

## Senior asst of GHMC Moosapet circle in ACB net

Hyderabad, July 1 (NSS): Today AOM. Sunitha, Sr Asst Property Tax Wing, office of Moosapet Circle-23, GHMC, was caught by Telangana ACB, City Range-2 Unit when she demanded and accepted a bribe of Rs 30,000/- from the complainant for showing official favour "to initiate and process the property mutation file of the complainant and to fix the property tax related to her house, which currently exists in the name of the complainant's mother". The accused thereby performed her public duty improperly and dishonestly. The bribe amount was recovered from the AO at her instance. Right hand fingers of the AO yielded positive in chemical test. The accused M. Sunitha was arrested and sent to judicial remand

## Death toll of Sigachi Chemical factory rises to 45



Hyderabad, July 1. The number of fatalities from the explosion at Sigachi Chemical factory in Pashamylaram near Patancheru has risen to 45 overnight, as rescue operations carried out by the NDRF, HYDRRA, and Telangana Fire Disaster Response teams proceeded throughout the night. Currently, 35 individuals are receiving treatment in various hospitals, with the condition of 10 being reported as critical. This incident is likely the largest industrial disaster in Telangana's history. Rescue efforts persist, amid concerns that many workers are trapped beneath the rubble of the company's building, which collapsed when they gathered to locate their relatives. The deceased have been transported to the government hospital in Patancheru for post-mortem examinations.

## Shabbir Ali urges unity, calls to protect Constitution ahead of Kharge's Hyderabad meeting



Kamareddy, July 1 Telangana Government Advisor Mohammed Ali Shabbir on Tuesday appealed to Congress workers to remain united and ensure the success of AICC president Mallikarjun Kharge's upcoming meeting in Hyderabad, which is intended to guide party ranks in defending the Indian Constitution. As part of these mobilisation efforts, a preparatory meeting was held at the EVM Function Hall in Nizamabad town, bringing together key Congress functionaries from the combined Nizamabad-Zahirabad Lok Sabha constituencies. District In-charge Minister D Seethakka and Zahirabad MP Suresh Shetkar attended the event as chief guests.

Addressing the gathering, Shabbir Ali emphasised the importance of taking forward the "Jai Bapu, Jai Bhim, Jai Samvidhan" campaign in a strong and determined manner across the nation to protect constitutional values. He said the Congress movement stood for uniting all communities and spreading a message of love, while fighting to preserve democratic institutions.He criticised the BJP for neglecting non-BJP ruled States and questioned how the BJP could claim credit for schemes such as the fine rice distribution in Telangana while failing to implement similar welfare measures in the States where it holds power. He accused the BJP of focusing its energy on toppling elected governments instead of working for people's development. He urged Congress activists to strengthen the party organisation at all levels and strive to secure victories in the upcoming local body and village elections.MLAs Sudarshan Reddy, Bhupathi Reddy, Lakshmi Kantha Rao, Madan Mohan Rao, Vedama Bajju, Sanjay Rao, Balamoori Venkat, Jeevan Reddy, Eravatri Anil, along with various corporation chairpersons, in-charges, and district presidents from across the combined district were present.

## Devotees throng Balkampet Yellamma Temple for Kalyanotsavam

GNS News Agency, July 2  
Hyderabad: Thousands of devotees, attired in their traditional best, turned up at the historical Yellamma Temple in Balkampet, Hyderabad, on Tuesday to participate in the annual Kalyanotsavam celebrations.The temple complex, whose history dates back to the 5th century, was abuzz from early Tuesday morning as devotees made a beeline to seek blessings from the Goddess. Those who managed to get access to Kalyanam tickets reached the temple in the wee hours for the Kalyanotsavam.The two-day festival, which will culminate with the Rathotsavam (car festival) on Wednesday, is expected to attract lakhs of devotees from Hyderabad and nearby districts. The State government made arrangements for the devotees, and a heavy police presence was in place to maintain law and order.

## Govt sanctions Rs.1.42 crore for development of temples in Mulugu

Hyderabad, July 1: The State government has sanctioned Rs.1.42 crore for the development of temples in Mulugu Assembly constituency.The allocation was made following a request from Minister for Panchayath Raj Seethakka, who serves as the representative for the constituency. On Tuesday, officials released orders approving the disbursement of Rs.1.42 crore from the CGF funds. The funding distribution includes Rs.12 lakhs for the Janaki Ramalayam in Bussapur, Rs.50 lakhs for the Masilamma temple in Gunjendu, Rs.30 lakhs for the Puta Mallikarjun Swamy temple in Jaggannapet, Rs.20 lakhs for the Venkateswara Swamy temple in Mallampalli, Rs.20 lakhs for the Nageswara Swamy temple in Mulugu town, and Rs.10 lakhs for the Ramalayam.

## CM Revanth announces one crore rupees compensation to families of deceased

Hyderabad, July 1 : Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy has announced that Rs One Crore ex-gratia will be provided to the family of each deceased in the ghastly fire mishap occurred in Pashamylaram Industrial area in Sangareddy district. Rs 10 lakhs will be given to seriously injured and partially injured will be provided Rs 5 lakh ex-gratia. As an immediate assistance, the Chief Minister said that Rs One lakh will be given to the bereaved families of the victims and Rs 50,000 to injured family members. Revanth Reddy, accompanied by Ministers D Sridhar Babu, Damodar Raja Narasimha, Vivek Venkataswamy and Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy, on Tuesday visited the site of the major fire mishap in the industrial area and reviewed rescue operations with officials. The officials briefed the Chief Minister that 36 people had died in the fire accident. Out of 143 people, 58 have been identified and rescue operations are in full swing to trace missing persons.Instructing the authorities to provide better medical care to the injured, Revanth Reddy said that it was unfortunate that the two Telugu States of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana never wit-

nessed such a big fire accident. Serious over the incident, the Chief Minister ordered the officials to identify the responsible and take stringent action against them.He also ordered the officials to submit a detailed report on the incident. The Chief Minister emphasised that the officials should conduct inspections in chemical companies to identify shortcomings to prevent such big fire accidents and also submit a report on the safety measures taken in the companies immediately. Addressing the media after meeting, Revanth Reddy said that " We will identify those responsible for the incident and take stringent action". The State government will also bring a transparent policy to prevent such incidents in the future, the Chief Minister said he already ordered officials to conduct periodic inspections in companies to avert fire accidents.

Reiterating that the government is ready to extend all possible support to the affected families, the Chief Minister said that arrangements are being made to handover the mortal remains to the bereaved families He clarified that immediate financial relief will be provided to the victims



families first and then ex-gratia will be given to them. The state government is also ready to bear the entire cost of medical care of the injured. The officials have also been ordered to provide admission to the children of the victims in government residential schools. Later, the Chief Minister visited the injured at a hospital in Patancheru and consoled the victims who were undergoing medical treatment.

## Next decade to further bolster India's global digital leadership: PM Modi

GNS News Agency, July 1

New Delhi: As 'Digital India' completes 10 years, the next decade will be even more transformative, as the country moves from digital governance to global digital leadership -- from India-first to India-for-the-world, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Tuesday.According to PM Modi, 'Digital India' has not remained a mere government programme; it has become a people's movement."It is central to building an 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat', and to making India a trusted innovation partner to the world. To all innovators, entrepreneurs, and dreamers: the world is looking at India for the next digital breakthrough," said the Prime Minister in a post on LinkedIn.Ten years ago, India embarked on a bold journey into uncharted territory with great conviction. While decades were spent doubting the ability of Indians to



use technology, "we changed this approach and trusted the ability of Indians to use technology," said PM Modi."While decades were spent thinking that the use of technology would deepen the gap between the haves and the have-nots, we changed this mindset and used technology to eliminate the gap between the haves and the have-nots. When the intent is right, innovation empowers the less empowered. When the approach is inclusive, technology brings change in the lives of those on the margins," PM Modi

how we govern, to how we learn, transact, and build, Digital India is everywhere," said the Prime Minister.

In 2014, India had around 25 crore internet connections. Today, that number has grown to over 97 crores. Over 42 lakh kilometres of Optical Fibre Cable, equivalent to 11 times the distance between Earth and the Moon now connects even the most remote villages.PM Modi wrote on LinkedIn that India's 5G rollout is among the fastest in the world, with 4.81 lakh base stations installed in just two years."High-speed internet now reaches urban hubs and forward military posts alike including Galwan, Siachen, and Ladakh. India Stack, which is our digital backbone, has enabled platforms like UPI, which now handles 100+ billion transactions a year. Around half of all real-time digital transactions happen in India," the Prime Minister highlighted.

## Adopt modern technology, raise consumer awareness on power services: Bhatti



Hyderabad, July 1 Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka emphasized the need to embrace modern technology to deliver services that align with the evolving needs of consumers in today's digital era.He made these remarks during a review meeting with senior officials and directors of the Southern Power Distribution Company of Telangana Limited (SPDCL) held on Tuesday at Praja Bhavan. The Deputy CM directed officials to expedite the complete implementation of the Feeder Outage Management System (FOMS), which ensures real-time alerts to the control room whenever a power supply disruption occurs. Officials informed him that FOMS has already been implemented across 5,500 of the 6,500 feeders under SPDCL's jurisdiction. He instructed that the remaining feeders must also be integrated into the system swiftly. He congratulated SPDCL for earning the ISO 9000 certification, acknowledging it as a commendable achievement based on performance in areas such as operations, consumer service delivery, and timely resolution of office files. He encouraged officials to continue improving and aim for more awards in the future. Bhatti Vikramarka also reviewed the new dress code designed for field staff and offered suggestions for its implementation. He stated directors were appointed based on their extensive experience and proven capabilities. Hence, he urged each director to create and implement an action plan to complete long-pending tasks within their respective domains. The Deputy CM highlighted the array of

services the power department is delivering to consumers. Just like the "108 Ambulance" model, the 1912 helpline number in the electricity department enables swift responses to consumer complaints. He appreciated the work of the Emergency Response Team (ERT), which reaches problem areas instantly with specialized vehicles and resolves issues on the spot. He also noted that new transformers and substations are proactively set up as soon as the load reaches 70%, ensuring uninterrupted power supply through advanced planning. Bhatti Vikramarka directed that consumer awareness campaigns should be launched to educate the public on these initiatives and services. He added that a comprehensive solar power strategy will soon be rolled out, and instructed department staff to be fully prepared for its implementation. The meeting was attended by CMD of the Energy Department Naveen Mittal, SPDCL CMD Musharraf Faruqui, along with directors and Chief Engineers. (NSS)

## TPCC chief condoles demise of Dr Pattabhiram

Hyderabad, July 1TPCC president & MLC Mahesh Kumar Goud expressed his deep condolences on the demise of renowned personality development expert Dr B.V. Pattabhiram (75). He said Dr Pattabhiram made remarkable contributions as a magician, hypnotist, author, psychologist, and counsellor. He played a key role in building self-confidence among the youth, adapting to the needs of changing times. His passing away is an irreparable loss to both the State and the nation. Mahesh Kumar Goud extended his heartfelt sympathies to Dr Pattabhiram's family and prayed eternal peace to his soul



## Ramachandra Rao formally elected as State BJP president



Hyderabad, July 1 Former MLC Ramachandra Rao was unanimously elected as the president of Telangana BJP. To this extent, the certificate of election was handed over to Ramachandra Rao by the party's State president election in-charge, Union Minister Shobha Karandlaje, and Union Minister Kishan Reddy. Union Minister Bandi Sanjay, MPs Eatala Rajender, DK Aruna, Laxman and others participated in the program.

Later, Shobha Karandlaje said that they were proud to say that the BJP was the largest party in the world. She asked Rao to work as the State president for the next three years. She claimed that people of the state were disappointed with BRS and the Congress party's rule for a year and a half and added that they should go to every village, mandal and district.

## Harish Rao questions Congress govt over crop insurance, urea shortage



Hyderabad: Former Minister and senior MLA T Harish Rao slammed the Congress government over its failure to implement crop insurance scheme for four consecutive seasons. He said the government was repeatedly betraying farmers of Telangana without implementing its electoral promises.Taking to X, Harish Rao said the Congress had made lofty promises, both in its Abhaya Hastam manifesto and Warangal Rythu Declaration, which had collapsed under the weight of inaction. He reminded that the government had also announced in all three budgets, including the Vote on Account, that the scheme would be implemented based on Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) data.

"But all these promises were only on paper, and nothing has been implemented. Though Rs 1,300 crore was allocated for crop insurance in the budget, not a single rupee has reached the farmers," he said.The former Minister stated that even around 20 months after coming to power, the Congress government had not floated tenders in this regard. Stating that the government was cheating farmers on loan waivers, bonuses and input subsidies, Harish Rao also criticised the ongoing shortage of urea across Telangana, noting that farmers in Adilabad, Nizamabad, Kamareddy and Kumram Bheem Asifabad districts were forced to queue up at Primary Agricultural Cooperative Society offices for fertilisers."If the government spent half the energy on urea supply that it did on beauty pageants, farmers would not have to face this hardship," he said.He added that the Congress government had ignored key farmer assurances, from pending bonuses to incomplete loan waivers, and warned that unless corrective measures were taken, it would face the ire of farmers across the State.



# Indian Chronicle

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## Mandating Hindi and secularism debate may boomerang on BJP

The recent moves by the saffron dispensation, making Hindi mandatory as the third language from Classes 1 to 5 in Maharashtra and questioning the words “socialism” and “secularism” in the Preamble to the Indian Constitution, are unfortunate. Driven by ideological zeal, the moves are unlikely to benefit either the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) or the nation as a whole. Instead, they risk further polarising of an already fractured political landscape and diverting national attention from pressing developmental challenges. The decision to enforce Hindi as a mandatory third language in a state with a rich linguistic heritage and a strong Marathi identity has raised eyebrows. India is a diverse, multilingual country where language has always been a sensitive issue. The attempt to impose Hindi on non-Hindi-speaking states has historically been met with fierce resistance, as witnessed during the anti-Hindi agitations in Tamil Nadu in the 1960s and also Karnataka. Such moves are often perceived as efforts to impose cultural hegemony rather than promote national unity. Language in India is deeply intertwined with identity, and the compulsion to learn Hindi, especially in regions with their dominant languages, is viewed as an encroachment on local cultures and traditions. While promoting Hindi as a link language is understandable in a country with numerous regional tongues, making it mandatory at the primary education level risks alienating large sections of the population.

Simultaneously, the move to question the inclusion of “socialism” and “secularism” in the Preamble to the Constitution opens another front of ideological conflict. These words were added to the Preamble during the 42nd Amendment in 1976.

## Baseless Allegations Against a Visionary Leader Draw Sharp Rebuttal.

“Those Lacking Integrity Have No Right to Criticize Icons of Clean Governance,” Says Arelli Kiran



“PS Ashokan “Indian Chronicle“Manthani,June 1”In a strongly worded statement, Peddapalli district social media in-charge Arelli Kiran came out in staunch defense of Hon'ble Minister for IT, Industries, and Legislative Affairs Duddilla Sridhar Babu, terming recent criticisms made by Putta Madhu as the rantings of a morally bankrupt and delusional mind.”Sridhar Babu is not merely a political figure but a visionary whose legacy is deeply etched in the hearts of the people of Manthani. He represents a lineage of integrity and progressive governance, following in the footsteps of the late Sri Sripada Rao, an exemplary statesman who was revered as a non-controversial, people-centric leader,” said Kiran.”Highlighting Sridhar Babu’s exemplary political journey, Kiran reminded that he secured electoral victories three times consecutively—even during a statewide TDP wave—and served with distinction as the Speaker of the erstwhile Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly. “He is the embodiment of dignity, intellect, and clean administration,” he noted.”In contrast, Kiran described Putta Madhu’s comments as a reflection of his “unfiltered arrogance” and “lack of democratic maturity.” He alleged that Madhu, who rose to prominence under Sridhar Babu’s political shadow, is now attempting to malign the very hands that uplifted him.”It is deeply shameful that instead of acknowledging the region’s developmental strides, some leaders stoop to peddling falsehoods for their survival. Politics should be rooted in vision, not vengeance,” Kiran asserted.”He further remarked that “education and enlightenment are essential for true governance,” and mocked those who, without understanding public service or constitutional values, aim to lead without moral compass.”Calling Sridhar Babu and Srinubabu “epitomes of humility, public reassurance, and responsive leadership,” Kiran warned that attempts to defame such leaders will be firmly resisted. “Even in adversity, the people of Manthani know Sridhar Babu stands with them. He is not just a leader—they are family,” he concluded.

## Encourage farmers to grow vegetables: Tummala tells officials

Hyderabad, July 1 Minister for Agriculture Tummala Nageswara Rao has instructed officials to promote vegetable cultivation among farmers in Telangana. The Minister on Tuesday held a meeting with horticulture officials at the Secretariat to assess the progress of horticultural crops across different districts in Telangana. He noted that vegetables are currently being sourced from other states and emphasized the need to motivate farmers to grow the vegetables necessary for the region. “The development of a strategic plan is essential to encourage farmers to enhance vegetable production within the state,” he stated. The Minister highlighted the importance of promoting large-scale vegetable farming, particularly in districts adjacent to Hyderabad, including Rangareddy, Vikarabad, Mahabubnagar, Siddipet, Sangareddy, and Medchal. He indicated that vegetable cultivation should be aligned with market demand, facilitated by the Center of Excellence for the benefit of farmers.

## Pragathi School Students Shine Bright in SEMS Olympiad – Felicitated at State Level.



“PS Ashokan“Indian Chronicle“Manthani,June 1”“Demonstrating exceptional academic prowess, the students of Pragathi School, Centenary Colony, earned state-level accolades in the prestigious SEMS Olympiad, bringing pride and recognition to their institution.”K. Bhavyasri, Vidwan, and C.H. Karthikeya secured meritorious ranks at the state level and were grandly felicitated at Sundarayya Vignana Bhavan, Baglingampally, Hyderabad. The ceremony was a celebration of academic excellence, where the students were honored with shawls, mementoes, and cash awards.”Addressing the gathering, SEMS Foundation Coordinator Mr. Arakala Ramachandra Reddy highlighted the organization’s commitment to conducting rigorous, high-standard examinations aimed at preparing students for national-level competitive tests. He lauded the students’ dedication and hard work.”Back at the school, under the leadership of Correspondent Mr. Abbu Keshava Reddy, the achievers were accorded a warm felicitation in the presence of staff, parents, and fellow students. The entire school community, including management and teachers, expressed great joy and pride over this remarkable accomplishment.”This recognition stands as a testament to the unwavering commitment of the students, the support of their families, and the holistic academic environment fostered by Pragathi School.



## Anganwadi Workers to Join Nationwide Protest on July 9 – Serve Strike Notice Demanding Repeal of Anti-Labour Policies.



“PS Ashokan“Indian Chronicle“Manthani,June 1”In a bold move against the regressive labor reforms introduced by the Central Government, Anganwadi teachers and helpers under the Manthani Project have formally served a strike notice to the ICDS officials, declaring their active participation in the All India General Strike scheduled for July 9.”Un-

der the banner of the Telangana Anganwadi Teachers and Helpers Union (CITU), the protest demands include:”Immediate repeal of the controversial Labour Codes”Declaration of ₹26,000 as minimum monthly wage”Granting of permanent employment status”Implementation of the 8-hour standard work schedule”G. Jyothi, Union District General Secretary, and Budida Ganesh, CITU District Leader, were present during the submission of the strike notice. They vehemently criticized the Central Government, particularly the BJP leadership, for dismantling 29 historic labor legislations—laws that were earned through decades of relentless struggle by the working class.”They further stated that these reforms not only erode the legal safeguards of Anganwadi workers but also systematically silence their democratic right to protest and demand justice.”“This is not just a strike—it is a resolute assertion of dignity, justice, and democratic entitlement,” said Budida Ganesh. He emphasized that the conspiracy to exclude Anganwadi workers from lawful benefits and statutory protections will be strongly resisted across the nation.”“The union appealed to all Anganwadi teachers and helpers to stand united and participate in the July 9 strike to reclaim their rightful place within the framework of labor justice.

## Mulugu Lions Club members felicitate doctors on the occasion of Doctors' Day



“Mulugu Correspondent, July 1, Indian Chronicle: The Lions Club of Mulugu felicitated the doctors of Mulugu District Hospital on the occasion of National Doctors' Day. Dr. Mohan Lal, Superintendent of the District Hospital and Principal of the Medical College were present as the chief guests of the program. Speaking on the occasion, they said that it is commendable to felicitate all the doctors of the district hospital on the occasion of Doctors' Day. The Lions Club Mulugu members praised the many service programs that they do in these areas. Speaking, Lion Dontha Reddy Srinivas Reddy, President of Mulugu Lions Club, said that the profession of a doctor is full of courage and that doctors

are equal to God. He said that it is a privilege for our Mulugu Lions Club to honor doctors on Doctor's Day. In this program, Dr. Praveen RMO, Dr. Bhumigari Mohan Rao, Dr. Usharani, Dr. M Raja, Dr. Kavitha, Dr. Nikhil, Dr. Bharat Reddy, Dr. Anil, Dr. Dixit, Dr. Sadhana, Dr. Harish, Dr. Shravan Kumar, Lions Club Secretary Lion Chunchu Ramesh, Treasurer Lion Aadepe Raju, Fast President Merugu Ramesh, Lion Kondi Sambasiva, Lion Sanikomma Ravinder Reddy, Lion Donthi Reddy Balaram Reddy, Lion Pingili Nagaraju, Lion Rudroj Vamsi, Lion Kapidi Sampath Rao, Lions members and hospital doctors and staff participated in this program.”

## TDP Delegation Visits Sigachi Accident Site

Hyderabad:A Telugu Desam Party delegation led by TDP Politburo member and National General Secretary Bakkani Narasimhulu visited the Sigachi company accident site in Pasumalaram, Sangareddy district, on Tuesday.

He stated that as per available information, over 50 people lost their lives in the tragic incident, and several others sustained serious injuries. The team inspected the area where the reactor explosion occurred and spoke to locals to understand how the incident took place.Narasimhulu urged the government to immediately support the families of the deceased and ensure the best possible medical treatment for the injured. He emphasized the need for the government to take strict action against such companies to prevent similar incidents in the future.The delegation also visited the hospital to console the injured victims.

The visiting TDP team included TTD member Nannuri Narsireddy, Medak Parliament Convener Illandula Ramesh, Malkajigiri Parliament Convener Kandikanti Ashok Kumar Goud, former state party spokesperson Nelluru



Durgaprasad, former official spokesperson M. Rameshwar Rao, Nalgonda Parliament Convener Kasireddy Shekhar Reddy, Malkajigiri Ad-hoc Committee member Janagam Narsing Rao, former District ZP Chairman R. Srinivas Goud, Pathancheru Ad-hoc Committee Incharge Karike Satyanarayana, along with local constituency leaders, mandal leaders, and party workers.

## Be available for relief operations “- Collector Diwakara's advice to officials“



Mulugu correspondent, July 1, Indian Chronicle: Collector Diwakara has asked the officials to be ready to take relief operations to prevent loss of life in disasters that occur during the current monsoon season. The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) reached the district on Tuesday. On this occasion, the Collector held a review meeting in his chamber along with Additional Collector Revenue C H Mahender G. District Collector Diwakara T.S. instructed the officials to create awareness among the people of the areas surrounding the Godavari River and Jampanna Vagu on precautionary measures. He explained to the (NDRF) team about the incidents that have occurred in the past in the Ramappa and Laknavaram lakes, Godavari River and Jampanna Vagu water flow in the district. He asked the NDRF team to inspect the water flow areas of the Godavari River and Jampanna Vagu, Oortam, Narlapur and Medaram, and to create awareness among the people about the precautions to be taken during untimely rains and disasters. District Panchayat Officer to make all necessary arrangements for NDRF team.”

## Awareness seminar on horticultural crops and oil palm cultivation“



Mulugu correspondent, July 1, Indian Chronicle: The Horticulture Department and K.N. Bioscience Oil Palm Company jointly organized an awareness seminar in Narlapur village of Tadwai mandal on Tuesday. On this occasion, District Horticulture Department Officer D. Sanjeeva Rao provided comprehensive information to the farmers on oil palm cultivation. Speaking about oil palm seed subsidies, cultivation methods and current domestic needs, he said that oil palm is very important for the daily oil requirement of a person, while the country produces 97 lakh tonnes of oil palm, while the consumption is more than 259 lakh tonnes. Looking at this, he said that the country needs oil palm cultivation in another 70 lakh acres. He explained that in the context of currently importing oil from other countries, our farmers can earn more income by cultivating oil palm and exporting it to other states. Similarly, farmers should use the subsidies provided by the government for the cultivation of fruits and vegetables and get benefits. Mulugu Division Horticulture Officer J. Srikanth, Oil Farm Company Area Manager Hemanth, Field Executive Anirudh, AEO Rajkumar and local farmers participated in the event.

## Durisetty Chandrakala appointed as Mulugu District DEO“

“Mulugu correspondent, July 1, Indian Chronicle:“District Collector Diwakar T.S. issued orders on Tuesday appointing Durisetty Chandrakala as Mulugu District Education Officer (DEO). The post fell vacant after G. Panini, who was working as the district DEO, was taken into custody by ACB officials on the 16th of last month. Later, D. Vasanthi, who was working as the DEO in Hanumakonda district, was given the responsibility, but she did not join the duties, so the collector said that Durisetty Chandrakala, who is currently working as the Intermediate Education Officer of Mulugu district, has been given this additional responsibility.

