grown 9.5 per cent. For the full financial year FY25, the GDP growth rate, as per the second advance estimates, is seen marginally higher at 6.5 per cent as against the 6.4 per cent in the first advance estimates released in January.

This is significant since it has come despite a sharp upward revision of GDP data for FY24. As per the latest estimates, GDP growth in FY24 has been revised up to 9.2 per cent from 8.2 per cent earlier. At 9.2 per cent, the GDP growth for 2023-24 is the second highest in the last 12 years.

finalising the Directions on the same,” the Ministry said. DFS has also stated that such guidelines will need time to implement at the field level and hence, may be suitable for implementation from January 1, 2026 only. On April 9, the RBI had released draft comprehensive guidelines on gold loans. Under the proposed norms, the RBI has barred lenders from granting any advance against primary gold/ silver or financial assets backed by primary gold/ silver like units of Exchange-traded funds (ETFs) or units of mutual funds. The maximum loan-to-value (LTV) ratio in respect of consumption gold loans should not exceed 75 per cent of the value of gold. The guidelines said that the eligible gold collateral should not be used concurrently for extending loans for income generating purposes as well as consumption loans. Lenders should not extend loans where ownership of the collateral is doubtful, and they should keep a record of the verification of the ownership of the collateral. Tenor of consumption loans in the nature of bullet repayment loans where both principal and interest become due at maturity should be capped at 12 months, the RBI said. The RBI’s impending framework for gold loans had come amidst a significant surge in gold loan outstanding and non-performing assets (NPAs) in the segment. The RBI’s new framework on gold loans aims to regulate the gold loan segment and mitigate potential risks. The sustained rally in gold prices has driven the growth in gold loans, as consumers tap into the rising value of their gold assets. Simultaneously, banks and financial institutions witnessed a substantial increase in gold loan disbursements, leading to a corresponding rise in NPAs. As per RBI data, banks and NBFCs reported a phenomenal growth in gold loan outstanding to Rs 1.78 lakh crore as of January 2025, a surge of 76.9 per cent on a year-on-year basis. RBI data shows that NPAs in gold loans jumped 28.58 per cent in a year and loan outstanding grew by 27.26 per cent. NPAs rose by over Rs 1,500 crore to Rs 6,824 crore as of December 2024 as against Rs 5,307 crore a year ago. Of this, gold loan NPAs of Rs 2,040 crore were reported by commercial banks as of December 2024 from Rs 1,404 crore a year ago.

# Luke Coutinho on weight loss for Indians: ‘Food is no longer a choice, it’s medicine’



Nutritional science expert and best-selling author Luke Coutinho insists that food has to be treated as medicine. “And they have to be as natural as possible,” he says. That’s how he has helped many lose weight, reverse their blood pressure, cholesterol and fatty liver, manage their sugar and even fight cancer. Just by going back to the basics. “Given the disease burden in our country, food is unfortunately not a choice anymore. We have to understand how food works on the gut microbes, on immune and stem cells, even DNA. It is all about understanding how nutrients react with molecules. Nutrition is now a key pillar of preventive health,” he says.

Excerpts:

Do you think the weight loss drug Mounjaro can dramatically alter the weight loss scenario in India?

Nothing is a magic pill. What most people do not want to understand is that novel weight loss pills like Mounjaro work on one fundamental principle — reducing your appetite. In other words, this is based on denial and suppression, a drastic step intended to help you get off the weight loss plateau, a stage when the body fat gets too stubborn to be lost through the diet-exercise routine and exposes you to a high risk of type 2 diabetes, heart disease, sleep apnea and certain types of cancer. These pills can help you lose up to 22.5% of your body weight over 72 weeks. Then you have to continue the medication and still maintain the weight drop with lifestyle changes. If people don’t learn how to change their behaviour around food and lifestyle before the pill or while taking the pill, then they may regain body weight. At the same time, it doesn’t work for everyone. Many people get fantastic results, some experience minimal effects. So it’s not a 100 per cent guarantee of weight loss. Mounjaro is an absolute lifesaver when it’s given to the population that it was actually meant for, like people who weigh over 120 kg. Question is if it is psychologically motivating enough for them too to make lifestyle changes that matter subsequently. They must take care of their muscle mass with strength training exercises. They must firm up their gut health, change their protein and fibre intake, balance out their macronutrient pie and look out for vitamin and mineral deficiencies.

What’s the commonest myth around Mounjaro?

That you can use it to knock off five to ten kilos because you are too lazy to make lifestyle changes and then get back to your life as if it’s a disease you cure. Stopping weight loss drugs means your hunger returns that much stronger. The reward centres in the brain still want you to consume, the drugs are just hiding this desire. A medicine is a medicine. It’s not something that we fool around with. We should take it with the right intention, the right guidance and with the mindset that we still need to change our lifestyle.

Is the 70-30 (70 per cent diet and 30 per cent exercise) formula the ideal way to lose weight?

It’s easier to control calorie intake than to burn a large number of calories through exercise alone. So diet is in-

deed a key pillar of any weight loss strategy.

What’s the link between gut health and weight loss?

