

## Two-day holiday declared for schools and colleges in rain-hit Telangana district

Kamareddy: In view of the heavy rains lashing the district for the past few days, District Collector directed the District Educational Officer to declare holidays on August 29 and 30 for all government and private educational institutions, including junior and degree colleges.

## Modi Embarks On Critical Asia Tour Amid US Trade Tensions

GNS News Agency, August 28

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is undertaking a significant diplomatic journey to Asia this week, visiting Japan and China at a time when India faces mounting pressure from the United States over trade policies and energy purchases. The tour comes against the backdrop of newly implemented American tariffs that have doubled duties on Indian imports to 50 percent, creating an urgent need for India to strengthen relationships with alternative partners.Modi's eastward diplomatic mission begins with his departure on Thursday evening for Japan, where he will remain until August 30 for the 15th India-Japan Annual Summit with Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba. This marks the Indian leader's first standalone visit to Japan in nearly seven years and represents his inaugural annual summit meeting with Ishiba, making it a particularly significant diplomatic engagement between the two nations.

Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri has emphasized the importance of the Japan visit, describing it as an opportunity for both prime ministers to conduct an in-depth review of bilateral ties while exchanging views on regional and global issues of mutual importance. The meetings are expected to launch several new initiatives designed to build greater resilience in the relationship and address emerging opportunities and challenges facing both countries.

Following his Japan engagement, Modi will travel to China's Tianjin for the 25th meeting of the Heads of State of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, scheduled for August 31 and September 1. This visit comes at the invitation of Chinese President Xi Jinping and will bring together leaders from ten member nations, including some of the world's most influential political figures under one roof.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit will



feature a remarkable gathering of global leaders, including Russian President Vladimir Putin and Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. The presence of these leaders creates a unique diplomatic environment where Modi will have opportunities for multiple bilateral engagements, though officials are still finalizing the specific meeting arrangements and agendas.The timing of Modi's encounter with Pakistani Prime Minister Sharif is particularly noteworthy, as it marks the first occasion since the India-Pakistan military conflict in May that both leaders will attend the same international event. This coincidence presents potential opportunities for diplomatic engagement, though no formal bilateral meetings between the two leaders have been confirmed at this stage.

Questions remain about whether Modi will hold bilateral discussions with Russian President Putin during the summit. When asked about potential meetings with the Russian leader, Foreign Secretary Misri indicated that finalization of such arrangements is still underway, promising to provide briefings on any proceedings that emerge from these engagements.

## KTR alleges Congress bid to tamper with voter list



GNS News Agency, August 28

Hyderabad: BRS working president KT Rama Rao alleged that the ruling Congress was attempting to manipulate the voters' list ahead of the upcoming local body elections. He asked party leaders to remain alert and ensure that no genuine voter is excluded from the list.Speaking in

a teleconference with senior party leaders on Thursday, Rama Rao said the government was deliberately removing the votes of BRS sympathisers and activists with the malicious intention of winning local body elections at any cost. He said the unusually short deadline given to raise objections over missing names only strengthens suspicions of foul play.To counter this, the BRS constituted a committee led by MLCs Dasoju Sravan, L Ramana, and BRS legal cell in-charge Soma Bharat Kumar to monitor irregularities. They have been directed to meet State Election Commissioner A Santhi Kumari on behalf of the party and raise concerns over irregularities in the draft voters' list.Rama Rao directed party leaders to collect draft voter lists from officials immediately after district- and mandal-level meetings scheduled on August 29 and 30, respectively. He asked district-level leaders, legislators and senior leaders to mandatorily attend these meetings, and also ensure thorough verification at the village level.He instructed that any discrepancies should be reported to the MPDO offices by August 31 and urged leaders to expose the government's conspiracies through media conferences. He stressed that it is the party's responsibility to safeguard every supporter's vote ahead of the final list publication on September 2.

## Virar building collapse: Toll rises to 17 after 2 more bodies found from debris



GNS News Agency, August 28

A day after a portion of a four-storey residential building collapsed in Chamundanager, Virar, the death toll went up to 17 on Thursday, after two bodies were found from the debris.According to officials, nine others were injured when a portion of Ramabai Apartment in Swami Samarth Nagar (Old), Vijay Nagar, collapsed late Tuesday around 11.45 pm.

The birthday celebration of a child, who turned one, was going on in the building, which housed 50 flats, just before the incident happened. Omkar Joil (27), his wife Arohi (24), and their one-year-old daughter Utkarsha were among those killed shortly after the gathering. Around 25 people had attended the birthday party, minutes after which the ground-floor wing collapsed, crushing 12 flats.Among the deceased were members of several families, including Sachin Nivelkar (44), Supriya Nivelkar (40), and their son Arnab (14), as well as Laxman Kisku Singh (26), Dinesh Prakash Sakpal (43), Parvati Sakpal (60), Dipesh Soni (41), Harish Singh Bisht (34), Sonali Rupesh Tejam (41), Dipak Singh Bohra (25), Kashish Pawan Sahni (35), Shubhangi

Pawan Sahni (40), Govind Singh Rawat (28), and Rohini Chavan (approximately 52).The injured are being treated at Tuljabhavani Hospital and other private medical facilities nearby.

## KTR blasts Revanth Reddy government over slow response to floods in Telangana

GNS News Agency, August 28

Hyderabad: BRS working president KT Rama Rao came down heavily on the Revanth Reddy government for its negligence in handling the flood situation caused by heavy rains across Telangana. Demanding Rs 25 lakh compensation for families of those who lost their lives and Rs 25,000 per acre for crop losses, he also sought Indiramma houses for those rendered homeless.

Rama Rao, who toured the inundated areas of Rajanna Sircilla district on Thursday, interacted with the affected people and assured them of all possible help. He asked the party cadre to remain accessible to the needy and provide them with essentials including food, water, medicines and clothes.Speaking to the media, he criticised the Congress government for failing to evacuate people in low-lying areas despite advance warnings of one lakh cusecs of flood inflow into the Manair river. He said Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy was holding meetings on Musi river beautification and sporting events instead of focusing on disaster management, even as people were struggling in flood waters without basic amenities.

## Traffic diversions in Hyderabad for Ganesh immersions from Aug 29 to Sept 5

Hyderabad: Hyderabad Traffic Police announced traffic diversions from August 29 to September 5, between 3 pm and late night, to manage Ganesh idol immersion processions towards NTR Marg and People's Plaza on PVNR Marg.

Key diversion points include Sailing Club Junction, VV Statue, Telugu Thalli Junction, DBR Mills, Kavadiguda X Road, Nallagutta Bridge and Buddha Bhavan. Routes leading to Upper Tank Bund, NTR Marg and Necklace Road will be regulated or closed depending on congestion levels.Motorists heading towards Liberty, Khairatabad, Secunderabad and Punjagutta are advised to take alternate routes via Kavadiguda, Begumpet, Minister Road and Telugu Thalli flyover.

## Revanth Reddy slams Kaleshwaram project during aerial survey of flood-hit districts

GNS News Agency, August 28

Hyderabad: Amidst an aerial inspection of flood-hit Kamareddy, Nizamabad, Medak and other districts, Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy continued his sharp attack on the Kaleshwaram project.The Chief Minister, accompanied by Irrigation Minister N Uttam Kumar Reddy and TPCC president Mahesh Kumar Goud, flew in a helicopter from Hyderabad on Thursday evening.During the trip, he inspected Pocharam and Yellampalli irrigation projects before addressing media persons."The Yellampalli project was constructed at a strategic location. This was the difference between a project that got washed away and one that stood strong. Yellampalli was constructed by experts and it has remained solid for decades," he said.When asked why water was not being stored at Medigadda and other barrages, the Chief Minister shot back: "How can that be done?"There is an issue with Medigadda, Annaram and Sundilla barrages as they were built with the same technology. The NDSA report has pointed to lack of quality, and experts too have found fault with the methods adopted. There are problems in design, construction and operations as well," he said."If water is lifted and stored in these barrages as per the demand of former Ministers Harish Rao and KT Rama Rao,



and if anything untoward happens, downstream villages will be inundated," he warned.On the Justice PC Ghose Commission report, the Chief Minister said it would be tabled in the Assembly and discussed thoroughly.Due to heavy rains, the Chief Minister's helicopter could not land in Kamareddy, forcing him to proceed by road to Medak, where he held a review meeting with MP Raghunandan Rao, the Irrigation Minister, TPCC president and senior officials at the SP's office.

## India flags 'denial and delay' by Bangladesh in accepting undocumented migrants



GNS News Agency, August 28

The Border Security Force (BSF) has flagged "denial and delay" by Border Guards Bangladesh (BGB) in accepting apprehended "illegal Bangladeshi entrants" along the eastern border at the three-day Director General-level conference in Dhaka.At the meeting, the BSF stressed upon the early construction of a single row fence, without any defence potential, which has been opposed by the BGB at multiple locations after political changes in Bangladesh in August 2024.The BSF delegation asserted that the construction of the fence was required to prevent cross-border crimes and the entry of undocumented migrants. The BGB said it was raising awareness among the border population to not cross into India, but no concrete steps, such as putting up a fence, have been taken by it, a government source said.The BGB raised concerns on "pushback" of undocumented Bangladeshi migrants, Myanmarese nationals and even Indians along

the border saying that around 2,500 people have been pushed into the country.After the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack, on the directions of the Ministry of Home Affairs, States began a crackdown against undocumented Bangladeshi migrants who were then sent across the border to avoid legal procedures that take years to complete. The Indian government has not acknowledged the "pushbacks".Concerns raised by the BSF included "prevention against attack/assault/abuse/stone-pelting on BSF personnel and Indian nationals by Bangladesh-based criminals/miscreants, joint efforts to prevent trans-border crimes, action against Indian Insurgent Groups (IIGs) in Bangladesh, issues related to border infrastructure, construction of SRF, misinterpretation of border issues by Bangladeshi media and other miscellaneous activities," a statement from the force said. The DG-level conference was held in Dhaka from August 25-28. When asked about the pushbacks at a press conference in Dhaka, Daljit Singh Chaudhary, DG, BSF said, "...exfiltration is happening, people are returning through proper channels, they are also coming back through gaps.... whoever we find (at the border) we immediately hand them over to BGB." In 2024, 1,049 undocumented people were apprehended while leaving the country, while till July 15 this year, 3,536 undocumented people were caught by the BSF while leaving the country via Bangladesh border, a senior government official said."DG BGB raised concerns over illegal push-ins of individuals, Indian nationals and Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals (FDMN) into Bangladesh by BSF. He emphasized adherence to established procedures for repatriation of illegal entrants. In reply, DG BSF assured that Bangladeshi nationals residing illegally in India would be repatriated following mutually agreed processes," a statement by BGB said.

## India, Bhutan sign pact for further co-operation in agriculture, allied sectors



GNS News Agency, August 28

According to an official statement on Thursday (August 28, 2025), Agriculture Secretary Devesh Chaturvedi and Thinley Namgyel, Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MoAL), Royal Government of Bhutan, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in Thimpu to further strengthen cooperation in the fields of agriculture and allied sectors.The signing of an MoU reflects the two countries' shared commitment to food security, sustainable farming and rural prosperity."It will serve as a framework for collaboration in various areas outlined in the MoU, including agricultural research and innovation, livestock health and production, post-harvest management, value chain development, and the exchange of knowledge, skills, and expertise," the statement said.

To implement the MoU, the first session of the Joint Technical Working Group (JTWG) was convened. The two countries agreed on the Terms of Reference for JTGW and priority areas of collaboration for immediate actions.Mr. Chaturvedi spoke about the priorities and challenges, besides highlighting a series of initiatives launched by the Indian government for the growth of the agricultural sector.During the JTGW session, India and Bhutan held detailed discussions on key areas of cooperation, including

Agriculture, Livestock, Agricultural Marketing and Cooperatives, Food Processing, Seed Sector, Research and Technology Collaboration, and Capacity Building.

## Heavy inflows into Godavari projects, gates lifted to manage floodwaters

GNS News Agency, August 28

Hyderabad: After nearly a fortnight of declining water levels, the Godavari River projects are once again witnessing heavy inflows, raising fresh flood concerns. The surge is attributed to upstream rains, inflows from tributaries, and releases from major irrigation projects, prompting officials to step up monitoring and precautionary measures.The Sripada Yellampalli Project is receiving massive inflows of 7,30,924 cusecs, including 3,01,000 cusecs from the Sri Ram Sagar Project (SRSP), 40,128 cusecs from the Kaddam Narayana Reddy Project, and 3,95,716 cusecs from its own catchment area. To regulate the flow, authorities lifted 40 of the project's 62 gates, releasing 8,20,982 cusecs downstream.At the Sri Ram Sagar Project, the water level stood at 1087.20 feet, against a full reservoir level (FRL) of 1091 feet, with 67.057 TMC of water stored out of a total capacity of 80.5 TMC. The project is receiving 2,00,000 cusecs and discharging 2,76,567 cusecs, including 2,50,000 cusecs through 39 spillway gates, 17,300 cusecs via the Integrated Flood Flow Canal (IFFC), 8,000 cusecs through escape gates, and 400 cusecs via the Saraswati Canal.The Kaddam Narayana Reddy Project is receiving more than 26,097 cusecs, with heavy discharges continuing to swell the Godavari.

# Indian Chronicle

## English Daily

### Swadeshi slogan gets a renewed push

As the new American tariff regime draws closer, the "swadeshi" slogan gets a renewed push with India staying firm and gearing up to absorb the impact. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call to the people to buy indigenous goods and to the business establishments to display boards selling swadeshi products must be seen as an expression of defiance and a political message for the country. A throwback to the "swadeshi" strategy is designed to unite people around an emotional narrative built on India's core strengths and also to pre-empt criticism over the impact of the American levies on the economy. Modi's assertion — while addressing a gathering in Ahmedabad — that he would never let harm come in the way of small entrepreneurs and farmers must be seen as part of the government's efforts to protect the home turf amid tensions over the imminent implementation of the new tariffs. 'Atmanirbharta' is going to be the weapon to fight the trade war imposed by US President Donald Trump. The PM used the most recent episode of his monthly radio show 'Mann ki Baat' to say that true service to the nation lies in promoting indigenous goods. The Ahmedabad pledge came less than a week before a 25 per cent additional tariff kicks in — besides an already-imposed 25 per cent — which the US calls a penalty for India's buying of oil from Russia. India has rightly rejected the diktat and continued to buy oil and other goods from Russia, thereby stressing its sovereignty. An interesting consequence of this assertion has been a marked thaw in India's diplomatic relations with China. Modi's unambiguous message that India would never bow to pressures from any quarters came a day after US Vice President JD Vance said

### Vanam Vinay Kumar assumes charge as the new Third Additional Judicial First Class Magistrate.



....."Bhukya Ranjith Naik, Bhadradi Kothagudem Bureau, August 28, Indian Chronicle: Vanam Vinay Kumar assumed charge as the Third Additional Judicial First Class Magistrate of Kothagudem on Thursday as per the orders of the Telangana State High Court (High Court). He assumed charge at the Third Additional Magistrate Court in the local court premises. He formally assumed charge from the Second Additional Judicial First Class Magistrate B. Ravikumar, who was earlier handling these responsibilities. Later, Vanam Vinay Kumar said that he would work to maintain the trust of the people in the judicial system and for the speedy resolution of cases. He said that he would do his best to make the judicial system more transparent and efficient. On this occasion, the lawyers and court staff in the court premises congratulated Vanam Vinay Kumar. They expressed hope that he would handle this post effectively. Lawyers believe that the appointment of Vanam Vinay Kumar in the Kothagudem judicial system will further boost the trial of local cases. Several lawyers and court employees participated in the program.