## Celestial wedding of Balkampet Yellamma held on grand scale

Hyderabad, July 1 The celestial wedding of Goddess Balkampet Yellamma took place on a grand scale on Tuesday, attracting a large number of devotees to the temple to witness the festivities. Endowment Minister Konda Surekha presented a silk sari on behalf of the State government. Among those in attendance were Hyderabad district In-charge Minister Ponnamm Prabhakar, GHMC Mayor Gadwala Vijaya Lakshmi, MP Anil Kumar Yadav, along with other elected representatives and officials. The celestial wedding ceremony was conducted by the priests at 11:51 AM. During the event, Minister Ponnamm Prabhakar noted that the wedding ceremony was celebrated in Balkampet with great enthusiasm in the presence of many devotees. He highlighted that the entire State government had prayed to the Goddess for abundant rainfall and the well-being of the crops.”Recently, there have been several tragic events, such as fires and plane crashes. I hope that the Goddess will wholeheartedly bless the people of Telangana and the city of Hyderabad,” Ponnamm stated.



# Digital (Cyber) Crimes Growing More Severe by the Day.“



“Khammam Bureau (Praneeth Kumar Pathakamudi), “July 01, “Indian Chronicle.”“Cybercrimes in the country are worsening each day. While the Modi government boasts that online transactions have increased under its administration as a reflection of transparency, and that India now leads globally in the number of such transactions, the dark side of this growth is also evident many people are falling victim to cybercrime. In mere moments, they lose all the money they had saved over a lifetime to cybercriminal scams. “A recent example from Haryana shows a woman who lost her lifetime savings within seconds. This is just one among the 1.23 lakh cybercrime cases reported in 2024, amounting to a total financial loss of 1,935 crore. This figure is nearly three times the number of digital arrests made in 2022.”Scammers often lure victims with promises of high returns or impersonate police officers claiming there are legal cases against the victims. They frequently use WhatsApp and Telegram for these scams. Driven by greed or fear of social embarrassment, many victims act without verifying the authenticity of the calls or messages. According to cyber experts, such hasty actions are pushing people

into deeper trouble. “A case investigated by an English news outlet involved a 44-year-old advertising executive from Gurugram who fell victim to such a scam and lost her money online. Investigators and the public alike questioned how an educated woman could fall for such tactics. Many such victims remain silent due to shame or guilt and do not come forward to file complaints. Fear, lack of awareness, and time constraints contribute to this silence, which works in favor of cybercriminals. “The woman knocked on several doors to recover her life savings, even writing to the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO). A Special Investigation Team (SIT) set up by Gurugram Police in April this year is now investigating her case. So far, the SIT has arrested three people in Hyderabad, including a cooperative bank director and two associates, and seized 58 lakh. “The Cyber Crime Division of the Ministry of Home Affairs, under the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C), also alerted the SIT. Their investigation in Hyderabad uncovered 11 mule accounts linked to 181 other complaints. In just three months, 21 crore was transacted through these accounts. Some evidence suggests part of these funds was used to purchase cryptocurrency.”“? Rising Trend of Cyber Crimes.”“The number of digital arrests and associated cybercrimes in India is on the rise.

According to information presented in the Rajya Sabha by Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Bandi Sanjay, based on data from the National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal”“2022: 39,925 incidents with losses of 91.14 crore”“2023: 60,676 incidents with losses of 339.03 crore”“2024: 1,23,672 incidents with losses soaring to 1,935.51 crore (more than double the number of incidents and over six times the losses of the previous year)”“So far this year, 17,718 fraud related cases involving 210.21 crore have been reported. Experts and analysts warn that this sharp rise highlights the severity of the growing cybercrime problem.”“? What Should Victims Do ?”“Cyber experts advise that victims of online fraud should not panic. Instead, they should immediately call 1930 to report the crime. It is especially effective if reported within 24 hours. Victims are encouraged to upload any photos or proof of the transaction to the relevant website. This enables authorities to quickly freeze the fraudulent accounts and attempt to recover the stolen money.

## "Revoke Suspension Imposed Without Evidence in the Name of Disciplinary Action"

““Demand by PRTUTS District President Karra Suresh



.”“PS Ashokan“Indian Chronicle“June,1”“Peddapalli district president of PRTUTS (Progressive Recognized Teachers Union – Telangana State), Karra Suresh, has strongly demanded the immediate revocation of the suspension imposed on him under the pretext of disciplinary action, claiming it was based on baseless and false allegations.”“Addressing a press meet at the Peddapalli Press Club on Tuesday, along with his supporters, Karra Suresh challenged MLC Sripal Reddy and the state leadership of PRTUTS to an open debate regarding the false accusations levelled against him. He expressed deep anguish over the injustices being committed by Sripal Reddy within the organization and condemned his alleged misuse of power.”“He criticized the leadership for targeting proactive and sincere members like him instead of working towards resolving pending issues such as six withheld DAs, delay in PRC implementation, and the sidelining of service rules. He described the suspension of committed activists as

highly unfortunate and motivated.”“Karra Suresh announced that in the coming days, he would expose the corruption of Sripal Reddy with complete documentary evidence. “No matter how many conspiracies, manipulations, or unethical strategies are deployed, I cannot be separated from the organization or the teaching community,” he asserted.”“He alleged that the suspension was carried out with personal vendetta. Recalling the Graduate MLC elections, he pointed out that Sripal Reddy had acted against the interests of Minister Sridhar Babu’s nominee, Narender Reddy, and demanded the formation of a disciplinary committee to investigate Sripal’s conduct during the elections.”“Suresh also questioned the legitimacy of Sripal Reddy’s claim as the PRTUTS MLC representative.”“Several union leaders including Rajamouli, Ramanna, Ramesh, Srinivas Reddy, Sudhakar, Kumar Raghubabu, Satish, Arun Kumar, Ravi, Nagaraju, Sampath, Swamy, Rajireddy, Ramesh, and others participated in the press conference, expressing solidarity with Karra Suresh.

## Let's make Mulugu a child labor-free district “-



Collector Diwakara T.S. “Mulugu correspondent, July 1, Indian Chronicle: The Operation Muskan-11 program was launched in the district with the aim of making the district a child labor-free district. On Tuesday, the district level coordination meeting held under the chairmanship of District Collector Diwakara T.S. was held at the Collectorate Conference Hall. Officials of various departments participated. Speaking on the occasion, the Collector said that in Operation Muskan-11, which will be held for a month from July 1 to 31, the police, child protection, labor, women welfare, and medical and health departments have the responsibility to identify and protect child laborers in coordination with each other. He said that strict action should be taken against the employers who employ children and that hot spots should be selected during the rescue and the children should be taken out. The Collector clarified that the Education Department should take steps to identify and enroll out-of-school children, the Medical and Health Department should take steps to ensure that pregnant women deliver in hospitals, monitor every child, and prevent illegal adoption of children. DSP Ravinder said that rescue teams have been formed at the level of two subdivisions, and police, child welfare, labor department officials and members of other departments will participate in these teams. He explained that cases will be registered against children under the age of 14 years, regardless of whether they are engaged in any work, and against children aged 15-18 years, regardless of whether they are engaged in dangerous work. District Wel-

fare Officer Tula Ravi said that the rescued children will be immediately presented before the Child Welfare Committee and shifted to shelter homes as per their needs. He said that areas where children are likely to work in brick kilns, building construction, and agricultural work have already been identified. Child Protection Officer J. Omkar said that he revealed the details of the special operation carried out in the past in Mulugu district. After the rescue, the children are not only being handed over to their parents, but are also being taken to rehabilitation centers and awareness programs are being continued at the mandal level, he said. Revenue Divisional Officer Venkatesh, District Medical Officer Dr. Gopal Rao, Horticulture Officer D. Sanjeeva Rao, SSCA Program Coordinator Raju, Agriculture Officer Suresh Kumar, AHTU Circle Inspector Ramesh, Sub-Divisional Team staff, Child Line Coordinator A. Naresh and others participated in this meeting.”

## Noted magician Pattabharam passes away



Hyderabad, July 1 Prominent personality development expert BV Pattabharam (75) passed away on Monday night in Hyderabad after suffering a heart attack. Pattabharam, a renowned magician and psychiatrist, is survived by his wife Jaya and son Prashanth. Pattabharam’s wife is also a personality development expert. His body has been kept at his residence in Khairatabad.

# Raja Narasimha greets doctors on National Doctor's Day

Hyderabad, July 1 Health Minister Damodar Raja Narasimha on Tuesday greeted all the doctors on the occasion of National Doctor’s Day. He said the contribution of the doctors in strengthening in Telangana’s healthcare infrastructure was exceptional. In a release here, Raja Narasimha praised the efforts of doctors in strengthening the state’s health system and providing better medical services to the people. He stated that the doctors as true warriors who work day and night even in the most difficult situations like Covid and save people’s lives. On the occasion, the Minister reminded that they are supporting doctors in every way. Doctors in government hospitals are being notified about various job opportunities. Last year, approximately 430 positions for civil assistant surgeons and 45 for assistant professors were successfully filled. In response to den-

tists’ longstanding desire for employment, a notification has been released for the recruitment of 48 dental surgeons. Additionally, announcements have been made for the hiring of 607 assistant professors in government medical colleges. Over the past 18 months, around a thousand doctors have received promotions,” he noted. The Minister also mentioned that construction has commenced on Osmania Naya Hospital, an issue that has concerned doctors for many years, and that the stipends for junior doctors and the honorarium for senior residents have been increased by 15 percent. He reiterated that the State government is committed to providing ongoing support to doctors in the future. On the occasion, Raja Narasimha appealed to doctors to work towards further development of the health sector in the Telangana State.

## Telangana HRC takes suo-motu cognizance of two grave incidents

Hyderabad, July 1 Telangana Human Rights Commission has taken suo-motu cognizance of two grave incidents reported in the media. In the first case, concerning a massive explosion and fire at Sigachi Industries Ltd, Pashamylaram, Sangareddy District, on June 30, 2025, which reportedly claimed about 42 lives and injured over 35 workers, many of them migrant labourers. The Commission expressed serious concern over alleged lapses in industrial safety and violations of workers’ rights and notices have been issued to concerned authorities, including the District Collector, Commissioner of Labour, Director Gen-

eral of Fire Services, and Superintendent of Police, Sangareddy, calling for detailed reports by July 30, 2025. In the second case, the Commission took cognizance of a tragic suicide of Jarpula Parashuram, a farmer from Dharmathanda, Kusumanchi Mandal, Khammam District, as reported in Sakshi Telugu daily dated July 1, 2025, allegedly due to financial distress over his comatose daughter’s treatment and land-related issues. A notice has been issued to the District Collector, Khammam, seeking a report on provision of free medical aid, social-economic support to the family, and reasons for non-issuance of the Pattadar Passbook.

## Hyderabad ACB’s half-yearly roundup

Hyderabad, : The Anti-Corruption Bureau, Telangana, Hyderabad registered a total of 31 cases/enquiries during June 2025. Of these, 15 are trap cases, two disproportionate assets cases, three criminal misconduct cases, four regular enquiries and seven surprise checks. Twenty-five Public Servants, including two outsourcing employees/private person were trapped/ arrested and remanded to judicial custody. An amount of Rs 3,43,500/- was seized in trap cases of various Departments. In two Disproportionate Assets Cases, Disproportionate Asset worth Rs 13,50,000/- and Rs 5,22,75,000/- were unearthed. During the surprise checks conducted on RTA checkpoints and Sub-Registrar offices, unaccounted amount of Rs 2,72,030/- was seized.

During the first half of the year, i.e. from January 2025 to June 2025, the Bureau has registered 126 cases i.e. 80 Trap cases, eight Disproportionate Assets cases, 14 Crimi-

nal Misconduct Cases, 10 Regular Enquiries, 11 Surprise Check and three Discreet Enquiries, trapped/arrested 125 Public Servants, including eight outsourcing employees/private persons and remanded to judicial custody, seized an amount of Rs 24,57,000/- in trap cases and unearthed Assets worth Rs 27,66,60,526/- in DA cases of various Departments. In June 2025, the Bureau finalized 11 cases and sent Final Reports to the Government. Further, the Bureau finalized 129 cases during the first half of this year, i.e. from January 2025 to June 2025 and sent Final Reports to the Government. In case of demand of bribe by any Public Servant, the public are requested to contact Toll Free Number of ACB, i.e. 1064 for taking action as per law. ACB, Telangana can also be contacted through social media platforms i.e. Whatsapp (9440446106), Facebook (Telangana ACB), X/formerly twitter (@TelanganaACB). The name and details of the victim/complainant will be kept secret. Call Phone Number-1064 (Toll Free Number)

## JSW MG Motor India sells 5829 units\* in June 2025, registers 21% YoY growth

Hyderabad:JSW MG Motor India reported monthly sales of 5829\* units in June 2025, registering a 21% Y-o-Y growth. The company is gearing up for the launch of its first luxury offering in India – the MG M9, Presidential Limousine, closely followed by the MG Cyberster – World’s fastest MG. These two bespoke products will be exclusively offered through JSW MG Motor India’s new luxury sales channel – MG Select.

SAIC Motor, a global Fortune 500 company with a presence in over 100 countries and JSW Group (India’s leading conglomerate with interests across B2B and B2C sectors) formed a joint venture - JSW MG Motor India Pvt. Ltd. in 2023. The joint venture aims to build a smart and sustainable automotive ecosystem while staying focused on developing a diverse portfolio of vehicles to give car buyers better access to advanced technologies and futuristic products with attractive value propositions. JSW MG Motor India Pvt. Ltd. is committed to introducing world-class technology, strengthening the manufacturing landscape, bringing the best of innovation across its business operations, and generating significant employment opportunities through extensive localisation.

Founded in the UK in 1924, Morris Garages vehicles were world-famous for their sports cars, roadsters, and cabriolet series. MG vehicles were much sought after by celebrities, including British Prime Ministers and even the British Royal Family, for their styling, elegance, and spirited performance. The MG Car Club, set up in 1930 at Abingdon in the UK, has thousands of loyal fans, making it



one of the world’s largest clubs for a car brand. MG has evolved into a modern, futuristic, and innovative brand over the last 100 years. Its state-of-the-art manufacturing facility in Halol, Gujarat, has an annual production capacity of 1,00,000 plus vehicles and 6,000 direct and indirect employees.

Driven by its vision of CASE (Connected, Autonomous, Shared, and Electric) mobility, the innovative automaker has augmented across-the-board ‘experiences’ within the automobile segment today. It has introduced several ‘firsts’ in India, including India’s first Internet SUV – MG Hector, India’s first Pure Electric Internet SUV – MG ZS EV, India’s first Autonomous (Level 1) Premium SUV – MG Gloster, the Astor- India’s first SUV with personal AI assistant and Autonomous (Level 2) technology, MG Comet – The Street-Smart Car and India’s first Intelligent CUV, MG Windsor.

## Industrial & Warehousing real estate records 24.5% Y-o-Y demand growth in H1 2025: Savills India

Hyderabad:The Industrial and Warehousing real estate segment witnessed robust absorption of 34 million sq. ft. in the first half of 2025, reflecting a 24.5% year-on-year increase compared to the 27.3 million sq. ft. absorbed during the same period in 2024, according to the latest findings by Savills India, a global real estate advisory firm.

Absorption was driven by a substantial contribution from the manufacturing segment and sustained demand from the 3PL segment, followed by the e-commerce, FMCG/FMCD and retail segments. Notably, Tier I cities accounted for 77% of total absorption, while Tier II & III cities took the remaining 23%, as per Savills India. On the supply side, the market witnessed fresh supply of 33.4 million sq. ft., of which Tier I cities accounted for 27.3 million sq. ft. (82%), while Tier II & III cities contributed 6.1 million sq. ft. (18%). The market witnessed delivery of projects across cities in tandem with the growing demand. Absorption (mn sq. ft.) Across Cities

	H1 2025	H1 2024	Y-o-Y change
Overall	34.0	27.3	24.5%
Tier I	26.2	21.4	22.4%
Tier II & III	7.8	5.9	32.2%
Tier I (% of total)	77%	78%	
Tier II & III (% of total)	23%	22%	

Note: Tier I cities include Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Mumbai, Delhi-NCR, and Pune. Tier II and III cities include Guwahati, Bhubaneswar, Patna, Hosur, Coimbatore, Rajpura, Lucknow, Jaipur,

Nagpur, Surat, Indore, Kochi, Hubli, Vizag, Belgaum and Anantapur.

Supply (mn sq. ft.) Across Cities

	H1 2025	H1 2024	Y-o-Y change
Overall	33.4	28.2	18.4%
Tier I	27.3	21.6	26.4%
Tier II & III	6.1	6.6	-7.6%
Tier I (% of total)	82%	77%	
Tier II & III (% of total)	18%	23%	

“India’s industrial and logistics sector is on track for significant expansion, with projected absorption expected to exceed 65 million sq. ft. in 2025. This growth is being driven by strong demand from the manufacturing sector and sustained momentum in third-party logistics (3PL) and retail. A key catalyst is the rapid rise of the e-commerce industry, particularly the increasing footprint of e-commerce (quick commerce) players, which is reshaping supply chain dynamics. Beyond traditional metropolitan hubs, Tier-II and Tier-III cities are emerging as crucial growth engines. These cities are becoming integral to sourcing, consumption, and distribution networks, positioning themselves as the next frontiers for industrial and logistics development. This surge in demand presents new opportunities for developers, investors, and occupiers, creating significant opportunities across the value chain, solidifying India’s role as a global logistics and manufacturing leader.” Srinivas N, Managing Director, Industrial and Logistics, Savills India.



# World MSME Day SpecialAI, Cross-Border Growth, Tier?2/3 Expansion & Omnichannel Transforming India’s Startup: Meta-Alvarez & Marsal India Report

Hyderabad:As India’s startup ecosystem accelerates into its next growth phase, emerging businesses are re-shaping their growth through digital innovation with AI, omnichannel strategies, creators, and access to tier-2 and tier-3 markets and equally to cross-border geographies.

On the occasion of World MSME Day, Meta has commissioned a new report in collaboration with leading global professional services firm Alvarez & Marsal India (A&M India), that captures insights based on deep conversations with 100 high-growth Indian startups and outlines six key levers of growth for India’s startups: AI adoption, cross-border expansion, omnichannel presence, Tier 2/3 market expansion, category diversification, creator-led brand building. A&M’s expertise in advising high-growth businesses and investors combined with its data-led, real-world approach has delivered forward-looking and actionable findings in the report.

India’s start-up ecosystem has witnessed exponential growth over the last decade, with a surge in early-stage funding, digital penetration, and consumer affluence across metros and non-metro regions. And technologies such as AI are further fueling the growth of startups and MSMEs in the country.

Said Sandhya Devanathan, Vice President, India and South East Asia, Meta, “In today’s dynamic times, startups that think smart and act fast to evolve will lead the charge. At Meta, we’re proud to be partners in this journey, equipping them with cutting-edge AI-powered tools to help them scale and turn their bold ideas into impact.”

Said Himanshu Bajaj, Managing Director & Head – Alvarez & Marsal India and GCC, “We’re seeing a significant

shift in how Indian startups think about scale—not just for pursuing growth but building more sustainable businesses that focus on value creation. AI, tiered expansion, and omnichannel models are no longer future bets—they’re foundational to execution today. What stands out is how early-stage startups are applying these levers with surprising sophistication. At Alvarez & Marsal, we’ve partnered with many of these ventures through critical growth inflection points—whether it’s business model and strategy, cost efficiency, supply chain or org design—and this report with Meta captures the emerging blueprint that will shape the next phase of India’s startup economy.”

With AI becoming a game-changer for marketers, the report outlines that more than 70% of startups are integrating it into their business operations. In marketing alone, 87% of AI adopters reported a ~30% improvement in cost per acquisition (CPA). Sectors such as healthcare, edtech, and beauty are leading in AI maturity leveraging automation for customer service, predictive analytics, and personalization.

Said Shrawan Daga, Founder, Krishna’s Herbal & Ayurveda, “At Krishna Herbals, we’ve always been at the forefront of innovation and experimentation. When Meta introduced Advantage+ solutions, we were one of the early adopters. We leveraged these cutting-edge tools to optimize our marketing campaigns, and the results have been nothing short of phenomenal. With Advantage+, we’ve seen a significant increase in conversions, improved ad targeting, and enhanced overall campaign performance. The automation capabilities have also freed up our team to focus on more strategic initiatives, allowing us to drive even more growth for our business.”

## Quality Nutrition Must Be Provided to Students.



““Khammam Bureau, “July 01, “Indian Chronicle. ““District Collector Anudeep Durishetty emphasized that teachers must ensure every student studying in government schools receives basic educational standards. On Tuesday, the Collector visited Raghunathapalem mandal. He conducted surprise inspections at the Zilla Parishad High School and the Primary Health Centre in Manchukonda village. “At the school, the Collector evaluated students proficiency in reading Telugu poems and

English. He also joined the students for lunch. He instructed education officials to ensure that quality, nutritious meals are provided to students according to the prescribed menu, in line with government guidelines. ““Earlier, he inspected the OP room and medicine stock register at the Primary Health Centre and inquired with patients about the medical services being provided. Speaking on the occasion, Collector Durishetty directed that pending development works in the school be expedited. He stressed the importance of enabling every student to read Telugu and speak English fluently. He urged teachers to take special care and implement necessary measures to ensure that all students receive at least a basic standard of education. He emphasized the need for structured planning from the beginning to achieve better results in the 10th grade examinations. He also advised that students should consume nutritious food daily to safeguard their health. “Additionally, he stated that steps must be taken to increase the number of normal deliveries in government hospitals and called for continuous monitoring of infant growth. He insisted that 100% vaccination be administered to pregnant women. District Education Officer S Satyanarayana, Headmistress Karuna Kumari, medical officers, and other relevant officials accompanied the Collector during his visit.”

## Technical Skills Training is Essential for Women - NYK Accounts Office



r Bhanu Chander. ““Khammam Bureau, “July 01, “Indian Chronicle. ““A grand closing ceremony was held for a three month free computer training program organized by the Samarthanam Disabled Persons Organization at the VITS Computer Education center in Khammam. The event was graced by Nehru Yuva Kendra Accounts Officer Kamaratapu Bhanu Chander, who addressed the gathering as the chief guest. On this occasion, Bhanu Chander emphasized that women are in no way behind today they are even venturing into space. He stressed the importance of skill development, stating that standing on one’s own feet requires strong technical skills. He commended Samarthanam for training 25 women, calling it a praiseworthy initiative that would be beneficial for their future success. He also congratulated those who had completed the training and secured jobs. “Samarthanam State Coordinator Shravan Kumar expressed his hopes that every trainee would go on to achieve a respectable position in life and reiterated the organization’s commitment to supporting women. He also shared his happiness that three batches have been successfully completed so far in Khammam. “The event also saw participation from Versatile IT Solutions Managing Directors Kodirekka Uma Shankar, Avuluri Soumya, Manager Kallepu Akhila, instructors Sarika Upender, Satish Mohan, Puvvada Uday Nagar Youth President Sharukh, Nemaikonda Vamshi and others.”



# Hostel visit calendar, Health records for students & facilities review ordered

Hyderabad, July 1: Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka has directed the welfare department officials to prepare a detailed calendar for visits and inspections of welfare hostels and residential schools (Gurukuls). The instructions were given during a review meeting held on Tuesday at Praja Bhavan, in the presence of Social Welfare Minister Adhuri Laxman Kumar. He instructed that every officer’s visit must be properly documented with timely reports on the aspects they inspected. The visit programme should be continuous, and ministers as well as local MLAs should be invited to participate in these inspections.

Highlighting the pro-student approach of the Praja Government, the Deputy CM noted that soon after coming to power, they increased the diet charges by 40% and cosmetic charges by 200%. A scientifically prepared menu was finalized based on doctors’ recommendations, and he ordered that prominent banners displaying this menu be placed in all welfare hostels and Gurukuls. The Deputy CM also directed officials to prepare detailed reports on the amenities available in hostels, particularly those operating from rented buildings, including building conditions and landlord

details. He stressed the need for installing mosquito nets in all hostels, ensuring uninterrupted running water supply, conducting medical check-ups for all students in welfare hostels and Gurukuls, issuing individual health cards for every student. For the health card initiative, he asked that district collectors and medical & health officers coordinate to complete the task quickly. He also mentioned that corporate hospitals are ready to offer free online medical services in case any student falls ill, and advised officials to make use of such services. Additionally, the Deputy CM instructed the planning of solar panel installations on all residential school buildings to meet their power needs. The meeting also reviewed the implementation of the “Best Available Schools” scheme and progress of “Centers of Excellence” across different societies. Key officials present in the meeting included Sandeep Kumar Sultania, Principal Secretary (Finance), Alugu Varshini, Secretary, SC Gurukuls, Kshitij, Deputy Director, Social Welfare Department, Shafi, Commissioner of Minority Welfare, Saidulu, Secretary, BC Gurukuls, Seethalakshmi, Secretary, ST Gurukuls, Sarveshwar Reddy, Additional Director, Tribal Welfare, among others.