Your gut is everything. It controls how food is broken down into energy, amino acids and fatty acids and is then absorbed into the body. It controls your mind, anxiety and neurotransmitters. It regulates almost 75 per cent of your immune system and hormonal balance. A healthy gut can burn up food for energy, making it easier to lose weight. If not, unused calories get absorbed, affecting hormones that regulate appetite and trigger inflammation. There are millions and millions of strains of bacteria, fungi and micro-organisms in the gut. But probiotic supplements pick up one strain of lactobacillus as your immunity shield. It’s like looking at only one sapling in the Amazon forest. The gut microbiome is a forest where both good and bad bacteria live in balance. But if we feed the bad bacteria through our lifestyle, junk food and sugar, then the good bacteria can’t do their job and get outnumbered. What we call gut cleanse or gut reset is really about starving the bad bacteria to death by going off sugar completely for two weeks. The cravings vanish, you start to lose weight, you feel lighter and your gut starts to get better.

Most of us have problems suppressing hunger pangs during any weight loss journey. How do we manage cravings?

We were never supposed to suppress hunger, which is a protective mechanism of the human body. The body makes us hungry because at that point it’s looking for certain vitamins, minerals and macro nutrients like carbs, proteins and fats. Unfortunately, we feed it the wrong thing and the body becomes hungrier for what it wants. When you have mostly refined carbs, the body’s need for protein or good fat is not met and your burger bun is no substitute. Never ever try to follow diets which advocate suppressing hunger. Instead, eat a nutrient-dense meal which gives you the bulk needed for satiety like whole grains, legumes, fruits, vegetables, lean proteins and nuts. The second reason we do not experience satiety even while eating the right food is because we are eating to feed our emotions. We eat when we are angry, sad, stressed or bored, seeking relief in food. Eat mindfully, not mindlessly.

What causes food addiction?

Sugar, salt and fat. These trigger the pleasure centres of the brain and release “feel-good” chemicals such as dopamine and serotonin, affecting the same area of the brain as drugs and alcohol. Even restaurants play with these three ingredients. That’s why you keep ordering a particular dish. That’s how food companies work.

What’s the biggest diet mistake that Indians make?

People eat their last meal at 10 pm and sleep by 11 pm. You need three hours to digest food, which will be unused and become extra calories.

Why are fruits and ghee under the diet scanner?

Only influencers say fruits are making you fat. I can guarantee that no human being can ever become fat because they eat fruits unless they’re diabetic and have a fatty liver that cannot absorb fructose. Other than that, you can eat fruits and not put on weight because they have no fat and are rich in fibre. Ghee is often mistaken as a saturated fat but there are good saturated fats and bad saturated fats. The bad saturated fats are your bakery products, junk and processed food. Good saturated fats can help you with heart disease, brain health, even cancers. These include pure ghee, cold pressed mustard oils or wood churned oils. Ghee is rich in Omega 3, and used in moderation, has great uses. Our most common foods like amla, the strongest source of vitamin C, guavas, moringa, ginger, turmeric and other spices are grossly under-rated.

# Is folate (vitamin B9) deficiency hampering your child’s growth? Takeaways from a new study

Nearly 41 per cent of urban adolescents in government schools across north India suffer from folate or vitamin B9 deficiency, which might be affecting their growth and development, according to a recent study by the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS). Girls had a higher deficiency than boys. The study was conducted with 3,129 school-going adolescents from north India.

Folate is vitamin B-9, which is needed for red blood cell formation and for healthy cell growth and function, crucial for children in their developmental years. It is needed by cells to carry oxygen throughout the body. If there isn’t enough folate, it can lead to anaemia, when the body lacks enough red blood cells. Folate is involved in the synthesis and repair of DNA and RNA, which are the building blocks of genetic material. According to Dr Rakesh Tiwari, senior consultant, Paediatrics, Paras Health, Gurugram, folate deficiency in foundational years can lead to impaired cognitive development, behavioural issues, fatigue and reduced academic performance. “A deficiency can compromise children’s immunity, making them more susceptible to infections,” he says.

How can parents ensure that their children have enough folate in their foods?

Parents can incorporate folate-rich foods into their children’s daily diet. These include green leafy vegetables (like spinach and fenugreek), legumes (lentils, chickpeas), citrus fruits, nuts, whole grains and fortified cereals. In cases of poor dietary intake, paediatricians may recommend folic acid supplements, especially in regions where deficiency is prevalent.

What is the role of Vitamin B9 in the growth of children?

Vitamin B9 is essential for supporting rapid growth phases in children. It aids in the production of red blood cells and development of the central nervous system during early childhood. In growing children, folate ensures proper brain function and emotional health. It is also crucial for tissue growth and cellular repair, processes that are continuous during childhood. Inadequate folate levels during formative years can result in growth retardation, cognitive delays and anaemia. Therefore, maintaining sufficient levels of vitamin B9 is key to supporting both physical and intellectual development.

Do girls tend to have a higher folate deficiency? How does it impact their bodies?

Studies indicate that adolescent girls tend to have a higher prevalence of folate deficiency compared to boys. This is partly due to increased physiological demands during menstruation and puberty, as well as differences in dietary intake patterns. Folate deficiency in girls can lead to anaemia, decreased stamina and poor concentration. Over time, this may affect their academic performance and overall well-being. Moreover, since folate is vital for reproductive health, early deficiencies may have implications, triggering complications in future pregnancies.



Is there a genetic reason for the deficiency?

Yes, genetic factors can influence folate metabolism. Some children could, therefore, be more prone to deficiency even with normal dietary intake. Genetic screening is not typically required for all children but in recurrent deficiency cases or family history, a test may be considered.