### 5 trapped in floods rescued by army personnel

GNS News Agency, August 28 Five people had gone to graze cattle on the other side of the Upper Maneru project at Narmala village in Gambhiraopet mandal of Sirilla district. They were all trapped there when the flood suddenly hit.

Upon hearing about the situation, Union Minister Bandi Sanjay took immediate action. He contacted Union Defense Minister Rajnath Singh, who arranged for two helicopters to assist. As a result, army officials successfully evacuated those stranded by the flood to safety using the helicopters on Thursday. In related news, the heavy inflow into the Upper Maneru Vagu caused damage to one side of the bridge at Bandalingampally in the Yellareddypet mandal, leading to the suspension of traffic.

### Red alert for Kamareddy, Adilabad, Jagtial, Nizamabad districts

Hyderabad, Aug. 28 : The Met Centre Hyderabad of India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued a red alert for the districts of Jagtial, Nizamabad, Kamareddy, and Adilabad, indicating that heavy rainfall is anticipated in these areas. It warned of winds reaching speeds between 62 and 87 kilometers per hour, along with the possibility of thunderstorms and lightning. An orange alert has been issued for the districts of Hanumakonda, Karimnagar, Medchal Malkajgiri, Medak, Nirmal, Peddapalli, Rajanna Sircilla, Sangareddy, Siddipet, and Warangal. Rainfall of moderate intensity is expected in these regions. A yellow alert is in effect for Bhadradi Kothagudem, Jangaon, Khammam, Komaram Bheem Asifabad, Mahabubabad, Mulugu, Nalgonda, Sangareddy, Suryapet, Vikarabad, and Yadadri Bhuvanagiri districts. Authorities have indicated that there may be light rain accompanied by gusty winds at speeds of up to 40 kilometers per hour. Officials have been notified in response to the Meteorological Center's warnings.

## Sruthi Venepalli Elected as Executive Committee Member of the Indian Weightlifting Federation



Hyderabad: The Telangana Weightlifting Association proudly announces that its President, Ms. Sruthi Venepalli, has been elected as an Executive Committee (EC) Member of the Indian Weightlifting Federation (IWF), New Delhi, during the Federation's Annual General Assembly held at

Crown Plaza Hotel, Ahmedabad.

In line with the revised norms of the Government of India, the strength of the Federation's Executive Committee has been streamlined from 45 members to just 12. It is a matter of immense pride that Ms. Sruthi Venepalli has been chosen as one among these 12 eminent members, representing the collective strength of 29 states across India. A distinguished sports person, Ms. Sruthi is an 8-time National Gold Medalist in Athletics and a passionate promoter of weightlifting. She hails from Kodad and currently resides in Hyderabad. She has an inspiring academic background — matriculated from Telangana Sports School, Hakimpet, completed Engineering in Electronics and Communications from Anurag Engineering College, MBA in HR from Sikkim Manipal University, and LLB from Mahatma Gandhi Law College, Hyderabad. On her election, Ms. Sruthi Venepalli said that "It is a great honor to be elected as a member of the Executive Committee of the Indian Weightlifting Federation. I dedicate this achievement to my father Venepalli Srinivasa Rao, coaches, mentors, and the entire sporting fraternity of Telangana who supported me throughout my journey. My focus will be on strengthening grassroots weightlifting, creating more opportunities for young talent, and ensuring India's presence shines at the global stage."

## Police Peace Committee Meets With Ganesh Mandapam Organizers In Wankidi: SI Durgam Mahender



"Indian Chronicle kumrambheem, Asifabad. District Reporter Jade Srinivas. August, 28. "A peace committee meeting was held with the organizers of Ganesh Mandals at Wankidi Police Station on evening. Speaking on the occasion, SI Durgam Mahender suggested that quality elec-

trical wires should be used at Ganesh Mandals, fire prevention measures should be implemented properly, proper parking facilities should be arranged, and mandals should not be set up on roads so that people do not face traffic problems.

## Devotees should not face any inconvenience during Ganesh immersion. "SP Rohit Raju inspects the arrangements and instructs the officials



....."Bhukya Ranjith Naik, Bhadradi Kothagudem Bureau, August 28, Indian Chronicle: SP Rohit Raju said that strict arrangements will be made in coordination with the officials of other departments so that the devotees who come to Bhadrachalam from various parts of Telangana for the

## Loans For Indiramma's Houses.. Rs.4,000 Per Month Is Enough!"

Indian Chronicle kumrambheem, Asifabad. District Reporter Jade Srinivas. August, 28. "Telangana The government is providing loan facilities to the poor who cannot afford to build Indiramma houses. Banks are providing loans to self-help groups through IKP linkage. Beneficiaries have to repay Rs. 4,000 per month along with their savings every month. After the government releases funds for the houses, they are trying to repay the loans taken by women's groups.

## 23rd Death Anniversary of Kotnaka Bheem Rao



"Indian Chronicle kumrambheem, Asifabad. District Reporter Jade Srinivas. August, 28. "On the occasion of the 23rd death anniversary of Kotnaka Bheem Rao, the first tribal minister, first tribal graduate, legislator and cabinet minister of united Andhra Pradesh, a special program will be organized at 11 am on Friday at Kotnaka Bheem Rao Children's Park in Asifabad. The program will include flag worship and a meeting. MLA Kova Lakshmi appealed to the public representatives, leaders, tribal association leaders and the public to participate in large numbers to make this program a success.

## Telangana opens gateway for Japanese semiconductor know-how: Sridhar Babu

Hyderabad, Aug. 28 Minister for IT, Industries & Commerce, Duddila Sridhar Babu, stated that by partnering with Toho Koki Seisakusho Co., Ltd. at T-Works, the State government is facilitating access to Japanese expertise and providing Indian businesses and researchers with the chance to engage in the global semiconductor supply chain. This collaboration aims to establish India's inaugural Chemical Mechanical Polishing (CMP) Pad Technologies Hub in Hyderabad.

The new hub, valued at ₹8 crore, will come up inside T-Works — India's largest prototyping centre and manufacturing knowledge partner built by the Government of Telangana — and will function as an open-access facility for learning, demonstration, and collaboration.

The Minister said from students and researchers to startups and global enterprises, the centre will provide a unique platform to experience world-class CMP technologies in India for the very first time. "This partnership is yet another step in Telangana's commitment to create global linkages for India's semiconductor mission," the Minister added. Takuya Nishimura, Global Business Head of Toho Koki, said that "We are delighted to partner with T-Works and contribute to the spirit of Make in India. CMP pad technology is a vital part of semiconductor manufacturing, and through this collaboration we aim to empower Indian companies to build their own capabilities. T-Works CEO Joginder Tanikella represented on behalf of Telangana Government in the MOU agreement programme."

## Jupally launches National Sports Week celebrations at NITHM

Hyderabad, Aug. 28 Minister for Excise, Tourism and Culture Jupally Krishna Rao on Thursday launched the three-day National Sports Week celebrations at the National Institute of Tourism and Hospitality Management (NITHM), Hyderabad. The celebrations feature a series of programs focusing on health, wellness, and institutional development.

The inaugural session began with a yoga camp led by trainer Smriti Pandey, which saw enthusiastic participation from students, faculty, and staff. Addressing the gathering, the Minister called upon students and faculty to work collectively to position NITHM as a leading institution of excellence. He stressed on introducing new academic programs, short-term and skill development courses, expanding employment and entrepreneurship opportunities, and upgrading campus infrastructure.

Jupally Krishna Rao assured complete support from the Telangana government and directed the NITHM Director to prepare a comprehensive action plan in consultation with the special chief secretary. He further stated that the government is giving special focus to tourism and hospitality, with plans to improve infrastructure at major tourist destinations, develop historical and cultural sites, and promote them globally. The Minister also urged the private sector to explore investment opportunities in this growing sector. NITHM Director Prof. Venkata Ramana, Dr. P.L.N. Patel (Srikara Hospitals), faculty, staff, and students participated in the celebrations.

## Minister Seethakka visits flood-affected areas in Kamareddy

Hyderabad, Aug. 28 : Minister for Panchayat Raj Dr. Dhanasari Anasuya, popularly known as Seethakka, inspected the flood-affected areas in Kamareddy district on Thursday. Government Advisor Mohammad Ali Shabbir and Zaheerabad MP Suresh Shetkar also participated in the visit. During the visit, the Minister assessed the state of the roads that had been damaged by the rains and addressed the concerns of low-lying villages at risk of flooding. She engaged with local residents to discuss their issues and gather more information. Speaking on the occasion, Seethakka remarked that thanks to the vigilance of the government and its officials, they were able to avert casualties and rescue numerous individuals trapped in the flood. She noted that the Chief Minister has held multiple reviews regarding the rainfall and flooding, providing direction to the Ministers and relevant authorities. "The intensity of the flood escalated due to an unexpected cloud burst in the early hours. We are currently evaluating the damage caused by the rains. The government is committed to providing assistance, including food supplies to those affected," she added. The Minister further emphasised that during natural calamities, political parties should prioritise aiding victims rather than engaging in politics, and assured that the entire government apparatus is prepared to address such devastating events.



## Model Demo Farm to Increase Additional Income and Employment Opportunities: District Collector Jitesh V. Patil.“



“““Bhukya Ranjith Naik, Bhadradi Kothagudem Bureau, August 28, Indian Chronicle: District Collector Jitesh V. Patil has ordered the officials to create a model demo farm to increase additional income and employment opportunities for the people in the district. On Thursday, the model demo farm site to be newly established on the land of the Irrigation Department next to the canal in the Morampalli Banjara Gram Panchayat limits of Burgampahad Mandal was inspected. Speaking on the occasion, the Collector directed the officials on how to develop the model demo farm. In this demo farm, plans were made to grow vegetables,

build a brick-making unit with clay, bamboo, and wattle fence, and build a quail unit shed and a solar driver, as well as to grow tung trees. The Collector said that through this model demo farm, additional sources of income will be available by introducing employment opportunities not only to farmers but also to women and by introducing new agricultural methods. Tahsildar B. N. Prasad, RI Narasimha Rao, SSRLP AE Sandeep, MP O. Balayya, APO Vijayalakshmi, APM Hemanthini, Panchayat Secretary Bhavani, Mandal Agriculture Officer Nagarjuna, and others participated in this program.

## District Collector Jitesh V. Patil takes special steps to provide quality bricks at low cost to Indiramma House beneficiaries.“““



“““Bhukya Ranjith Naik, Bhadradi Kothagudem Bureau, August 28, Indian Chronicle: District Collector Jitesh V. Patil inspected the process of manufacturing quality bricks using fly ash at Bhadradi Thermal Power Station (BTPS) near Dammakapet in Manuguru Mandal on Thursday to provide quality bricks at low cost to Indiramma House beneficiaries and for Employment Guarantee Scheme works. On this occasion, he inspected the brick manufacturing process and made several suggestions. The Collector said that the main objective is to provide high-quality construction materials in the construction of Indiramma Houses and Employment Guarantee Scheme works being undertaken in the district. He said that the use of fly ash will benefit the environment, and the remaining waste material after production can be effectively utilized to make and use bricks. The Collector suggested that bricks should be manufactured extensively according to local needs. The Collector clarified that providing high-quality construction materi-

als is important in the construction of Indiramma houses and the employment guarantee scheme, and that quality bricks can be provided in rural areas at low prices by making bricks with sand, cement, fly ash, and clay mixtures. He said that widespread publicity on these will contribute to large-scale brick production in the district, thereby directly benefiting the beneficiaries.

On August 30, a training and awareness program will be organized at BTPS on the method of making quality bricks with different mixtures through three machines, and the Collector called for the large-scale participation and training of Indiramma house beneficiaries, concerned officers, and enthusiasts in this program. BTPS Chief Engineers, Superintendent Engineers, Panchayat Raj Officers, Employment Guarantee Scheme Officers, Housing Construction Department Engineers, Tahsildars, MPDOs, APOs, and officers of concerned departments participated in the program.

## Action Should Be Taken Against Hospitals That Follow The Rules And Regulations.



““A petition To The District Medical Officer Under The Usps Of DYFI KVPS Associations““Indian Chronicle kumrambheem, Asifabad. District Reporter Jade Srinivas. August, 28. “Private hospitals across the district of Kumram Bheem Asifabad are looting innocent people financially in the name of medicine without following government rules and regulations, said DYF district president secretaries Gedam Teekananand and Godisela Karthikbi, adding that in some hospitals, if there is a price in the price list displayed, the staff there is charging more. He said that if there is a doctor's name on the notice board, another doctor is treating inside. Some fake hospitals in Asifabad and Kagaznagar town are running hospitals with fake certificates. In the recent past, incidents have taken place in two private hospitals in Kagaznagar town. Due to this, the game played in private hospitals continues to be a song sung. Therefore, keeping in mind the lives of the people of the district, he asked for an investigation and strict action to be taken against such hospitals. District Medical Officer Sitaram responded positively and said that we will soon conduct

inspections in private hospitals. He said that if we have any shortcomings, we will take strict action against the hospitals. He said that action will be taken against the hospitals that charge high fees. The innocent poor people we will ensure that better treatment is provided in private hospitals. KVPS District Secretary Durgam Dinakar participated in this program..

## Traffic halted on the Medak-Bodhan route

The high-level bridge on the Medak-Bodhan main road was washed away due to heavy floodwaters flowing into the Pocharam reservoir. This has brought traffic to a standstill on this route. Barricades have been set up to prevent vehicles from entering from both sides. The authorities have made arrangements so that vehicles can travel from another route.