## Surjewala and Shivakumar say Siddaramaiah will remain as Karnataka CM; Hussain to be served notice

GNS News Agency, July 1

All India Congress Committee (AICC) general secretary Randeep Singh Surjewala and Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar Tuesday cleared the air regarding speculations about a leadership transition in the state government, ruling out replacing Siddaramaiah as chief minister in the immediate future. However, despite Shivakumar’s reprimand against MLAs asking him to be made the chief minister, his loyalist and Ramanagara MLA Iqbal Hussain stuck to his guns and said that an opportunity should be provided for Shivakumar to lead the government.



At a press conference, Surjewala, the AICC general secretary in charge of Karnataka, said consultations being held with Congress MLAs, MPs, MP candidates, and MLCs were not to take views on changing the leadership in the state. The meetings, he said, were to understand the works carried out by MLAs in their respective constituencies, examine the functioning of local Congress units, the status of Congress frontal organisations, and to assess the implementation of guarantee schemes. “Are we taking an opinion on leadership change? The answer is clearly no,” he said. Surjewala advised party MLAs not to make public remarks on the issue, saying, “What we deliberate within the party should remain within the party.” Shivakumar said he would issue a notice to Hussain over his continued stance in favour of replacing Siddaramaiah as CM. “I will issue a notice to him. Nobody has to say that I will become CM. I will issue him a notice today or tomorrow. Siddaramaiah is our CM. We have to strengthen his hand,” he said. The consultation

by Surjewala was to bring discipline to the party. “Other than that, there is no talk of leadership change. Nobody among us is in a hurry (to become CM).

For us, the 2028 Assembly polls are important,” he said. Among the 20 MLAs Surjewala held consultations Tuesday was Hussain, who told reporters following the meeting that he had urged the Congress leadership to appoint Shivakumar as CM. “When he (Shivakumar) was appointed KPCC president, the Congress strength was 70-75 MLAs. He worked for the party, and the rest is history. He played a major role in forming the government,” said Hussain hours after Shivakumar warned MLAs against making statements over the issue. For Shivakumar to become CM, he must secure the support of MLAs along with a decision from the high command. “Several MLAs have sought the change. I have joined hands with them,” said Hussain.

## Gujarat HC initiates suo motu contempt against senior advocate for “having a drink”, talking on phone during virtual proceeding

GNS News Agency, July 1

Gujarat HC initiates suo motu contempt against senior advocate for “having a drink”, talking on phone during virtual proceeding The court said that “disregarding” the incident would be “destructive to the rule of law” and lead to a collapse of the institution as senior advocates are seen as role models and mentors for young lawyers. The Gujarat High Court on Tuesday initiated suo motu contempt proceedings against one of its senior advocates for allegedly “having a drink in a beer mug” and “talking on the phone” while attending a court proceeding virtually on June 26.



A Division Bench comprising Justice A S Supheia and Justice R T Vachhani on Tuesday directed the Registry to register the contempt proceedings against the senior advocate, stating that the conduct (of the senior advocate) was “outrageous and glaring”. The alleged incident is said to have occurred in the court of Justice Sandeep Bhatt in which the senior advocate was appearing virtually. Stating that the video clip of live streaming of the said proceeding had been widely shared on social media, the court said that “the indecent act has very wide ramifications” as the video had “travelled beyond the precincts of this prestigious institution” and “dents the glory and dignity of the institution”. The court said that “disregarding” the incident would be “destructive to the rule of law” and lead to a collapse of the institution as senior advocates are seen as role models and mentors for young lawyers.

legedly violated the Rule 5(j) The Gujarat High Court (Live Streaming of Court Proceedings) Rules, 2021, which lays down that “anyone participating in the proceedings, whether in person or through video conferencing, will have to maintain utmost discipline and decorum for upholding the dignity and majesty of the court”. It also said that the senior advocate’s designation may be “reconsidered” as the “contemptuous demeanour unquestionably defies the privilege of Senior Counsel”, conferred by the HC. The court also directed the Registry to prepare a report and place it before the court by the next date of hearing as well as to preserve the said video. The court also restricted the appearance of the senior advocate through virtual mode before the Division Bench until further orders are passed.

The court also noted that the senior advocate had al-

## One year of new criminal laws: Chandigarh Police registers over 3,000 FIRs

GNS News Agency, July 1

As the new criminal laws — Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam (BSA) — complete one year of implementation, Chandigarh has registered a total of 3,154 FIRs under the new framework, including 1,459 e-FIRs. Of these cases, 758 chargesheets have been filed, and 78 cases have been decided, with 71 convictions — marking a “remarkable” 91.1 per cent conviction rate in the city, police said. Chandigarh was the first state/ UT in the country to fully implement the trio of reformed criminal laws and has emerged as a leading example of technology-driven, transparent, and citizen-centric policing. Over the past year, the city police undertook a comprehensive approach to adapting to the new legal architecture — focusing on capacity-building, forensic enhancement, digital integration, and public engagement. According to the police, more than 6,124 police personnel, including senior officers, SHO’s, and investigators, were trained extensively on the new provisions. A group of 29 master trainers was developed, and training modules were conducted in collaboration with judicial academies and law schools. To strengthen investigative capabilities, 14 forensic experts were hired through the National Forensic Sciences University (NFSU), along with 22 IT



specialists through NICS. Applications such as eSakshya, Nyay Setu, eProsecution, and MedLeaPR have enabled faster, evidence-based policing. The eSakshya platform alone has digitally documented 2,675 pieces of evidence, which are securely stored with geo-tagging and hash verification. AI-based tools like CCTNS Khoji have enhanced suspect tracking, search capabilities, and biometric identification, a Chandigarh police official said. The average time taken for conviction in cases under the new laws has been reduced significantly — from 300 days to just 110 days — reflecting greater speed and efficiency in investigations and trial processes.



## Ashu resigns as Congress working president after fragmented party loses Ludhiana West bypoll



GNS News Agency, July 1

The fragmented and divided Congress failed to cash in on the anti-incumbency and ended up finishing second in the Ludhiana West bypoll, the results of which were declared, Ashu said he has tendered his resignation while taking moral responsibility for the electoral defeat in the by-election. "Since this election was solely my responsibility, and the state president and Leader of Opposition (LoP) were nowhere in sight, I have resigned as the party's working president taking moral responsibility of the defeat," Ashu told. He added that he has sent his resignation to the senior Congress leadership, including Mallikarjun Kharge and Bhupesh Baghel. In Ashu's defeat, the Congress' vote share also dipped from 28 per cent in 2022 Ludhiana West Assembly polls to 27.22% now. For Ashu this was his second consecutive defeat after 2022 when he had lost to AAP's Gurpreet Gogi by around 7,000 votes. Traditionally, this urban constituency has been a Congress bastion with six wins in the past, including Ashu's in 2012 and 2017. Monday's results, however, didn't come as a shock to Congress insiders who knew it was a writing on the wall, owing to the rift that was wide open during the entire campaigning. The one faction led by Punjab Congress president and Ludhiana MP Amrinder Singh Raja Warring and leader of opposition Partap Singh Bajwa largely maintained distance from Ashu's campaign. Ashu, instead relied on the other faction including, former Punjab CM Charanjit Singh Channi, senior MLA Rana Gurjeet Singh and Pargat Singh, who extensively campaigned for him.

Such was the state of affairs in the party that Warring conducted some meetings and press conferences in the Ludhiana East segment, while the election was in West. The party's Ludhiana district (urban) president Sanjay Talwar, a former MLA from the Ludhiana East, was also missing from Ashu's campaign. A day before the campaigning ended, Warring and Bajwa conducted a separate press conference which Ashu did not attend.

On the last day of campaigning which ended with a

roadshow, Channi and Rana Gurjeet led the show with Ashu, while Warring and Bajwa again gave it a miss. Sources said that Warring was "upset" over not being invited by Ashu. Warring's wife Amrita Warring who had extensively campaigned in Ludhiana when he had contested Lok Sabha polls last year, wasn't seen this time and she also did not campaign for Ashu. AICC in-charge for Punjab affairs Bhupesh Baghel did not campaign extensively for Ashu, except on a few occasions.

"I was contesting so the entire responsibility of this defeat is mine. No one else is responsible. I congratulate Arora and I assure him that he will find me by his side whenever I would be needed for Ludhiana's development. The president (Warring) or leader of opposition (Bajwa) were not contesting this election, I was. I don't know what their responsibility was but my conscience says it was my responsibility," said Ashu, to The Indian Express. Kapurthala MLA Rana Gurjeet Singh, who was also appointed as the in-charge of bypoll by the party, said that "it wasn't Ashu's defeat but his own." "This is not Ashu's defeat. It is our defeat as we fought this election for him. He used to do whatever we would suggest," said the MLA. "However, I must say that AAP really needs to wake up. They filled the entire Ludhiana city with huge hoardings to win this bypoll. They woke up only after 3 years when they saw that the bypoll was here. The Congress vote bank is still intact. In 2022 we got 28 per cent votes and it is almost the same this time too. There's just a minor decrease. AAP shouldn't feel that happy as they have not even received 40 per cent votes. Their vote share is 39 per cent which means 61 per cent voters voted against them. We fought this election unitedly as a party and every leader who was assigned duty did it wholeheartedly. This is a bypoll, and in a bypoll people vote for ruling party. Now AAP should fulfill all its promises made to people of Ludhiana especially industry and businessmen," said Rana Gurjeet. Congress MLA Pargat Singh alleged that AAP "misused power and administrative machinery" to win the election. "Till the results were not announced, the faces of officials and policemen were yellow fearing that AAP might lose," he said.

He wrote on X: "I acknowledge and appreciate the INC Punjab workers in Ludhiana West by putting up the best fight against all odds when it was against the entire government machinery. This, after all, was just a by-election. Our fight will continue and we will take it to the logical conclusion in 2027. I was there whenever and wherever I was called to campaign and fulfil my responsibility as the president." I acknowledge and appreciate the @INC Punjab workers in Ludhiana West by putting up the best fight against all odds when it was against the entire government machinery. Punjab BJP president Sunil Jakhar added that the "Congress doesn't need any enemies as half of its own leaders were working to ensure Ashu is defeated. When you have such friends, you don't need enemies".

## 'Modi govt using tech to ensure transparency': Minister Annapurna Devi flays Congress for opposing facial recognition tech in take-home ration distribution

GNS News Agency, July 1

Women and Child Development (WCD) Minister Annapurna Devi on Monday hit out at the Congress that slammed the Centre for making facial recognition mandatory for distributing take-home ration through Anganwadi centres. She said the Modi government was using technology to ensure transparency and inclusion in welfare schemes. The Congress alleged that the Central Government was "using technology to exclude" vulnerable sections of society from social welfare entitlements.

In a communication to States and Union Territories last month, the WCD ministry stated that facial recognition will be mandatory for take-home ration distribution from July 1. The take-home ration (THR) scheme is meant for pregnant and lactating women. Additionally, facial recognition will also be made mandatory at the time of registration of beneficiaries of Anganwadi centres from August 1. For children (Anganwadis serve children from the ages of 0-6), the Aadhaar of the child's parent or guardian, along with face recognition, will be a precondition for registration. The child's Aadhaar will not be considered at the time of registration, going by the communication. In addition to the adult's facial recognition, the child's picture with "liveliness detection" will be captured for children in the 3-6 age group. Congress communications in-charge Jairam Ramesh wrote on X on Monday: "The Modi government is systematically using technology to exclude the most vulnerable sections of society from social welfare entitlements. Now, pregnant women face a new hurdle: facial recognition technology (FRT) for basic and legal entitlements under the NFSA (National Food Security Act)." Ramesh stated that technologies such as Aadhaar-based Payment System (ABPS), the National Mobile Monitoring System (NMMS) app, etc have proven



to be exclusionary or have failed. "The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education, Women, Children, Youth, and Sports in its 365th Report on the Demand for Grants for the Women and Child Development Ministry had noted that the introduction of ABPS in the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) impacted the ability of eligible beneficiaries (i.e., pregnant and lactating women) to benefit from the scheme. The number of beneficiaries paid has dipped drastically, from 96 lakh women in FY19-20 to 27 lakh women in FY23-24," he wrote. Responding to his post, WCD Minister Annapurna Devi wrote on X:

"With the help of modern technologies like Facial Recognition System (FRS), Biometric and Aadhaar, the government today is successful in reaching last mile beneficiaries." "It is wrong to say that the use of technology has led to a decline in PMMVY beneficiaries," she wrote, adding that there were 72.05 lakh first-time beneficiaries of the scheme in 2019-20, 80.48 lakh in 2024-25, and over 27 lakh beneficiaries in the first quarter of 2025-26.

## ED questions ex-Congress MP D K Suresh in Aishwarya Gowda case

GNS News Agency, July 1

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) Monday questioned Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar's brother and former MP D K Suresh in a money laundering case against Aishwarya Gowda, who allegedly cheated several people on the pretext of gold business ventures posing as his sister. After appearing before ED officials, D K Suresh said he was summoned because many of Aishwarya Gowda's victims had named him in their statements before the agency, as "the person had misused my name".

"They (ED) asked me a few questions to which I have answered. I am supporting the investigation. They have asked me to appear again on July 8, which I will do. I also have mentioned the complaint that I had filed before the Bengaluru city police," he added, referring to his police complaint accusing Aishwarya Gowda of using false family connections to facilitate fraudulent activities. The Central agency also said it attached properties worth Rs 3.98 crore belonging to Aishwarya Gowda and others in a financial fraud case. "The attached properties include immovable properties in the form of flats, constructed building and land having value of Rs 2.01 crore and movable properties in the form of cash and vehicle worth Rs 1.97 crore," ED said in a statement.

ED initiated the money-laundering investigation based on multiple FIRs registered at various police stations against Aishwarya Gowda, her husband Harish K N, and others over the allegation that they entered into a criminal conspiracy to defraud and cheat several people by taking gold, cash, and funds from them after promising high returns.



After appearing before ED officials, D K Suresh said he was summoned because many of Aishwarya Gowda's victims had named him in their statements before the agency, as "the person had misused my name".

The accused have neither returned the money nor given the promised return. Gowda also allegedly threatened the investors with dire consequences if they pursued the matter further, by claiming proximity to various high-profile politicians. ED has searched various locations connected with Aishwarya Gowda and her accomplices, and seized incriminating documents related to money-laundering activities allegedly carried out using movable and immovable properties and other digital devices. Aishwarya Gowda, who is reportedly close to BJP, Congress and JD(S) politicians, is facing charges of cheating and money laundering as she allegedly cheated some rich people in Bengaluru by claiming to be Suresh's sister.

## 'Hyper technical reasons not sustainable in the eyes of law': Karnataka HC awards compensation for minor's death in 2012 train accident



GNS News Agency, July 1

The court also disagreed with the "hyper-technical" reasoning applied in the earlier decision. The court also disagreed with the "hyper-technical" reasoning applied in the earlier decision. The Karnataka High Court on May 2 ordered the payment of compensation for the death of a minor who fell off a train in 2012 in Karnataka, observing that the original dismissal of the claim for technical reasons was not correct. The order, which was passed by a bench consisting of Justice Hanchate Sanjeevkuma, was made available this week. The minor and his cousin had purchased a train ticket from Raichur to Yeshwantpur in 2012. After crossing the Dharmavaram station, the deceased fell off the train while washing his hands at a washbasin, sustaining fatal injuries.

The Railway Claims Tribunal had dismissed the claim of the victim's family members because while an eight-year-old had died in the accident, different papers mentioned the age as 8 or 20 years, raising doubts whether it was the same person. The Tribunal also questioned the discrepancies in the mention of the time of the accident. The Karnataka High Court disagreed with this reasoning, observing that the complaint, First Information Report (FIR), postmortem report, witness statements etc, all established that the deceased was eight years old. The bench stated, "There may be some discrepancies in mentioning the age of the deceased as 8 to 20 years, but this discrepancy shall not be exaggerated so as to reject the claim petition." The court also disagreed with the "hyper-technical" reasoning applied in the earlier decision.

The reason assigned by the Tribunal is so trivial, which absolutely could not be accepted. The claim petition is dismissed with all its possible hyper-technical reasons which are not sustainable in the eyes of law. When all the evidence on record placed before the trial Court conclusively proves the fact that the deceased died in the accident, but only on a hyper-technical reason, dismissing the claim petition is absolutely not correct." After making these observations, the court ordered the payment of Rs 400,000 calculated at 8 per cent interest per annum. The court added that if the amount stood less than Rs 800,000, then that would be the sum of compensation instead.

## Security at Delhi's Saket Court ramped up after inmate's murder inside premises

GNS News Agency, July 1

Authorities at the Saket Court in Delhi have decided to ramp up security measures after an under-trial inmate was murdered inside a lockup in the complex premises by two other inmates on June 5, with "integrated security equipment" being installed at the three gates. "...the work in respect of installation of integrated security equipment scheduled to be commenced at Gate no 1, 2, and 6, w.e.f. 13.06.2025 with anticipated completion during the ensuing summer vacation," read a circular issued by the Office of the Principal District and Sessions Judge (South) dated June 23.

"Installation of integrated security equipment work would be commenced at Gate No.1 and 2 and shall be closed completely with effect from 24.06.2025 till 30.06.2025 for all purposes like entry for pedestrians and vehicle entry for Judicial Officers, Advocates and other staff and as such, Gate No.1 and 2 will not be available for ingress and egress (entry and exit) during this period," the circular read. "Gate No. 6 will function as an access route for Advocates and Court staff/police staff/bank employee/PWD staff and Exit from Gate No. 3 till the completion of work of installation of integrated security equipment at Gate 1 & 2," it added. Aman, the under-trial who was murdered in the lockup, was lodged in the Tihar jail and was facing trial for allegedly killing a man in 2017. He was murdered after an altercation broke out between him and Jitender, a fellow inmate, with whom he had an old animosity, according to the Delhi Police. On



November 24, 2021, the Delhi High Court directed authorities to take various interim measures to ensure safety in district court premises after taking note of the rising incidents of violence inside court complexes. These measures included the setting up of an expert team to undertake a security audit of the Delhi High Court complex as well as all the district court complexes in the Capital, checking all vehicles entering court premises, allowing only vehicles with stickers to enter, and setting up CCTV cameras. Among other measures were directing Bar Associations to devise a mechanism to issue ID cards with QR codes to all advocates who are members of these associations, frisking visitors by security personnel at two checkpoints, and producing high-risk under-trial prisoners through virtual mode in court hearings.

## Allahabad HC flags Gangsters Act misuse, summons Muzaffarnagar DM, SSP in detention case



GNS News Agency, July 1

The Allahabad High Court on Monday sharply criticised Muzaffarnagar authorities for repeatedly invoking the stringent Uttar Pradesh Gangsters and Anti-Social Activities (Prevention) Act against a man, on charges that date back to 2023, allegedly to keep him in jail. The man identified as Manshad alias Sona has been detained since May under this law after four separate FIRs were consolidated against him at Khalapur police station.

The court has directed the District Magistrate of Muzaffarnagar, the Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP), and the Station House Officer (SHO) of Khalapur police station to appear in person on the next date of hearing to explain their alleged misconduct and negligence. The next hearing has been scheduled for July 7. Additionally, the court instructed the Registrar (Compliance) to send a copy of the order to the SHO of Khalapur police station, the District Magistrate, and the SSP of Muzaffarnagar for necessary compliance. Copies are also to be sent to the Director General of Police, Uttar Pradesh, and the Secretary, Home Department, Uttar Pradesh, for their information.

The court further granted interim bail to Manshad alias Sona until the next date of hearing, on furnishing a personal bond and two sureties of the same amount, to the satisfaction of the court concerned. While hearing his bail application, the court noted that three 2023 FIRs and one from 2025 had each been re-registered under the Gangsters Act, and an earlier invocation in 2024 compounded the ordeal. When the Additional Government Advocate could not justify this pattern, the court observed that the "The above fact shows not only arbitrariness on the part of the S.H.O. of Police Station—Khalapur, District Muzaffarnagar, but also sheer negligence on the part of S.S.P., Muzaffarnagar as well as District Magistrate, Muzaffarnagar who are required to apply their minds at the time of conducting joint meeting under Rule 5(3)(a) of U.P. Gangsters and Anti Social Activities (Prevention) Rules, 2021." The court in its order stated, "However, considering the fact that there was sheer misuse of the Gangsters Act by the SHO, P.S. Khalapur, District Muzaffarnagar and also the negligence on the part of S.S.P., Muzaffarnagar as well as District Magistrate, Muzaffarnagar in approving the same which is punishable under Section 3(2) of the Gangsters Act and is the violation of directions of this Court issued in the case of Abdul Lateef @ Mustak Khan vs. State of U.P. and others; Criminal Misc.

Writ Petition No. 9930 of 2024; Sanni Mishra @ Sanjayan Kumar Mishra vs. State of U.P. and others; 2024 (1) ADJ 231 (DB) as well as the judgment of the Apex Court in the case of Vinod Bihari Lal vs State of Uttar Pradesh and another; Criminal Appeal Nos. 777-778 of 2025, Lal Mohd. and another vs. State of U.P. (supra) and also in violation of recent guidelines, issued by the State Government in compliance of the order of the Apex Court passed in the case of Gorakh Nath Mishra vs. State of U.P.; Criminal Appeal No. 2589 of 2025, this Court directs the S.H.O., P.S. Khalapur, District Muzaffarnagar; SSP, Muzaffarnagar; and the District Magistrate, Muzaffarnagar to appear personally before this Court on the next date of listing and explain their misconduct and negligence."

## Singareni trade unions seek contract jobs for land evacuees in VK opencast mine

Kothagudem: The Singareni Contract Trade Unions Joint Action Committee (JAC) has urged the Singareni Collieries Company Limited (SCCL) to prioritise employment of land evacuees from the Gautham Khani Opencast (GK OC) mine in upcoming recruitment for contract jobs at the new Venkatesh Khani Opencast (VK OC) mine in Kothagudem.

According to the JAC, nearly 600 workers from families displaced by the GK OC mine closure in 2018 had earlier worked as contract labourers in the same mine. However, many were left jobless after mining operations ceased. With SCCL preparing to commence coal production at VK OC, the JAC demanded that these displaced workers be given first preference for contract jobs. Speaking to Telangana Today, Indian Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU) leader Namilla Sanjeev Kumar said that SCCL has awarded the recruitment contract to Saudha Infra Pvt. Ltd., a private agency. "Instead of prioritising land evacuees, the agency has been collecting applications from outsiders," Sanjeev Kumar alleged. "The displaced workers, who lost both their livelihoods and land, are now protesting the agency's unfair hiring practices." He noted that many families struggled with homelessness, mounting debts, and lack of income during the pandemic after losing work in 2018. The launch of VK OC had raised hopes among the affected families, but the hiring of non-locals has now left them disheartened. Sanjeev Kumar said representatives of various trade unions—including Mohan (INTUC), M. Ravi (BMS), Anjaneyulu (HMS), Ravi Goud (TNTUC), Yakaiah (CKHPS), and Shiva (BWBS)—met SCCL Kothagudem Area General Manager Shalem Raju and submitted a petition demanding jobs for the evacuees. "The GM responded positively and assured us that contract jobs will be provided to land evacuees. However, if any injustice is done, we will be forced to launch serious protests," he warned.



# Underage marriages and Teenage pregnancies in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh: A childhood snatched, a future denied



GNS News Agency, July 1

V. Haritha isn't sure how old she was when she got married. "I was just 14, maybe," she says, adjusting a child on her hip while two more play nearby. Now 18, she is a mother of three, living in Gangaraju Madugula, a remote village about 120 km from Visakhapatnam, nestled in the Eastern Ghats of Andhra Pradesh. The village is home to tribal communities such as the Kondhs and Porajas, listed among India's Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs). Access to education, healthcare and steady income remains limited in the region, and families often make difficult decisions in the face of poverty and isolation. For many girls like Haritha, that includes getting married — and becoming mothers — while still in their teens.

Standing beside her is 16-year-old S. Rupa, eight months pregnant. She married a 24-year-old man a year ago. "My father couldn't afford to feed all of us. I am the third girl. He had no choice," she explains with practiced calm. Teenage girls like Haritha and Rupa, married young and already mothers, are not exceptions in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. Their stories are part of a larger trend documented in the Round Seven of the Work and Family Lives: Young Lives Survey, released in Hyderabad on May 30 this year. The study began in 2002 in the then-undivided Andhra Pradesh, selected as one of four global sites alongside Ethiopia, Peru and Vietnam. "The State was chosen because of its early push to economic reforms — initiatives such as Vision 2020 and privatisation made it an ideal setting to study how liberalisation impacted children over time," says E. Revathi, director of the Centre for Economic and Social Studies and lead investigator of the study in India.