# How safe is your plate in restaurants?

Hyderabad: Vibrant red tandoori chicken, chicken 65, popular ‘Shaadi Wala’ red chicken curry, reddish gobi manchurian or the rich orange-yellow biryani that you order in restaurants might look appetising on the plate. However, behind the mouth-watering colours that make food visually appealing lies a less savoury truth — synthetic food colours which put public health at risk including cancer. The task force teams of Telangana Commissioner of Food Safety have uncovered widespread use of synthetic food colours in several restaurants, particularly in the HMDA area, and in some hotels in districts as well.

During recent raids, the food inspectors found several eateries using the synthetic food colours to enhance the visual appeal of the dishes, including vegetable and non-vegetable biryanis, chicken 65, tandoori chicken and various kebabs. Some restaurants were also found to be using non-food grade red and orange colours besides artificial flavours of chocolate and cardamom for preparing sweets.

“We have come across several restaurants using synthetic colours for preparing popular dishes. As per the FSSAI norms, no artificial food colours are to be added in food. On noticing the colour, we are immediately discarding the food,” a senior health official said. As per rules, food colours are only permitted in sweets and cold beverages and such content is permitted with the limits of 100 gm/kg. Doctors express concerns over the widespread usage of synthetic colours in restaurants. “The synthetic food colours are made from chemicals, which are carcinogenic and damage the digestive system. People consuming such food are at risk of developing stomach cancers, ulcers, gastroenteritis.



## ‘Family is more important than my career’: Jasprit Bumrah opens up about fitness, his body and workload management



GNS News Agency, June 5

India ace pacer Jasprit Bumrah opened up about his much-discussed workload management, family and much more in a recent conversation with former Australian cricketer Michael Clarke. Speaking on Clarke’s podcast named Beyond 23, Bumrah said his family is more important than his career. “For me, family is more important than my career because you know that is constant. There are two things that I take seriously. One is my family, and one is my game, but family comes first,” said Bumrah.

“I have to give priority, and I do give priority because I

will not be a cricketer all the time. For them, I’m not a cricketer. I’m a human being, and you know, being a young father, seeing my son, you know, he started picking up the ball and started playing with the ball, which is not advisable at this moment,” he added. With Shubman Gill taking over the captaincy reins from Rohit Sharma after his retirement, Team India is looking at a new era starting from the England tour. Bumrah was in reckoning for the Test leadership, but since he is unlikely to feature in all five Tests, looking at his workload management, the selectors, led by Ajit Agarkar, decided to go with Gill instead. Speaking on his fitness and his body, Bumrah said: “Obviously, it is tough for any individual to keep playing everything for so long. I’ve been doing it for a while, but eventually you have to understand where your body is going, what is the important tournament.

“You have to be a little selective and smart about how you use your body. As a cricketer, I would never want to leave anything and always keep on going. But I don’t set goals or look at numbers. whenever I have (set goals), I’ve never been able to fulfil them,” he added. “I just try and enjoy because that’s why I started this sport. Take one day at a time and collect memories because, at the end of the sport, that’s all I’ll remember,” added Bumrah.

## ‘My first thought was ‘oh gosh, there’s an end point’: One of ‘Fab Four’, Kane Williamson shares his thoughts on Virat Kohli’s Test retirement

GNS News Agency, June 5

Being one of the ‘Fab Four’, a term coined by former New Zealand Captain Martin Crowe first in 2014 for the quartet of Virat Kohli, Kane Williamson, Joe Root and Steve Smith, Kiwi batsman Kane Williamson currently stands at the third highest run scorer among the four batsmen in Tests. While Kohli retired earlier this month after playing 123 Tests and amassing 9,230 runs, Williamson has played in 105 tests amassing 9,276 runs and is currently behind Smith’s tally of 10,271 runs (116 Tests) and Root’s tally of 13,006 runs (153 Tests). With the rest of the three of the ‘Fab Four’ batsmen still playing in Tests, 34-year-old Williamson has revealed how Kohli’s retirement, a first among the four, made him wonder about having ‘an end point’.

“My first thought was ‘oh gosh, there’s an end point. Because before that, you’re on the journey, there’s a pursuit there. And it’s not connected to those other three, but we’ve all been playing at the same time, and we’ve all competed against each other for a long time and we all know each other pretty well. So then you do start to reflect a little bit. I know Virat pretty well, we’ve chatted a lot over the years, but you do realise that we’re not just cricketers as well, we’re human beings and your life situation changes.” Williamson told The Guardian in an interview. Williamson, who has a Test average of 54.88 runs, currently stands at 17th spot in the list of world’s leading Test run scorers with Sachin Tendulkar sitting at the top with 15,921 runs. The Kiwi cricketer has arrived in England to play for Middlesex in the Vitality Blast as well County Championship and has shared his memories of playing country cricket in England.

“Summer’s always got a nice buzz here in the UK and especially in London, so it’s great to call it home for a few months. I know I really valued my time in England actually



playing county cricket as a young player, getting exposed and having to learn. You’re just constantly having to try and work things out but getting so many opportunities to do it. Whereas in most other parts of the world you’re playing half as many games a year,” added Williamson. New Zealand will next play an international match when the team travels to Zimbabwe for a T20I series involving hosts Zimbabwe apart from South Africa and New Zealand in July before they play a two Test series against Zimbabwe. The 34-year-old also talked about how he sees red-ball cricket as ‘the soul of the game’. “The opportunities now are vast and that’s an amazing thing. But my passion was for the red-ball game, that was the pinnacle, and that’s where my aspirations were, growing up. I guess on the other side, you have the white-ball formats and they come and they go pretty quickly and there’s so much of it going on, which presents a lot of fantastic opportunities, but yeah, when I talk about the soul of the game I still see that as the red-ball cricket,” said Williamson.