## Manda Venkateswara Rao, a resident of Bhadrachalam, has been elected as the co-option executive member of the Telangana Judges Association

““““Bhukya Ranjith Naik, Bhadradi Kothagudem Bureau, August 28, Indian Chronicle: Manda Venkateswara Rao, a resident of Bhadrachalam in Bhadradi Kothagudem district, has been elected as the co-option executive member of the Telangana Judges Association. He is currently holding key responsibilities as the District Judge of Kukatpally in Hyderabad. This election should be considered as a recognition of the immense experience, commitment, and services displayed by Manda Venkateswara Rao in the legal field. As a resident of Bhadrachalam in Bhadradi Kothagudem district, his representation in the Telangana State Judges Association is a matter of pride for the district. This association works on issues related to the welfare and professional development of judges across the state. It is expected that he will play a key role in achieving the goals of the association with his experience in these new responsibilities. It is a good development that his services in the Telangana judiciary are expanding further. Bhadrachalam resident Manda Venkateswara Rao has been elected as the executive member of the Telangana Judges Association, which is a matter of pride for our Bhadrachalam, said Bhadrachalam Bar President Kota Devadanam.



## Asifabad Fake Pesticide..Loss To Farmers“

“Indian Chronicle kumrambheem, Asifabad. District Reporter Jade Srinivas. August, 28. “Farmers' associations have raised a protest alleging that a farmer named Mallesh from Ankusapur in Asifabad mandal was cheated by a fertilizer shop owner. He said that the farmer, who had cultivated cotton on 9 acres by taking loans at high interest rates,

was sold a fake pesticide called 'Shooter'. The farmer expressed his grief that the crop was destroyed within 4 days of spraying this pesticide and that he had suffered serious losses.“

“Farmers' associations have demanded that the authorities take action.

## Gram Panchayat Draft Voters list Released



““Indian Chronicle kumrambheem, Asifabad. District Reporter Jade Srinivas. August, 28. “The draft voters' list for all gram panchayats in Komurambheem Asifabad district was released on Thursday. The list of polling stations has also been made available in the mandal offices. Voters can express their objections to the panchayat secretary or mandal development officers from August 28 to 30. After examining these objections, the final list will be prepared on August 31 and published on September 2, said District Panchayat Officer Bikshapati Goud.

## NH-44 damaged

Heavy rains across Telangana have damaged National Highway (NH) No. 44 in several places, resulting in the disruption of vehicular traffic. Cyberabad Traffic Joint CP Gajrao Bhupal said that heavy vehicles going towards NH 44 from Hyderabad are being diverted. Vehicles going towards Adilabad from Hyderabad are being diverted at Medchal check post.

Gajrao Bhupal suggested that people should go to Adilabad via Medchal check post, Siddipet, Karimnagar, Jagtial, Korutla, Metpally, and Armur. He asked the passengers to cooperate with the police. Those going to distant places should definitely follow diversion routes to avoid traffic congestion. He said that traffic police and highway patrol teams will be available to help the passengers. District

SP Rajesh Chandra said that the 44th National Highway near Kamareddy has been damaged due to heavy rains, due to which only 25 percent of the traffic is being carried out. Noting this, motorists were advised to use alternative routes instead of the Medchal-Ramayampet-Kamareddy Dichpally route. He said that heavy vehicles are being diverted at Medchal and normal vehicles at Ramayampet. People are requested to take note of this. Nirmal police issued several instructions to motorists travelling from Adilabad to Hyderabad. Motorists travelling from Adilabad to Hyderabad via Kamareddy have been advised to take a left turn from the Kondapur bridge near Nirmal and take a diversion. From Kondapur, the people should travel to Hyderabad via Mamada, Khanapurmet, Jagtial and Karimnagar, said Nirmal District SP Dr. G. Janaki Sharmila.

## BJP Chief directs party workers to take up relief works in rain-hit Telangana

Hyderabad, Aug. 28. Telangana BJP President N. Ramchander Rao directed his party workers across the state to actively participate in relief and rescue operations in the rain-affected areas. Rao while convening a teleconference with party booth-level presidents, district presidents, office-bearers and corporators today, instructed them to extend full cooperation to the official machinery engaged in evacuating the people from low-lying areas. He urged the people to remain vigilant as heavy rains continue to lash several districts of Telangana. With the Meteorological department issuing a red alert for Medak and Kamareddy districts, he advised the people to avoid venturing out unless necessary, citing overflowing streams, lakes and submerged roads. The BJP leader further said that the Central

government has assured to extend full support to Telangana in handling the crisis. Defence minister Rajnath Singh and BJP National President JP Nadda personally spoke to him and enquired about the situation. The Centre has already dispatched NDRF teams and kept helicopters on standby for rescue operations, he noted. Calling it as the 'primary responsibility' of BJP workers to stand by the people in distress, Rao urged the party leaders, particularly the BJYM cadres, to step up efforts in relocating people from vulnerable areas and for distributing food and drinking water. Union Ministers G. Kishan Reddy and Bandi Sanjay Kumar also spoke to Union ministers Rajnath Singh and JP Nadda and the latter assured all possible assistance to Telangana since several parts of the state reel under incessant rains.

## Officials Take Care Of Broken Hand Pump““

Indian Chronicle kumrambheem, Asifabad. District Reporter Jade Srinivas. August, 28. “Women in Ko Yavagu Gram Panchayat No. 2 of Kagaznagar Mandal have been facing various problems due to the breakdown of the hand pump for the past four months. The pumps are not getting water properly even though there is a Mission Bhagiratha line. They are just names. The pipeline was constructed without digging a single foot of the last contract. That is

why the water from the pipeline is not getting water properly. No matter how many times the officials and the Panchayat Secretary have been informed, they do not care. Now the people are demanding that the officials take immediate action and provide good water. If they do not take action, the women ward members are ready to protest together. Similarly, the sanitation work in ward no. 2 is also not done properly. At least bleaching powder is not used.

# Haryana interfaith couple forced to stay separated as panchayat orders annulment



GNS News Agency, August 28

It's difficult to say what angered the villagers more and the couple's interfaith marriage or the fact that the groom and the bride belonged to the same village. The July 3 marriage of a 25-year-old Muslim man and a 24-year-old Hindu woman from Mehrana village in Haryana's Charkhi Dadri district shattered many unwritten rules set by the villagers. From "dent to izzat (honour)" brought by the interfaith relationship to violation of age-old customs practised by the residents, their marriage drew the ire of not one but three villages in the neighbourhood. On Sunday (July 20), Haa khap panchayat called by residents of Mehrana and those of neighbouring Kheri Sanwal and Patuwas villages pronounced its "verdict" on the marriage — it has to be annulled at the earliest possible, according to Chaju Ram, 63, a cattle farmer who attended the meeting. "Two other decisions were also taken at the Athgama khap. The girl (bride) has to marry someone else who is not from any of the three villages. The boy (groom) cannot live in the village (Mehrana) and his family will be boycotted indefinitely," he said. "Yeh hamari purani parampara hain. Desh itna bara hai... Aap ko 15 km ke andar hi kisi se shadi kyun karni hai (This is our age-old tradition. This country is so huge, why do you have to marry someone who lives within 15 km of your village)?" he said. The couple and their families are already bearing the brunt of the villagers' wrath. While the groom has left the village, his parents have been living under police protection since July 7. The bride, who is pursu-

ing her Master's from a Rohtak college, is staying with her parents in Prem Nagar area in the district. Asked if the couple was being forced to stay separated, Bhupender Sanwal, a resident of Mehrana and former sarpanch, said: "You tell me, is it right for such a couple to stay together, even if married?" He said the couple's families have been asked to immediately initiate a formal nullification of the marriage through legal process. Another villager, on condition of anonymity, said it has been a tradition to treat girls in the village as sisters, and any other relationship is "wrong". Chaju Ram claimed that the woman, who belongs to a Scheduled Caste, was made to convert to Islam in front of two witnesses arranged by the man, and the conversion has been reversed after the village's intervention. The woman has sworn in an affidavit that she has returned to her previous faith, another villager said. The police, however, said they did not have information on any conversion being carried out. The couple, who got married on July 3, got police protection from court on July 6 and moved to a safe house on July 8, said the police. They were released from the safe house on July 10 on their request, the police said. According to villagers, the woman was taken by her parents to their Prem Nagar home, while the man was denied entry in the village by his grandfather. The grandfather, Jaleddin, a retired Armyman, said with folded hands, "The villagers have taken their decision. I cannot and do not want to say anything more now. My mental balance is not right." Mehrana sarpanch Mukesh Grover was not available for a comment. The family of the woman did not wish to speak on the issue. The police maintain that the atmosphere in the village is peaceful. "Police personnel were present during the panchayat meeting. We do not know what decisions were taken but the village has remained peaceful. We have not received any complaints from the villagers or the couple," said Charkhi Dadri DSP (Headquarters) Dheeraj Kumar. The villagers, meanwhile, remain on the edge. "If the boy (groom) returns, it can definitely get physical (violent). Anything can happen," Ram said. A police officer said nobody can stop the man from returning to the village and boycotts are not necessarily followed by more than a handful of villagers. Policemen have been posted at the man's home as a precaution to prevent any untoward incident, the officer said.

# 'Justice delayed... is dignity diminished': Karnataka HC slaps Rs 2 lakh fine on Govt officials over delaying para-swimmer's cash reward

GNS News Agency, August 28

The bench observed that although a different notification governing such awards was issued in 2017, the swimmer's events took place during the pendency of the 2013 government notification. The bench observed that although a different notification governing such awards was issued in 2017, the swimmer's events took place during the pendency of the 2013 government notification. The Karnataka High Court on Monday directed officials of the Department of Youth Empowerment and Sports to pay an international-level disabled swimmer more than Rs 1.26 lakh as a pending cash award, and imposed a fine of Rs 2 lakh on them. In the order, Justice M Nagaprasanna also directed the department's officers to bear the sum of Rs 2 lakh in litigation expenses personally. The petitioner, Vishwas K S, is a swimmer with multiple medals at the international level who had lost his arms at a young age in an accident.

Based on a 2013 Karnataka Government notification granting cash awards to international para-swimmer medalists, he had approached the Department of Youth Empowerment and Sports in March 2018 for a cash award of Rs 6 lakh. After failing to receive the full amount despite multiple representations, he approached the High Court. His counsel argued Vishwas had been subjected to inhumane treatment as he was not given his dues as a disabled person, and was entitled to equal treatment. The opposing counsel said he was paid Rs 4.6 lakh, which was the actual amount due, and pointed out that the association he represented had been disqualified from April 2015 to June 2016. The bench observed that although a different notification governing such awards was issued in 2017, the



swimmer's events took place during the pendency of the 2013 government notification. Under this, he would be eligible for Rs 4 lakh for two international silver medals, and another Rs 2 lakh for international bronze medals in various events. "The association's suspension or its subsequent revocation cannot deprive a deserving athlete of his rightful reward... It is the said sportsperson's effort during the sporting event that they would win a medal for the nation or the state, as the case would be, which would entitle them to get such cash rewards... focus must not be on bureaucratic technicalities, but on the living human spirit that triumphed against colossal odds," the bench said. "...for having driven a disabled person to bear the brunt of litigation, the officers of the State must be mulcted with payment of exemplary costs. The costs are to be imposed as a caution or to serve as a reminder to the officers of the State that justice delayed, especially to those who overcome the gravest of odds like the petitioner, is not only justice denied, but dignity diminished," the bench added.

# 3 engineering students booked in Bengaluru for classmate's suicide following 'online harassment'



GNS News Agency, August 28

Bengaluru The police have booked Chiranth, Vikas Gowda, and Ameen, all in their early 20s, under section 108 (abetment of suicide) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and are probing further. The Bengaluru police have booked three students for allegedly harassing their classmate at Reva University who recently died by suicide. Terming the incident a ragging-related death, the All India Democratic Students' Organisation (AIDSO) has sought an impartial investigation and action against the college management. The deceased, Arun C, 22, was a native of Hassan district and a student of architectural engineering. Though he died around 1 pm on July 11, the online harassment came to light after Arun's parents filed a complaint with the Madanayakanahalli police on July 21. The police have booked Chiranth, Vikas Gowda, and Ameen, all in their early 20s, under section 108 (abetment of suicide) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and are probing further. The son of daily wage labourers, Arun was a bright student and had just completed his eighth semester examination. A resident of Teachers' Colony in Dasanapura, Bengaluru North, he was also known for doing on-the-spot drawings. As per the complaint, he was harassed and humiliated in a class WhatsApp group. After his death, a case of unnatural death was registered. The case took a turn when Arun's parents discovered a video that he had recorded and posted on the class WhatsApp group before his death. In the video, Arun expressed his pain and claimed that he was always disrespected by his peers. According to the First Information

Report (FIR), the accused regularly posted messages about Arun in the group, humiliating him. Two of the deceased's friends reportedly confirmed this to his parents, revealing that the harassment had continued over the last year. In a statement, AIDSO called for action against the college management for failing to prevent ragging. "We demand an immediate and impartial investigation into this incident, strict action against those responsible, and accountability from the college management. We also urge the government to strictly implement anti-ragging measures across all campuses and establish mechanisms for students to safely report such abuses," it said in a statement.

# Sabitha Indra Reddy blames Centre, State for urea shortage in Telangana

Hyderabad: Maheshwaram MLA and former Minister P Sabitha Indra Reddy on Thursday slammed both the BJP-led Centre and the Congress government in Telangana for failing to ensure the timely supply of urea to farmers.

She said farmers in Maheshwaram and Kandukur mandals have been standing in queues at Primary Agricultural Cooperative Societies (PACS) from early morning, struggling to procure fertiliser.

Speaking to the District Collector over phone, the former Minister pointed out that police were distributing tokens, collecting photocopies of Aadhaar and pattadar pass-books, and issuing slips for supply. However, urea continued to be sold in the black market unchecked, she alleged after interacting with farmers waiting in queues at PACS. She accused both governments of neglecting farmers' distress. "Neither the Centre nor the State is serious about their plight. Farmers are being forced into hardship due to lack of planning," she said. Sabitha Reddy recalled that under BRS chief and former Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhara Rao, farmers received immediate relief during such crises.

# 'Shocked to see men defending men... Justice must be served': Murdered tennis player Radhika Yadav's friend in new video



GNS News Agency, August 28

A friend of the murdered tennis player Radhika Yadav Tuesday expressed her shock at the barrage of comments on a video she posted, defending the action of Yadav's father, who allegedly killed her in Gurgaon earlier in July. Radhika, a 25-year-old state-level tennis player, was shot dead allegedly by her father, Deepak Yadav, at their home in Sushant Lok 2 in Sector 52 on July 10. In the caption of a video posted on Instagram, her friend Himanshika Singh Rajput said, "I posted two videos about Radhika Yadav last week, and I was shocked to see my entire comment section filled with men defending men. This is not okay. Justice must be served. Men need to understand that this world doesn't belong to them alone women exist, women resist, and women will continue to fight for each other." In the comments, some users said the father of Yadav did the right thing, and some accused her friend, Himanshika Singh Rajput, of playing the victim card. Rajput also said that women will not stay silent, they will keep speaking up, and fighting back.