Using a longitudinal, mixed-methods approach, the study tracked 2,000 one-year-olds and 1,000 eight-year-olds across 20 sentinel sites — urban and rural clusters selected based on development indicators. Over 23 years, researchers followed these children across Andhra, Rayalaseema and Telangana, documenting how they grew up, studied, worked, got married and had children. While some indicators improved, one pattern remained stubbornly visible: the prevalence of early marriage and teenage pregnancies. One of those tracked was Kamakshi, a girl from the Goya tribal community in Mahbubnagar, Telangana. She was just 11 when she was married off to a 16-year-old relative. Her parents, struggling with poverty and homelessness, saw marriage as a way to reduce their burden. "She was eight when we first met her in 2002," recalls P. Prudhvikar Reddy, one of the field researchers. "By our second visit in 2006, she was already married. And by 2013, she was raising three children." Now 29, Kamakshi is a grandmother. One of her daughters was married before she turned 18; another, who is out of school, lives with a relative in Jogulamba Gadwal. "I could not leave her alone at home while I went to work," says Kamakshi, who makes a living through daily wage work, by frequenting the labour addas of Chandrayangutta, Hyderabad — just 100 km from Mahbubnagar. In forest-fringed Chittoor of Andhra Pradesh, a Scheduled Tribe girl from Bangarupalem recounts her troubled marriage to a 28-year-old daily wage labourer, now working near Tamil Nadu border. In October 2023, local police and activists intervened to stop her child marriage. The families agreed to delay it until she turned 18. "But just two days later, my father took me to a temple of our village goddess, near Kolar in Karnataka. The wedding was conducted in the presence of a few relatives. From there, I was taken to Bengaluru, where I worked as a housemaid in a posh locality while my husband took up a job as a truck driver," she shares.

Within a month, she got pregnant. After she gave birth to a girl, her husband vanished without a word. She waited three months before returning to her parents' home in Chittoor. "He came back a few months ago, promising he will never abandon us again. But I know, he is not just a drunkard but also a liar," she says, her laughter tinged with resignation. In the Bangarupalem-Palamaner belt, considered a hotspot for child marriage, the Rural Organisation for Poverty Eradication Services (ROPES), a 35-year-old NGO, has intervened in several cases. "Just in the last couple of years, we have stopped over 200 child marriages in these two mandals. The numbers are slowly falling compared to previous decades, but the threat still looms in silence," says K. Dhanasekharan, chairman of the NGO.

# Bring back woman deported to Pakistan: J&K High Court

The High Court of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh has ordered the Union Home Secretary to repatriate a 63-year-old housewife to India who was deported to Pakistan following the crackdown against Pakistani nationals in the wake of the Pahalgam terror attack. Judge Rahul Bharti, in a June 6, 2025 order, said, "Human rights are the most sacrosanct component of a human life and, therefore, there are occasions when a constitutional court is supposed to come up with SOS-like indulgence, notwithstanding the merits and demerits of a case, which can be adjudicated only upon in due course of time. Therefore, this court is coming up with a direction to the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), Government of India (GOI), to bring back the petitioner from her deportation." Petitioner Rakshanda Rashid from Pakistan had been staying in Jammu for the past 38 years with her husband and two children. Her daughter Falak Sheikh told The Hindu that for the past two months, her mother had been living alone in a hotel in Lahore. She had no immediate relatives there and might soon run out of money that she took from India. "She was here on a long-term visa (LTV), yet she was deported to Pakistan. She applied for citizenship in 1996 but the application is yet to be processed. All her sisters are settled in other countries; she has no immediate relatives there," said Ms. Sheikh, a language proficiency trainer in Jammu. The daughter added that the family was worried about her mother's safety as soon her phone would also stop working. "She took only ₹50,000 with her due to the cap on the currency one can

While the National Family Health Survey (2019-20) noted a modest drop in teenage pregnancies — from 8% to 7% — the Young Lives study painted a starker picture. In Telangana alone, 20% of women were married before the age of 18, and 28% had a child before they turned 19. Early marriage and motherhood continue to limit educational and economic prospects, though the overall trend is declining, note researchers. Among the younger cohort tracked by the study, 13% were married before 18 whereas 18% had become mothers by 19. The figures were higher among the older cohort (25% and 27%, respectively), suggesting gradual improvement over time. Some of that change is reflected in the trajectory of K. Mona, 31, who lives in a packed slum in northwest Hyderabad. A participant in the Young Lives study since 2002, Mona was just eight when her father died. With no government school nearby and her mother unable to afford private fees, her education ended in Class V.

While her mother worked long hours as a domestic worker — leaving at 10 a.m. and returning after a 12-hour shift — Mona stayed home, read the Bible and dabbled in stitching. Her elder sisters, sent to relatives in Machilipatnam, managed to study further: one became a lecturer after completing her MBA, the other a teacher after earning a degree in engineering. Mona remained behind to help her mother and took up odd jobs, including at a local medical store, where she met her future husband, a driver. She got married at 20 and her husband, she says, remains her biggest support. With his encouragement, Mona completed her Class 10 through open schooling. "I can read now. I understand English even if I can't speak or write. I help my children with their homework," she says with quiet pride. Her seven-year-old son studies in a private school and wants to join the Army; her five-year-old daughter, who goes to the neighbourhood Anganwadi school, dreams of becoming a doctor. Sometimes, Mona wonders what her life might have been. "If my father had lived, if there had been a school nearby... things would have been different," she says, tears welling up. "My sisters got chances that I didn't. It was not anyone's fault — just the place, the time, the options we had."

Just a few lanes away from her resides 22-year-old Jiya, another participant in the Young Lives study, enrolled when she was just a year old. Raised in the same slum as Mona, Jiya's journey has taken a different course, shaped by steady parental support, access to education and self-assured ambition. Her father, a local pastor, made it clear from the start: her education came first. Petite and poised, dressed in lavender trousers and a crisp white top, Jiya is a BSc (Mathematics) graduate from a private college in Hyderabad. Over the past few years, she has held two jobs — first at the help desk of Rajiv Gandhi International Airport in Hyderabad, then at a customer service firm in the city. As a child, she had wanted to be a teacher. By her teens, she was training to become an air hostess. She cleared two rounds of interviews with a Middle Eastern airline, only to be rejected in the final round for something as trivial as a pimple. "It upset me, of course, but not enough to make me give up," she says.

She took up the help desk job in Hyderabad anyway, travelling four km by bus every day, dressed in a blazer and formals. "I liked the work, but the pay — ₹17,000 a month — and the atmosphere weren't great. The men passed uncomfortable comments," she says. With her parents' support, she chose to walk away and pursue higher studies instead. She continued her open degree alongside a year of air hostess training and later joined a call centre, earning over ₹20,000. But the night shifts triggered persistent migraines, forcing her to quit last month. Now, Jiya is preparing to join an IT firm. Marriage isn't on her mind just yet. "Maybe in a few years," she shrugs. "If I find someone I want to share my life with, I will think about it. But for now, I am focused on work and stability." One of the key factors contributing to the shift in social practices, particularly the delay in early marriages, has been the growing presence of social welfare residential schools across both States. Andhra Pradesh currently has over 590 such schools under the Tribal Welfare Department; Telangana has 158.

These fully residential institutions offer free meals, three times a day, along with education, which has encouraged parents from tribal and low-income communities to send their children, especially girls, to school. "By the time a student completes school here, they are around 17 years old. That alone has significantly reduced the likelihood of marriage before 18," says an official from the Andhra Pradesh Tribal Welfare Department. Economic indicators in both States show impressive growth. Andhra Pradesh recorded a Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) growth of 12.94% in 2024, with balanced gains across agriculture, industry and services. Telangana followed with a GSDP growth of 10.1%, driven largely by industry and IT services. Yet, this economic momentum hasn't resulted in proportionate investment in social sectors. And until social development keeps pace with economic growth, the burden of inequality will continue to fall on the most vulnerable — young girls at the margins.

carry across the border, and soon she will run out of money. First, she stayed in a paying guest accommodation and then moved to a hotel in Lahore. Her phone will stop working; she cannot purchase a local SIM card as foreign handsets do not work in Pakistan. To keep international roaming, she needs to pay ₹30,000-40,000, which she does not have," the daughter added. Married to a retired government official, Ms. Rashid was picked up by the Jammu and Kashmir police and taken to the Attari border check point in Punjab, from where she was sent to Pakistan on April 30. According to the Court order, Sheikh Zahoor Ahmed, the husband of the petitioner, said his wife "has no one in Pakistan for her care and custody, particularly when she is suffering from multiple ailments and her health and life are at risk with each passing day and she is left to fend for herself as abandoned." The Judge said, "This court is bearing in mind that the petitioner was having the LTV status at relevant point of time which per se may not have warranted her deportation, but without examining her case in better perspective and coming up with a proper order with respect to her deportation from the authorities concerned, still she came to be forced out." The court ordered that "given the exceptional nature of facts and circumstances of the case" that the petitioner has been purportedly deported to Pakistan in the recent drive undertaken by the GOI post-Pahalgam carnage, this court is constrained to direct the Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs, GOI, to retrieve the petitioner back to Jammu and Kashmir, India so as to facilitate the reunion of the petitioner with her husband in Jammu."

# Big questions loom over Trump's announcement of Israel-Iran ceasefire deal



GNS News Agency, July 1

WASHINGTON, When President Donald Trump sent U.S. bombers to strike Iran's nuclear sites last weekend, he was betting he could help ally Israel cripple Tehran's nuclear program while keeping his long-standing vow to avoid entanglement in a protracted war. Just days later, Trump's surprise announcement on Monday of an Israel-Iran ceasefire agreement suggests he may have bombed Tehran's rulers back to the negotiating table. The Reuters Daily Briefing newsletter provides all the news you need to start your day. Sign up here. But a long list of big unanswered questions remains, not least whether any ceasefire can actually take effect and hold between two bitter foes whose years-long "shadow" conflict had erupted into an air war marked by the past 12 days of strikes on each other's territory.

Also still unknown and unmentioned in Trump's effusive social media post announcing an imminent "Complete and Total CEASEFIRE" are the terms the two sides have agreed to; whether the U.S. and Iran will revive failed nuclear talks; and the fate of Iran's stockpile of enriched uranium that many experts believe may have survived the U.S. and Israeli bombing campaign. "The Israelis have accomplished much of their objectives ... and Iran was looking for an off-ramp," said Jonathan Panikoff, a former deputy U.S. national intelligence officer for the Middle East. "The U.S. hopes this is the beginning of the end. The challenge is whether there is a strategy for what comes next."

Questions also remain about what has actually been agreed to, even as Trump's declaration raised hopes for the end of a conflict that has prompted fears of a broader regional war. There was no immediate confirmation from Israel of a ceasefire deal, and the Israeli military said it had detected missiles launched from Iran towards Israel in the early hours of Tuesday. Four people were killed in a missile strike on a building in Beersheba, Israel's ambulance service said. Soon after, Trump said the ceasefire between Israel and Iran was "now in effect" and urged both countries to not violate it. While an Iranian official earlier confirmed that Tehran had accepted a ceasefire, the country's foreign minister, Abbas Araghchi, said there would be no cessation of hostilities unless Israel stopped its attacks. But that did not stop Trump and his loyalists from touting what they see as a landmark achievement of a foreign policy approach they call "peace through strength." Trump had endorsed Israel's assessment that Iran was getting close to developing a nuclear weapon, which Tehran has long denied. U.S. intelligence agencies said earlier this year they assessed that

# Fearing war with Russia, Finland hardens NATO's northern frontier



LAPPEENRANTA, FINLAND - At a shooting range 10 miles from the Russian border, Finnish army reservist Janne Latto opened the trunk of his car and unpacked a small surveillance drone and controller, equipment he sees as vital for any future conflict with Finland's neighbour. Since the invasion of Ukraine prompted Helsinki to join NATO two years ago, tensions reminiscent of the Cold War have resurfaced along the forested 1,340-km (833 mile) frontier, Europe's longest with Russia.

The Nordic nation is beefing up an already-sizeable reservist force and will host a new command for NATO, whose members meet in the Hague on June 24 for an annual summit. Still under construction, an imposing barbed-wire-topped fence now dominates a once-bustling section of the border, closed by Finland after it accused Russia of weaponising migration. Shopping malls and restaurants that buzzed with Russian visitors have fallen quiet.

On the other side, Russia has slowly begun dusting off Soviet-era military bases, satellite images show. Kyiv's June 1 attack on Russia's strategic bomber fleet, including at the Olenya airfield near northern Finland, brought the war in Ukraine closer to home.

For this story, Reuters spoke to a dozen people in Finland's border region, where the emerging divisions have left some unable to visit relatives and caused economic losses. Others supported the measures, citing a need to prepare for and deter future conflict. At the shooting range, near the lakeside town of Lappeenranta, some 100 miles from Russia's second city, St Petersburg, Latto, 47, said the Lauritsala Reservists were training with three drones including the Parrot Anafi surveillance vehicle, used by the professional armies of several NATO members, including Finland. A grant from Finland's association of reservist groups meant ten more were on order, he said. The 2022 assault on Ukraine hardened 47-year-old Latto's perception of Russia. "What if they decide to come and change the border, just like they went to Ukraine," said Latto, who runs a small business assembling neon signs and billboards. He recalled Soviet attempts to invade during World War Two, and how Finland was forced to cede approximately 10% percent of its territory to Russia, including Ayrapaa, a nearby municipality that his grandfather died defending in 1944. The countries each insist they pose no threat to the other. Finnish President Alexander Stubb has said some level of Russian buildup is a normal response to Helsinki's accession to NATO, which more than doubled the length of Russia's border with the alliance.

Iran was not building a nuclear weapon and a source with access to U.S. intelligence reports told Reuters last week that that view hadn't changed.

Trump's announcement came just hours after Iran launched missiles against a U.S. air base in Qatar, causing no casualties, in retaliation for the U.S. dropping 30,000-pound bunker-buster bombs on Iranian underground nuclear facilities over the weekend. Trump administration officials deemed Iran's response on Monday to have been calibrated to avoid further escalation with the U.S., according to sources familiar with the matter.

Trump called for talks with Israel and Iran, and a senior White House official said Israel agreed to a ceasefire so long as Iran did not launch fresh attacks. Iran signaled that no further strikes would take place, the official said on condition of anonymity. Trump spoke directly to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and Vice President JD Vance, Secretary of State Marco Rubio and U.S. special envoy Steve Witkoff were involved in the direct and indirect communications with Iran, the official said. Qatar also helped broker contacts with the Iranians. Iran was also amenable to the ceasefire because it was in a severely "weakened state," the White House official said. The Iranians had faced days of Israeli bombardment of nuclear and military sites as well as targeted killings of top nuclear scientists and security commanders. Trump in recent days had also mused publicly about the prospects for "regime change" in Iran. Earlier on Monday, three Israeli officials had said their government was looking to wrap up its campaign in Iran soon and had passed the message on to the U.S. but that much would depend on Tehran. "Now that Trump declared 'world peace,' it will be hard for Netanyahu to publicly contradict him," said Laura Blumenfeld, a Middle East expert at the Johns Hopkins School for Advanced International Studies in Washington. For his part, Trump's unprecedented decision to bomb Iran's nuclear sites marked a step that he had long pledged to avoid - to intervene militarily in a major foreign war. In the biggest and potentially riskiest foreign policy move of his presidency, Trump was betting not only that he could take out Iran's key nuclear site at Fordow but also draw only measured retaliation against the U.S. There have been fears that Tehran could respond by closing the Strait of Hormuz, the world's most important oil artery, attacking multiple U.S. military bases in the Middle East and activating proxies against U.S. and Israeli interests worldwide.

If Trump is able to defuse the Israel-Iran conflict, he may be able to calm the storm of criticism from congressional Democrats and appease the anti-interventionist wing of his Republican MAGA base over bombings that ran counter to his own campaign pledges. It would also allow him to re-focus on policy priorities such as deporting undocumented migrants and waging a tariff war against trading partners. But Trump and his aides won't be able to ignore Iran and the lingering questions it poses. "Can the ceasefire hold?" asked Dennis Ross, a former Middle East negotiator for Republican and Democratic administrations. "Yes, the Iranians need it and the Israelis have largely now acted against the (Israeli Defence Force's) target list." But obstacles remain. "Iran is greatly weakened but what is the future of its nuclear and ballistic missile programs? What happens to its stockpile of highly enriched uranium? There will be a need for negotiations - and these won't be easy to resolve," Ross said.

However, a Finnish government defence report late last year described "a heightened risk of an armed conflict," citing the development of Russia's military capabilities since the start for the war in Ukraine, and saying Moscow had ambitions to create a "buffer zone" from the Arctic to southern Europe. Finland has since announced plans to stockpile landmines. It banned Finnish-Russian dual nationals from flying drones and Russians from buying property, and this week warned that mobile signals were disrupted in regions near Russia.

"Finland is responsible for over half of the entire land border between NATO countries and Russia," Foreign Minister Elina Valtonen posted on X on Thursday, saying the country's defence posture was to ensure the border "remains inviolable."

Finland's presidency declined to comment for this story. Russia's foreign ministry did not respond to a comment request. President Vladimir Putin on Wednesday denied any plans to attack NATO. He said he did not see NATO rearmament as a threat. After Finland joined the alliance, Moscow announced plans to strengthen military capacity in Russia's west and northwest. The activities of the Finnish reservists, who also use firearms in target practice, are voluntary, although most have completed Finland's long-standing mandatory male conscription.

Finnish reservist Unto Kiljunen carries weight plates meant to simulate anti-tank mines during training in Imatra, Finland. More than 50,000 Finns take part in such clubs, up by about a third since before the Ukraine war, according to the Finnish Reservists' Association, with a similar increase in the number of reservists called up by the military for refresher training. Even older members of Latto's band of volunteers could see service in a crisis, as Finland raises the reserve's upper age limit to 65 to add 125,000 troops to a wartime army, and to take the number of reservists to one million by 2031.

He welcomed the extended military service, saying older reservists could be drone or radar operators. "You don't have to run with the infantry to be a part of the modern battlefield," said Latto, a skilled hobbyist who has made his own first-person-view goggles to control a homemade drone. Some businesses are unhappy with the changes. Shopping malls and restaurants once buzzing with Russian visitors are noticeably emptier. Up to 13 million annual cross border trips have ended, affecting dual citizens with family in Russia. The vanishing Russian tourists and dearth of trade has taken at least 300 million euros annually from a 5.5 billion euro local economy, the region's council said. Unemployment soared to close to 15% at the end of last year, higher than the national average. Antique shopkeeper Janne Tarvainen said that previously, some locals complained the Russian visitors had made it hard to get reservations in restaurants or find parking spots.

I saw it differently — money was coming into the town," said Tarvainen, who is now looking for online shoppers to replace Russian footfall. Oksana Serebriakova, 50, whose grandfather was Finnish, moved to Lappeenranta from Moscow after the COVID-19 pandemic looking for better opportunities for her 17-year-old son Vitalik. Her older son and the boys' father stayed in the Russian capital, with plans for frequent visits.



# FATF hails India’s digital stack



The latest edition of FATF’s ‘Money Laundering National Risk Assessment Guidance’ recognised India’s financial inclusion mechanism of combining Aadhaar identification, Jan Dhan accounts and mobile numbers (popularly known as JAM trinity) as an effective tool for formalising financial transactions. “Significant transactions in the informal economy in India happen in cash. Based on India’s assessment of the risks associated with cash, India introduced policies (known as Jan Dhan, Aadhaar and Mobile) to encourage use of the formal financial system. These policies expanded affordable access to bank accounts and other financial services, using a biometric identification system and supported the development of a digital mobile payment system,” the FATF document published earlier this month said.

The document aids countries in assessing money laundering menaces and help them to mitigate such risks. The FATF’s endorsement came close on the heels of its evaluation report published in mid-September that certified India’s robust compliance system on 40 evaluation parameters. The report placed India on the FATF’s exclusive club of top performers, surpassing the US, China, Germany, Japan and Canada for maintaining higher standards in curbing money laundering and terror financing through various measures, including its transparent and globally acclaimed digital India stack. India stack is a collection of technology products owned and maintained by different agencies such

as the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI), the ministry of electronics and information technology (MeitY), the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), and the Reserve Bank Information Technology Pvt Ltd (ReBIT).

The FATF document also endorsed India’s digital payment infrastructure (DPI). “India has prioritised the development of digital payment infrastructure, leading to a rapid increase in digital transaction volumes from 20.7 billion transactions in 2017-18 to 134.6 billion in 2022-23. As a result of these measures, access to financial services has increased from 35% of the total population in 2011 to 80% in 2017,” it said. According to the Union government data, the number of such transactions crossed 18,592 crore (or 185.92 billion) in India in 2023-24 with value touching ₹3,658 lakh crore. India’s indigenously developed digital payment system (UPI and RuPay cards) is getting international acceptance. UPI is already fully functional in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bhutan, and Singapore while expanding to Nepal, Mauritius, France, and Sri Lanka. RuPay cards are accepted in Nepal, Bhutan, Singapore, and the UAE. India’s steps to promote financial inclusion are well calibrated in order to ensure “financial integrity” by designing financial inclusion products with in-built risk mitigating measures, the FATF document said. “A sectoral risk assessment concluded that the overall vulnerability of these financial products is low as far as they relate to ML/TF [money laundering/terrorism funding] therefore India has put in place simplified measures to allow broader access to the formal financial system,” it added. The FATF document endorsed Indian system of customer due diligence (CDD) that work in financial institution as Know Your Customer (KYC) norms under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). It said popular Indian digital products have ensured that people with lower incomes have access to banking with simplified CDD under PMLA while opening of small accounts as well as other accounts for categories of clients that are low risk. “The rules do not permit simplified measures where there is a suspicion of ML/TF, where specific higher-risk scenarios apply or where the risk identified is not consistent with the national risk assessment,” it added.

# KOKO arrives in Hyderabad: Mumbai’s award-winning luxury Asian Dining Destination now open at Hitec City

Hyderabad: KOKO, the celebrated luxury Asian restaurant, is now in Hyderabad, marking its debut as the city’s first standalone luxury Asian dining destination. Originating from Mumbai’s culinary landscape and known for its innovative Cantonese and Japanese cuisine, KOKO in the city opened at RMZ Nexity, Hitec City. Spanning across 10,000 sq ft, the open floor plan includes a stylish bar, a lounge, a dining area, and the exclusive Suite for private gatherings. The decor is characterised by a rich colour palette of deep emerald green, crimson, and gold, punctuated with black and white accents to evoke a sense of luxury and intrigue. A standout feature is the Red Tunnel—a curved passageway illuminated by soft, red LED lights, designed to create anticipation and a sense of mystery. The restaurant’s centrepiece is a grand, curved bar crafted from green marble and beige travertine, flanked by intricate gold shelves filled



with premium spirits and adorned with a chinoiserie-inspired mural above. “KOKO means grand, and the brand was conceived as a celebration of luxury and grandeur in the Asian dining scene,” .

# Challenges before IAEA after attacks on Iran’s nuclear sites



The attacks by the United States and Israel on Iran’s nuclear sites mark the first time any country’s operational nuclear facilities have been targeted to destroy them. As a result, numerous concerns have emerged in the aftermath of the attacks, including the risk of radiation leaks. While Iran and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the global nuclear watchdog, have reported no increase in radiation levels so far, other worries persist. These include concerns about the safety and whereabouts of nuclear material stored at the targeted facilities — Natanz, Isfahan and Fordow.

The attacks could also disrupt IAEA’s access to these nuclear sites which has till now helped the organisation, and the rest of the world, gather information about the goings-on at the facilities. This is a relatively easy exercise. Every nuclear facility, anywhere in the world, is fitted with instruments that monitor radiation levels in real time. In most cases, the data are shared with the IAEA. Iran is a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) as a non-nuclear weapon state. In that capacity, it had to mandatorily enter into a comprehensive safeguards agreement with the IAEA, which allows the organisation to install its own equipment to monitor activities, including radiation levels. Bigger radiation leaks can even be detected from far away. Nuclear radiation typically consists of alpha, beta, and gamma rays, and neutrons. Of these, gamma rays can travel long distances, and can potentially be detected by sensors in other countries. In certain cases, signatures of a leak can be captured by satellites as well, though not in real time.

Ascertaining a radiation leak is not very difficult. That is why the IAEA was able to put out a statement within a few hours of the attacks on Sunday, declaring that it had not noticed any increase in radiation levels around the facilities. The damage to Iran’s nuclear sites is still being assessed as most of their crucial parts are underground. The Fordow facility, used for enriching uranium, is almost entirely underground; most of the Natanz facility, including the enrichment infrastructure, is underground; while some parts of Isfahan are also apparently underground.

While Iran has played down the impact of the attacks, saying no irreversible damage has taken place, IAEA’s preliminary assessment presents a more serious picture. IAEA Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi, in his opening remarks at the emergency meeting of the IAEA Board of Governors, called to discuss the situation in Iran, said that the fuel enrichment plant at Natanz had been hit. At Fordow, craters could be seen, but the damage underground could not be assessed. At the Isfahan site, buildings, including some related to the uranium conversion process, and entrances of the tunnels leading to halls meant for storing en-

riched uranium, appear to have been hit, Grossi said.

Although the IAEA has its team deployed in Iran, the organisation does not currently have access to the attacked sites. The IAEA has said its staff is ready to carry out inspections of the sites to assess the damage, but their safety might be a concern in the current situation. This might be the biggest concern right now. The IAEA keeps track of all nuclear material around the world with the help of information provided by host countries. Every country using, storing, or handling nuclear material is supposed to report its status to the IAEA. This is particularly true of countries such as Iran, which, besides being an NPT signatory, is also under special watch due to its suspected attempts to build nuclear weapons. According to the IAEA, Iran has 400 kg of uranium that is already enriched to 60%, just a few steps away from further enrichment to weapons-grade level of 90% or more. The total stockpile of uranium and other nuclear material would be much more. Much of these nuclear materials were believed to have been stored at the sites that have been attacked. Iran has said that anticipating the attacks, it had already evacuated its sensitive nuclear materials from these facilities, and moved them to undisclosed safer locations. There have been reports of a long line of vehicles seen in some pre-attack satellite images at the Fordow site, suggesting that nuclear material may indeed have been moved. The absence of any radiation leaks from the attacked sites could support this argument. The attacks by Israel and the US could make it difficult for the IAEA to fully account for all the known nuclear material in subsequent inspections. This might lead to the unverified use of nuclear material or nuclear proliferation.