## ‘I’ve got to be bowling’: RCB’s Josh Hazlewood says IPL stint will help him in WTC final vs South Africa

GNS News Agency, June 5

Josh Hazlewood RCB IPL WTC Josh Hazlewood of Royal Challengers Bengaluru celebrates the wicket of Josh Inglis of Punjab Kings during the qualifier 1 match at the Maharaja Yadavindra Singh International Cricket Stadium, Mullanpur. Royal Challengers and Australia pacer Josh Hazlewood said that the time he spends on the field for RCB will hold him in good stead when he joins his national side for the World Test Championship final against South Africa, set to take place at Lords from June 11. Hazlewood, who had not played for RCB for one month due to a shoulder injury, showed that he did not lose a step when he took 3 wickets against Punjab Kings in Qualifier 1, helping RCB reach the IPL final. “...I’ve got to be bowling, you know wherever I am in the world, I’ve got to be bowling getting ready for that game (WTC final) anyway. There’s no better place than I think out in the middle, obviously you’ve got to bowl more, more hours of training from time to time to build up for a Test, but to get that intensity right up, there’s no better place than the IPL,” he said. Hazlewood has been one of the brightest sparks in RCB’s IPL campaign, having snapped up 21 wickets in 11 matches at an average of 15.80.

“I (have) worked really hard the last few weeks on the shoulders to get back and got some good overs into it the last sort of 10 days, and yeah it is feeling good to be back...So, I was happy with tonight, the wicket helped ob-



viously didn’t it? Not having to bowl fast yorkers or anything like that. So yeah it is feeling good to be back,” the Aussie said. In Thursday’s match, RCB defeated PBKS by eight wickets in Qualifier 1 to enter the final of the Indian Premier League. RCB bowlers justified skipper Rajat Patidar’s decision to field first by packing off PBKS for a paltry 101 in just 14.1 overs. Marcus Stoinis was top-scorer with 26. Young leg-spinner Suyash Sharma (3/17) did the star turn for RCB by picking up three wickets while pacers Hazlewood (3/21), Yash Dayal (2/26) and Bhuvneshwar Kumar (1/17) left PBKS reeling at 50 for five in the seventh over. In reply, RCB romped home, scoring 106 for 2 in 10 overs with Philip Salt scoring 27-ball 56.



ters are being ultra-aggressive, on a given day, anybody could run through and get wickets,” said Bumrah. He also commented on England’s ultra-aggressive ‘Bazball’ approach and said, “They’re playing an interesting style of cricket, which is interesting because I don’t really understand it too much.” The five-match Test series against England will start from June 20 to July 4 and will be played in five venues for nearly two months. The first Test will be played in Leeds.

## EXPLAINED: Why was Indian men’s 4x100m relay team disqualified in heats at Asian Athletics Championships



GNS News Agency, June 5

The Indian quartet of Manikanta Hoblidar, Amlan Borgohain, Rahul Kumar, and Pranav Gurav competing in the men’s 4x100m relay race at the Asian Athletics Championships in Gumi (South Korea) was disqualified on Friday. The men’s 4x100m team, primed for a podium finish, had a confident start in the heats. India finished second behind host Korea as the satisfied team were awaiting the timings before the India team was marked disqualified (DQ) when the official times were displayed. The disqualification came after India were found guilty of exchanging the baton outside the takeover zone, which breaks the technical rule. According to World Athletics rule 24.7, “The baton shall

be passed within the takeover zone. The passing of the baton commences when it is first touched by the receiving athlete and is completed the moment it is in the hand of only the receiving athlete. In relation to the takeover zone, it is only the position of the baton which is decisive. Passing of the baton outside the takeover zone shall result in disqualification.”

Furthermore, the World Athletics 24.19 reads, “For all takeovers, athletes are not permitted to begin running outside their takeover zones, and shall start within the zone. If an athlete does not follow this Rule, their team shall be disqualified,” making the changeover done by the Indians invalid. The Indian quartet that competed in the heats were without their two regular members — Gurindervir Singh and Animesh Kujur — who were replaced by Pranav and Rahul. The 24.7 rule comes with a description: “In determining the position of the baton, it is the whole baton which must be considered. Umpires must be diligent to ensure that they observe any contact with the baton prior to the baton entering the change-zone. If the outgoing runner even touches the baton prior to the baton being inside the zone, the team will be subject to disqualification.” Earlier, the Indian men’s 4x100m relay team was disqualified in a similar fashion in the 2017 Asian Athletics Championship held on home soil in Bhubaneswar. On Friday, the Malaysian team, too, was also disqualified for the same baton-release violation.

## Why RCB bowling unit is the hidden heroes despite having only 1 bowler in Top 10 IPL 2025 wicket takers list

GNS News Agency, June 5

Josh Hazlewood isn’t the top wicket-taker in IPL; that’s Noor Ahmed. But the Australian has stepped up in the last two games, and the reward is more than being in striking distance of the Purle Cap (Hazlewood on 21, Noor on 24) but needing 4 wickets in the final. But while that purple cap race heats up (Prasidh on 23, Boult on 19, Arshdeep 18, Bumrah, Sai Kishore on 17 who all could get a game extra), the Aussie is revelling in how the RCB bowling unit is getting the job done, especially putting in a perfect performance in the playoff against Punjab, and its much vaunted batting order.