# NGT issues notices to PPCB, dyeing industry CETPs in contempt petitions filed by PAC

GNS News Agency, August 28

In the ongoing legal battle over extreme water pollution in Ludhiana's Buddha Dariya, now infamously known as Buddha Nullah, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) Tuesday heard 14 clubbed cases, focusing notably on the legality and functioning of Common Effluent Treatment Plants (CETPs) operated by Ludhiana's dyeing industry. The dyeing industry has been allegedly dumping untreated waste in the stream.

The Punjab Pollution Control Board (PPCB) informed the bench that a new industry minister, PPCB chairperson, and Member Secretary are now in place, all having intent to resolve the issue. PPCB submitted that it has enlisted IIT Ropar to draft a comprehensive solution and has imposed penalties worth crores on the three CETPs for violating environmental clearance (EC) conditions. Meanwhile, the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) submitted an affidavit acknowledging non-compliance by the Punjab Dyers Association and Bahadarke Dyeing Association. The ministry sought two months time to enforce compliance or take action. The Tribunal directed the ministry to consider including affected residents as stakeholders.

The petitioner, Public Action Committee (PAC), urged the bench to implement PPCB's own closure orders for the CETPs and accused the Board and industry players of collusion to delay action. PAC also filed three execution applications-cum-contempt petitions for non-compliance with the NGT's December 9, 2024 order. The contempt petitions seek coercive action against PPCB officials and CETP directors for continued discharge of untreated effluent into Buddha Dariya. Taking note, the Tribunal issued notices to PPCB and the CETP special purpose vehicles (SPVs). The



contempt charges could lead to penalties of up to Rs 10 crore or imprisonment up to three years or both for willful disobedience of Tribunal orders. The NGT will next hear the petitions on October 7. Speaking outside the court in Delhi, PAC member Kapil Arora said, "The PPCB, Punjab government and the Centre continue to downplay the crisis. The PAC, with other organizations, will intensify its efforts to hold authorities accountable and end these delaying tactics." In its affidavit, the MoEF&CC has also said that "that environmental clearance (EC) is mandatory" for all common effluent treatment plants (CETPs) in Ludhiana. The MoEF&CC has also served show-cause notices to three CETPs operating without EC and valid consents of the PPCB, recently. Notices were issued to the 15 MLD CETP at Bahadurke, the 40 MLD CETP at Focal Point, and the 50 MLD CETP at Tajpur Road. The notices pointed out multiple serious violations, including illegal discharges into Buddha Nullah, failure to take consents under environmental laws, and not adhering to stipulated safety and environmental norms.

# Wanted criminal held after shootout with police in Delhi's Ghazipur

GNS News Agency, August 28

A wanted criminal, who had allegedly assaulted two Delhi Police personnel and was involved in a string of robberies, was injured in a late-night encounter with the force Monday in the Ghazipur area of the national capital. According to the police, Khem Chand, 33, was carrying a loaded pistol and riding a stolen motorcycle when he allegedly opened fire on the police team. They added the police team shot at Chand in retaliatory action, and he was injured. He is undergoing treatment at Lal Bahadur Shastri Hospital in Kalyanpuri. The police said Chand, a habitual offender with 15 prior criminal cases, had been on the run since July 18, when he and two others allegedly attacked Mohammad Qasim, Assistant Sub-Inspector, and Krishanpal, Constable, during a routine patrol near Anand Vihar. The attackers, riding a bike against traffic, were stopped by the patrolling team. They allegedly launched a violent assault using stolen police batons, severely injuring both officers. The accused also snatched ASI Qasim's phone, wallet, documents, and cash before fleeing the scene. A case was registered under sections 121(1), 221, 132, 309(6) and 3(5) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). Following the assault, the police launched a high-priority investigation. The police teams used technical surveillance, CCTV footage, and informant inputs to track the suspect's movements. "On July 21, acting on specific information received by Inspector Arun Kumar, it was learned that Khem Chand was planning another major offence and would be visiting the Paper Market area around 12 to 12.15 am to meet his associates. A joint raiding team was swiftly deployed and strategically positioned near the suspected spot. When he was spotted, Khem Chand was directed to surrender," said Abhishek Dhania, Deputy Commissioner of Police (East). "Instead, he impersonated a police officer and tried to flee. When cornered again, the accused opened fire on the police team. In self-defence, the police team retaliated, resulting in injury to the accused. He was immediately shifted to LBS Hospital, Kalyanpuri, for treatment. The PCR unit and Crime Team were informed, and further legal action is in process. Further investigation is underway to identify and apprehend remaining associates," Dhania added. A resident of Godda in Jharkhand, Khem Chand was living in Sant Nagar in Burari. The police said, Chand, who is unmarried and illiterate, is known to lead a transient life, often sleeping on railway platforms in Shahdara and Ghaziabad to evade arrest. They said he sustained himself through theft and robbery, mainly driven by his addiction to



alcohol and cheap heroin. During interrogation, he allegedly admitted to purchasing a country-made pistol from a man called Sunil, and that he often bought platform tickets to avoid attracting suspicion from railway authorities. The police said he recently attempted to adopt a false identity — that of Javed, son of Abdul Wahab — possibly to escape his criminal past or mislead law enforcement.

# Congress govt fails to tackle flood challenges: Harish Rao

Hyderabad, Aug. 28 : Former Minister and BRS MLA T Harish Rao criticised the Congress government for its lack of preparedness in response to the severe rainfall that caused significant damage in the Medak and Kamareddy districts, resulting in crop losses and fatalities.

During a visit to assess the affected areas in Medak on Thursday, Harish Rao told the media that Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy had received advance warnings from the India Meteorological Department (IMD), but did not ensure that officials were on standby. He claimed this negligence led to extensive agricultural damage and loss of life. Harish Rao highlighted the tragic case of Bestha Satyanarayana and Yada Goud, whose auto-rickshaw was carried away by floodwaters. He noted that the two men managed to cling to an electrical pole for hours, repeatedly reaching out to officials and Congress leaders for help, but received no assistance. Harish Rao pointed out the irony that while Cabinet Ministers and the Chief Minister opted for helicopters for short trips, the government was unable to save the lives of these two men, who were ultimately lost when the pole was toppled by the floodwaters.

## How cops traced engineering student Bhagyashree Sude's killers from a ransom message



GNS News Agency, August 28

Fulfilling a promise made by Devendra Fadnavis, who was the home minister of Maharashtra at the time, senior lawyer and Rajya Sabha MP Ujjwal Nikam recently appeared before a Pune court for a hearing in the Bhagyashree Sude murder case. The 22-year-old engineering student was allegedly murdered by three youths, including her college friend, on March 30 last year. The state government has appointed Nikam as the Special Public Prosecutor (SPP) in the case. Bhagyashree goes missing. A native of Harangul village in Maharashtra's Latur district, Bhagyashree was a fourth-year student of BE (Computer Science) at GH Raisoni College in Pune's Wagholi and resided at Sakore Nagar. As per police records, she went to Phoenix Mall in Viman Nagar around 9 pm on March 30, 2024. Bhagyashree had told her mother that she was going to a friend's birthday party, but went missing soon after, the police said.

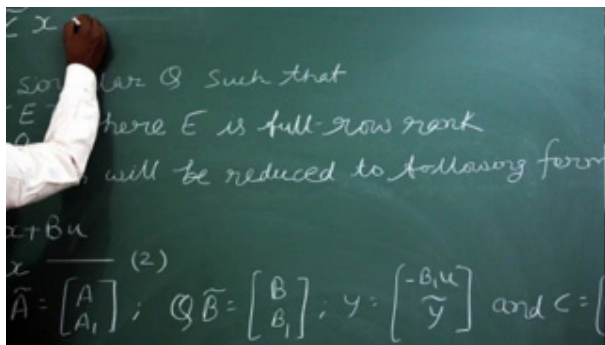
On failing to contact Bhagyashree, her parents came to Pune and lodged a missing-person report at Viman Nagar police station on April 2. The same day, her mother received a ransom message from Bhagyashree's mobile phone: "Allah Hafiz Sude family. Stop searching for Bhagyashree. We have kidnapped her. We have sent her to a foreign country." The message, which was in Hindi, directed Bhagyashree's parents to transfer Rs 9 lakh to her bank account for her release and threatened to throw pieces of her body in her native village if the police were informed. Investigators later said the message was meant to "divert" their attention and make her family and the police believe that she was still alive. Meanwhile, Bhagyashree's father Suryakant Sude, a former sarpanch, lodged a First Information Report (FIR) of kidnapping under section 364 (a) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC). A technical investigation confirmed that the ransom message to Bhagyashree's parents was sent from Mumbai's Jogeshwari area. A police team went to Mumbai, but could not trace the accused. As the probe into Bhagyashree's mobile phone calls and bank account continued, the police zeroed in on Shivam Madhav Fulawale, 21, a student of BE (IT) at her college. Officers said Bhagyashree knew Fulawale, a native of Nanded, for

two years as they were in the same college and belonged to the Marathwada region. They used to talk to each other and she had even met him on March 28, the police said.

Based on clues obtained during the investigation, investigators arrested Fulawale from Wagholi for his alleged role in Bhagyashree's murder. Subsequently, his aides Suresh Shivaji Indure, 23, and Sagar Ramesh Jadhav, 23, were also arrested. A mall visit and a pit dug the day before. The probe revealed that Bhagyashree went with Fulawale on March 30 when he came to Phoenix Mall in a rented car along with his friends Suresh and Sagar. The police suspect that Fulawale may have offered to drop her near her room but the three men allegedly choked her to death in the car. Officers said the accused allegedly took her body to a secluded spot at Kamargaon village in Ahilyanagar district. They suspect the men burnt her body with petrol before burying her. The police recovered Bhagyashree's body from the spot on April 7. Referring to the pit in which Bhagyashree was found buried, an officer said the accused had dug it the day before committing the crime, suggesting that her murder was a premeditated and well-planned act. The accused had hired a car on rent to commit the crime. The police said they went to Mumbai and Nanded after the murder before returning to Pune and giving the car back to the service provider. The vehicle was subsequently seized for investigation. The police said Suresh, who has a diploma in IT and worked in Mumbai, knew Fulawale as both hail from the same district. Fulawale knew Sagar, a Class 10 pass, since his school days.

The accused were charged under Indian Penal Code (IPC) sections 302 (murder), 120B (criminal conspiracy), 201 (causing disappearance of evidence), 404 (dishonest misappropriation of property possessed by deceased person), and 34 (common intention). As the police began probing the motive behind the murder, it came to light that the suspects had become debt-ridden after losing their money in the share market and to online gaming. So they allegedly hatched a conspiracy to kidnap Bhagyashree and extort money from her family. Officers, however, suspect that she may have been murdered because of her attempts to resist them. Sarjerao Kumbhar, Senior Police Inspector, said, "The accused committed the crime for money. There was no sexual assault on the victim. The accused had no previous criminal record. Technical investigation helped us in solving the case." After the murder triggered outrage, Fadnavis, who was then the deputy chief minister and home minister of the state at the time, visited Bhagyashree's family and said he would personally request advocate Ujjwal Nikam to be the SPP in the case. A police officer who was part of the investigation said a chargesheet has been filed against the three accused who are currently in jail. The case is on before a court in Pune.

## India's first private maths research institute comes up in Mumbai, Fields Medal winner Manjul Bhargava on advisory council



GNS News Agency, August 28

India's first privately funded mathematics research institute, Lodha Mathematical Sciences Institute (LMSI), was launched in Mumbai Sunday in the presence of world-renowned dignitaries from the field of mathematics, including Dr Manjul Bhargava, the first Indian-origin winner of the Fields Medal, the highest honour in mathematics.

Dr Bhargava, who serves on LMSI's advisory council, is also set to conduct the institute's inaugural course. Currently a professor at Princeton University, Dr Bhargava will lead a seminar-based course on arithmetic statistics and number theory. Scheduled to begin later this month and continue until mid-December, it marks the first of several intensive four- to six-month programmes to be hosted by LMSI and led by prominent experts from India and abroad. With an advisory council composed of eminent mathematicians from around the world, LMSI aims to host many such intensive courses. The institute is backed by the Lodha Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Lodha Group founded by Mangal Prabhat Lodha. The Foundation received an endowment of approximately Rs 20,000 crore from the Lodha family last year.

Abhishek Lodha, chief executive officer and managing director of Lodha Developers, said, "It is very important

for us as a company to make sure that our success contributes in a wholesome manner to India's development. In that context, the family decided last year to donate about one-fifth of the ownership of the company to the Lodha Foundation. We have realised that for any nation to become strong, we ought to have original thinking and promote innovation." The institute will be headed by Dr V Kumar Murty, a renowned mathematician, known for his significant contributions to number theory and arithmetic geometry. He said, "We know that in the vast history of India, there have been many great mathematicians who contributed fundamental ideas that have shaped the world that we live in today. The LMSI aims to address fundamental problems that will help India become a developed nation and a global leader by 2047." Dr Murty, who holds a PhD from Harvard University, has served as director of the Fields Institute and professor at the University of Toronto. Dr Murty's research covers a range of topics, including analytic number theory, information security, and arithmetic algebraic geometry. LMSI's advisory council features esteemed figures such as Dr Vikraman Balaji (Chennai Mathematical Institute), Dr Sourav Chatterjee, Dr Ravi Vakil, and Dr Yakov Eliashberg (all from Stanford University), Dr Alexander Lubotzky (Weizmann Institute of Science), and Dr Kavita Ramanan (Brown University), among others. Beyond academics, LMSI seeks to apply advanced mathematical tools, such as data science, operations research, machine learning, and optimisation, to address critical challenges in infrastructure, healthcare, and economics. Faculty will be empowered to pursue research without administrative burdens. In the future, LMSI plans to launch the Indian Congress of Mathematics Ashish Kumar Singh, chief mentor at Lodha Foundation, said, "The foundation of almost all technological progress today is mathematical, whether it be cryptography, cybersecurity, warfare, and definitely artificial intelligence (AI). At LMSI, we are aiming to get the brightest researchers to come together and pursue research in cutting-edge frontier mathematics."

## 'Dragging down his image' — Gopal Mukherjee's grandson files complaint against director Vivek Agnihotri

GNS News Agency, August 28

Filmmaker Vivek Agnihotri, director of The Bengal Files, faces more trouble as the grandson of Gopal Mukherjee — popularly known as 'Gopal Patha' — has filed a complaint at Bowbazar Police Station, accusing him of showing his grandfather in poor light. Shantanu Mukherjee, the grandson, alleged that the film had tarnished the image of his grandfather, who, he said, "was a brave heart who had taken up arms to fight for the Bengalis." He told The Indian Express, "I have filed a complaint with my local police station (Bowbazar police station) and my lawyer has also sent a legal notice to the director for tarnishing the image of my grandfather." According to him, Agnihotri neither took the family's permission nor approached them before making the film. "The director never took any permission from us or even tried to meet us and speak to us regarding my grandfather. Derogatory terms were used against my grandfather," he said.