# Closing Hormuz Strait could backfire on Iran

Dubai: The war between Israel and Iran has raised concerns that Iran could retaliate by trying to close the Strait of Hormuz, the world’s most important oil chokepoint due to the large volumes of crude that pass through it every day. The US military’s strike on three sites in Iran over the weekend has raised questions about how its military might respond. The Strait of Hormuz is between Oman and Iran, which boasts a fleet of fast-attack boats and thousands of naval mines as well as missiles that it could use to make the strait impassable, at least for a time. Iran’s main naval base at Bandar Abbas is on the north coast of the strait. It could also fire missiles from its long Persian Gulf shore, as its allies, Yemen’s Houthi rebels, have done in the Red Sea. About 20 million barrels of oil per day, or around 20% of the world’s oil consumption, passed through the strait in 2024. Most of that oil goes to Asia. The strait connects the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea. It’s only 33 km wide at its narrowest point, but deep enough and wide enough to handle the world’s largest crude oil tankers. Oil that passes through the strait comes from Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Iraq, Iran, Kuwait, and Bahrain, while major supplies of liquefied natural gas come from Qatar. At its narrowest point, the sea lanes for tankers lie in Omani waters, and before and after that cross into Iranian territory. While some global oil chokepoints can be circumvented by taking longer routes that simply add costs, that’s not an option for most of the oil moving through the strait. That’s because the pipelines that could be used to carry the oil on land, such as Saudi Arabia’s East-West pipeline, they don’t have nearly enough capacity.

# Ayurveda Biology in NET: Jagadesh Kumar explains why; some experts add caveats



Based on recommendations from an expert committee, the University Grants Commission (UGC) has decided to include Ayurveda Biology on the list of subjects from December 2024 onwards. The UGC conducts the National Eligibility Test (NET) through the National Testing Agency (NTA), twice a year, in June and December. Inclusion of a subject on the list would qualify test takers for research and faculty positions in it.

Ayurveda Biology seeks to apply modern evidence-based science to traditional knowledge. The syllabus for Ayurveda Biology, as released on the UGC-NET website, has ten units, the first five of which focus on the concepts of Ayurveda and the rest, modern biology. Apart from the history and fundamental principles of Ayurveda, the syllabus covers key Ayurveda concepts such as Sharira Rachna and Kriya as well as Ayurvedic Pharmacopoeia. The second half of the syllabus focuses on contemporary science topics such as Microbiology, Immunology, Genetics and so on. Explaining the reasons for the UGC decision, M. Jagadesh Kumar, Chairman, UGC, told The Hindu that facilitating research is a key aim. “The possibilities for research in Ayurveda Biology are enormous. Aspirants can conduct clinical trials to investigate the efficacy of Ayurvedic treatments and formulations. It is also possible to study the effects of Ayurvedic herbs and formulations on various physiological systems,” he says.

Mr. Kumar said that Ayurveda Biology researchers can help in developing methods to standardise Ayurvedic preparations and ensure that they are of high quality. Inclusion on the list is an extension of the National Education Policy 2020’s emphasis on interdisciplinary research. “Collaborating with researchers from other fields, such as biochemistry, genetics, and microbiology, can help explore Ayurvedic principles. This will promote interdisciplinary research. Integrating Ayurveda Biology knowledge into clinical practice can help in collaborating with other healthcare professionals, and providing patient care by existing and upcoming health professionals,” he said. While the UGC NET list has historically been a place for arts and humanities subjects, the CSIR NET focuses on strict science. Prof. Jagadesh Kumar says, in the beginning, the UGC NET did focus on arts and humanities but it has evolved to incorporate a wider range of subjects. “If you look at the list, there are some 28 subjects that fit within what we generally call strictly science and provide ample opportunities for candidates in the science stream. Subjects like Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) are also included on the UGC NET list to encourage research and scholarship in these areas. We must recognise their cultural and intellectual significance. IKS is conceived as an integrated theme across different disciplines, just like Ayurveda Biology,” he adds.

Benefits and caveats Welcoming the inclusion, Subhash Chandra Lakhotia, BHU Distinguished Professor (Lifetime) and SERB Distinguished Fellow Cytogenetics Laboratory, however, said the issue is that the teaching of Ayurveda that has been going on in the traditional BAMS course is very poor. “With Ayurveda Biology, Ayurveda students can move a notch up by acquiring a scientific background and applying modern science to traditional knowledge,” he says. But, Mr. Lakhotia cautioned that Ayurveda Biology will be useful only if teaching and examination are based on facts, not myths and imagination. He approved the NET syllabus for Ayurveda Biology but said that requiring students to learn concepts like Sharira Kriya along with contemporary physiology can cause confusion. “Students need to be informed about the historical nature of the first component,” he said. The other serious limitation that he foresees is that those studying traditional Bachelor of Ayurvedic

After two suffocating days of “severe” air quality and more than two weeks of persistently “very poor” air, members of the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) finally initiated Stage-3 of the Graded Response Action Plan (Grap) across the National Capital Region (NCR). The decision comes as residents grapple with dangerously polluted air, with health experts and citizens decrying the delayed enforcement of stricter anti-pollution measures. Stage-3 of Grap, which goes into effect at 8 am on Friday, imposes 11 new restrictions targeting two primary sources of urban pollution: emissions from older vehicles, as well as dust generation from construction and demolition activities (C&D).

CAQM’s sub-committee, responsible for activating Grap, convened to implement measures only after Delhi’s air quality remained in the “severe” range for 48 hours and amid growing public frustration. Grap-3 also offers the choice for NCR governments to consider suspending in-person classes for children in primary school and taking them online instead. The measures also came into effect after widespread uproar from citizens who continued to suffer from

Medicine and Surgery (BAMS) may not be able to attempt this NET exam since their grounding in modern science is not adequate. “The BAMS curriculum needs in-depth redesigning so that the basics of modern biology are taught to these students. Unless the formally trained Ayurveda candidates get actively involved in research, the dream of Ayurvedic Biology cannot be fulfilled,” he said. M. Jagadesh Kumar, Chairman, UGC said, “Collaborating with researchers from other fields, such as biochemistry, genetics, and microbiology, can help explore Ayurvedic principles.” [Photo credit: Official X handle of Prof. Mamidala Jagadesh Kumar]

M. Jagadesh Kumar, Chairman, UGC said, “Collaborating with researchers from other fields, such as biochemistry, genetics, and microbiology, can help explore Ayurvedic principles.” [Photo credit: Official X handle of Prof. Mamidala Jagadesh Kumar]

The idea of Ayurveda Biology, as a discipline, was pioneered by Dr. Marthanda Varma Sankaran Valiathan, a renowned cardiac surgeon and the founder-director of Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences and Technology (SCTIMST). Dr. Valiathan spent much of his later years deeply researching the ancient scholars — Charaka, Susruta, and Vagbhata. After many decades of study and research, Dr. Valiathan said procedures and products in Ayurveda lend themselves to modern scientific investigation. Critics say that while Ayurveda Biology has an evidence-based approach, in other subjects, such as Indian Knowledge System, concepts are taken to be true with little or no evidence. Dr. G. Sivaraman, a Siddha physician, for instance criticises the IKS syllabus in NET saying it is not a dispassionate evaluation of the concepts. “Many mythological opinions are positioned as scientific. Some of the concepts are unscientific and irrational and they need not be positioned in the name of Indian science,” he says. Dr. Sivaraman warns against “tall claims” in ancient texts of Ayurveda, Siddha and other traditional knowledge systems. “The practitioners of both the disciplines should know the basics of both the systems so dialogue and debate can happen with consensus.”

While modern science begins with atoms and molecules, according to Ayurveda, matter arises from the five mahabhutas: aether, air, fire, water and earth. Mr. Lakhotia says the fundamental principle of panchmahabhuta is from a time when people didn’t know what matter is or what life is. Today life is understood in terms of biological and physical properties. The concept of tridosha can’t be true for all situations. “Historically, when Ayurveda Biology was pioneered by Late Dr Valiathan in the early 2000’s, it was to question Ayurvedic principles and practices with an unbiased mind and to establish a scientific rationale for them. I believe that should be the objective today too.”

Among the institutes that teach Ayurveda Biology are the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) in New Delhi and the University of Trans-Disciplinary Health Sciences and Technology (TDU) in Bengaluru, founded by Sam Pitroda and Darshan Shankar. Dr. Gurmeet Singh, professor and head of Centre for Ayurveda Biology and Holistic Nutrition at TDU, said, “While both Ayurveda and Biology are regarded as sciences of life, the two knowledge systems have a very different foundation. Biology studies how the body responds to different environments and analyses our responses from the lens of types of genome, epigenome, microbiome or our own biochemistry. Ayurveda explores these from doshik dimensions. Ayurveda Biology tries to explore the synthesis of Ayurveda and Biology.” Dr. Sivaraman says Ayurveda Biology is the need of the hour. “The entire world, including all the developed countries, are closely watching the possibilities of integrative medicine. Wherever modern science of medicine is facing obstacles in understanding a disease or treating an ailment, they are thinking of other possibilities and whether different knowledge systems can complement each other,” he says. Prof. Gurmeet Singh said applying contemporary biology to the knowledge in ancient texts and accumulated by village healers started some 30 years ago at TDU. “What started 30 years ago organically turned into a structured programme at the TDU when we felt the need to synergise Ayurveda and Biology. Research areas at TDU include micronutrient deficiencies with focus on iron deficiency, metabolic health with focus on type 2 diabetes, brain health with focus on mild cognitive impairment, traditional knowledge guided quality standards for traditional medicine, quality of traditional medicinal ingredients and products, and more.”

restriction, it restricts BS-4 or lower light motor vehicles (LMVs, or simply put cars) from plying in Delhi, Gurugram, Faridabad, Ghaziabad and Gautam Budh Nagar. Further, there are restrictions on the movement of BS-3 and lower medium goods vehicles (MGVs) and Light Commercial Vehicles (LCVs) from plying in the Capital. Stage-3 also asks interstate buses from NCR to be stopped from entering Delhi if they are not CNG, electric or complying with BS-IV diesel or higher. Major construction and demolition projects like railway projects, metro, airport, ISBTs, national and defence-related projects, healthcare facilities.





# Climate footprint of space exploration is passing below the radar



As the world becomes more reliant on space technologies for vital functions like climate monitoring, the environmental consequences of space activities also become increasingly urgent and in need of more attention. The rapid growth of the number of satellites in orbit has led to concerns about interference with climate monitoring systems and the accumulation of orbital debris. With no specific international regulations addressing these challenges, it is crucial the world's governments act quickly to ensure space exploration doesn't drift into unsustainability.

How are space activities affecting the environment?

Every rocket launch releases carbon dioxide, black carbon, and water vapour into the atmosphere. Black carbon is of particular concern because it absorbs sunlight 500-times more effectively than carbon dioxide does, amplifying global warming. As commercial space ventures become more common, the cumulative impact of these emissions will worsen. Rocket propellants, especially those using chlorine-based chemicals, deplete the ozone layer at high altitudes, increasing exposure to ultraviolet radiation on the ground as well as disrupting atmospheric circulation — both of which affect the global climate. According to a December 9 article in MIT Tech Review, when satellites “burn up in the atmosphere” once their missions end, they release “satellite ash in the middle layers of the earth’s atmosphere. This metallic ash can harm the atmosphere and potentially alter the climate.” Next, like many other forms of manufacturing, the production of satellites demands energy-intensive processes involving metals and composite materials, whose extraction and preparation have large carbon footprints of their own. Satellites also use propulsion systems to adjust their location and orientation in orbit, and their emissions add to the overall count. Equally, the rise of space mining — e.g. extracting valuable (on the earth) minerals from asteroids — could lead to increased industrial activity both in space and on the ground. Such mining activities haven’t begun yet but they are sure to be part of the future. While space technology supports essential climate monitoring and disaster management, the environmental costs for the earth’s atmosphere and space are escalating, requiring urgent redressal.

What are the dangers of orbital debris?

Orbital debris, or space junk, refers to defunct satellites, spent rocket stages, and pieces of satellites produced when they break apart in low earth orbit (LEO). According to the European Space Agency, as of September 2024, there had been around 6,740 rocket launches since 1957 that placed 19,590 satellites in orbit. Around 13,230 are still in space and of them 10,200 are still functional. Since the space in earth’s orbit is a resource just like water bodies and land masses on the ground, the occupation of orbits by non-functional objects constitutes a form of pollution as well — with the added threat of risk magnification. For example, space surveillance networks have catalogued around 36,860 space objects thus far, including those produced in the 650+ fragmentation events (break-ups, explosions, and collisions). The total mass of all space objects in orbit exceeds 13,000 tonnes. As this mass continues to increase, the collision risks to satellites increase as well. Most space junk can reach speeds of up to 29 km/hr. When moving so fast, even a minuscule piece of metal can smash through a satellite like a bullet, damaging critical components, including those used for communication, navigation, and to monitor climate parameters of merit. Orbital debris also poses an indirect threat by interfering with scientists’ ability to col-

# Way in the world: how Muslim women travelled from 17th-20th centuries

I began reading Three Centuries of Travel Writing by Muslim Women (Zubaan Books) chronologically, hoping rather ambitiously to read it from cover to cover, one essay at a time. That was a mistake, I think. The book is better served, and savoured, if the reader were to dip into it in no particular order. Each essay is so precisely contextualised by the immaculate ‘Introduction’ prefacing each entry and followed by ‘Further Reading and ‘Notes’ that even a casual reader can dip into this richly documented, beautifully translated volume of disparate writings and partake of the spirit behind it. For the more serious reader/researcher, there is of course the scholarly introduction by Siobhan Lambert-Hurley and Daniel Majchrowicz who edited the book (along with Sunil Sharma). They write: “On the face of it, the premise of this volume is simple: a comparative study of travel narratives by Muslim women who travelled the world before the ‘jet age’ transformed modern mobility. Yet in our contemporary moment, the very juxtaposition of these terms — Muslim, women, travel mobility — instantly raises a number of questions.”

Colonialism, gender, travel, religion, money come together in unexpected ways throughout this book. What is more, these accounts by educated and “privileged” Muslim women also contain descriptions — sometimes empathetic, occasionally derisive — of other Muslim women they meet during their travels who are poor and disadvantaged and, being illiterate, could not have recorded their experiences or left written records of their lives. So, apart from records of the new and the unexpected, there are also observations about the different practices of child-rearing, food, cooking habits, dress, religious and social practices.

Multiple voices These first-hand accounts, originally written in Urdu, Persian, Arabic, Turkish, Chaghtaai Turki, Punjabi, Bengali, Indonesian, German and English, span the 17th to 20th centuries thus presenting an array of experiences and impressions. Written variously as conventional travelogues (Halide Edib, Zainab Cobbold), excerpts from autobiographies (Salamah Bint Said/Emily Ruete, Huda Shaarawi), diary entries (Muhammadi Begum, Begum Hasrat Mohani), written for limited circulation as magazine articles (Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, Shams Pahlavi), recorded for family and friends (Begum Sarbuland Jung, Ummat al-Ghani Nur al-Nisa), or with a pronounced political overtone (Suharti Suwarto, Melek Hanim) quite naturally, therefore, present different voices and concerns. Chatty, informal, informed when the writing is for herself or her family members; or formal, structured, detailed, sometimes even didactic when she knows what she is writing is

lect data about the earth — from tracking disasters to monitoring weather — from space, such as by interfering with radio waves. Such threats also obligate satellite operators to invest in shielding satellites and actively perform costly manoeuvres to avoid collisions; both requirements drive up mission cost. The risks are even more significant for human-crewed missions. For example, the International Space Station frequently adjusts its orbit to avoid debris.

What are the barriers to space-sector sustainability?

Regulation is key to ensuring space remains accessible and space activities remain environmentally sustainable. Without clear guidelines, the unchecked growth of emissions and debris will harm the earth’s climate and increase the barriers to future space exploration. Space activities currently fall outside international sustainability instruments like the Paris Agreement, so governments need to establish standards for emissions from rockets and satellites to prevent them from becoming overlooked contributors to global warming. Without regulations, the increasing number of satellites and debris will overcrowd LEO, rendering future missions more expensive, which in turn would subtract from space’s identity as a shared global resource that needs to be equally accessible to everyone. International cooperation through bodies like the Committee on the Peaceful Use of Outer Space (COPUOS) is necessary to create enforceable standards in this context. Governments can also ensure such frameworks align with the Outer Space Treaty’s principles of responsible use of space while addressing the Treaty’s current lack of binding provisions. This unity is particularly crucial if countries are to address the environmental impacts of space activities.

How can space exploration be more sustainable?

Achieving sustainability in space exploration requires innovative solutions but which also present challenges of their own. For example, reusable rockets like those developed by SpaceX and Blue Origin reduce manufacturing waste and lower costs by allowing engineers to reuse rocket components in multiple missions. But the reusable parts are often heavier, which increases fuel consumption. These rocks also have limited applicability for high-orbit missions and their wear-and-tear invokes costly refurbishments. Thus scaling this technology while maintaining efficiency remains a hurdle. Second, transitioning to cleaner fuels like liquid hydrogen and/or biofuels can minimise harmful emissions during liftoffs. However, hydrogen is currently produced with non-renewable energy, negating its environmental benefits. Cryogenic fuels — which provide more thrust for the same mass — are more expensive and more complex to handle, keeping them out of reach of smaller operators. Electric propulsion is another option, but its low thrust restricts its use to specific missions like in-orbit manoeuvres. Third, designing satellites with biodegradable materials that naturally disintegrate during re-entry can prevent long-term debris accumulation. On the flip side, these materials currently lack the durability required for the extreme conditions of space. High development costs and limited adoption further slow progress.

Autonomous debris removal (ADR) technologies such as robotic arms and laser systems also offer hope for cleaning up orbital debris, but again, they are currently expensive as well as need more legal clarity before they can begin to operate safely. A global traffic system to monitor satellites and debris in real time could reduce collisions and optimise orbit use. Resistance to data-sharing, including due to security and commercial concerns, and the lack of a unified international authority hinders its development, however. None of these hurdles are permanent of course. Moreover, whereas individual solutions face significant challenges, a combined approach may be more feasible. For example, binding agreements through COPUOS can standardise emission limits, debris mitigation, and data-sharing practices; governments and private entities can prioritise funding for green technologies, ADR systems, and satellite biodegradability; and financial rewards, subsidies or penalties can nudge private actors towards sustainable practices. At the intersection of technological advancement and environmental responsibility, the choices we make today will define the future of space exploration.

meant for public consumption. Travel as life There are 45 accounts in all, grouped under four headings: Travel as Pilgrimage, Travel as Emancipation and Politics, Travel as Education, and Travel as Obligation and Pleasure. While large numbers of Indian women have written haj accounts, there is only one Indian in the second section, Shareefah Hamid Ali, who represented India at the United Nations and travelled by air. Several Indian Muslim women chose to travel for education, sometimes their own, or their husband’s or sons’. There is Mehr-al-Nisa from Hyderabad who joined her doctor husband in Ohio to train as an x-ray nurse, and Zaib-un-Nisa from Karachi writing an account of her 60 days in America as a member of the U.S. Department of State-sponsored Foreign Leader Exchange Programme where she crosses the breadth of the United States in a hired car with her husband. Safia Jabir Ali, daughter of the esteemed Tyabji clan, married Jabir Ali who travelled extensively for business from their home in Burma to Europe. Her memoir, written in Urdu, is brimful with an easy confidence: “I had to travel by myself from Bombay to Marseilles, and that was the first time I had occasion to depend entirely on myself and spend more than three weeks among entire strangers. However, as probably some of you know by experience, on board the steamer, one gets to know people very soon.

I was lucky in being able to travel on the Loyalty, the steamer of an Indian company where there were a good many Indian passengers, and some of us soon became great friends.” Connecting the dots The last part, ‘Travel as Obligation and Pleasure’, has by far the most interesting experiences: Mughal Princess Jahanara’s mystical meeting in Kashmir; Salamah Bint Said, a princess of Zanzibar, who flees her home to unite with her German lover in Hamburg, converts to Christianity and takes the name Emily Ruete; and Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain’s pleasure trip to the Himalayas, among others. While most women travelled with a male (husband, father, son, brother), some travelled alone: “

Safia Jabir Ali travelled alone from Bombay to meet her husband in post-First World War Britain, Sediqeh Dowlatabadi from Tehran in 1923 to study at the Sorbonne in Paris, Selma Ekram from ‘Stamboul’ to New York in 1924 on the promise of work, Muhammadi Begum with her infant child from Bonn to Oxford in the mid-1930s, and Herawati Diah en route to study at Barnard College in New York in 1937. “Alone or chaperoned, veiled or unveiled, travelling for work or pleasure, these accounts by Muslim women bust every stereotype. In one voice, these women seem to be saying: “only connect”.

# UGC rules on UG, PG: A case for ‘liberating’ autonomous colleges from universities



Recently, the University Grants Commission (UGC) published the Draft (Minimum Standards of Instruction for the Grant of Undergraduate Degree and Postgraduate Degree) Regulations, 2024. The draft is open for feedback from stakeholders. The draft democratizes higher education in terms of its flexibility, mobility, assessment patterns, curriculum design, and vocationalization. Therefore, it is imperative to redefine our education policy in tune with the skill gap and economy’s demand so that the workforce can be transformed. Educational policies are periodically revised to suit changing demography, socio-cultural context and socio-economic developments. The deficit in skilled workforce having socio-economic implications and the emergence of knowledge-based economy demands the redefining of the curriculum and the pedagogy. For instance, in recent times, we have been hearing about the decline in enrolment in conventional degree programmes in liberal arts and science colleges and the closure of degree programmes that do not run successfully in reputed universities in India and abroad indicating the need for reimagining the tertiary education landscape.

According to a Dell Technologies report, 85% of the jobs in 2030 that Generation Z and Alpha would embrace have not been invented yet. In addition, as per the world Economic Forum report, 65% of primary-school children today will be working in job types that do not exist yet. Having set the context for the need for education policy, it is our duty to critically analyse the pros and cons of the UGC draft for the minimum standards to be complied with from a neutral perspective.

Academic flexibility The UGC draft states that academic institutions should value learning through Hybrid flexible (HyFlex) modes in 60:40 ratio. However, it is depressing to note that despite the UGC promoting online distant learning in recent years, many universities have not bothered to empanel themselves on the concerned portal that would facilitate affiliated colleges offering Online Distance Learning (ODL). While many south Indian universities are moving towards bankruptcy, they don’t quite realize that ODL is a potential revenue stream to become sustainable. Autonomous colleges in the top 100 NIRF rankings have the privilege of availing the ODL courses benchmarked with the standards of MOOC. However, lack of awareness among State universities and their stiff-necked attitude towards affiliated colleges has not let the autonomous colleges to register in the UGC portal. Only if UGC takes stock of the compliance of the universities and be a party to all the litigation in the court on compliance issues filed by the constituent colleges, academic flexibility as a scheme would be realized. While the positive impact of ODL needs to be appreciated, having learnt from the pandemic, we need also to recognize that social learning is acquired or imbibed through campus experiences from co-curricular and extra-curricular activities as well. This happens through immersive engagement through various clubs and societies as part of the curriculum. The idea of “whole person education” cannot be realized through ODL alone. Hybrid, flexible learning is the way to go. Tamil Nadu has the lion’s share of around 232 autonomous colleges among 995 such colleges in India. However, for 45 years autonomous colleges have not been liberated from the clutches of the universities to experiment academic flexibility in spirit and word.

Multiple entry and exit HEIs shall provide multiple entry and exit options in academic programmes, as per the new draft rules. Multiple entry and exit would enhance student mobility and academic flexibility. Millennials seek value for money and go for professional certifications in addition to the degree programme. They seek return on investment on the tuition fee for UG and PG programmes. Keeping these perspectives in mind, the degree programme has been divided into certificate, diploma, degree and honours as four levels, rendering flexibility to the stakeholders. This scheme facilitates the students to exit after certificate or diploma levels and get into the world of work for internship or job and get back to complete the rest of the credits promoting lifelong learning. It is to be noted that only if the students pursue the vocation related to their domain, multiple entry and exit would have continuity. Although students would welcome it, financial sustainability is a concern if enrolment varies. If the number of entries and exits balance, then the programme can be sustainable.