“I guess, throughout the innings, which we saw tonight. So, we’re in a pretty good place, I think, as a bowling unit,” Hazlewood said after sealing the final spot, after puncturing Punjab with his top spell. “I think I probably just picked up on the momentum from the last game, I think a little bit,” he said in the post-match interaction. Hazlewood also lauded the quietly brilliant RCB bowling pack and how efficiently they have operated. They aren’t in Top 10, Krunal and Bhuv are at No 14 and 15 in table with 15 wickets apiece. But they are chipping away nicely. Quietly even. And Hazlewood says it’s because they are versatile in their roles, and can switch duties seamlessly. “I think any one of the five or six bowlers can bowl in any moment of the game, whether it be the start, middle or end,” he said, adding the Indian veteran was the silent assassin. “I think it obviously helps having Bhuv (Bhuvneshwar Kumar) with so much experience, quite a calm customer. So that sort of rubs off on the rest of the attack,” he said.

“But I think when it comes down to making decisions, you know, bowling changes, what delivery we’re trying to bowl, we’re very relaxed and calm,” he said of a composed unit, unaffected by batters with carnage on their mind. RCB in fact has been particularly effective against the highly rated explosive batting lineups — neutering both SRH and PBKS. “I think as a unit we’ve worked really well. I think everyone knows their role, everyone is different. The combination is great, it’s got some good variation, so everyone’s got different strengths and it’s just about using them at the right times,



Hazlewood, who rocked Punjab with 3.1-0-21-3 said. “It’s just clear planning, obviously, first of all, and then clear execution and committing to that delivery you’re trying to bowl. So just nice, clear mindsets. And yeah, we’ve been doing that nicely,” he added. Mullanpur also rolled out a wicket with some juice for bowlers. “There was a little bit in the wicket, to be honest, there was a little bit of seam movement, the bounce was probably a little bit inconsistent. So we sort of utilised that as best we could,” said Hazlewood, who is 15th on best economy.

One of the unlucky bowlers has been leg spinner Suyash Sharma, whose quality of spells does no justice to his wicket count. He has bowled 48 overs, has an unflattering average of 52.87 for 8 wickets, and is 29th on best economies and strike rate of 36. Suyash stepped up in the first Qualifier though. “Suyash (leg-spinner) bowled really well in spells throughout the whole tournament, but has been a little bit unlucky on the wicket taking front, but obviously tonight got the rewards,” Hazlewood explained of the 8.81 economy bowler. Hazlewood has Shreyas Iyer as bunny claiming him 4 times in T20 at average of 2.75, and he pointed out to the obvious vulnerability. “Probably from a batting point from Kings XI, they probably just had to pull back a little bit and try and get a score on the board, you know, 150, 160 would have been a difficult chase potentially,” the Australian pace ace mulled, of what he was up against after returning Fri an injury layoff of the shoulder.

## ‘We have lost the battle, but not the war’: Shreyas Iyer confident of a comeback after 8-wicket thrashing vs RCB in Qualifier 1



GNS News Agency, June 5

Those were some straightforward words which came out from Punjab Kings skipper Shreyas Iyer after his team was bashed by eight wickets in the Indian Premier League 2025 Qualifier 1 match against Royal Challengers Bengaluru at the Maharaja Yadavindra Singh International Cricket Stadium in Mullanpur, Chandigarh, on Thursday.

Batting first, PBKS, which finished first on the points table first time since 2014, imploded against a potent RCB attack led by Yash Dayal and Josh Hazlewood in the Powerplay. Opener Priyansh Arya fell in just the second over before Bhuvneshwar Kumar dismissed the other opener, Prabhsimran Singh. Hazlewood picked two big scalps of skipper Iyer and in-form Josh Inglis. Eventually, PBKS were bundled out for just 101 in 14.1 overs before RCB romped home chasing the target with 10 overs to remain. Even though PBKS lost the match vs RCB, the Iyer-led PBKS are still not out of the tournament. They will play the winner of the Gujarat Titans vs Mumbai Indians match in the second Qualifier. “Not a day to forget, but got to go back to the drawing board. We lost a lot of wickets (in the first innings. There’s a lot to go back and study on,” said Iyer after the loss.

Iyer said he is not going to bother about his decision-making making and PBKS failed to execute the planning, which seemed to be spot on ahead of the game. “I am not doubting my decisions to be honest. Whatever we did in terms of planning, outside of the ground whatever (planning) we did, I think it was on point. Just that we couldn’t

execute it on the field,” he said. “Can’t even blame the bowlers, as it was a low total to defend. We’ve got to work on our batting especially on this wicket. In all the games we have played here there has been some variable bounce,” he added. “We can’t give such reasons because we are professionals at the end of the day, and we have to bat according to the situation and we have to live up to it,” said Iyer.