In his complaint letter, Shantanu wrote: "... Recent interviews of the said Vivek Ranjan Agnihotri about my late grandfather Sri Gopal Chandra Mukherjee have been spoken of and depicted in a very poor light and in an utterly defamatory manner. Till date, there has not been any research project on my grandfather across Indian universities and hence, each info available in the social arena stem from us and except it, all is hearsay." The letter continues, "What hurts us is that such efforts are not alien to us; previously, loads of despicable endeavours aimed at dragging down the image of my late grandfather Sri Gopal Chandra Mukherjee had occurred, leaving the entire family in utter shock. Not only his words or deeds, but his ideological conviction along with his interpretation of the historic struggle



was also denigrated, and the same is occurring recurrently at present by the said Vivek Agnihotri, who is seen openly referring to my grandfather as a butcher and is seen talking about his involvement in alleged violent actions that reportedly took place during Direct Action Day, thus besmirching his reputation as a freedom fighter... I, therefore, request you to accept this complaint to stop this imminent unchecked enterprise of The Bengal Files and to take all lawful steps including lodging an FIR against the said film director Vivek Ranjan Agnihotri, the officials of his film production companies." Meanwhile, Agnihotri claimed that the Kolkata Police had stopped the trailer launch of The Bengal Files — based on the 1946 Calcutta Riots — at the "last moment" on Saturday afternoon. The event was to be held at a five-star hotel, but according to police sources, permission for the screening had not been granted despite Agnihotri's email request. The BJP condemned the move, while Agnihotri questioned whether Bengal followed a "special constitution."

## Raut praises NDA V-P candidate Radhakrishnan's 'balanced personality', hints at Sena UBT's stance on poll

GNS News Agency, August 28

Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut Monday welcomed the BJP-led NDA's decision to nominate Maharashtra Governor C P Radhakrishnan as its candidate for the vice-presidential election, praising and calling him a "balanced and non-controversial personality". At the same time, Raut said the Opposition INDIA bloc should not divert attention from the larger issue of electoral malpractice by getting into a contest it cannot win. The vice-presidential election, scheduled for September 9, was necessitated after incumbent Jagdeep Dhankhar resigned, citing health reasons.

On Sunday, BJP president J P Nadda announced Radhakrishnan's candidature after a meeting of the party's parliamentary board, appealing for a consensus to ensure an unopposed election. While Nadda has appealed for consensus, Opposition leaders are expected to discuss the matter in an INDIA bloc meeting this week. Raut made it clear that while the Shiv Sena (UBT) welcomed the nomination of a leader associated with Maharashtra, his party would go by the INDIA bloc's collective decision. However, he also stressed that the Sena (UBT) and party chief Uddhav Thackeray always feel that elections for such constitutional posts should not be politicised, and candidates should be elected unopposed. "He has been working calmly as governor of Maharashtra for the past year, and is a very balanced, non-controversial personality in politics. We are glad that the Maharashtra governor is getting an opportunity to become the vice-president of the country. We always welcome and congratulate such appointments," Raut told reporters in Delhi. "But he is the NDA's candidate, and we are in Opposition. The INDIA alliance will take a collective decision, and the Sena (UBT) will go with whatever the bloc decides. There is also a meeting to be held with Rahul Gandhi and [Mallikarjun] Kharge in Delhi, where these issues will be discussed," he added. The Sena MP pointed out that the Opposition front does not have the numerical strength to defeat the NDA nominee in the vice presidential elections. "Since the INDIA bloc doesn't have enough numbers to win the VP polls, attention shouldn't be diverted from the real issues: vote chori, manipulation of voter lists, and the SIR (Special Intensive Revision) in Bihar. These are the issues Rahul Gandhi has raised, and they must remain



the focus," he said.

Raut said the Shiv Sena (UBT) will abide by the bloc's decision, and that Uddhav had already conveyed his views to Rahul and Congress president Kharge. Raut also criticised the Election Commission over its demand that Rahul Gandhi submit an affidavit to back his allegations of vote theft. "This is arrogance. Will the EC also ask Anurag Thakur to file an affidavit when he makes similar allegations? Or is the Commission's courage only for Rahul Gandhi?" he asked. Meanwhile, Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena announced its support for the candidature of Radhakrishnan. Expressing confidence in his victory, Shinde said, "By nominating C P Radhakrishnanji as the candidate for the post of Vice President, the NDA under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi has duly honoured an experienced, intellectual, honest, and patriotic personality in Indian politics." "As the Governor of Maharashtra, Radhakrishnanji has been a source of pride for us. With his vast parliamentary experience as a Member of Parliament and his deep administrative knowledge as a Governor, his candidature deserves full support from Shiv Sena. We are confident that his tenure as Vice President will prove to be remarkable for the bright future of the nation. On behalf of Shiv Sena, I extend best wishes to C P Radhakrishnan for a successful tenure." Radhakrishnan, 66, took charge as Maharashtra's 24th Governor on July 31, 2024.

## How blind photographers are redefining visual art in India

GNS News Agency, August 28

For most, photography is about capturing what the eye can see. But for Vivek Yeralkar, who gradually lost his vision, it has become a way to experience the world on his own terms through sound, memory, and technology. Once a sighted photographer, Yeralkar had to put his camera away when he went blind. "I lost not just my sight, but confidence," he recalls. Years later, a simple moment using his phone to photograph a tile and identify it through Google Lens rekindled a sense of independence.

Yeralkar is among a growing number of visually impaired photographers in India exploring photography not as a visual medium, but as a sensory and conceptual one. Helping lead this shift is Partho Bhowmick, a Mumbai-based photographer and educator who founded the Blind With Camera initiative in 2006. His workshops encourage visually impaired individuals to use other senses, touch, sound, and spatial awareness to understand and frame their surroundings. Partho Bhowmick with his visually impaired students during a 'Blind with Camera' workshop.

"Blind With Camera works to help visually impaired people become part of society and culture. It teaches them art that doesn't rely on vision, giving them pride, purpose, and hope in their new way of 'seeing.' It also helps give them a voice and brings people together, making society more understanding and accepting," Bhowmick says. Since its inception, 'Blind With Camera' has trained over 1,800 people across India and abroad. It has also launched an open-source e-learning platform for blind photographers, developed with IIT Bombay, and curated multi-sensory exhibitions that invite both sighted and non-sighted audiences to experience photography in new ways. Advancements in technology have made this art form more accessible. Apps



like Microsoft's Seeing AI describe scenes aloud; vOICE converts visuals into soundscapes; and others like Tech-Freedom integrate scene reading, object recognition, and currency detection, features that allow visually impaired users to explore their surroundings independently. In blind schools across India, students are now being introduced to these tools not only for daily navigation, but as part of creative expression. For some, photography has led to professional opportunities. Bhavesh Patel, who has been blind since early childhood, made headlines in 2014 for shooting a commercial campaign for Lux featuring actress Katrina Kaif. He used sound cues like the rustle of fabric to frame his subject. Patel now uses his phone camera for daily tasks, such as taking a picture of his shirt and effectively colour coordinating his entire ensemble. Yeralkar, too, has found purpose beyond the lens. A silver medalist at the West Zone Abilympics, he says photography helped him rebuild confidence. "I needed physical help to get around. But after rediscovering photography, I felt renewed purpose and could navigate independently again," he said.

## No bail for BMW hit-and-run case accused; court cites his 'merciless behaviour'



GNS News Agency, August 28

Worli hit-and-run case, Mihir Shah Blood test, bmw hit and run, mumbai bmw hit and run, mihir shah, shinde sena leader son, mihir shah accused, indian express Mihir Shah, 24, is the son of Rajesh Shah, a Shiv Sena leader close to former Chief Minister and present Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde. Observing that the accused behaved in a merciless manner, denoting that anything can be done on the basis of financial and muscular power, the sessions court rejected the bail applications of Mihir Shah and Rajrishi

Bindawat, who were arrested in the Worli 'hit-and-run' case, which had caused the death of one woman.

On July 7, 2024, Shah, driving a BMW car, allegedly rammed it into a two-wheeler on which Pradip Nakhawa, 50, and his wife Kaveri Nakhawa, 45, were travelling, around 5.25 am. Kaveri was allegedly dragged for nearly 2 km after she got stuck between the car's bumper and tire. She was later flung onto the road, leading to her death. As per the police, Mihir allegedly switched seats with his driver, Bindawat after dragging Kaveri for over 1.5 km. "The overall facts and circumstances of the case clearly show how the accused behaved in a merciless manner, meant to say that anything can be done on the basis of financial and muscular power... and the law is not above them. The pendency of a writ petition filed by the informant (Pradip Nakhawa) for addition of section 103 (1) (murder) of the Bhatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, cannot be ignored because whatever the outcome, it will certainly impact the case," additional sessions judge R S Aradhye said in the order. The court said that if the accused are granted bail, a wrong message will go into society. The order was passed on August 22 and made available this week.

Shah, 24, is the son of Rajesh Shah, a Shiv Sena leader close to former Chief Minister and present Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde. He was later removed from the post of deputy leader of Shiv Sena's Palghar unit. While Rajesh was granted bail, Shah and Bindawat were in jail for over one year. Shah through his lawyer sought bail claiming that he has undergone a 'substantial long period' of incarceration, of over one year, and trial has not commenced till now.

# Why Delhi Police find it difficult to crack cases involving bomb threat emails to schools, other institutions



GNS News Agency, August 28

The Delhi Police are facing a tough time dealing with the ongoing situation of continuous bomb threat emails sent to schools and other institutions. Last year, the National Capital witnessed 25 such cases, and this year, schools have already received bomb threat emails five times.As per police records, only a few of the cases were solved last year, and just one so far this year.On Monday, over 20 schools in Delhi received bomb threats again, prompting authorities to shut them down, send students back home, and put the police and administration on high alert. An officer stated that nothing suspicious was found in any of the schools, and the threat was later declared a hoax.When it all startedBomb threats to schools via emails or messages are not new. In 2022, a private school in Sadiq Nagar received such a threat, and in 2023, similar threats were sent to different schools on three separate occasions. In all these cases, the police discovered that school students were behind the emails. They were later caught and given counselling.

The students said they mainly sent such bomb threats to avoid examinations, get a day off, or simply as a prank.The main issue, however, began last year in May when over 200 schools and other institutions received bomb threat emails. Since the emails were sent in bulk, the agencies rushed to register a First Information Report (FIR) under sections pertaining to conspiracy and other relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC). A specialised unit of the Special Cell's Counter-Intelligence (CI) was tasked with conducting the probe.The email threats continued in June, August, October, and November, triggering concern in several schools, colleges, hospitals, airlines, and several other government institutions. The police decided to club all these cases under the initial FIR registered by the CI unit.

A senior police officer said that the cases that remain

to be solved involve emails sent via a VPN (Virtual Private Network) proxy server – an encrypted connection over the Internet which helps the sender hide their identity.Last December, the police had zeroed in on a student who had emailed a bomb threat to his school to avoid an examination. The student had simply used an email ID without VPN, making it easier for the police to track him. The child was counselled and allowed to go.In July this year, an investigation allegedly revealed that a 12-year-old boy had sent fake threats to two educational institutions — Delhi University's St Stephen's College and St Thomas School in Dwarka. He was briefly detained and released after counselling.During the counselling session, the Class 8 student of a private school revealed that he wanted schools to be shut down and had randomly added the email IDs of the institutions. In this case too, the boy had not used a VPN, an officer said.

The officer said that when the servers are based abroad, they seek assistance from central agencies to collect details. "Over the past few months, in most cases, the domains used in emails were traced to European countries. However, accessing the IP (Internet Protocol) addresses or other sender details is nearly impossible, as they are encrypted and masked using VPN or proxy servers," he added.The officer added, "If we try to understand VPN as a layman...when we are talking to each other, it is direct connectivity, but if we are connected through a VPN, we communicate via multiple domain servers."Multiple layers of obfuscation'Cyber expert Shashank Shekhar, who is the co-founder of the thinktank FCRF, tracing the location of a person using a VPN is inherently challenging because VPNs are designed to mask the user's real IP address by "routing their traffic through multiple servers across different countries."Advanced VPN services also implement features like multi-hop routing and no-log policies, which further obscure digital footprints. When threat actors send emails using such anonymised networks—often coupled with encrypted email services or compromised accounts—it significantly limits the ability of law enforcement to pinpoint the true origin," Shekhar said."In recent cases involving threat emails sent to schools in Delhi, the attackers have leveraged such techniques, creating multiple layers of obfuscation that delay or derail attribution efforts, especially when international cooperation is required to access logs or trace traffic," he added.Shekhar said most of these VPN service providers are headquartered outside India and often refuse to share user data or logs with Indian law enforcement agencies, citing privacy policies or foreign jurisdiction, and pointed out that it is imperative to establish regulatory frameworks mandating data sharing and log retention by such providers to assist probe agencies.

# In a first, IITM Pune sets up dedicated lab to study toxicity of air pollutants, health risks they pose



GNS News Agency, August 28

In a first, the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM) in Pune recently set up an Atmospheric Chemistry Laboratory to decode the complex chemical composition of airborne particles and assess their impact on air quality, health, weather patterns, and climate systems.The laboratory is a flagship initiative under the Mission Mausam project. IITM scientist Sachin Ghude, who is the lab's project director, said they aimed to develop a next-generation air quality prediction model capable of forecasting not only pollution levels but also the chemical toxicity and associated health risks.Ghude has made significant contributions in both observational and modelling aspects of atmospheric chemistry that culminated in the development of an operational early warning system for winter fog and air quality. He told The Indian Express that unlike traditional systems that measure only the mass of particulate matter (PM), this laboratory goes a step further to break down particles into their chemical components, such as heavy metals, toxic organics, and trace elements.The lab specifically focuses on analysing the chemical composition and toxicity of PM1, PM2.5, and PM10, which are among the most harmful pollutants affecting urban populations.

"Early findings already reveal that toxicity does not scale linearly with particle mass. Even low concentrations of PM can be highly hazardous, depending on their chemical makeup. Also, an additional focus includes detecting airborne and waterborne micro- and nano-plastics, a growing threat to both ecosystems and human health," he said.The lab will also work on getting a better understand-

ing of how aerosol chemistry influences cloud formation, radiation balance, and fog events, offering insights into regional weather and climate systems.

While the System of Air Quality Forecasting and Research (SAFAR) monitors ambient levels of pollutants like PM2.5, PM10, CO, NOx, O3, and volatile organic compounds (VOCs), it does not analyse their chemical composition or toxic potential. The Winter Fog Experiment (WiFEX) primarily focuses on fog processes and meteorological dynamics over the Indo-Gangetic Plains, studying how aerosols interact with fog but without detailed chemical resolution."In contrast, the Atmospheric Chemistry Laboratory is India's first dedicated platform to integrate chemical characterisation, toxicity analysis, and health impact modeling, making it a complementary yet uniquely powerful tool in the national atmospheric research ecosystem," Ghude said.To achieve its high-resolution scientific goals, the lab is equipped with cutting-edge analytical instruments, including: Aerosol Mass Spectrometers (AMS), Gas and Liquid Chromatographs, High-Resolution ICP-MS (Inductively Coupled Plasma Mass Spectrometer), Thermal-Optical Carbon Analysers and instruments for detecting micro- and nanoplastics in air and water. Some of these have already been deployed, and additional instruments are being procured to complete the setup.Samples will be collected across multiple regions of India, including urban centres where SAFAR and MAPAN (Micrometeorological and Air Pollution Assessment Network) stations are active.Additionally, sampling campaigns will be conducted in Himalayan regions and oceanic outflow zones, including Andaman and Lakshadweep, to capture the diversity of aerosol sources and transport pathways.