Academic mobility Academic mobility is not only envisaged between arts to sciences and vice versa but also between mainstream to vocational stream in order to eliminate harmful hierarchies and silos. Value-added courses integrate vocational education with mainstream education. Edutech firms have started developing modules by roping in industrial cohorts as ecosystem partners to design modules by suitably converting their practices into graded modules. Such courses are to be benchmarked with vocational standards for a seamless transition to the world of work. Further, the four-year course will enhance the global mobility of students. The UGC has been driving at enrolling in the Academic Bank of Credits as a mandatory assignment for autonomous colleges. Unfortunately, autonomous colleges are caught in the grip of universities that offer the degree certificates. The UGC needs to intervene and liberate the autonomous colleges. Minimum attendance requirement and outcome-based attendance Guideline 7.0 discusses reforms in minimum attendance requirements. The concept of attendance needs to be redefined owing to the promotion of diverse learning modes (HyFlex) and as an attempt to dignify varied learning styles (cognitive, affective, kinesthetic and auditory). The redefinition may take into account learning outcomes rather than just the physical presence of students in the class. Since the knowledge is accessible, learning is progressively reckoned as facilitated constructivism where students construct the knowledge on their own rather than based on teachers’ instructions. Moreover, students are progressively inclined towards active learning that includes internships and projects than being confined to classrooms. Hence attendance cannot be defined exclusively on the number of instructional lectures attended by the students. Consequently, a process needs to be designed, wherein 450 hours per semester are distributed into several learning outcomes, and the marking of attendance for the absentees is made through the assessment for learning outcomes as per Bloom’s taxonomy levels of K5 and K6 and a passing minimum of 40% is benchmarked. This proposal would appeal to students who learn by modes other

than reading, writing, and speaking (cognitive mode) and dignify the auditory, kinesthetic and social learners who would have to learn outside the classrooms occasionally.

Beyond boundaries of domains The UGC draft guidelines have ventured into achieving this goal in principle by democratizing admission norms by liberating it from domains. A major shortcoming in our system is the rigid segregation between the sciences and humanities/arts unlike the U.S. where students are encouraged to secure credits across streams. Unlike conventional universities, new-age private universities now offer courses that hybridize the sciences and the arts but this trend should spread to the older, established universities and colleges too. The future of higher education lies in intermarrying between disciplines and spanning across the boundaries of domains in solving problems. The need of the hour is solving problems from a transdisciplinary perspective where the boundaries between the domains cease to exist. Institutes of excellence such as the IITs, IISERs and IISc have already begun experimenting it. Unless there is a need and reward-based interventions by the UGC, the teaching fraternity would find it difficult to move from status quo. The ability to span across boundaries is a trait of researchers and teachers that is needed to bring the faculty from various specializations to join together to explore a given problem from multiple perspectives. Textbooks need to be rewritten from transdisciplinary perspectives right from schools to promote cross-disciplinary admissions as intended by the UGC. Common entrance tests as non-equitable assessments Eligibility criteria for admission (Undergraduate / Postgraduate) states that admission in any discipline of the UG programme is possible (120 credits) if the student qualifies the national level or university level entrance examination in the discipline of the UG programme. Further, it states that a student is eligible for admission in any discipline of PG programmes if the student qualifies for the national level or university level entrance examination in the discipline of the PG programme. Although it is indispensable to have such screening examinations to normalize the knowledge acquired by the students, these examinations will not help scout real innovators and creators who can help build a skilled workforce. Such entrance tests do not test the ability of students to ideate, rather they test the ability to answer conditioned and stereotypical questions that can be learnt through a strategic pedagogy offered by tutorial colleges and structured thinking. Consequently, students who learn through learning styles other than cognitive means (read, write and speak) cannot succeed in such entrance tests and would miss the opportunity to progress towards higher education. While entrance tests could be one of the windows to assess the knowledge level of students, if alternative windows that evaluate their real competency, skill sets and ideation ability, are made available to admit lateral thinkers, the country would produce innovators and creators.

In my inquiry into these aspects, I have come to learn and experience that often those who clear the UGC NET, GATE, CSIR or JAM examinations by conscious monkey training from childhood are at times not critical in their thinking. On the other hand, many students with adequate research aptitude, demonstrated lab skills and process intelligence to execute projects are not inclined towards or are incapable of clearing the competitive exams. Each year, colleges witness the exodus of such potential candidates to careers other than domain or research for want of financial assistance. There should be provisions to allow such potential candidates to pursue research as their career. The government should be able to offer patronage to them for junior research fellowships so they can register for PhD after MSc or M.A. It would be ideal if a support system or another window is created for such students to pursue and publish in Indian peer-reviewed journals through a fast-track mode. Unfortunately, the present educational system provides opportunities for post graduate students of science to pursue research internships in institutes of excellence only based on academic excellence rated exclusively through marks obtained. This denies opportunities for low-scoring but highly skilled graduates from certain universities, allowing some geographic domains to reap almost all the benefits. Students selected through marks and references obtained from professors, if subjected to an intensive pre-internship process, can be an alternative mode of selection for paid research internships. Many of our students who are incapable of clearing GATE or CSIR exams get admissions in universities abroad because they can demonstrate their proven research skills and publications in journals. They can put together convincing applications based on their statements of purpose. The same students return after graduation to serve as faculty in the institutes of excellence that denied them opportunities to study. Our system has failed to spot such talented students. The UGC encourages innovation and out-of-the-box ideas through autonomy, good governance, and empowerment as per the draft guidelines. Common entrance tests may not foster such out-of-the-box thinking. While critiquing the idea of conducting entrance tests, it is imperative to find an intervention that would mitigate the limitations. Although the idea of boundary-crossing flexibility from sciences to arts and vice versa in principle is an intelligent move, the execution of the idea should be strategized through project-based pathway courses as part of the credit framework (foundational or bridge course). This should be a criterion while students seek cross-disciplinary admissions. Bottom-up consultations This article has critiqued the UGC draft guidelines and suggested interventions. An effort has been made to perceive the implementation of the policy in the context of colleges. If the decisionmakers at the UGC conduct brainstorming sessions to curate opinions and design interventions authentically from bottom-up, the stakeholders will show ownership and the execution will be sustainable.

# Combat plastic menace through collective action

Plastic has infiltrated every part of our lives today, including our bodies in the form of microplastics. The UN Environment programme, on World Environment Day called for collective action to combat plastic pollution. Globally, it is estimated that nearly 460 million tonnes of plastic are produced every year of which, nearly 20 million tonnes end up as litter, according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature. Despite reports suggesting that a large portion of plastic waste is being recycled, the problem remains pervasive. The World Population Review’s Mismanaged Waste Index (MWI) — which measures the level of mismanagement of the waste — ranked nearly 97 countries out of 212 as ‘very high’ as of 2023. This means nearly 45 per cent of the world’s nations are not managing their waste properly. India is among those ranked ‘very high’ in MWI, indicating the severity of plastic pollution. The country accounts for 20 per cent of the total plastic waste generated in the world (9.3 to 10.2 million tonnes).



# New climate data set for India unveiled by Azim Premji University



The average annual maximum temperature will experience an increase of 1.5 degree Celsius by 2057 under ‘the middle of the road’ emission scenario while the more extreme ‘fossil-fueled development’ emission scenario predicts this temperature rise will occur a decade earlier, by 2047. This is one of the many key findings of the Azim Premji University’s new climate data set for India, which was unveiled on November 17.

According to the Climate Change Projections for India (2021-40) report, the projections examine two IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) scenarios: SSP2-4.5 (moderate emissions and adaptation) and SSP5-8.5 (high emissions with heavy fossil fuel reliance). In other words, the ‘middle of the road’ emission scenario assumes that society will take moderate steps to reduce emissions and adapt to climate change, which will lead to moderate effects in the future. The ‘fossil-fueled development’ emission scenario presumes that society will continue to rely heavily on fossil fuels for energy, leading to a future with very high emissions and severe impacts.

Another finding is that India’s average summer maximum temperature will have a 1.5-degree Celsius increase by 2043, according to the ‘middle of the road’ emission sce-

nario and by 2041 for the ‘fossil-fueled development’ emission scenario. Under the low emission scenario, 196 districts in India will experience a summer maximum temperature increase of at least one degree, with 70 districts projected to experience a similar annual maximum temperature change. “The highest change is expected in Leh at 1.6 degree Celsius for both summer and annual maximum temperatures. The winter minimum temperature is projected to change by 1.5 degree Celsius or more for 139 districts, while 611 districts will see a 1 degree Celsius or more temperature change,” the report states. Similarly, under the high emission scenario, 249 districts will experience an annual maximum temperature change of one degree Celsius or more, and 16 districts, mostly in the Himalayan States, are projected to experience an annual maximum temp change by 1.5 degree Celsius or more with the highest being at Leh at 1.8 degree Celsius. “517 districts will experience a summer maximum temperature change of one degree Celsius or more, and 17 districts will experience a summer maximum temperature change of 1.5 degree Celsius or more, with the highest being at Leh at 1.7 degree Celsius.

The winter minimum temperature is projected to change by 1.5 degree Celsius or more in 162 districts with the highest being 2.2 degree Celsius in Anjaw district of Arunachal Pradesh,” the report added. With regard to change in precipitation patterns (2021-2040), the report said that the western part of India will experience a significant increase in precipitation, compared to most of the eastern and north-eastern parts of the country. “Change in precipitation patterns (2021-40), the arid States such as Gujarat and Rajasthan exhibit a higher annual precipitation ranging from 20% to 40% under SSP2-4.5, and a 20% to 50 % change under SSP5-8.5. Under both the scenarios, 24 to 25 districts spread across the coastal States and eastern Himalayas will experience more than 31 degree Celsius summer wet bulb temperature, posing serious threats to human health,” the report said.

# Why countries struggle to eliminate fossil fuel subsidies | Explained

Fossil fuels are the leading driver of climate change, yet they are still heavily subsidised by governments around the world. Although many countries have explicitly promised to reduce fossil fuel subsidies to combat climate change, this has proven difficult to accomplish. As a result, fossil fuels remain relatively inexpensive, and their use and greenhouse gas emissions continue to grow. I work in environmental and energy law and have studied the fossil fuel sector for years. Here’s how fossil fuel subsidies work and why they’re so stubborn.

What is a subsidy?

A subsidy is a financial benefit given by a government to an entity or industry. Some subsidies are relatively obvious, such as publicly funded crop insurance or research grants to help pharmaceutical companies develop new drugs. Others are less visible. A tariff on an imported product, for example, can subsidise domestic manufacturers of that product. More controversially, some would argue that when a government fails to make an industry pay for damage it causes, such as air or water pollution, that also amounts to a subsidy. Subsidies, especially in this broader sense, are widespread throughout the global economy. Many industries receive benefits through public policies that are denied to other industries in the same jurisdiction, such as tax breaks, relaxed regulations or trade supports. Governments employ subsidies for political and practical reasons. Politically, subsidies are useful for striking bargains or shoring up political support. In democracies, they can mollify constituencies otherwise unwilling to agree to a policy change. The 2022 Inflation Reduction Act, for example, squeaked through Congress by subsidizing both renewable energy and oil and gas production. Practically, subsidies can boost a promising young industry such as electric vehicles, attract business to a community or help a mature sector survive an economic downturn, as the auto industry bailout did in 2008. Of course, policies can outlive their original purpose; some of today’s petroleum subsidies can be traced to the Great Depression.

How are fossil fuels subsidised?

Fossil fuel subsidies take many forms around the world. For example: In Saudi Arabia, fuel prices are set by the government rather than the market; price ceilings subsidise the price citizens pay for gasoline. The cost to state-owned oil producers there is offset by oil exports, which dwarf domestic consumption. Indonesia also caps energy prices, then compensates state-owned energy companies for the losses they bear. In the United States, oil companies can take a tax deduction for a large portion of their drilling costs. Other subsidies are less direct, such as when governments under-price permits to mine or drill for fossil fuels or fail to collect all the taxes owed by fossil fuel producers. Estimates of the total value of global fossil fuel subsidies vary considerably depending on whether analysts use a broad or narrow definition. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, or OECD, calculated the annual total to be about US\$1.5 trillion in 2022. The International Monetary Fund reported a number over four times higher, about \$7 trillion.

Why do estimates of fossil fuel subsidies vary dramatically?

Analysts disagree about whether subsidy tabulations should include environmental damage from the extraction and use of fossil fuels that is not incorporated into the fuel’s price. The IMF treats the costs of global warming, local air pollution and even traffic congestion and road damage as implicit subsidies because fossil fuel companies don’t pay to remedy these problems. The OECD omits these implicit benefits. But whichever definition is applied, the combined

effect of national policies on fossil fuel prices paid by consumers is dramatic. Oil, for example, is traded on a global market, but the price per gallon of petrol varies enormously around the world, from about 10 cents in Iran, Libya and Venezuela – where it is heavily subsidised – to over \$7 in Hong Kong, the Netherlands and much of Scandinavia, where fuel taxes counteract subsidies.

What is the world doing about fossil fuel subsidies?

Global leaders have acknowledged that subsidies for fossil fuels undermine efforts to address climate change because they make fossil fuels cheaper than they would be otherwise. In 2009, the heads of the G20, which includes many of the world’s largest economies, issued a statement resolving to “rationalise and phase out over the medium term inefficient fossil fuel subsidies that encourage wasteful consumption.” Later that same year, the governments of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum, or APEC, made an identical pledge. In 2010, 10 other countries, including the Netherlands and New Zealand, formed the Friends of Fossil Fuel Subsidy Reform group to “build political consensus on the importance of fossil fuel subsidy reform.” Yet these commitments have scarcely moved the needle. A major study of 157 countries between 2003 and 2015 found that governments “collectively made little or no progress” toward reducing subsidies. In fact, the OECD found that total global subsidies nearly doubled in both 2021 and 2022.

So why are fossil fuel subsidies hard to eliminate?

There are various reasons fossil fuel subsidies are hard to eliminate. Many subsidies directly affect the costs that fossil fuel producers face, so reducing subsidies tends to increase prices for consumers. Because fossil fuels touch nearly every economic sector, rising fuel costs elevate prices for countless goods and services. Subsidy reform tends to be broadly felt and pervasively inflationary. And unless carefully designed, subsidy reductions can be regressive, forcing low-income residents to spend a larger percentage of their income on energy. So, even in countries where there is widespread support for robust climate policies, reducing subsidies can be deeply unpopular and may even cause public unrest. The 2021-22 spike in fossil fuel subsidies is illustrative. After Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, energy prices surged throughout Europe. Governments were quick to provide aid for their citizens, resulting in their largest fossil fuel subsidies ever. Forced to choose between climate goals and affordable energy, Europe overwhelmingly chose the latter. Of course, economists note that increasing the price of fossil fuels can lower demand, reducing emissions that are driving climate change and harming the environment and human health. Seen in that light, price spikes present an opportunity for reform. As the IMF noted, when prices recede after a surge, it “provide[s] an opportune time to lock in pricing of carbon and local air pollution emissions without necessarily raising energy prices above recently experienced levels.”

sideration of non-essential travel and Level 4 recommends avoiding all travel. The current advisory reflects growing concerns over the spread of vector-borne diseases in the region. If you are pregnant, reconsider travel to the state of Telangana, India, particularly if you are close to delivering your baby. Mothers infected around the time of delivery can pass the virus to their baby before or during delivery. Newborns infected in this way or by a mosquito bite are at risk for severe illness, including poor long-term outcomes,” the travel notice said. Status unclear Telangana’s Health Department reported 178 chikungunya cases as of August 31, surpassing figures from previous years. Joint swelling, and rash. While most individuals recover within a week, severe joint pain can persist for months or even years in some cases.

# With 45 years to go, how sustainable is India’s road to net-zero? | Explained



Every year, climate action draws significant attention in the months leading up to the United Nations’ annual meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COPs). But the outcome of the 2024 U.S. presidential election will likely have a greater impact on the planet’s climate future than COP29 itself, illustrating an important challenge in combating climate change: operationalising global cooperation towards a common cause even when national interests don’t align with it. For example, an economically developed country with sufficient resources per capita may not find it necessary to change course — whereas a populous and developing country like India will. A few COPs ago, India committed to achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2070. Since then, it has implemented several policies while others are in the works to support this transition. It is widely acknowledged that this journey will not be without challenges, especially financial ones. However, other resource constraints such as land or water availability also matter, limiting the choices available for a sustainable long-term pathway for India.

Why net-zero at all? With each passing day, climate change is becoming more evident. The scientific consensus is that to avoid devastating and irreversible consequences, the world must keep the global average annual surface temperature rise to within 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels. The current increase is at least 1.1 °C over that in 1880. The Sixth Assessment Report of the U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change estimated that from 2020, the remaining (cumulative) global carbon budget for a 50-67% chance of limiting temperature rise to 1.5 °C is 400-500 billion tonnes (Gt) of CO2. Currently, annual global emissions are around 40 GtCO2. This means net global emissions must drop drastically to stay within the carbon budget. Several countries have announced net-zero targets, but we also really need a sharp decline in total emissions.

Is net-zero equitable?

The developed world, having caused the problem of climate change in the first place, is expected to lead this transition and reach net-zero emissions well before 2050, allowing more time for developing countries to balance their development goals with climate action. These expectations aren’t being met, however. Developed countries are also expected to help finance climate action, but this hasn’t materialised at the required scale either. Developing countries, especially those that are small islands, are bearing more than their fair share of the brunt of climate change. So overall, neither climate change nor climate action is currently equitable. COP29 is expected to build consensus on the level of financing required. India’s per-capita emissions are among the lowest in the world. However, according to the World Inequality Database, the per-capita emissions of the richest 10% are 20-times greater than that of the poorest 10% and in absolute terms almost half of the country’s total. Climate change more severely affects the economically weaker sections. India’s size and diversity mean it’s a country of countries, and some of them are more polluting than

# India’s race to eliminate dog-mediated rabies by 2030: experts stress the need for a ‘One Health’ approach

India has made significant strides in reducing human rabies deaths over the past two decades. However, achieving the goal of eliminating dog-mediated rabies by 2030 will require accelerated efforts and a focused, ‘One Health’ approach, experts say. The One Health strategy highlights integrating human and animal health measures to address rabies at its roots. Key steps identified include strengthening both human and animal surveillance systems, ensuring timely and complete administration of post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) for those exposed to the virus, and scaling up dog vaccination efforts across the country. While rabies cases have declined, experts warn that without these integrated actions, India may struggle to meet the 2030 target.

A recent study published in The Lancet highlights the public health challenge of rabies in India. Using a nationwide, community-based cross-sectional survey, researchers gathered data from 3.37 lakh individuals residing in 78,807 households across 60 districts in 15 states. The survey results estimated that India experiences approximately 9.1 million animal bites annually, with 76.8% attributed to dogs. The annual dog-bite incidence was calculated at 5.6 per 1,000 people. Significant gaps in post-bite care were noted, as 20.5% of dog-bite victims received no anti-rabies vaccination (ARV), and among those who did receive ARV, nearly half of the 1,253 people who started the vaccination course did not complete it. This lapse in vaccination adherence poses severe health risks, as the study estimates around 5,726 human rabies deaths each year, despite an overall reduction in deaths over recent decades. “To make rabies a disease of the past in India, it is essential to prioritise prevention, awareness, and vaccination efforts,” says Ranga Reddy Burri, president of the Infection Control Academy of India. “Although human rabies deaths have declined, achieving the goal of eliminating dog-mediated cases by 2030 requires accelerated action. A robust One Health approach, combining human-animal surveillance, timely post-exposure prophylaxis, and extensive dog vaccination is vital. With the increase in pet ownership, responsible pet care and vaccination are also critical to this mission,” Dr. Burri adds.

In answer to a question in the Lok Sabha on July 30, 2024 on the stray dog menace in the country, Minister of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying Rajiv Ranjan Singh said that in 2023, India reported a total of 30.43 lakh dog bite cases, with 286 fatalities linked to these incidents. This data was gathered under the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. “According to the National Centre for Disease Control, 46,54,398 anti-rabies vaccinations were administered to individuals who sustained dog bites throughout the year,” the Minister said. The Minister also said that the government had introduced a rabies helpline (15400) in five States, with plans to expand it nationally. Additionally, the Rabies-Free Cities Initiative was launched to create rabies-free zones in Tier 1 and Tier 2 cities, with a structured rabies prevention and action plan. Shailaja Tetali, dean of research at the Indian Institute of Public Health (IIPH) Hyderabad, however noted that while the National Rabies Control Programme (NRCP) has successfully reduced ra-

others vis-à-vis the climate. Importantly, India lacks the carrying capacity to support the developed world’s lifestyle standards for its entire population. If it should, India will run into significant food shortage due to groundwater depletion by the 2040s, extreme heat stress in urban areas due to the ever-increasing vehicular pollution and AC use, irreversible biodiversity loss due to non-ideal land-use changes encroaching on habitats, etc. India’s lifestyle aspirations could easily become unsustainable in the long run, jeopardising our access to basic needs. A new consumption corridor

In a scenario where consumption rises unchecked and India electrifies all end-use applications, the power demand could increase nine- to tenfold by 2070. Meeting it entirely via renewable energy will require more than 5,500 GW of solar and 1,500 GW of wind, up from the current 70 GW and 47 GW, respectively. This target is achievable if India’s only priority is to expand renewable energy generation capacity. But if India is to maintain food and nutritional security, increase forest cover, and preserve biodiversity as well, these energy targets will become very challenging. By modelling land-use change dynamics over time, the authors have found going beyond 3,500 GW solar and 900 GW wind will demand considerable land trade-offs. In sum, India has a tough balancing act to pull off: availing good quality of life to a large share of its population (which has significant material and energy implications) while working towards its climate adaptation and mitigation goals. To this end, it is important to recognise the pitfalls of economic models. For example, the environmental Kuznets curve hypothesises that beyond a threshold, economic growth can be decoupled from carbon emissions. In reality, even the richest countries haven’t achieved this decoupling (other than by shifting their emissions to poorer countries). This is why it is in our best interest to not aspire to achieve the lifestyle standards of the west. Instead, we need to envisage a long-term strategy incorporating ‘sufficiency consumption corridors’, with a floor well suited to meeting our developmental goals and a ceiling of excess that will help avoid unsustainable growth. Equally, if not more, important are demand-side measures to help maintain this corridor of consumption that will keep us on a sustainable pathway. Our power consumption here could increase six- or sevenfold by 2070. Demand and supply measures Some of these demand-side measures include the use of better construction materials and passive design elements to provide thermal comfort that doesn’t require air-conditioning, energy-efficient appliances, public and/or non-motorised transport within urban areas and railways for intercity travel, local products to reduce the demand for long-haul freight, mindful dietary choices, and alternative fuels in industries in addition to some electrification. On the supply side as well, India needs to further decentralise energy production (including by the use of rooftop solar cells and of solar pumps for agriculture). Finally, it should continue to expand its nuclear power generation capacity to diversify its energy mix and to complement a grid becoming more dependent on intermittent energy sources. Nuclear power could also offer a precious low-carbon baseload energy and help the government effectively phase out the national economy’s dependence on fossil fuels. As the world tumbles towards its net-zero and other climate-related targets, the leeway for governments to miss some of them or postpone their achievement almost shrinks. Of course some things are out of our control — for example who becomes the US President — but the things that we can we must, before we cannot. Ramya Natarajan and Kaveri Ashok work on climate change mitigation at the Center for Study of Science, Technology and Policy (CSTEP), a research-based think tank.

bies cases, addressing dog bites requires a comprehensive One Health approach. “To tackle dog bites effectively, we need coordinated efforts across surveillance, resources, training, collaboration, and public awareness,” she explains. She highlighted the need for enhanced surveillance of dog bites across both public and private facilities, especially in remote areas. “Every case should be recorded, as data is critical to tackle the issue in underserved regions,” she said. Dr. Tetali also stressed on stockpiling anti-rabies vaccines (ARV) to avoid shortages, and filling gaps in veterinary resources to support humane dog population control. Specialised training for para-veterinary staff is essential, as many are often shifted into animal care without preparation. Collaboration among animal welfare boards, municipalities, NGOs, and resident associations is also necessary for effective dog population management. Dr. Tetali added that public awareness is also vital. “People need to respect animals’ space and understand the importance of post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) after contact with potentially rabies-carrying animals,” she advised, noting that these measures can reduce rabies and dog bite incidents significantly. Awareness remains low According to information in India’s National Action Plan for Dog-Mediated Rabies Elimination (NAPRE) booklet, in India, rabies is transmitted commonly by dogs and cats (~97%), followed by wild animals (2%) such as mongoose, foxes, jackals, and wild dogs, and occasionally by horses, donkeys, monkeys, cows, goats, sheep, and pigs. Rodents, rats and bandicoots, squirrels, rabbits, birds, and bats are generally not known to transmit rabies. The presence of unvaccinated free-roaming dogs (FRD) or street dogs, amidst human settlements is a major contributor to the high incidence of rabies in India, which is endemic. Apart from humans, rabies also causes significant mortality among livestock animals such as bovine, cattle and small animals. Kiran Madhala, professor of critical care medicine at Gandhi Medical College, Secunderabad, highlighted key findings from the multicentric rabies survey conducted by World Health Organization (WHO) in collaboration with the Association for Prevention and Control of Rabies in India (APCRI) in 2017 and 2018. “According to the study, almost 40% of participants had never even heard of rabies, which is alarming for a country aiming to control this disease,” Dr. Kiran said. He explained that even among those who knew of rabies, one in four was unaware of its fatal nature. “While nearly everyone recognised bites as a means of transmission, only about half considered scratches, and only a third saw saliva contact as potential sources of infection.” Dr. Kiran said the perceived risk varies by animal type. “Three-quarters of respondents viewed dogs as a rabies source, yet only about 20% associated the risk with cats or monkeys.” Surprisingly, wild animals like mongooses or bats were rarely considered sources, with only 5-10% mentioning them, whereas some mistakenly believed rodents, birds, and even snakes were rabies risks, he added. The Supreme Court of India has issued several rulings and guidelines related to dog bites, addressing public safety, the responsibilities of dog owners, and animal welfare. In the All Kerala Stray Dogs Eradication Group v. State of Kerala & Ors.