## Plan was to stay in the present, says Siraj

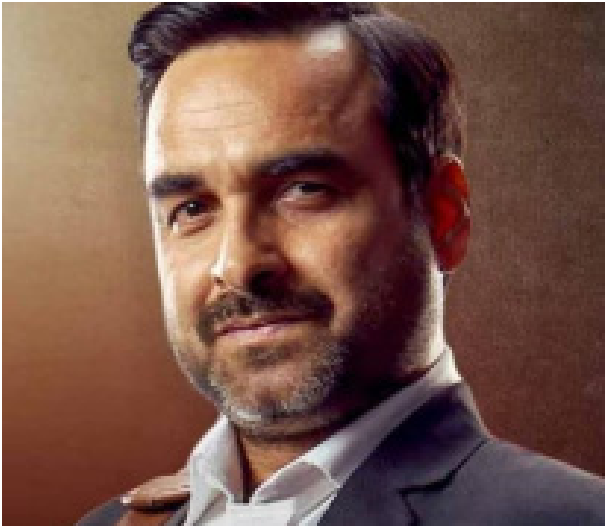
HYDERABAD: “My plan was to stay in the present. The Champions Trophy selection was very important to me, but I told myself it’s not over yet. ICC events mean a lot to any player — but I knew I had to focus on my skills and fitness,” Gujarat Titans fast bowler Mohammed Siraj said.

Siraj said in a Gen Bold chat on Jio Star that he had to enjoy his bowling again and that was feeling confident and enjoying it a lot. “I have played with RCB for seven years, so I know the team well. I was a bit emotional during that moment. But after that, you saw what happened,” he said. “No player wants to underperform — we always want to give our best for the team. Even when we’re out of form, we aim to win, driven by our mindset, by our coaches, and our determination,” Siraj said.

“That’s always been my goal. Whenever I feel I’m not performing well, I turn to Arun sir. I remember speaking to him before going to Australia — he simply told me, ‘Enjoy your bowling.’ That stayed with me. It’s very important,” he explained. “My first match didn’t go well — it was a high-intensity game after a long break. But I learned from it and focused on my bowling,” Siraj said. “Against Rohit bhai, I tried swinging the ball twice, but it didn’t work. Then I stuck to my plan and got the wicket. I have a lot of respect for him, which is why I didn’t celebrate much,” he said. “The most memorable moment was having my family in the stadium. Performing in front of them gives me a lot of confidence. My parents supported me so much and worked really hard — we’ve seen tough times. But when their son performs in front of thousands, they feel proud.” Siraj said.



## Criminal Justice A Family Matter review: Surveen Chawla stands out as Pankaj Tripathi’s show goes flat



There is comfort in watching characters we know go through a new story arc, a mix that allows for both familiarity and freshness. The fourth season of Criminal Justice re-unites us with the core team of Madhav Mishra, played by the affable Pankaj Tripathi, his perky wife Ratna (Khushboo Atre), her eager-beaver brother Deep (Aatm Prakash Mishra), and the immaculately-turned out Shivani Mathur (Barkha Singh), which is plunged into a roiling family affair featuring murder and mayhem. Only three episodes of the eight are streaming currently, in which we are introduced to the prime suspects of a murder most foul in a fancy Mumbai high-rise. A domestic help arrives in a flat in the morning and sees a woman, all bloodied, being cradled by a man, who appears to be distraught. Another woman is present, who has already called the cops.

The man is a well-regarded doctor called Raj Nagpal (Mohammed Zeeshan Ayyub). The dead woman is his paramour Roshni Saluja (Asha Negi), a trained nurse who also happened to be a care-giver for his daughter with special needs. And the woman who has called it in is the doctor’s estranged wife Anju (Surveen Chawla) who lives in a flat across the landing. Also present at the time is the teenaged daughter Ira (Khushi Bhardwaj), who has Aspergers syn-

drome, and Raj’s mother Gurmeet (Sohaila Kapur). Who could the killer be? The doctor who seems to genuinely love the victim, and appears shell-shocked? The wife who is the only one in control, despite the enormity of the crime? Or could it be someone else who entered the flat on the quiet, and lay in wait, sharp object in hand?

As in the earlier seasons, this fourth iteration of Criminal Justice, based on the British TV series of the same name, is a police procedural plus courtroom clashes plus human drama. And as ever, it is Pankaj Tripathi who is the fulcrum around which events revolve. This time around, a corporate law firm has him in its sights, using his home-grown, desi charm, to disarm tough adversaries: a big car is dangled, and so are plush chambers. Will Madhav succumb? Will he abandon his feet-on-groundness, and become a jousting in the aid of corporate sharks? I’ve seen the entire season, and I’m not telling you a thing more. But I will say this: even in the first three episodes, you can see the strain of filling up 40-odd minutes. Scenes are stretched, and our attention starts wandering. How does Ratnaji, who was such a sharp addition to the previous series, get stuck in her husband’s office, waiting for something to do? Atre is good, and her pairing with Tripathi still has spark, but all the waiting around is tiring. Mohammed Zeeshan Ayyub comes off strangely subdued and colourless. The one who keeps us watching is Surveen Chawla, who brings an emotional fidelity to her character, grappling with the guilt of having given over her daughter to the care of someone else. The series also commits the grave sin of telling its viewers that ‘teenagers with Aspergers have violent tendencies’, without a single caveat. Yes, this is a series that has taken the trouble to front a character with special needs, but to make such a statement without qualifying it is just plain damaging to those who live with the condition, and are dependent on how they are perceived by the world. Will Madhav Mishra make amends? Pankaj Tripathi’s everyman-ness is his most endearing trait, but it can also become a much of muchness. And render things flat. Criminal Justice A Family Matter cast: Pankaj Tripathi, Mohammed Zeeshan Ayyub, Surveen Chawla, Asha Negi, Shweta Basu Prasad, Mita Vashishth, Khushboo Atre, Navin Talreja, Sohaila Kapur, Khushi Bhardwaj, Kalyanee Mulay, Barkha Singh, Aatm Prakash Mishra. Criminal Justice A Family Matter director: Rohan Sippy. Criminal Justice A Family Matter rating: 2 stars