The initiative is a strategic step toward meeting India's sustainable development and climate goals under the Viksit Bharat 2047 mission, Ghude said. The lab has a five-year scientific roadmap aimed at building national capacity in chemical and health-based air quality forecasting.By the end of this period, the aim is to deliver an operational toxicological air quality forecasting system, set up a national database of aerosol chemical composition, provide policy-relevant insights for health advisories and emission control, and contribute to global climate models with more accurate aerosol input.

# Neutral ENSO conditions to last till winter, global weather experts

GNS News Agency, August 28

Early next year, NOAA said, there are chances for the development of a weak and brief La Nina before the return of ENSO neutral conditions around mid-2026.Early next year, NOAA said, there are chances for the development of a weak and brief La Nina before the return of ENSO neutral conditions around mid-2026. (Representative Image)The prevailing neutral phase of the El Nino Southern Oscillation (ENSO) will continue along the equatorial Pacific Ocean till the end of the upcoming winter season in the northern hemisphere, multiple global weather agencies have said.ENSO and its two phases – El Nino (warm) and La Nina (cold) – can cause extreme weather. Over India, many El Nino years have corresponded with below-average monsoon rainfall, whereas La Nina has been associated with severe winters.The US-based National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) said near-average sea surface temperatures persisted across most of the equatorial Pacific Ocean – a trend that has existed for the past few months.Early next year, NOAA said, there are chances for the development of a weak and brief La Nina before the



return of ENSO neutral conditions around mid-2026.Earlier this month, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said ENSO neutral conditions would prevail through the monsoon and winter seasons. The Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS), too, had said in its monthly ENSO bulletin that the probability of near-neutral ENSO conditions over the Pacific was high and it ranged from 50 to 68 per cent from August to April next year.

# Cases from 6 districts to be heard | ‘A dream comes true after 40-45 years of struggle’: CJI inaugurates HC bench in Kolhapur



GNS News Agency, August 28

Chief Justice of India B R Gavai inaugurated a circuit bench of the Bombay High Court in Kolhapur on Sunday and said that the dream of lawyers and citizens has finally come true after decades of struggle."This is the day when the dream of lawyers and citizens for a high court has come true after a 40-45 years of struggle," he said, highlighting the efforts and hardships that went into getting the high court bench in Kolhapur.

Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, state ministers Chandrakant Patil and Hasan Mushrif, Congress MP Shrimant Shahu Maharaj, Sangli MP Vishal Patil, MLC Satej Patil, Bombay High Court Chief Justice Alok Aradhe and local MLAs, representatives of various Advocates Bar Associations were present at the inaugural function.The Kolhapur bench is the fourth bench of the Bombay High Court. It has other benches at Nagpur, Aurangabad (now Chhatrapati Sambhajanagar), and neighbouring state of Goa.A notification for setting up of the Kolhapur circuit bench was issued by Bombay High Court Chief Justice Alok Aradhe on August 1.

The bench has come up after demands from litigants and lawyers who have to travel over 300-350 km all the way to Mumbai.The bench, which will start functioning from Monday, will hear matters relating to PILs, civil writ petitions, first appeals, family court appeals and other civil and criminal cases from six districts— Kolhapur, Satara, Sangli, Solapur, Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg.

Addressing a gathering after the inauguration, the CJI said, "Through the Kolhapur circuit bench, the common man will get social and financial justice. The circuit bench should soon make way for a Bombay High Court bench."The CJI said the lawyers from six districts struggled for years to get the HC bench in Kolhapur. "The people and lawyers from these districts struggled for 40-45 years, demanding the high court. Some of the old-time lawyers have passed away. When a committee was formed to find out whether the HC bench could be set up, two judges gave conflicting reports. However, the report of judge Ranjit More who suggested setting up of the HC bench in Kolhapur was accepted. Finally, after 11 years the day has dawned," he said.The CJI said that he pursued the matter after taking charge on May 14."I have always believed that justice should reach the doorstep of the people..I had told the high court chief justice that the bench should be set up by August... We then decided that we should set up the Kolhapur bench a day after

# Delhi Police nab ‘ascetic’ who killed his estranged wife after she refused to accompany him to Bihar

GNS News Agency, August 28

The Delhi Police Saturday arrested a man who allegedly hacked his estranged wife to death at their son's house in South Delhi and stayed in hiding in an ashram. The police said the accused, Pramod Jha, 60, told them that he had an argument with his wife Kiran Jha over her 'extra-marital' affairs hours before he killed her in her sleep on August 7.

Kiran had left her husband 10 years ago and was staying with their son Durgesh Jha and his family in Delhi's Neb Sarai area, according to the police. Since his wife left him, Pramod had been living as an ascetic in his village of Jamalpur in Bihar, and he sustained through small donations he received, said the police.The police said Pramod told them that he left Bihar 25 years ago and worked as a guard in Delhi. He then got into religious preaching and became a self-styled saint in the capital, said the police.

Pramod lived with his family in Neb Sarai but left for Bihar in 2016 after he started suspecting his wife of extra-marital affairs, said the police. He then started living with his ailing mother in Bihar, and she passed away in May this year, they added."On June 31, he travelled on the same train from Munger in Bihar to Delhi as his wife, who was there to attend her mother's funeral. He arrived in Delhi on August 1, and his daughter took him to her grandmother's house in the Devli village. A heated argument erupted between the accused and his wife over alleged extra-marital affairs," said Ankit Chauhan, Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), South. In a fit of rage, Pramod allegedly brutally murdered his wife with a hammer while she was asleep. The police said he had brought the hammer from his village, planning the murder in advance if his wife did not fol-

low him back. Independence Day. We decided that people should get freedom from their problems in getting justice and therefore the bench should be set up as soon as possible," he said.The CJI praised the state government and the public works department for setting up the bench in a short period of time."The building of the high court bench was set up in barely 20-25 days. The old grandeur of the building has been retained. The public works department led by Shivendraraje Bhosale has done outstanding work. This should actually make it to the Guinness Book of World Records... Those who said Maharashtra was behind in judicial infrastructure have been given a befitting reply," he said.The CJI said that HC Chief Justice Alok Aradhe was not confident that the Kolhapur bench would be set up in August. "He (Aradhe) is possibly not aware of the Chief Minister and the Deputy Chief Minister. May be because of the newspaper reports which said Maharashtra was lagging in ensuring proper judicial infrastructure. He had doubts whether the Maharashtra government would be able to set up the bench by August 15. However, the CM assured us that it would be ready by August 15," he said."I am of the opinion that Maharashtra is not behind when it comes to judiciary's infrastructure. Government is always behind the judiciary when it comes to infrastructure," the CJI said.CJI Gavai stated that the Kohapur bench will ensure social and economic justice for the common man."The Kolhapur bench will ensure social and economic justice for the common man. The setting up of the bench is a good opportunity for budding lawyers. A hostel should also be set up for them at the circuit bench."Expressing happiness over the high court bench being set up on the land of Maratha ruler Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj, the CJI said, "It was Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj who had given 50 per cent reservation to the people from Backward Class for the first time. It was Shahu Maharaj who put a stop to devdasi system. Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj had said that whatever wealth we have it is meant for others. And therefore we celebrate his birth anniversary as Social Justice Day."Chief Minister Fadnavis, in his address, termed the setting up of the circuit bench of the high court in Kolhapur "historical". "The 50 year old struggle of lawyers and people from Kolhapur, Sangli, Satara, Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg has finally culminated with the inauguration of the circuit bench of the high court in Kolhapur," he said.

Fadnavis said that in his first term as chief minister, the state cabinet had decided to set up the high court bench in Kolhapur on May 12, 2015."When Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Kolhapur for an event, a request to set up the bench in Kolhapur was placed before him. After that, Chandrakant Patil had led an all-party delegation to me pressing for the HC bench in Kolhapur. The state government then pursued the matter with the Bombay High Court. We told the HC that we were ready to set up the judicial infrastructure. However, things picked up after CJI Bhushan Gavai took charge. He himself personally monitored the progress of the circuit bench plan," Fadnavis said.The Chief Minister said his government would soon bring in a law to ensure safety of advocates. "A demand has been repeatedly made to enact a law to ensure the safety of lawyers. Our government is positive about bringing in the legislation," he said.



low him back. According to the police, after the murder, Pramod re-dressed as a saint and fled the scene. The police circulated lookout posters across the capital in a bid to nab the accused."From the analysis of CCTV footage, the police found out that the accused fled around midnight on August 6, dressed in the attire of a saint. The team followed his movement via multiple CCTV cameras, tracing his route. He used auto-rickshaws, took lifts on two-wheelers, and travelled some distance on foot across Badarpur, Jaitpur, Moladband, Meethapur, and Harinagar areas," DCP Chauhan said.The breakthrough came after a five-day search when the head priest at a Pitampura-based ashram saw the poster with Pramod's picture and recognised him."The head of an ashram at Pitampura revealed that a man matching the description of Pramod, who was referred by a disciple from Bihar, was staying at their Qutubgarh branch. Immediately, a team led by Inspector Pawan conducted a raid and arrested Pramod Jha," DCP Chauhan said.

# Army jawan returning to duty beaten up by toll plaza employees in UP's Meerut, 4 held

GNS News Agency, August 28

The police said they have arrested four of the five toll plaza workers who allegedly assaulted the jawan and launched a search for the fifth.The police said they have arrested four of the five toll plaza workers who allegedly assaulted the jawan and launched a search for the fifth.An Army jawan returning to duty was allegedly pinned to a pole and brutally assaulted by toll plaza employees in Uttar Pradesh's Meerut Sunday night. The incident at the Bhuni toll plaza under the Sarurpur police station area was caught on camera and circulated widely on social media. The police said they have arrested four of the five toll plaza workers who allegedly assaulted the jawan and launched a search for the fifth.

According to the police, Kapil, 24, was being driven by his cousin to the airport after a vacation to catch a flight to Srinagar in Jammu and Kashmir, where he was due to report back on duty.Ajay Shukla, Station House Officer, Sarurpur, said, "There was a long queue at the toll booth, the jawan was getting late to catch his flight and requested the toll staff to let him bypass the long line. They told him to reverse his car, but he refused, saying he could not reverse



it anymore. This turned into an argument, and eventually, they started beating him up."

The video of the incident showed Kapil being beaten with sticks, pinned to a pole as his hands were pulled back, while one of the assailants hurled abuses and another approached him with a rock in hand.Following a complaint by Kapil's family, the police filed an FIR at the Sarurpur police station.Rakesh Kumar Mishra, Superintendent of Police (Rural), said: "Kapil is in the Army.

# Some Palestinians already leaving Gaza City ahead of Israeli offensive



CAIRO, GNS News Agency, August 28- Fearing an Israeli onslaught could come soon, some Palestinian families began leaving eastern areas of Gaza City, now under constant Israeli bombardment, for points to the west and some explored evacuating further south. Israel's plan to seize control of Gaza City has stirred alarm abroad and at home where tens of thousands of Israelis held some of the largest protests seen since the war began, urging a deal to end the fighting and free the remaining 50 hostages held by Palestinian militants in Gaza.

The planned offensive has spurred Egyptian and Qatari ceasefire mediators to step up efforts in what a source familiar with the talks with Hamas militants in Cairo said could be "the last-ditch attempt." Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has described Gaza City as Hamas' last bastion. But, with Israel already holding 75% of Gaza, the military has warned that expanding the offensive could endanger hostages still alive and draw troops into protracted and deadly guerrilla warfare. In Gaza City, many Palestinians have also been calling for protests soon to demand an end to a war that has demolished much of the territory and wrought a humanitarian disaster, and for Hamas to intensify talks to avert the Israeli ground offensive.

An Israeli armoured incursion into Gaza City could see the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people, many of whom have been uprooted multiple times earlier in the war. "The people of Gaza City are like someone who received a death sentence and is awaiting execution," said Tamer Burai, a Gaza City businessman. "I am moving my parents and my family to the south today or tomorrow. I can't risk losing any of them should there be a surprising invasion," he told Reuters via a chat app. A protest is scheduled for Thursday in Gaza City by different unions, and people took to social media platforms vowing to participate, which will raise pressure on Hamas. The last round of indirect ceasefire talks ended in late July in deadlock with the sides trading blame for its collapse. Sources close to the Cairo talks said Egyptian and Qatari mediators had met with leaders of Hamas, allied militant group Islamic Jihad

and other factions with little progress reported. Talks will continue on Monday, the sources added. Hamas told mediators it was ready to resume talks about a U.S.-proposed 60-day truce and release of half the hostages, one official, who asked not to be named, told Reuters, but also for a wider deal that would end the war. DIPLOMATIC DEAD-LOCK

Israel says it will agree to cease hostilities if all the hostages are released and Hamas lays down its arms - the latter demand publicly rejected by the Islamist group until a Palestinian state is established. Gaps also appear to linger regarding the extent of an Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and how humanitarian aid will be delivered around the enclave, where malnutrition is rife and aid groups warn of unfolding famine. On Saturday, the Israeli military said it was preparing to help equip Gazans with tents and other shelter equipment ahead of relocating them from combat zones to the south of the enclave. It did not provide further details on quantities or how long it would take to get the equipment into the enclave. Palestinian economist Mohammad Abu Jayyab said at least 100,000 new tents would be needed to house those heading to central and southern areas of the coastal strip should Israel begin its offensive or the army orders Gaza City's entire population to evacuate. "The existing tents where people are living have worn out, and they wouldn't protect people against rainwater. There are no new tents in Gaza because of the (Israeli) restrictions on aid at the (border) crossings," Abu Jayyab told Reuters. He said some families from Gaza City had begun renting property and shelters in the south and moved in their belongings.