# FM Nirmala Sitharaman rejects ‘tariff king’ charge, says India has just 8 tariff rates



Is India a tariff king, as has been claimed by the commentary in the US? Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday said it is not, with India having reduced the tariff rates to eight, including the zero per cent rate. Speaking at the EXIM Bank Trade Conclave in Delhi, Sitharaman said the government has undertaken a lot of reforms in reducing the burden on trade by cutting down tariffs to support manufacturing and value addition, promote exports and to facilitate trade.

“The rationalisation of customs structure for industrial goods was done (in the Budget). To remove seven tariff rates. For those who still believe in the commentary, which was made in the US that India may be the tariff king. No, I want two things to be remembered. Given our system of things, we seek parliamentary approval for deciding on the tariff rate, obtain from the parliament the permission to go up to a certain level but effectively you are at a far lower level. Effective tariff rate is at a far lower level. But what gets published in the gazette would be that level for which you obtained permission from the Parliament and it is that level which appears everywhere and people then tend to think, probably rightly, that’s the rate at which we are imposing tariffs” “So our procedures have given us the not-so-desirable picture of being very, very restrictive and regressive about tariffs. Many of them are already far lower than the rate at which the gazette notification came after the approval of the Parliament. But even after that, seven tariff rates have been removed in this Budget, reducing the total to just eight. So for those of us who still think there is still a tariff story in India, I want this to be clear, there are only just eight (tariff rates) including the zero rate,” she said. US President Donald Trump has frequently called India the “tariff king” citing high tariffs. India is currently in talks to finalise a trade deal with the US, its largest trade partner. Indian goods currently attract a 10 per cent baseline US tariff which could continue even after the trade deal comes into effect. India and the US had earlier decided to conclude the first phase of the proposed bilateral trade agreement by autumn (September–October) this year. However, both sides have now agreed on an interim trade deal before the first tranche, to

be finalised by July 9. The interim deal is expected to cover a limited range of goods and services, with the US seeking market access in India for items including agricultural products. Sitharaman lauded the exporters for swimming against the current and succeeding in it, assuring them of full support from the government “given the uncertainties which are prevailing”. She enlisted three qualities of the Indian exporters — they are growing significantly, they are not just exporting raw goods and commodities but well-engineered products, and they are also finding newer markets. “...they are not just growing as they were growing earlier. Today they are finding technology-infused, high-end products which are getting exported...where innovation and IP will come in handy. India is not just exporting raw goods and commodities, it is exporting well-engineered products which are of high standard. Third, they are also finding newer markets. We know for the last few years Europe is suffering and their consumption has come down. And with recession-like situation in Europe, our exporters have been creative and imaginative enough to also re-route and find out newer markets,” she said.

She said exporters have shown survival instincts and are relying on five Ts — transport and logistics upgradation, targeted support to MSMEs including revamped credit guarantee schemes, trade finance access, trade cluster development, and trade agreements. There has been more emphasis on signing more trade agreements, she said. “Whether it is UAE, Australia, EFTA area, UK now and with the US and European Union negotiations are going on and should come to a conclusion sooner. So emphasis is being made for getting more free trade agreements signed. So if all this is on, the features of Indian exports are also transitioning. India’s total exports reached an all-time high of \$825 billion, achieving 6 per cent growth over the previous year. And a significant \$466 billion over 2013-14,” she said. There has also been deepening participation in global value chains, the Finance Minister said. “Apple is one classic example. It shows what level of value addition can happen within India. Apple’s India’s iPhone manufacturers have crossed 20 per cent domestic value addition,” she said. She said the production-linked incentive (PLI) schemes have transformed India’s export basket from traditional commodities to high-value products. “PLI-supported exports have surpassed Rs 5.31 lakh crore or \$62 billion. The items that went through it were — large-scale electronics manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, food processing, telecom products,” she said. Sitharaman pointed out that private participation is picking up, but it can be even faster. “For the sake of our exporters, we all need to continue to innovate and need to bring more support for them. What is more important is that (for) risk-sharing facilities, hedging instruments, we need creative solutions and also for advisory support,” she said.

# Oil price slips after Iran targets US base in Qatar instead of blocking Strait of Hormuz: Here’s why

As Iran launched missiles at a US military base in Qatar in retaliation to American airstrikes at its nuclear facilities, oil prices tumbled. With West Asia on edge amid the Israel-Iran conflagration and the US joining in, the fact that oil prices slipped after Iran fired missiles at Qatar could seem counterintuitive at first, given that it would appear that the conflict was escalating further. Oil traders, however, saw it differently. To them, Iran’s Monday evening strikes accompanied by a de-escalatory tone were signals that Tehran was not going to target oil shipments or attempt a blockade of the critical chokepoint—the Strait of Hormuz—and would limit its response to seemingly symbolic strikes.

The traders, it now appears, were right in their assessment. Overnight, US President Donald Trump announced a ceasefire from Israel and Iran. Although the two countries have not officially acknowledged that an understanding has been reached, there are clear indications that military action is likely to be suspended, at least for the time being. Iran’s foreign minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi said that there was no agreement on any ceasefire, but if Israel stopped attacking Iran, then the latter had no intention to continue with its attacks.

Oil prices started slipping after Iran’s volley of missiles at the US base in Qatar, giving up all the gains of the past couple of weeks. Trump’s announcement of an Israel-Iran “ceasefire” further exacerbated the fall. Brent is currently hovering around \$68 per barrel. Over the course of the nearly two-week conflict between Israel and Iran, oil prices were volatile, with Brent rising from around \$69 per barrel to \$81, given the presence of threat to West Asian oil export infrastructure and flows from the region. War risk premiums on shipping surged over fears that oil tankers could become targets, or even collateral damage. But oil prices still did not really shoot through the roof, despite Tehran’s warnings that it could shut the Strait of Hormuz. In fact, the Iranian parliament on Sunday recommended the closure of the strait, which is critical for global energy flows, but the oil prices did not really shoot up when markets opened the next day. It was clear that energy markets, while concerned and watchful, were not really buying into Iran’s threats of blocking the Strait of Hormuz. For energy industry insiders and analysts, it was always improbable, a highly distant possibility at best.

The Strait of Hormuz is a critical and narrow waterway between Iran and Oman, and connects the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea. The US Energy Information Administration (EIA) calls it the “world’s most important oil transit chokepoint”, with around one-fifth of global liquid petroleum fuel consumption and global liquefied natural gas (LNG) trade transiting the strait. The strait is critical for India’s energy security as well. According to tanker data, over 45 per cent of crude oil imported by Indian refiners in May was likely to have been transported from various oil producing countries in West Asia via the Strait of Hormuz. The importance of the chokepoint for India’s energy supply and security cannot be understated as the country is the world’s third-largest consumer of crude oil and depends on imports to meet over 88 per cent of its requirement. The strait’s blockade, if it actually did happen, would have sent energy prices soaring, with predictions of oil prices in triple-digits, up to \$130 per barrel, being widely talked about. Such price levels would have hurt the global economy, with additional pain points for energy import-dependent countries like India. Given the fragile peace now in place in the region, that fear has abated to a great extent, at least for the time being.

Iran has in the past threatened to close the strait on multiple occasions, but has never actually done it, even during some of its worst wars. A large number of energy sector experts and analysts, while viewing Iran’s repeated threats of the strait’s closure with concern, maintained that the possibility was extremely low, primarily because such a move would impose a heavy cost on Iran, which would



outweigh any benefit the country may get. “First foremost, such a blockade would disproportionately harm China, which sources 47 per cent of its seaborne crude from the Middle East Gulf, including Iranian volumes. Iran’s ability to maintain its sole major oil customer would be directly jeopardised. Additionally, Tehran has made deliberate efforts over the past two years to rebuild ties with key regional actors, including Saudi Arabia and the UAE, both of which rely heavily on the Strait for exports and have publicly condemned Israel’s actions. Sabotaging their flows would risk unraveling those diplomatic gains,” commodity market analytics firm Kpler had said on Thursday (June 19).

In fact, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said in an interview with Fox News that China should prevent Iran from attempting the strait’s closure, as China is the key buyer of Iranian oil and seen as having a close relationship with Iran. He added that while the US retained options to deal with the strait’s closure, “other countries should be looking at that as well”. He also termed the strait’s closure as “economic suicide” for Tehran. Iran remains structurally reliant on the Strait of Hormuz. While it has an oil export terminal located outside the Persian Gulf, its effective capacity is only a fraction of Iran’s oil export volumes that cannot bypass the strait. Additionally, Iran would have certainly faced international military retaliation if it went ahead to close the Strait of Hormuz or targeted the transiting oil shipments. “Any Iranian naval build-up would be detectable in advance, likely triggering a preemptive US and allied response. At most, isolated sabotage efforts could disrupt flows for 24–48 hours, the estimated time required for US forces to neutralise Iran’s conventional naval assets... while the rhetoric may generate headlines, the fundamentals argue strongly against action,” Kpler’s June 19 note said. Also, the strait’s closure would have infringed upon Oman’s territorial waters, souring Iran’s relationship with its neighbor, which would have been counterproductive for a country that doesn’t exactly have a lot of friends and allies in its neighbourhood, analysts pointed out. Iran depends on Oman for back-channel diplomacy with the US, and alienating Muscat could have significantly constrained Iran’s diplomatic options.

# No increase in radiation off sites that US hit: IAEA

Tel Aviv: The International Atomic Energy Agency said on Sunday that there has been “no increase in off-site radiation levels” after US airstrikes on Iranian nuclear sites. The UN nuclear watchdog sent the message via the social platform X on Sunday. “The IAEA can confirm that no increase in off-site radiation levels has been reported as of this time,” it said. The “IAEA will provide further assessments on situation in Iran as more information becomes available.”

The United States struck three sites in Iran early on Sunday, inserting itself into Israel’s war aimed at destroying the country’s nuclear program in a risky gambit to weaken a longtime foe despite fears of a wider regional conflict.

# Our drones led frontline attack in Operation Sindoor says Gautam Adani



New Delhi: Billionaire Gautam Adani on Tuesday said drones and anti-drone systems made by his conglomerate played a frontline role in Operation Sindoor — the precision counter terror strike launched by the Indian Armed Forces in direct retaliation for the brutal Pahalgam terror attack. Speaking at his group’s annual shareholder meeting, Adani said, “Operation Sindoor called, and we delivered”. The loitering munitions produced by Adani Defence conducted precision strikes while its counter-drone units protected Indian assets from retaliatory threats.

“Our drones became the eyes in the skies as well as the swords of attack, and our anti-drone systems helped protect our forces and citizens,” he said. Developed in partnership with Alpha Design Technologies (26 per cent owned by Adani Defence) and Israel’s Elbit Systems, the SkyStriker loitering munition or kamikaze drones can carry 5-10 kg warheads, fly silently at low altitudes up to 100 km, and precisely strike targets. “As I have always believed — we don’t operate in safe zones. We operate where it matters — where India needs us the most,” Adani said. Adani began the address to the annual general meeting by saluting the brave soldiers guarding borders.

“This year, during Operation Sindoor, our brave men and women in uniform stood tall. Not for fame, not for medals — but for duty. Their courage reminded us that: Peace is never free, it is earned. And that the freedom to dream, to build, and to lead — stands firmly on the shoulders of those who protect,” he said. India, he said, understands the value

# Centre unveils portal to promote EV car manufacturing, applications open till Oct 21

New Delhi: In a bid to boost the domestic manufacturing of electric vehicles (EVs), the government on Tuesday announced the portal launch of the application process under the Scheme to Promote Manufacturing of Electric Passenger Cars in India (SPMEPCI). Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy said that guided by the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, this initiative marks a defining moment in India’s journey towards clean, self-reliant, and future-ready mobility.

“The launch of this portal under the SPMEPCI scheme opens new avenues for global electric vehicle manufacturers to invest in India’s rapidly evolving automotive landscape. This scheme not only supports our national commitment to achieving Net Zero by 2070, but also reinforces our resolve to build a sustainable, innovation-driven economy,” said the minister. Applications are invited from eligible applicants under the scheme and applicants can apply through the application module at [spmecpi.heavyindustries.gov.in](http://spmecpi.heavyindustries.gov.in). The application portal will be open for applications from June 24 till October 21. The government of India has approved a forward-looking scheme to promote the domestic manufacture of passenger cars, with a special focus on electric vehicles (EVs). It is designed to firmly establish India as a premier global destination for automotive manufacturing and innovation.

The scheme will help to attract investments from global EV manufacturers and promote India as a manufacturing destination for e-vehicles. The scheme will also help put India on the global map for manufacturing of EVs, gen-

of peace. “But if someone dares to threaten it, India also knows how to respond in their own language,” he said referring to Operation Sindoor. Adani said the world around has changed dramatically over the past 12 months. “Over 60 nations went to the polls. Borders were redrawn, alliances tested, and economies shaken. In the Middle East, war continued to cast shadows on energy and logistics. In Europe, economic confidence stumbled. The United States had its own challenges. And yet, in the middle of all this noise, India stood apart and grew faster than any other major nation,” he said.

This, he said, was not a coincidence. “It is the result of vision. Of intent. Of policy. I say this with full conviction that the Indian Government, both at the Centre and across the states, has laid down the foundation for a truly historic transformation — a transformation not of a few, but for an entire nation whose best chapters are just beginning.” At the AGM, Adani underscored the conglomerate’s resilient performance, reaffirmed its national mission and pledged record-breaking capital investments across critical sectors in India.

Despite global headwinds — from geopolitical instability in the Middle East to economic turbulence in the West — the Adani Group’s chairman said India stood out as a beacon of growth due to visionary policymaking and bold national intent. “India is writing history not of a few, but of a billion dreams.” In a year marked by scrutiny, including US regulatory inquiries, Adani reaffirmed the Group’s adherence to global governance standards. “No one from the Adani Group has been charged with violating the FCPA or conspiring to obstruct justice,” he said, pointing out that truth often speaks softer than negativity but carries more weight. Financially, the Group recorded Rs 2.71 lakh crore in revenue and Rs 89,806 crore in adjusted EBITDA. A healthy net debt-to-EBITDA ratio of 2.6x was maintained, even as annual CAPEX is projected to touch USD 15-20 billion over the next five years. “And our numbers tell their own story. Even in a year of turbulence, we saw record-breaking revenue, unprecedented growth and historic profitability. We are proof of a Group that dares to dream beyond constraints and powered by a nation that breathes possibility into every tomorrow ahead of us,” Adani said.



erate employment and achieve the goal of “Make in India”. To encourage the global manufacturers to invest under the Scheme, the approved applicants will be allowed to import Completely Built-in Units (CBUs) of e-4W with a minimum CIF value of \$35,000 at reduced customs duty of 15 per cent for a period of 5 years from the application approval date. Approved applicants would be required to make minimum investment of Rs 4,150 crore in line with the provisions of the scheme. The scheme is strategically crafted to position India as a global hub for electric vehicle manufacturing. Through calibrated customs duty concessions and clearly defined domestic value addition (DVA) milestones, the scheme strikes a balance between introducing cutting-edge EV technologies and nurturing indigenous capabilities.

# Adani Airports secures \$1 billion from global investors for Mumbai International Airport upgrade



Mumbai: Adani Airports Holdings Limited (AAHL) on Tuesday said it has successfully secured \$1 billion financing through a project finance structure for its Mumbai International Airport Ltd (MIAL).

The transaction involves issuance of \$750 million notes maturing July 2029 which would be used for refinancing. The financing structure also includes provision to raise an additional \$250 million, resulting in total financing of \$1 billion. This framework will provide enhanced financial flexibility for the capital expenditure program of MIAL for development, modernisation, and capacity enhancement, said the company, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Adani Enterprises Ltd and India’s largest private airport operator.

This issuance follows AAHL’s \$750 million financing from a consortium of global banks recently. This latest transaction is yet another validation of Adani’s access to diversified global capital markets and its ability to attract high-quality investors to India’s next-generation infrastructure platform. “This successful issuance validates the strength of the Adani Airports’ operating platform, the robust fundamentals of Mumbai International Airport, and our commitment to sustainable infrastructure development,” said Arun Bansal, CEO, Adani Airports Holdings Ltd. “With participation from Apollo-managed funds and leading institutional investors, we are proud to deepen our access to global pools of capital. Our ability to secure one of the largest private investment-grade project finance issuances demonstrates our commitment to financial discipline, capital efficiency and long-term value creation,” he added.

This is India’s first investment grade (IG) rated private bond issuance in the airport infrastructure sector. The transaction was led by Apollo-managed funds, with participation

from a syndicate of leading institutional investors and insurance companies which included BlackRock-managed funds, Standard Chartered among others, underlining global confidence in India’s Infrastructure opportunity and Adani Airports’ operating platform. Backed by MIAL’s stable asset base and cash flows and operational excellence, the notes are expected to be rated BBB-/stable. AAHL said it remains committed to a long-term vision of transforming the airports infrastructure through continued investments in modernisation, capacity expansion, digitisation, and technology integration. The transaction will also accelerate MIAL’s sustainability agenda, supporting its goal to achieve net zero emissions by 2029. AAHL was incorporated in 2019 as a 100 per cent subsidiary of Adani Enterprises Ltd, the flagship company of the Adani Group.

# UN chief condemns terrorist attack in Syrian capital

United Nations: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres condemned the terrorist attack on a church in Damascus, Syria, said his spokesman. The secretary-general reiterates that all perpetrators of terrorism must be held accountable. He takes note that the Syrian interim authorities have condemned Sunday’s attack and, after a preliminary investigation, attributed it to the Islamic State. He calls for a full investigation, said Stephane Dujarric, the spokesman, in a statement. Guterres expresses his deepest condolences to the families of the victims and wishes a swift recovery to those injured. He reaffirms the commitment of the United Nations to supporting the Syrian people in their pursuit of peace, dignity, and justice, said the statement.

A suicide attack during the Sunday evening Mass at the St. Elias Orthodox Church in the predominantly Christian Dweilaa neighbourhood of Damascus killed at least 22 people and wounded 63 others, Xinhua news agency reported. The blast ripped through the Mar Elias Church in the Dweilaa district, a predominantly Christian neighbourhood on the eastern outskirts of Damascus, leaving behind blood-stained pews, shattered icons, and scenes of chaos, according to eyewitnesses and local media. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said the attacker opened fire inside the packed church before blowing himself up, causing “severe human losses.”



# ‘He had his own way of doing things’: Sourav Ganguly reflects on time as BCCI colleagues with Jay Shah



GNS News Agency, July 1

Former India batter Sourav Ganguly said that during his tenure as BCCI president, he expected “certain kind of toughness and stubbornness” from the then Board secretary and current ICC chairman Jay Shah but ultimately was impressed by his honesty and resolve to do things properly. Ganguly and Shah were with the BCCI together from October 2019-September 2022 before the former was replaced by Roger Binny in 2022 while Shah continued as BCCI secretary till November 2024 before taking over as the youngest ever ICC chairman at 36 years of age.

“He (Jay) had his own way of doing things but the best

thing about him was he wanted to do things properly for Indian cricket. See, he had the power, the support, so you expected certain kind of toughness, stubbornness from him but he would do things for Indian cricket,” Ganguly said to PTI. “Relationship was very good. It’s still very good. When he came in September 2019...he was a young boy, straight from Gujarat CA, very cooperative, approachable. Obviously, he had opinions and rightfully so, he wanted to do things and still does, he is the ICC chairman and it is a bigger post,” he added. Ganguly also said that with time Shah grew better at his job, adding that the two still bump into each other occasionally. “He is very supportive of players. He got better as he learnt. The good thing about him was he wanted to do good for the game. He is very honest, he always had the thought (about) who he was at the back of his mind, what baggage he carried. So, he wanted to do things rightfully and properly all the time. All of us made mistakes, I did, he did. It was never intentional but the game never stopped,” Ganguly said. “Obviously, he has progressed, he is the ICC Chairman now. You see him at times because you live in different cities. I am not involved in administration, I wish him the best. I saw him in England this time for a little bit. I meet him in ICC meetings because I am the chair of the (ICC cricket) committee and he wants the game to grow and go forward,” he added.

# Wimbledon to unveil Andy Murray statue for 150th anniversary, two-time champ will help design sculpture of himself

GNS News Agency, July 1

Wimbledon will honour two-time champ Andy Murray with a special sculpture at the 150th anniversary of the championships in 2027. (Reuters) Wimbledon will honour two-time champ Andy Murray with a special sculpture at the 150th anniversary of the championships in 2027. Two-time Wimbledon champion Andy Murray will receive a rare and unique honour at the iconic Wimbledon Championships, with achievements at his home Grand Slam set to be recognised by the organisers in two years during the All England Club’s 150th anniversary.

Talks about honouring Murray at the prestigious championships were floated as early as 2013 when he became the first British man in 77 years since Fred Perry to win the men’s singles title, defeating then-World No. 1 Novak Djokovic. Murray doubled his tally, three years later, making the grass-court tournament his most favoured Grand Slam. Murray will certainly feel a personal touch to the honour. The Scot is set to assist in the design of the full-length sculpture of himself. Wimbledon director Debbie Jevans said that they decided to go ahead with the special project after recently witnessing 22-time Grand Slam winner Rafael Nadal celebrated at the French Open with his footprint inscribed on a permanent plaque at the iconic Court Philippe-Chatrier. “We looked at Rafa Nadal having that sort of plaque unveiled to him at Roland Garros which was all very special. “We thought: ‘What do we want for Andy?’” said Jevans on the Performance People podcast. “We had a great celebration for Andy when he played his last match, which was on Centre Court. “And then when he came, when all the old players came and they greeted him and Sue Barker interviewed him. So we did a similar thing for him here last year but we are looking to have a statue of Andy Murray



here and we’re working closely with him and his team. “And the ambition is that we would unveil that on the 150th anniversary of our first championships, which was 1877, so would be in 2027. “It will be lovely and really special. So he’s got to rightly be very involved in that and he and his team will be,” said Jevans. Wimbledon is simply continuing its rich tradition of commemorating its home champions. This includes a full-length statue dedicated to Fred Perry and a bust honouring Virginia Wade. Recognition has also been extended to Kitty Godfree, who claimed the first of her two Wimbledon titles in 1924, along with Dorothy Round, Angela Mortimer, and Ann Jones. It is a season of commemorations for the 38-year-old. Earlier this month, Murray was part of the unveiling of the Andy Murray Arena when the Queen’s Club decided to name its centre-court after the former five-time champion. “It was my most successful event; I always love coming back here at the start of the British summer. I’m very proud of the results I had here. I’m very grateful and thankful for whoever it was who decided to name the stadium this was,” Murray said.

# Jofra Archer ready for India Tests, bowls full throttle in County fixture

GNS News Agency, July 1

England pacer Jofra Archer feels he is ready to play his first Test match in four years against India after sending down 14 overs on his return to County cricket on Monday. The pacer, who hasn’t played a Test since 2021 turned out for Sussex in their County fixture against Durham which is seen has a trial for his return to the Test squad. On Day 2 of the fixture at Chester-le-Street, Archer sent down 14 overs and picked up one wicket on what Daily Mail reported it as a “docile pitch”. And speaking at the end of play, Archer sounded confident about the recall to the Test side and his ability to feature in the ongoing series against India. “I guess so. I just want to get through the game,” Archer said when asked if he is ready for Test cricket. “I’m glad I’ve finished a day of four-day cricket. The last time I played I made it to tea. I’m glad to go all the way today. I guess I looked fine today. You’d have to tell me but I felt fine. I guess I’m faced with a different challenge now I know my body can hold up to it – the mental part of the game. So I think over the next couple of days I’m going to have a battle with it but it’s all good. I’ll keep trucking along,” Archer was quoted as saying by Daily Mail.

In the four years he has been away from Test cricket, Archer has suffered multiple injuries including one in the right elbow which kept delaying his comeback. But right



through the rehab process, Archer has intended to play Test cricket again with England expecting him to be fully fit and available for the Ashes Down Under later this year. As part of it, any game time during the series against India will give England a clear picture of where Archer stays in terms of red-ball cricket. Archer said as of now there is no workload restrictions. “When the scoreboard got to 50 overs I was like: ‘Jesus, it’s time to come off now’ but we got to the end of day and it wasn’t that bad. I did 14 today. Who knows how many I’m going to do tomorrow? There’s no limit. There can’t be. If you look at a Test match you can’t have restrictions if you’re potentially going to go in and play.”

# High Court appoints Vanka Pratap, Naveen Rao to conduct HCA leagues

GNS News Agency, July 2

Hyderabad: Justice E.V. Venugopal of the High Court of Telangana has issued orders that Justice P. Naveen Rao (Retd), who submitted a supervisory report dated 13.4.2025 and gained considerable expertise in the affairs of the Hyderabad Cricket Association (HCA), shall conduct the league matches for the 2025–26 season without any delay.

The High Court, responding to a writ petition filed by Jai Hanuman Club—represented by its general secretary K. Lakshmi Narasimha Rao—observed that the inordinate delay in conducting the annual HCA leagues was detrimental to the interests of players, particularly regarding selections for various State teams. The court further noted that substantial time had been lost due to technicalities or the incapability of the respondents (including the HCA) in organizing the league matches. The High Court also stated that Vanka Pratap (former India A cricketer), who was appointed as a member of the committee constituted by the Honourable Supreme Court on 22.08.2022 to supervise the management of HCA’s affairs, shall be appointed as the

coordinator for conducting the league matches by assisting, cooperating, and coordinating with Justice P. Naveen Rao (Retd) and the HCA.