## ‘Shabana Azmi and I sleep on streets’: Javed Akhtar claps back at Pak actor Bushra Ansari’s comment that nobody rents him a house in India

Weeks after Pakistani actress Bhushra Ansari’s comment against Javed Akhtar, the veteran lyricist-writer has reacted to it. In a recent interview, Javed Akhtar gave a befitting reply to Bhushra’s ‘Inhe Mumbai mein koi ghar pe rent nahi deta’ comment. He asked, “Who are you to tell me when to talk and when to not?” In an interview with Lallantop, Javed Akhtar shared, “There is this Pakistani actress, Bushra Ansari, she often talks about me. She once advised me to keep quiet. She said something like, ‘Naseeruddin Shah stays quiet, you should too.’ My question to her is: ‘Who is she to tell me when to talk and when not to? Who gave you this right and why do you expect me to take your advice?’”

He added, “We internally might have several problems (referring to India), but if an outsider comes to comment, I am an Indian. Why do they forget that? I won’t keep quiet.” When the interviewer said the actress claimed that he doesn’t even get a house on rent in Mumbai, Javed sarcastically replied, “Yes right, Shabana and I have been sleeping on the streets lately. Kya yaar, ab kya bole?” He laughed as he said. In the same interview, Javed Akhtar recalled the incident that prompted her to take a dig at them for not getting a house on rent.

He said, “About 25 years ago, Shabana wanted to buy a flat for investment purpose. But the broker said that the owner will not sell his house to a Muslim. But, do you know why he refused? He refused it because his parents stayed in Sindh from where these Pakistanis shooed them away. Anyone with a wound that big and deep, will react the way the owner reacted. If that day, Shabana was refused a flat, it was not because she was a Muslim, but it was because the owner was displacing his revenge someplace else for what his parents went through. So who is she (Bushra Ansari) to take a dig at this, and ask me to keep quiet? They must look into their own doings before



commenting.” On April 22, when the news of a terrorist group killing about 26 tourists in the Baisaran meadows of Pahalgam came in light, the entire nation went in shock. This sparked several reactions from Indians. Many actors, politicians and internet personalities went on to condemn this act and demanded justice. Similarly, veteran lyricist-writer gave a powerful speech at Gauravshaali Maharashtra Mahotsav. Speaking at the event, Javed Akhtar said, “Yeh baat humein bhulni nahi chahiye, yeh mamooli baat nahi hai. (We shouldn’t forget this).” Following his speech, Pakistani actress Bushra Ansari attacked him on social media and said, “Humare writer so-called, unko toh bahana hi chahiye tha. Actually, unko toh makaan kiraaye pe nahi milta tha Bombay mein (Our so called writer is even refused a flat in Mumbai).” She added, “Chaloji chup karjaaye aap. Naseeruddin Shah bhi toh hai, who chup baithe hai na? Aur bhi toh chup baithe hai na? Jiske dil mein jo hai wo rakha rahe. (Please stay quiet just like Naseeruddin Shah. Others are also quiet, you too be quiet please).”

## Maharani Radhikaraje Gaekwad of Baroda takes a dig at Ishaan Khatter-Bhumi Pednekar’s The Royals: ‘The Royal Ignore’

When Ishaan Khatter and Bhumi Pednekar’s The Royals premiered on Netflix on May 9, it sparked varied reactions from viewers. While some appreciated the series’ visual appeal, others criticised its storyline. Now, Maharani Radhikaraje Gaekwad of Baroda has publicly criticised the show for misrepresentation of modern-day royals. Taking to her Instagram, Radhikaraje penned a long note emphasizing that many royals are active contributors to India’s cultural and social landscape. She expressed her disappointment in how the ladies of the royal family were presented on screen. Taking to her Instagram on Thursday, Radhikaraje Gaekwad shared a long note with the headline, “The Royal Ignore.” She further wrote, “One would imagine the royals of India, a community abundantly chronicled, photographed, biographed, and today well positioned in a range of arenas from politics, hospitality, to magazine covers, would have a better chance of surviving an on screen portrayal such as the one in The Royals. Alas, that was not and such is our fate, since 1947.” Radhikaraje said stereotyping Rajas soaked in whiskey and profligacy and Ranis in chiffons and pearls, was a politically motivated propaganda that began post independence and unfortunately continues to define them, hinting at the portrayals of the royals in the Netflix series. Defending her community, Radhikaraje Gaekwad went on to list several good things the royals did both pre- and post-independence. She wrote, “In truth India’s independence saw the dissolution of centuries old, internationally recognised Indian monarchy. Sardar Patel correctly referred it as a ‘Bloodless Revolution’. 565 princely states controlling over 40 per cent of pre independence India handed over



their homes, lands, and identities for the creation of a united, democratic country. Apart from a handful that resisted and disappointedly left.” Calling it an era of uncertainty for families that had lived for centuries with privileges, Radhikaraje wrote, “They had for most parts administered their princely states, many the size of smaller European countries, and often more prosperous too with benevolence and acumen. And history is proof of this.” She added, “Undoubtedly, there were a few bad royal apples and I make no excuse for them, yet while monarchs rose and fell in China and younger empires such as France, Russia, and Austria, India has the unique distinction of being one of the only countries where royals reigned for centuries without any known instances of revolt or assassination. And when time came, they relinquished their kingdoms with dignity.” Radhikaraje Gaekwad highlighted the time when Indian royals faced the abolition of allowance in return for giving up their sovereignty,