"Some people learned from previous experience, and they don't want to be taken by surprise. Also, some think it is better to move earlier to find a space," Abu Jayyab added. The U.N. humanitarian office said last week 1.35 million people were already in need of emergency shelter items in Gaza. The war began when Hamas-led militants stormed across the border into southern Israel on October 7, 2023, killing 1,200 people and taking 251 hostages back to Gaza, according to Israeli tallies. More than 61,000 Palestinians have since been killed in Israel's ensuing air and ground war in Gaza, according to local health officials, with most of the 2.2 million population internally displaced. Five more Palestinians have died of malnutrition and starvation in the past 24 hours, the Gaza health ministry said on Monday, raising the number of people who died of those causes to 263, including 112 children, since the war started. Israel disputed the figures provided by the health ministry in the Hamas-run territory. Additional reporting by Maayan Lubell in Jerusalem, Nidal al-Mughrabi in Cairo, Emma Farge and Olivia Le Poidvin in Geneva; editing by Mark Heinrich Our Standards: The Thomson Reuters Trust Principles., opens new tabA senior correspondent with nearly 25 years' experience covering the Palestinian-Israeli conflict including several wars and the signing of the first historic peace accord between the two sides.

# Bolivia's left in historic defeat as presidential vote set for October runoff

GNS News Agency, August 28  
LA PAZ, Aug 17 (Reuters) - Centrist senator Rodrigo Paz was leading Bolivia's presidential election late on Sunday, according to early official results, which showed the ruling Movement for Socialism (MAS) on track for its worst election defeat in a generation. Paz of the Christian Democratic Party had secured 32.18% of the vote, while Eduardo del Castillo of MAS had just 3.16%, according to initial results released by the electoral tribunal on Sunday night. The Reuters Tariff Watch newsletter is your daily guide to the latest global trade and tariff news. Sign up here. Conservative former President Jorge "Tuto" Quiroga of the Alianza coalition was in second with 26.94% of the vote.

"Bolivia is not just asking for a change in government, it's asking for a change in the political system," Paz said in a speech broadcast on Sunday night. "This is the beginning of a great victory, of a great transformation," he added, as his supporters chanted "renewal." Earlier on Sunday, Quiroga acknowledged the results, confirming his place in the runoff, and congratulated Paz on his performance. Outgoing President Luis Arce released an upbeat statement recognizing the results. "Democracy has triumphed," the statement read. If no presidential candidate obtains more than 40% of the vote with a 10-point lead, the election will be decided in a runoff on October 19. Full official results will be announced within seven days.

Paz's strong performance surprised analysts. Opinion polls had suggested that the senator, with roughly 10% support, was far behind Quiroga and center-right candidate Samuel Doria Medina of the Unidad Alliance coalition. Businessman Medina conceded defeat on Sunday and said he would support Paz in an eventual runoff. Sunday's general election has been overshadowed by inflation at a four-decade high and the absence of former leftist president Evo Morales, who was barred from running and criticized the vote. But Morales' calls to boycott the election appeared to fall flat. Voter turnout on Sunday was steady, authorities said. Despite earlier concerns that the electoral process could be obstructed by supporters of Morales, who had called on the public to boycott the race, international observers said there were no major disruptions. Several minor incidents took place at polling stations in the central region of Cochabamba, Morales' political stronghold.

With a crowded field of eight contenders and no dominant MAS party candidate, the election marked a "crossroads moment" for Bolivia, said Southern Andes analyst Glaeldys Gonzalez Calanche of the International Crisis Group. Item 1 of 6 Bolivian presidential candidate centrist Senator Rodrigo Paz of the Christian Democratic Party (PDC) reacts while he speaks to members of the media, as early official results show that he is leading Sunday's presidential race, in La Paz, Bolivia Bolivia's fragile economy has been at the top of many voters' minds. Price rises have surged past other Latin American countries this year, and fuel and dollars have run scarce. Annual inflation doubled to 23% in June, up from 12% in January, with some Bolivians turning to cryptocurrencies as a hedge. Bolivia's inflation is soaring past others in the region who were far more affected in recent years, including during the Covid-19 pandemic. Many Bolivians, especially those who work in the informal economy, were now struggling to make ends meet, said economist Roger Lopez. "Bolivia is on the brink," said Lopez. "It has no dollars and faces obligations that must be paid in dollars, and voters understand that the coming years will be difficult." Early election results indicated millions of voters chose to punish MAS on Sunday, creating a window of opportunity for the first time in nearly two decades for centrists and the right, which together commanded roughly three quarters of the vote, the early count showed. "Every year the situation has got worse under this government," said Silvia Morales, 30, from La Paz, a retail worker. A



former MAS voter, she said this time she would cast her vote for the center-right. Carlos Blanco Casas, 60, a teacher in La Paz, said he intended to vote for change. "This election feels hopeful. We need a change of direction," he said. Quiroga has promised "radical change" to reverse what he calls "20 lost years" under MAS rule. He supports deep public spending cuts and a shift away from alliances with Venezuela, Cuba and Nicaragua. Quiroga was president for a year in 2001-2002 after Bolivia's then-leader resigned. Paz, meanwhile, plans to decentralize government by introducing a "50-50 economic model" in which the central government would manage only half of public funds. The remainder would be designated to regional governments. Silvia Morales, 30, a former MAS voter from La Paz, said she had cast her ballot for Paz on Sunday. "He's a new face with experience," she said, "I think we should make space for new opportunities." Voters also elected all 26 senators and 130 deputies, and officials will take office on November 8. Reporting by Lucinda Elliott in Montevideo and Monica Machicao in La Paz, additional reporting by Daniel Ramos in La Paz and Camille Ayrat in Mexico City. Editing by Daina Beth Solomon, Rosalba O'Brien, Marguerita Choy, Brendan O'Boyle, Michael Perry and Kate Mayberry

# US envoy to Lebanon discusses Hezbollah disarmament, post-war aid

Beirut: The US special envoy to Lebanon said Monday that his team would discuss the long-term cessation of hostilities with Israel, after Beirut endorsed a US-backed plan for the Hezbollah militant group to disarm. Tom Barrack, following a meeting with Lebanese President Joseph Aoun, also said Washington would seek an economic proposal for post-war reconstruction in the country, after months of shuttle diplomacy between the US and Lebanon. Barrack is also set to meet with Prime Minister Nawaf Salam and Speaker Nabih Berri, who often negotiates on behalf of Hezbollah with Washington. "I think the Lebanese government has done its part. They've taken the first step," said Barrack, who is also the US ambassador to Turkey. "Now what we need is for Israel to comply with that equal handshake." Lebanon's decision last week to support a plan to disarm Hezbollah angered the Iran-backed group and its allies, who believe Israel's military should first withdraw from the five hilltops it has occupied in southern Lebanon since the end of its 14-month war with Hezbollah last November and stop launching almost daily airstrikes in the country.

# Hong Kong democrat Jimmy Lai given heart monitor for final stretch of marathon trial



HONG KONG, GNS News Agency, August 28- Hong Kong pro-democracy media tycoon Jimmy Lai was given medication and a heart monitor on Monday for the start of final submissions in a landmark national security trial after concerns over his health delayed proceedings last week. Lai, 77, who founded the Apple Daily newspaper that was forced to close after a police raid and asset freeze in June 2021, has pleaded not guilty to two charges of conspiracy to collude with foreign forces, and a charge of conspiracy to publish seditious material.

Lai's lawyer Robert Pang told the court last Friday that Lai had experienced some episodes where he felt that he was collapsing and had heart "palpitations", prompting the court to adjourn proceedings and order that he be provided with a heart monitor and medication. Prosecutor Anthony Chau confirmed that Lai had been provided with the items on Friday and was now fit to appear in court. Lai, noticeably thinner than when the trial began in late 2023, sat in the glass dock dressed in a white jacket and pressed his palms together in a prayer gesture several times to his family and supporters. Addressing the court as the prosecution began its closing submissions, Chau said that Lai had acted as a "helmsman" at the Apple Daily, using the paper as a platform to advocate or request foreign countries conduct hostile activities against China, including trade embargoes.

He also argued that Lai had gone beyond calling for individual sanctions against Hong Kong and Chinese offi-

# Russian drone attack kills seven in Kharkiv, including two children, Ukraine says

KHARKIV, Ukraine, GNS News Agency, August 28 A Russian drone attack on a residential area in Kharkiv killed seven people including a toddler and a 16-year-old boy overnight, Ukrainian authorities said on Monday, as the United States presses Kyiv to accept a quick deal to end the war that Moscow started. Six children aged 6 to 17 were among 20 other people injured in the attack on Ukraine's second largest city, Oleh Synehubov, governor of the wider Kharkiv region, wrote on Telegram. The Reuters Daily Briefing newsletter provides all the news you need to start your day. Sign up here. The attack came as Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelenskyy was preparing for talks with Donald Trump in Washington later on Monday amid European fears the U.S. president could try to pressure Kyiv into accepting a peace settlement favourable to Moscow. The air force said Russia launched 140 drones against Ukraine overnight, the largest total recorded in a single night since August 4. Kharkiv, which lies near northeastern Ukraine's border with Russia, has been the target of Russian drone and missile attacks throughout the war.

A ballistic missile attack shattered around 1,000 windows in various buildings in the city on Sunday, Synehubov said. Some residents had to be evacuated from their homes, officials said. Reuters witnesses saw medics attending to residents on a street and rescuers inspecting damage to residential buildings. "Russia is a murderous war machine that Ukraine is holding back. And it must be stopped through transatlantic unity and pressure," Ukrainian Foreign Minis-

terial, and aimed to target China itself. Chau noted that Lai had travelled to the United States in July 2019 and urged then-Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to sanction Chinese and Hong Kong leaders, with the Apple Daily reporting on the trip.

Item 1 of 4 A prison van believed to be carrying Jimmy Lai arrives at the West Kowloon Magistrates' Courts building for the closing submissions in the national security collusion trial of Jimmy Lai, founder of the now-defunct pro-democracy newspaper Apple Daily, in Hong Kong, China, [1/4] A prison van believed to be carrying Jimmy Lai arrives at the West Kowloon Magistrates' Courts building for the closing submissions in the national security collusion trial of Jimmy Lai, founder of the now-defunct pro-democracy newspaper Apple Daily, in Hong Kong, China, August 18, 2025.... Purchase Licensing Rights, opens new tab Read more" We submit all these foreign connections, foreign collaboration and to show (Lai)'s unwavering intent to solicit or request SBHA (sanctions or blockades or other hostile activities) against the PRC and the HKSAR," Chau said referring to China and Hong Kong by their official names. Lai, a British citizen, has been held in solitary confinement for around 1,700 days. His son and some rights groups have expressed concern over his health, which they say is deteriorating.

Hong Kong authorities said in a statement on Friday that Lai had been provided with "adequate" medical care in custody and detailed medical examinations had found no "abnormality". Esther Toh, one of the three judges on the bench, relayed the opinion of a medical expert who said Lai was "physically and mentally fit for court," but she said additional breaks could be provided for Lai if necessary. Some Western governments have called for Lai's immediate release and raised concerns about the erosion of fundamental rights in the city under China-imposed national security laws. Hong Kong and Chinese authorities have said Lai is being given a fair trial. An Australian foreign affairs spokesperson told Reuters on Monday that Canberra was "deeply concerned by Hong Kong's widespread application of national security laws to repress civil society and prosecute pro-democracy advocates ... such as Jimmy Lai". Asked about Lai's case in a media interview last week, U.S. President Donald Trump said that he would "do everything I can to save him."



ter Andrii Sybiha wrote on X after the attack. Russia says it does not deliberately target civilians. Thousands have been killed since Moscow launched its full-scale invasion in February 2022. Russia fired four missiles overnight as well as the drones, the air force said. It said 88 drones were downed and reported impacts at 25 locations in six different regions. Seventeen people were injured in a morning missile attack that struck unspecified critical infrastructure in the southeastern city of Zaporizhzhia, officials said. In the Black Sea region of Odesa, an attack caused a large fire at a fuel and energy infrastructure facility, requiring a major firefighting effort, the governor said. Two people were also injured in strikes in the northern region of Sumy, where at least a dozen homes and an educational institution were damaged, authorities said.

# Pilgrimage route cut as Spanish wildfires spread to Picos de Europa mountains



PALACIOS DE JAMUZ, GNS News Agency, August 28 Spain, - Raging wildfires in Spain spread to the southern slopes of the Picos de Europa mountain range on Monday and authorities closed part of the popular Camino de Santiago pilgrimage route. About 20 wildfires, fuelled by a severe 16-day heatwave, have devastated more than 115,000 hectares (285,000 acres) in the regions of Galicia and Castile and Leon over the past week. Make sense of the latest ESG trends affecting companies and governments with the Reuters Sustainable Switch newsletter. Sign up here.

"This is a fire situation we haven't experienced in 20 years," Defence Minister Margarita Robles told radio station Cadena SER. "The fires have special characteristics as a result of climate change and this huge heatwave." She said thick smoke was affecting the work of water-carrying helicopters and aircraft. The Spanish army has deployed 1,900 troops to help firefighters.

Highways and rail services have been cut in the area, as well as the "Camino de Santiago" hiking route, an ancient pilgrimage path trodden by thousands in the summer. Item 1 of 6 A pyrocumulus cloud forms as smoke rises from a wildfire as seen from a cemetery in the village of Vilarmel, Lugo area, Galicia region, Spain, It links France and the city of Santiago de Compostela on the Western tip of Spain, where the remains of the apostle St James are said to be buried. Authorities in the Castile and Leon region have closed the path in the area between the towns of Astorga and Ponferrada, which are about 50 km (30 miles) apart, and told hikers "not to put (their) lives in danger". A

firefighter died when his truck crashed on a forest path near the village of Espinoso de Compludo. Four firefighters have died so far. The interior ministry says 27 people have been arrested and 92 are under investigation for suspected arson since June. Southern Europe is experiencing one of its worst wildfire seasons in two decades, with Spain among the hardest-hit countries. In Portugal, wildfires have burnt 155,000 hectares so far this year, according to the ICNF forestry protection institute - three times the average for this period between 2006 to 2024. About half of that area burned in the past three days.

# Alaskan man gifted new motorcycle by Putin during Trump summit

GNS News Agency, August 28  
A local man in Anchorage was given a new motorcycle by Russian President Vladimir Putin during last week's summit with U.S. President Donald Trump in the Alaskan city, according to a report published by Russian state television. An employee of the Russian embassy in the United States handed the man, Mark Warren, the keys to his new Ural motorcycle in the parking lot of the Anchorage hotel where the Russian delegation was staying. The Reuters Daily Briefing newsletter provides all the news you need to start your day. Sign up here. "I have to say that this is a personal gift from the President of the Russian Federation," Andrei Ledenev, the embassy employee, told Warren. The white-haired, bespectacled Warren, who Reuters was unable to contact for comment, was shown hopping aboard his new bike, Ledenev behind him and another man in the sidecar, to take it for a spin. "It's night and day," Warren said. "I like my old one, but this one is obviously much better." "I'm speechless, it's amazing. Thank you very much." The unexpected gift by the Russian leader came after reporters with Russian state television Channel 1 met Warren by chance on the streets of Anchorage ahead of the summit. The reporters stopped to admire Warren's bike, which is manufactured by Ural, whose orig

# How to plan for 10X rise in education expenses



Amid the uncertainties of life lie some certainties. For instance, children growing up, school education expenses, rising cost of higher education, career goals of children, etc. Above all, it is certain that the money required for education today would leapfrog at least tenfold by the time children enrol in higher education. So, is it possible to meet the 10X rise in education expenditure in the future? There is no one-size-fits-all solution for investment decisions. Yet, some are universally applicable, and financial experts consider them the golden rules. Let's dive into details. Career goals

First and foremost, understanding the career goals of children plays a major role in planning. For instance, if your son/daughter wishes to study abroad, you might have to earmark more money for meeting the educational expenses. If they do not want to go abroad, your actual educational expenditure might be comparatively less. Moreover, the courses they are interested in also play a major role. Not all courses are costly. If they are really interested in courses that are less competitive and relatively cheaper, you are relieved to some extent. However, the decision must be purely based on their wish not on financial condition.