“All the respondents (including HCA) shall assist, cooperate, and coordinate with Justice P. Naveen Rao (Retd), in coordination with Vanka Pratap, without causing any hindrance in conducting the league matches for the 2025–26 season,” the High Court said. The court further ordered a fixed honorarium of Rs 3 lakhs per month to be paid to Justice Naveen Rao and Rs 2 lakhs per month to Vanka Pratap. It was also stated that Justice Naveen Rao is authorized to form a team—including selectors, observers, etc.—for conducting the league matches with the assistance and coordination of Vanka Pratap. “This is made clear that this order shall not preclude the official respondents from conducting the AGM and from following the rules as contemplated under the bye-laws of respondent No.2 (HCA). Both the interlocutory applications are ordered accordingly,” the High Court said.

# ‘You are not Curtly Ambrose’: Ian Healy sledges West Indies quick ahead of Australia Tests



GNS News Agency, July 1

Ian Healy may have long retired from Test cricket, but the former wicketkeeper has come up with another brutal sledge ahead of Australia’s first Test against West Indies starting Wednesday in Barbados. After West Indies quick Shamar Joseph sent out a warning note to young Australian opener Sam Konstas, Healy has stepped in to say, “You are not Curtly Ambrose champ.” In the absence of Steve Smith and Marnus Labuschagne, Australia have given call ups to Konstas and Josh Inglis. Konstas, who made an impressive debut against India Down Under, is set to start the first Test giving himself a good chance to prove his credentials ahead of the Ashes later this year. And Joseph, who famously bowled West Indies to a thrilling over Australia at the Gabba in 2024, sent a message to Konstas saying, “just look out, that’s all.”

# Cracks opening up, Headingley is like a subcontinent pitch on Day 5, says KL Rahul as India eye famous win

GNS News Agency, July 1

IND vs ENG Leeds Test: Off late the Headingley pitch has become batting friendly with teams comfortably chasing 300-plus totals. IND vs ENG Leeds Test: Off late the Headingley pitch has become batting friendly with teams comfortably chasing 300-plus totals. Going into the final day of the first Test, there is plenty of intrigue around the Headingley pitch which hasn’t showed any big signs of deteriorating. When Day 4 began it was lively before a few deliveries kept low as the day progressed with spinners getting some purchase from the rough. As England go into the final day needing 350 runs and India needing 10 wickets, and bit of showers predicted through the day, the Test is heading for a fitting climax.

Off late the pitch has become batting friendly with teams comfortably chasing 300-plus totals. And India batsman KL Rahul, who scored a century at the top, revealed that the pitch reminded him of sub-continental conditions. “I think the first two days, being as hot as it was, the pitch has taken a bit of beating,” Rahul said in an interview with JioStar at stumps on Day 4. “The crack seems like it’s opening up. There’s a bit of rough there, and the wicket is really dry. Mostly, it’s like a subcontinent wicket on day five,” Rahul said. The opener who became the first Asian opener to score three centuries in England said India expect the hosts to come hard at them. “Day five wicket won’t be as easy, but knowing how England play and their style of cricket, they’re going to come hard and try and score boundaries and try and score runs as quickly as possible. We need to keep that in the back of our heads and try and bowl as straight as



we can. Try and be patient and really not give them those boundaries, make them earn their runs. It should be a very interesting day.”

Rahul said the conditions on Day 4 were typically English where the ball seamed around in the morning. Even on Day 5, conditions are expected to be overcast which could bring the seamers very much into play. “It was very different this morning. It almost felt like it was the first time we were actually in English conditions. The ball was seeming around, it was overcast. There was a bit happening from the wicket.” The first couple of days when we batted, there wasn’t much. There was a bit of swing in the air, but nothing off the pitch. But this morning it was a really good spell. I just felt like I needed to play tighter and make sure that we don’t lose too many wickets and make sure that I kill the first session. I was trying to play as straight as possible. At least defend as straight as possible.”

# ‘Jasprit, please play all five!’: Sanjana Ganesan relays Gavaskar & Pujara’s plea to husband Bumrah

GNS News Agency, July 2

TV presenter and wife of Jasprit Bumrah, Sanjana Ganesan, passed on a special request from batting great Sunil Gavaskar and Cheteshwar Pujara to her husband and India’s premier fast bowler Bumrah in an interview during Day 4 of the first Anderson-Tendulkar Trophy Test between India and England at Headingley in Leeds on Monday. During a light-hearted conversation, Sanjana said, “A request has come from above from Cheteshwar Pujara and Sunil Gavaskar. Don’t shoot the messenger, I am just telling you what they said, ‘Jasprit, please play all five, please please please,’” said Sanjana. In reply, Bumrah came up with a cheeky response and said, “That is the conversation that we’ll have on other day.” Bumrah had said he would play three out of five Tests in England to manage his workload as the Border-Gavaskar Trophy had seen him endure a stress injury after he was exposed to excessive workload in the Australian tour.

Earlier, Bumrah waged a lone battle over the last two days in contrasting conditions in Leeds as his 14th Test five-wicket haul bundled England out for 465 on the third day in the first innings. His special feat was, however, not enough to hand India a decisive advantage as fellow seamers Mohammed Siraj and Prasidh Krishna’s profligate outings, conceding over 240 runs together, meant that India’s first-innings score of 471 offered minimal momentum while heading into the second essay. Bumrah recently revealed



that even before Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli announced their retirement from Tests, he had informed the BCCI not to consider him for leadership roles because of a long-standing back issue that requires him to manage his workload, as the selectors eventually picked Shubman Gill as Rohit’s successor.

Bumrah, who has captained in three Tests in a stop-gap arrangement in the past, has shown tactical acumen that can be considered for the long run. But following a re-lapse of his back injury during the series in Australia in January, the fast bowler explained how the succession decision panned out, as at one point, the BCCI was seriously looking at him for captaincy.

# Alyssa Healy and Tahlia McGrath to feature in India-A tour as Australia announces squads



GNS News Agency, July 1

HYDERABAD: Australian captain Alyssa Healy and vice-captain Tahlia McGrath will feature in the upcoming Australia A series to be played against India A across Queensland in August.

National selectors have named three separate squads for the series that will feature a trio of T20s in Mackay as well as three 50-over matches and a four-day clash in Brisbane. Current and future stars of Australian and Indian cricket will go head-to-head across the multi-format series as part of an ongoing four-year agreement between the two nations.

Healy and McGrath will be joined by Australian fast-bowlers Kim Garth and Darcie Brown, with the quartet to use the series as preparation for the ICC Women’s World Cup to be played in India in October, while Tess Flintoff, the latest addition to the national contract list, will be looking to impress selectors and push for a maiden call-up to the world-champion side. Queenslander Charli Knott will further add to her leadership credentials by captaining the T20 and four-day sides, with McGrath to take the reins in the 50-over format. Australian Women’s Team assistants Dan Marsh (T20 and 50-over) and Gavan Twining (four-day) have been named head coaches, with Scott Prestwidge their assistant.



## ‘Aamir Khan hated Josh’: Mansoor Khan reflects on 25 years of Shah Rukh Khan-Aishwarya Rai-starrer, says movie left him ‘disillusioned’



Steven Spielberg’s recent rendition of the timeless West Side Story invited comparisons that inevitably fall short when held against Mansoor Khan’s Josh, a film that transcends its musical roots to deliver a far more exciting exploration of gang rivalries and the torments of forbidden love. Josh recently completed 25 years, and after much pursuit and patient waiting, I finally had the chance to speak with Mansoor Khan about the Shah Rukh Khan-Aishwarya Rai-starrer. In an exclusive conversation with SCREEN, he reflected not only on the creative journey behind Josh, but also on his seminal coming-of-age classic Jo Jeeta Wohi Sikandar, his evolving relationship with his cousin Aamir Khan, insights into Junaid Khan’s craft, and the possibility of a long-anticipated return to filmmaking.

What I find fascinating about Josh is that, unlike its source material, it’s not a romantic tragedy. It has this almost rebellious energy and a very positive outlook on love and life. Was that a conscious choice, especially considering you had already explored a tragic love story with Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak?

So basically, see, I’ve always wanted to make a spirited musical with Josh. Every now and then, I think, “Okay, this one is going to be a musical.” By musical, I don’t mean in the literal sense of just having songs in the film. I mean a true musical, like Fiddler on the Roof, where the scenes themselves become musical, you know?

Take me back to the beginning, when did the idea of adapting West Side Story strike you? Was it the popularity of the original that drew you in, or was it more about giving your own spin to a timeless classic and making it resonate with Indian audiences?

I really liked the premise of West Side Story. It is basically Romeo and Juliet in a different form. Instead of parents and families, it’s two brothers. So at its core, that’s the premise. But when I saw the film, I was very disappointed. I thought the first half was okay, very stylish and all. It had that stage musical feel. But I lost interest in the film after the brother dies, which happens midway through. I honestly don’t even remember the rest of it. Still, that premise stuck with me, brothers opposing the love of their siblings. I wanted to take that idea somewhere else, though. The Indian audience needs a little more than just that. And I didn’t want to focus only on resolving the love angle, you know? And I’ve always been fascinated by Goa and its history, especially Portuguese history, which a lot of people don’t know about. My wife is Goan, and I found that part of the history really intriguing.

You co-wrote some truly iconic dialogues for Josh with the late Neeraj Vora. What was that process like?

Neeraj was a storehouse of talent, and he was a very, very amusing and funny guy. He could be quite distracting, actually, because every time we sat down, and we had dozens of sittings, he’d come up with a new idea. Especially for the introduction, for a few weeks, he kept throwing in fresh thoughts that would totally throw us off. We’d be like, “Wow, that’s a great idea. Come on, we’ve written it now, we’re going with this.” And then the next day, Neeraj would come in and say, “You know, actually, I was thinking... if we do it like this, that could work too.” And we’d be like, “Yeah, let’s do it that way.” But, you know, I don’t get distracted easily. So sometimes I did have to put a stop to it. But he had such a fertile mind, it was great fun to work with him. He didn’t take things too seriously, and his sense of humour was wicked. You can see that, especially in Josh, but also in the kind of comedy he brought in. All those funny lines, even that bit about the bakery turning into a rat house, that’s all him.

There are so many wild casting stories around Josh! Is it true that you originally wanted Aamir and Shah Rukh together in the film?

So after Jo Jeeta Wohi Sikandar, I was looking for a script. And it was then I wrote a lot of Josh, and I had both Aamir and Shah Rukh in mind, Aamir for the romantic part, opposite whoever the actress would be, and Shah Rukh as Max. But when I narrated it to Aamir, I didn’t tell him who was supposed to play which role. So he started imagining that he’d be playing Max. I thought, “Oh no, now what do I

do?” In my head, I was like, okay, don’t jump the gun. Let me go see what Shah Rukh says first. Not that I ever intended to give Max’s role to Aamir, honestly, I just wanted to see how the cards would fall. So I went to meet Shah Rukh and narrated the script to him. He really liked it. And by the end of the narration, he’d already started talking about the scenes, because his mind is very active. He was like, “Yeah, in that scene, Max can do this, and in that one, Max can do that.” And I thought, “Oh God, this guy also wants the same role” But anyway, I did want him for Max. So I asked, “Shah Rukh, are you doing the film?” And he said, “No, because I know Aamir will get Max’s role.” At that point, I didn’t really know how to respond. So I just left it there. I didn’t say anything. But later on, Aamir himself said, “No, no, I don’t want to play this role.” He’d already done a lot of soft-boy, lover-boy parts. And he’d also done that tapori role in Rangeela, so he wanted to change his image. So he said no on his own. Anyway, in my mind, even to this day, there’s only one Max, and that’s Shah Rukh. He’s got that panache, the humour, and that underlying threat needed for the role. He is a charismatic guy.

Did Aamir ever see Josh? What was his reaction to it?

He saw it at that time and said he hated it. So I said, okay, fine. I was pretty disillusioned after that too. I didn’t watch it again for 15, maybe 17 years. I finally saw it about eight years ago, and honestly, I feel it’s not a bad film. I told Aamir, “You should see it now.” I said, “See, back then, the wounds were still fresh.”

Josh music Bharat Shah, Chandrachur Singh, Aishwarya Rai, Priya Gill, Rekha, Shah Rukh Khan, Ganesh Jain, Anu Malik, Mansoor Khan, Ratan Jain and Sameer Anjaan, among others at a promotional event of Josh.

How was it working with Anu Malik on the music of Josh?

So my first choice was actually AR Rahman. I went and met him, but I suddenly realised, Rahman is excellent, no doubt, but his work style is very different, and he’s quite elusive. I’m used to sitting with music directors and really being involved, because I play music myself. I record, I compose my own songs. In fact, that’s a big part of my life now, which I had ignored for a long time. The thing is, I like to interact closely, right from selecting the tune, obviously, but even down to the instrumentation and arrangement. I want a certain sound. I want a specific drum sound, a certain electric guitar tone. I don’t want screeching violins. They can definitely be used, but in the right way, not the over-used, clichéd way they often are.

And I knew that kind of hands-on process wouldn’t happen with Rahman. So when I came back from Chennai, I called him and said, “I’m sorry, Rahman, this is not working out.” He was very gracious and understanding. Now, Anu, since I had worked with him on Akele Hum Akele Tum, he was already pitching for this film. He knew I was about to start something new, and he was hoping I’d take him again. I had actually told him, “No, Anu, this time I’m going to work with Rahman.” But when that didn’t work out, I came back and called him, and he was thrilled. And honestly, Anu is really one of a kind. He’s full of tunes, he’s a melody guy.

Whose idea was it to have Shah Rukh sing “Apun Bola”?

I’m so glad you brought this up. So, I had actually heard “Aati Kya Khandala” way before anyone else had—way before any of the guys had heard it. But it just didn’t fit into my film. I realised that Aati Kya Khandala, from a musical standpoint too, and also in terms of tone, just didn’t belong. I really liked the song, it was exciting, but I don’t like forcing things into a film when they don’t naturally fit where I want them to go. Actually, maybe it’s a good thing they took it, because they kept the original lyrics, which were perfect for what it was. If I had taken the tune, I might have taken the lyrics somewhere else, and maybe it would have worked, maybe not. So, coming to your question, I think, yeah, maybe I did get inspired because Aamir had sung Khandala. That’s when I thought, “Hey, let Shah Rukh sing, it should feel more like him.” Because that’s really his only song in the film. I mean, not the only song, but the one that really needs to reflect his character. Like “Sailaru Sailare”, that one, honestly, anyone else could’ve sung it too. In fact, someone else might’ve done it even better.

Were you disappointed with the way the film performed at the box office?

The first thing is, reception never really affects me. When I finish a film, for me, it’s all about whether I feel I’ve done a good job. Whether I’ve stayed true to the premise and rendered it the way I visualised it. And if I’ve done that, then I feel it’s not bad. Of course, what’s considered good or bad also depends on audience taste. But I go by my own judgment. So I never felt like, even when Aamir told me he didn’t like Josh, that didn’t affect me. Because, I don’t know, I just felt that there’s something about Akele Hum Akele Tum, Josh, and even Jo Jeeta Wohi Sikandar, my films tend to take time for the audience to really get into them.

nal Screenplay category. Only in his mid-20s and already at the top of the world, he developed a reputation for being a spendthrift.

Writing for Guardian in 2009, the film historian David Thomson described Welles as “most glorious film failure of them all.” According to Thomson’s essay, Welles “died, alone and broke, in a cottage in the Hollywood hills on 10 October 1985, at which point his affairs and his estate passed into a chaos that he had known and engineered for most of his life. In his youth, Thomson wrote, Welles “worked 20 hours a day, ate double meals to keep going, pursued pretty young women like a demon and lived as if he had no tomorrow.” Welles spoke about his financial struggles in an interview with documentarian Leslie Megahey. “I think I made, essentially, a mistake staying in movies. But it’s the mistake I can’t regret because it’s like saying I shouldn’t have stayed married to that woman, but I did because I love her. I’ve wasted the greater part of my life looking for money and trying to get along, trying to make my work from this terribly expensive paintbox which is a movie. I’ve spent too much energy on things that have nothing to do with making a movie. In 1982, addressing a group of film students in France, Welles said

## 20 years of Paheli: Shah Rukh Khan-Rani Mukerji starrer feminist, dreamlike love story has aged gloriously well



‘Paheli’ is a deeply fascinating title. It is deceptively simple, yet dense with suggestion. A word that breathes poetry into the everyday, that lives between the literal and the symbolic. It can be a riddle, yes, but also its resolution. It invites contemplation and still manages to offer closure. In the context of Amol Palekar’s 2005 fantasy film, starring Shah Rukh Khan and Rani Mukerji, the title becomes something else entirely. Many still argue that the film might have been better served by the title ‘Duvidha,’ the original 1973 film by Mani Kaul, which serves as inspiration for Palekar’s 2005 rendition. But the truth is: ‘Duvidha’ as a word could never fit into what Palekar was trying to convey. After all, he wasn’t telling the story of a ghost, but of love — ghostly in its own right, not dead, not alive, just endlessly recurrent.

Take the film’s logline: Lachchi (Rani Mukerji) marries Kisanlal (Shah Rukh Khan), yet on their wedding night, Kisanlal refrains from consummating the union, revealing he must leave for five years on a business trip. But when he departs, a ghost, entranced by Lachchi’s beauty, assumes Kisanlal’s form. At first glance, one might expect a straightforward tale of mistaken identity. A story about a ghost (let’s call him Prem), courting Lachchi, who soon discovers the truth. Yet Palekar (just like Kaul) subverts this expectation. When Prem first meets Lachchi, he does not conceal his nature; he confesses, openly, that he is a ghost impersonating her husband. He offers her freedom, to reject him and be left alone. Caught in a ‘duvidha,’ a dilemma, Lachchi hesitates. But the title ‘Paheli’ acquires a distinct meaning here, as she chooses not to unravel the mystery, not to seek an answer. Instead, she embraces the riddle. She lets herself be caught in the enigma of love, in its illusions. Because what is love, if not illusion? Sometimes, the illusion is the only truth that matters.

Then the film transforms into a vivid dream of love, alive with stirring songs, and a gentle, unfolding romance. And that is where Palekar departs from Kaul, not by disagreeing with him, but by dreaming differently. Kaul’s Duvidha was about stillness. About the silence between two possibilities; Palekar’s Paheli is movement. It flows, it dances, it breaks rules not to shock, but to soften. Perhaps the most striking departure is how Palekar envisions a femi-

nist love story, grounded in women of agency, rooted in a small Rajasthani town. Consider the introduction of Shah Rukh’s character: he remains out of focus, while Rani commands the foreground. This might appear a subtle choice, even trivial. Yet, the deliberate way a film composes its women on screen, how it centers the narrative around them, is a language unto itself. And here, those creative decisions speak volumes. They invite us to study not just the story, but the very politics of presence.

The very fact that on her wedding night Lachchi chooses Prem, the ghost, is rooted in something profound: he alone asks for her consent. He offers her the gift of choice, the pleasure of agency. The film deliberately departs from the traditional cinematic portrayal of the ‘suhaag raat,’ where women are often shown as passive, or aching with restraint. In Paheli, Lachchi commands the moment. She tells her husband to lift her veil and is the one who desires to consummate the marriage. And it is the man, Kisanlal, who flees, cautioning that passion kindled for a single night is dangerous. This reversal is not only bold but grounded in cultural nuance. Brides, especially in traditional narratives, are framed as meek, hesitant, shy. Lachchi is neither. She embraces her desire openly. As desire, in her hands, becomes not transgression, but truth. Watching Paheli now, two decades after its release, hints at the kind of cinema we claim to be striving for today. But there was Palekar, doing it already back then. He imagined a world where women support one another, where abandonment by men does not define their sorrow, only their freedom. Think of Laapataa Ladies, that same thread of camaraderie runs through Lachchi and her sister-in-law (Juhi Chawla). Their bond is not written with sentiment, but with solidarity. Even in the song ‘Minnat Kare,’ as Lachchi’s friends tease her about the wedding night, there’s a playful, subversive energy, one that feels like a precursor to ‘Naram Kaliya’ from Amar Singh Chamkila. It’s the same undercurrent: women laughing among themselves, not as objects of desire, but as subjects of their own stories. Shah Rukh Khan In one of the film’s most moving moments,

Shah Rukh responds to his own self. When asked who he is, he replies that he is the love that resides in every woman’s heart. What I also believe Paheli set in motion was Aditya Chopra’s decision to make Rab Ne Bana Di Jodi a few years later. You can sense it, the way Palekar crafted Shah Rukh’s lover persona, with such poetic restraint and emotional sophistication, seems to have inspired Chopra to create his own mythic duality in Surinder Sahni and Raj. Because at their heart, both films are not about the men, but about the women. About their longing, their desire, their rebellion. And SRK, as always, exists not to dominate those stories, but as the bridge, the embodiment of what they dare to dream. It’s no accident, then, that in Paheli, when Kisanlal asks the ghost who he really is, Prem answers: “Aurat ke dil mein jo prem ho, woh hoon main.” (I am the love that lives in a woman’s heart.) No wonder, it’s a scene where Shah Rukh speaks to himself, split into two bodies, two selves, inhabiting the myth of who he has always been on screen. Who said love is an illusion? As long as you have Shah Rukh Khan, it’s the only truth that matters.

## ‘Thappads, ragging would happen’: Siddharth P Malhotra recalls assisting Vidhu Vinod Chopra, dad asked Kareeb director to ‘grind’ him



Filmmaker Siddharth P. Malhotra, who has made his mark with films like We Are Family, Hichki, and most recently Maharaj, opened up about his early days in the industry, working under celebrated director Vidhu Vinod Chopra. In a candid conversation with Cyrus Broacha, Malhotra shared memories of being an assistant director on Chopra’s 1998 film Kareeb, calling the experience both demanding and unforgettable. “He is a genius but at the same time, he wants what he wants,” Malhotra said. “So I remember that all of us as his assistants were very enthusiastic, and he was like, ‘Who can swim here?’ And I was like, ‘I can swim.’” What followed was a far cry from what they’d expected.

“As assistants, we had no idea that we were going into the water to hold one rope, because he wanted a thousand candles to be aligned while Bobby Deol is in the water. So all the people who practically knew swimming were below water, holding the bloody rope so that the song Chori Chori Jab Nazrein Mili could happen.” Malhotra recalled the intensity of working under Chopra. “I remember as an assistant, a call used to come and then I used to run, go somewhere and then come back... ragging would happen, thappads would happen, everything happened,” he said. Despite coming from a prominent film family, he is the grandson of veteran actor Prem Nath and related to Raj Kapoor and Prem Chopra, Malhotra insisted no special privileges were afforded to him. In fact, he revealed that his father personally requested Chopra to make him work hard. “My father made a call to Vinod and asked him to grind me as an assistant,” he said. “And Vinod once laughingly said, ‘Your father has asked me to raggaad him, so I’m doing that.’”

Malhotra also reminisced about a personal milestone in Chopra’s life that coincided with the making of Kareeb. “I think it was at that time he had just married Anu [film critic and author Anupama Chopra], so the temperament was

still high then. But now it has come down,” he said. “I really love him though. The way he uses the camera, I don’t think anyone else can.” Vidhu Vinod Chopra most recently directed 12th Fail, a film that was met with widespread critical acclaim and went on to become a sleeper box office success. The film won accolades for its storytelling, Chopra’s direction and editing, and a standout performance by Vikrant Massey.

## Trisha Krishnan drops cryptic post about love amidst dating rumours with Thalapathy Vijay

Mumbai: Is there someone special in Southern beauty Trisha Krishnan’s life? Well, netizens certainly seem to think so. The rumor mills suggest that Trisha is in a relationship with her ‘Ghilli’ co-star Thalapathy Vijay. Adding fuel to the rumors, she recently dropped a cryptic post about love on social media.

Taking to the stories section of her Instagram account, Trisha penned, “When you are full of love it confuses people who are full of shit.” Before this, wishing Thalapathy on his 51st birthday, the ‘Leo’ actress treated her Insta users with an unseen image with Thalapathy.

The photo featured Trisha sitting beside Thalapathy on a sofa. While he playfully interacted with her pet dog Izzy, Trisha looked at him with a warm look in her eyes. Trisha wished him on his special day saying, “Happy Birthday, bestest.” Reacting to the post, one of the netizens shared, “How adorable you two cutieeee.” Whereas, another one penned, “Some bonds are written in cinema history... and our hearts... Timeless chemistry, forever favourites”. While some adored their chemistry, others expressed their displeasure after seeing the two together.

“Why would you even post this? So unnecessary! It’s been ages since we saw him with his wife Sangeetha and these kind of private meeting photos are so unneeded! Well, can’t blame you alone unfortunately!”, one of the comments read. Refreshing your memory, Trisha was left blushing during one of the events of their movie “Leo” as Thalapathy referred to her as a princess. The ‘Beast’ actor was heard saying, “I’m sure you all know who I’m talking about. Everyone will show hands like this (normal wave), but she alone will show like that (princess wave). I’m sure you all have noticed it. Yes, it is our princess Kundavai. Best wishes, Trisha.”