## Moonwalk movie review: This tribute to Michael Jackson is yet another example of why Malayalam cinema soars while Bollywood struggles



Moonwalk movie review: Just imagine how cool it would have been if Varun Dhawan’s character had appeared on screen carrying a ripe, juicy jackfruit on his head, heading home after burning up the dance floor in the climax of director Remo D’Souza’s ABCD 2 (2015) or Street Dancer 3D (2020). You know, a jackfruit that could also be used to cook different dishes and would feed his character’s entire impoverished family for a day or two. And since he’s too poor to afford an autorickshaw or any other transport, he has no choice but to carry it on his head. The instance sounds relatable, right? Because this is something that has already happened or could happen in our lives at any moment. But, unfortunately, Bollywood films no longer offer this kind of relatability. Not just Varun, it’s almost impossible to imagine any of the mainstream Hindi actors doing a role that requires them to perform such an ordinary action on screen, simply because it lacks the ‘glitz and glam’.

In the resolution of debutant filmmaker Vinod AK’s Moonwalk, however, we see Sura (an impressive Sibi Kuttappan), in his signature Michael Jackson getup, happily carrying a jackfruit on his head and a plastic bag in one hand, walking home proudly after setting the a breakdance competition stage afire just a few days earlier with his extraordinary performance. It’s also the unhesitating way in which filmmakers envision and execute such mundane, relatable scenes that make Malayalam cinema what it is today. And maybe, just maybe, a lesson Bollywood could learn from instead of dropping fresh stink bombs every week. At the same time, Moonwalk also serves as a reminder to prioritise theme, concept, story and script over the male lead’s (almost nonexistent) star value. Although most members of the film’s ensemble are newcomers — and some readers might feel that comparing them to established actors like Varun Dhawan is unfair — two points are worth highlighting here: these Bollywood stars didn’t take on such characters even early on in their careers, and more importantly, director Vinod AK deliberately chose to prioritise his narrative over star power. He didn’t even attempt to cast familiar faces or so-called stars who might have given the film broader reach, but would have un/knowingly compromised its soul by making the movie only about them. He trusted the script he co-authored with Mathew Varghis and Sunil Gopalakrishnan. Moonwalk’s story is simple and straightforward. Set in 1987, it follows a group of late-teenage friends in Thiruvananthapuram whose lives are forever changed when they stumble upon the electrifying art of breakdance and its most iconic figure, Michael Jackson. Aspiring to become exceptional dancers, they begin practising with dedication. Although some personal dramas unfold, the gang, who call themselves the Moonwalkers, navigate these challenges and continue to push forward, defying the many limitations life has placed on them, particularly poverty. One of the most self-aware Malayalam films in recent times, Moonwalk doesn’t try to be anything it’s not. It is the result of Vinod AK’s absolute conviction and trust in the material he has. Right from the beginning, he makes it clear that he isn’t going to follow the typical Indian dance-drama narrative template and sets the tone of Moonwalk with precision and clarity. Despite the film being under two hours long, Vinod takes his time to establish the characters, their personalities and their surroundings, without rushing into anything. One of the best aspects is that the filmmakers don’t try to oversell any of the characters or their circumstances. Almost all members of the Moonwalkers are given equal prominence, with just a few standing out as first among equals.

Even as the story progresses, Moonwalk avoids unnecessary detours and senseless subplots. All the side stories, including a few romantic tracks, only add to the film’s appeal, thanks to the magnificent way they’ve been handled. Despite the large ensemble cast, it never feels like Vinod and his team have overlooked certain characters or given

## Rajkummar says he prefers impactful roles over dance-centric ones

Mumbai: Despite grooving to hits like “Aayi Nai,” “Na Na Na Na Re,” and “Chor Bazari Phir Se,” National Award-winner Rajkummar Rao says he prefers impactful roles over dance-centric ones, valuing films like Shahid, Maalik, and Newton for their rare depth. Asked what he would choose — a Dancing Rajkummar or the one who has done films such as Shahid and Maalik, Rajkummar said: “I’ll choose Shahid, Maalik, and Newton of the world because I can dance at a party too, make a video and upload it. He added: “But opportunities like these don’t come easily.” Rajkummar’s action-drama “Maalik” has been postponed. The film was earlier scheduled to hit theatres on June 20, but will now be released on 11th July 2025. In the film, which is currently in post-production, Rao will be seen playing a ruthless gangster. His portrayal of a gangster promises to showcase a side of him that fans haven’t seen before, adding an intriguing edge to the film. Directed by Pulkit, “Maalik” is produced by Kumar Taurani under the Tips Films banner and Jay Shewakramani’s Northern Lights Films. Talking about Shahid and Newton, the former film was released in 2012. It is a biographical drama film directed by Hansal Mehta. Based on the life of lawyer and human rights activist Shahid Azmi, who was assassinated in 2010,