Next, understanding the educational capacity of your son/daughter is essential. If they are good at studies, you might expect some scholarships or fee waivers. If not, the expenditure would be more. Financial investigation

You must understand your current financial position. A thorough, honest analysis of income, expenditure, debt, luxury and lifestyle habits, risk appetite, savings, investments, short-term and long-term goals, dependents (not just children but also aged parents) and the presence/absence of family-support system must be made. Luxury and lifestyle

habits play a spoilsport in savings and investments. The two are inversely related. The more you spend on luxury, the less you save or invest. You should clearly zero in on a target; that is, to which level would you want to reach regarding the above variables. Often, quantification of the above variables to the approximate levels is beneficial. For instance, let's say the current savings is 1,000 a month and your target savings is ₹10,000 per month.

Next, analyse the gaps from where you are to where you want to be (again, quantification helps). In this case, ₹9,000 a month is the gap between the current and the target level. You should also figure out the time available for reaching the target, say how many years you have in between. Budgeting exercise The moment you realise there are gaps and are aware of the time available, start budgeting. Cut down on lifestyle expenses and expenses on instant gratification. Know the difference between needs and desires and, as far as possible, spend on needs, not desires. Start early The key solution to attaining the target is to start early. Only then can you enjoy the magic power of compounding. Say, if you start when your child is just two or three years old, you are giving money ample time to grow, and when it multiplies, goal attainment is easier. In contrast, if you start when your son/daughter is in Class IX or X, you are losing the potential power of compounding, and on top of it, you must save more money per month for attaining your target.

Teach your child about the importance of cutting down on expenses, money, savings, investments, education, financial discipline and financial responsibility. The first expenditure towards securing your future must be insurance policies. To avoid touching savings or investments in times of emergencies, you must be well protected by all kinds of insurance policies. Say, a term policy for at least ₹1 crore; a family-floater health insurance policy for at least ₹10-₹25 lakh; if you have your own house, buy a Bharat Griha Raksha policy with the sum insured covering property value. Risks/rewards Do not put all eggs in one basket. Your investment portfolio must have a combination of fixed/recurring deposits (emergency fund), mutual funds, gold and stocks. If you have 8-10 years for your goal, invest a portion of your savings in equities. Though equities might be highly risky if held for less than five to seven years, they have the potential to give inflation-beating returns if invested for more than 10 years or so.

# Ethanol fuel plan cuts imports, worries motorists. What does science say?

In 2021, the Government of India had said it will move to 20% ethanol blending in petrol by 2025 with the two-pronged goal of cutting carbon emissions and reducing the country's dependence on foreign oil. While vehicles modified to be compatible with the new composition started rolling out in April 2025, the government's push for 20% ethanol-blended petrol (E20) has left vehicle-owners worried about the impact on their older vehicles and about a surge in maintenance costs. Ethanol, or ethyl alcohol, is a biofuel: it is made from plant waste called biomass. Regular petrol is a hydrocarbon made from the fossilised remains of organic matter buried for millions of years. Under India's ethanol-blending programme, the government procures ethanol either from sugarcane-based raw materials like C-heavy molasses, B-heavy molasses, sugarcane juice, sugar or sugar syrup, or damaged food grains like broken rice, maize or cellulosic and lignocellulosic materials. Molasses is a byproduct of sugarcane production. It is a thick, dark syrup about 40% rich in sugars that can be fermented but which can't be extracted further. C-heavy molasses are the final byproduct of the sugar production process, with molasses content around 28-32%. B-heavy molasses are an intermediary byproduct of the same process and have a higher molasses content, around 48-52%.

Ethanol is made from molasses by fermentation — using yeast enzymes to catalyse the breakdown of sugar molecules in the presence of water. An everyday example of fermentation is ginger soda. If you put ginger, sugar, and water in an airtight container for a few days, it becomes fizzy. This is because the microbes in ginger feed on the sugar, releasing carbon dioxide, which makes carbonic acid with water. In the first step of ethanol production from molasses, sucrose molecules in the syrup are diluted with water. Then they break down into glucose molecules in the presence of invertase.

These glucose molecules further react in the presence of zymase to form ethanol and release carbon dioxide. Producing ethanol from food grains and lignocellulosic materials also involves other processes that break them down to fermentable sugars first. Lignocellulosic biomass is plant matter with a high carbohydrate content and is usually composed of parts not used for food or feed. This biomass is rich in cellulose, hemicellulose, and lignin. Chemical nature, energy efficiency Two factors are key to understanding ethanol's energy efficiency: the calorific value and the octane number. The calorific value of a fuel denotes its yield: a higher calorific value means more energy. The calorific value of ethanol is significantly lower than that of petrol, so the fuel's overall burning efficiency should theoretically decrease. However, the government has maintained that the drop in fuel performance is not significant and that it is governed by a mix of other factors, including "driving habits, maintenance practices such as oil changes and air filter cleanliness, tyre pressure and alignment, and even air conditioning load".

The octane number is a measure of a fuel's resistance to engine knocking or burning prematurely. Ethanol has a higher octane number than petrol. Thus it has the potential to reduce the knock resistance significantly. However, because of its lower energy content, the amount of energy the engine can extract per litre of blended fuel decreases with increasing ethanol content. This said, the drop in mileage drivers have raised concerns about won't be significant, Sudheer Kumar Kuppili, a research fellow at London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, said. "The compensation for having lower energy would be quite low when you are moving from E10 to E20," Kuppili said. "It would be significant only when we shift to 100% ethanol. Most of the uproar these days about the reduction in vehicular mileage is fuelled by many factors, which are difficult to assess." In fact, experts said the thing to focus on here is ethanol's hygroscopic nature. That is, ethanol has a considerable tendency to attract and attach water molecules to itself. This in turn affects the vehicle's components and fuel performance in new ways. Independent expert Noble Varghese said the main concern is the increased possibility of corrosion. "Ethanol affects the rubber components of a fuel system, which is mainly the piping, the fuel tank, the injectors, the filters, and the combustion chambers. The combustion chamber and the engine block itself are not as af-



ected by ethanol, but what is affected is the fuel tank, the rubber piping, and the injector," Varghese said.

"Ethanol tends to attract water, so if the vehicle is not used everyday, water tends to collect in the fuel tank, which is corrosive for the tank. This causes another problem too: rust particles mix with fuel and go into the fuel line and clog it," he added. "That in itself will reduce the mileage. This is not primarily because of ethanol's thermodynamic properties but more because of the components which are not suited to E20 fuel." The government has however maintained that replacing older rubber parts and gaskets designed for the non-blended fuel is "inexpensive and can be easily managed during routine servicing."

A statement released by the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (MoPNG) on August 12 also said this change would be required only "once in the lifetime of the vehicle" and at "any authorised workshop". Kuppili also said moisture won't be a significant problem. "This might be a problem for older vehicles, which are probably already worn out. This should not be a problem for BS-IV or BS-VI vehicles. The fuel's hygroscopic nature might have a noticeable effect when you are in colder parts of the country. However, in those regions, fuels are usually mixed with additives to avoid freezing," he explained. "Also, when you are using a vehicle regularly, any moisture that accumulates will be evaporated by the high engine temperatures (>400°C)," he said. Kuppili wished to clarify that he hasn't worked on this particular issue of the fuels. Comparisons with Brazil Comparing the Indian ethanol-blending story with that of Brazil may not be justified as the South American country currently uses E27 petrol as well as paced this upgrade out over decades. Brazil first decided to lower its dependence on imported petrol in 1975 with its Proálcool programme during the oil crisis in the 1970s. Over the next few years, it focused on building capacity by working with researchers, expanding the production of ethanol from sugarcane with the specific purpose of mixing it with petrol, providing subsidies, incentives, and tax breaks to reduce the costs of production, and increasing the competitiveness of ethanol. The country also has a large market for vehicles fit with flex-fuel engines that allow vehicles to readily adapt to petrol with different ethanol fractions. This isn't the case with Indian vehicles. According to Varghese, the electronic control unit in an engine is hypersensitive to fuel content, which it detects automatically. "If you put more ethanol in fuel, its chemical properties change and therefore the engine management system has to be able to adapt, and older cars might not be able to do that," he said. By way of solution, he said mechanics could quickly connect the unit to a computer and update the fuel composition setting. However, one senior industry executive told The Hindu that vehicles that don't have electronic control units and injectors can't be made compatible with E20 as fuel. The executive said "about 95%" of all vehicles until the rollout of the BS-VI emission standards (in April 2020) were mechanically carbureted, meaning they didn't utilise any electronic units with sensors to regulate the delivery and treatment of fuel. "When the blending happens, it alters the stoichiometric ratio, i.e. air-to-fuel ratio, which in turn affects the speed of combustion and heat release," Kuppili said. "Modern vehicles have sensors called electronic control units, which monitor the oxygen content and alter the amount of fuel and air needed." With ethanol-blended petrol, he added, "you would need less air than usual, as ethanol has an oxygen atom. So this reduction can actually reduce pollutant emissions such as NOx, PM, and CO."

# Call for region-specific antivenoms to save snakebite victims



Herpetologists and health experts have called for region-specific antivenoms to increase the chances of saving lives in areas where the 'Big Four' snakes are not dominant. Snakebite victims in India are administered a polyvalent antivenom derived from the venom of four serpents that cause the majority of deaths. These four are the Indian cobra (Naja naja), common krait (Bungarus caeruleus), Russell's viper (Daboia russelii), and saw-scaled viper (Echis carinatus). However, the polyvalent serum developed against these four snakes has limited or no efficacy in most parts of Northeastern India, where snakebite deaths are more commonly caused by the monocled cobra (Naja kaouthia), kraits (Bungarus sp.), green pit vipers (Trimeresurus sp.), and other medically significant snakes.

"There is an urgent need to establish a Regional Venom Centre and a serpentarium (a place where snakes are housed for exhibition or research) at a strategic place in the northeast to address the region's unique snakebite challenges and improve patient outcomes," herpetologist Jayaditya Purkayastha said. He heads Help Earth, a Guwahati-based biodiversity conservation organisation, which partnered the Assam State Biodiversity Board, Assam Forest Department, and the Madras Crocodile Bank Trust (MCBT) to organise the first-ever Assam Snake Symposium a fortnight ago. The event brought together more than 80 snake rescuers from across Assam, alongside national and international experts, researchers, educators, and policymakers.

"Without region-specific antivenom, many envenomation cases result in delayed recovery, long-term complications, or even fatalities, despite the administration of standard treatment. A regional venom centre would serve as a hub for the systematic collection of venom from the medically important species native to the northeast, enabling the development of geographically appropriate antivenom," Dr Purkayastha said. "Such a centre, coupled with a serpentarium, can help maintain, milk, and study live specimens ethically. This facility would also support research on venom variability, toxin composition, and clinical manifestations specific to local snake species," he said.

A 2020 study on trends in snakebite deaths in India from 2000 to 2019, published in eLife, said the World Health Organisation's call to halve global snakebite deaths by 2030 would require substantial progress in India. It also cited the WHO's estimation that 81,000-138,000 people die annually from snakebites worldwide, and thrice the number survive with amputations and permanent disabilities. The researchers of the study, including Romulus Whitaker, Wilson Suraweera, Geetha Menon, and Prabhat Jha, analysed 2,833 snakebite deaths from 611,483 verbal autopsies in the nationally representative Indian Million Death Study from 2001 to 2014, and conducted a systematic literature review from 2000 to 2019 covering 87,590 snakebites.

The team estimated 1.2 million snakebite deaths (average 58,000 per year) across India from 2000 to 2019, nearly half of them occurring at ages 30-69 years and over a quarter in children under 15 years. Most of these deaths occurred at home in rural areas. The study found that about 70% occurred in eight higher-burden States with 55% of India's population, and half during the rainy season and at low altitude. These States are Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh (before

the creation of Telangana), Rajasthan, and Gujarat. "The risk of an Indian dying from snakebite before age 70 is about 1 in 250, but notably higher in some areas. More crudely, we estimate 1.11-1.77 million bites in 2015, of which 70% showed symptoms of envenomation," the study said, noting that prevention and treatment strategies might substantially reduce snakebite mortality in India.

According to the National Crime Records Bureau's report on accidental deaths in 2022, deaths due to "snakebite" dropped by 3.6% from 10,450 in 2021 to 10,085 the following year. Deaths due to "killed by animals" and "animal/reptiles/insects bite" increased by 16.5% and 16.7% during this period, respectively. Despite the "encouraging" trend in snakebite deaths, reptile specialists pointed out that snakebite envenoming remains a major but often overlooked public health issue in India, which accounts for nearly half of the global snakebite deaths each year. "India is the world's most affected nation in terms of mortality. The burden is particularly high in rural and agrarian communities, where people frequently work barefoot in fields and lack access to timely medical care," MCBT's Gnaneswar Ch. said. He said that the snakebite crisis is worsened by several challenges, with many cases going unreported due to reliance on traditional healers, lack of transportation, and limited awareness.

"Delays in reaching health facilities, along with improper first-aid practices, often lead to severe complications or death. Furthermore, there is a shortage of trained personnel and adequate supplies of antivenom in remote areas. The quality and regional suitability of antivenom is another concern, as it may not be effective against locally prevalent snake species outside the Big Four," he said. In response to this public health emergency, India launched the National Action Plan for Prevention and Control of Snakebite Envenoming in 2024, aligning with the WHO's 2030 target to halve snakebite deaths. The experts agreed that despite such efforts, major gaps remain in public awareness, community preparedness, and healthcare infrastructure. They sought greater emphasis on region-specific research, education campaigns at the village level, and strengthening rural healthcare systems to ensure early and appropriate treatment. Acknowledging the challenges in saving lives in a region where the polyvalent serum is less effective, Assam's forest minister, Chandra Mohan Patowary said a State-Level Steering Committee on Snakebite Mitigation would be formed.

He proposed the establishment of a serpentarium in Assam to facilitate advanced research on snake venom and address the region-specific challenges of envenomation and treatment. Subsequently, the Assam State Biodiversity Board signed a memorandum of understanding with Help Earth to work jointly on snakebite awareness and mitigation programmes at the Biodiversity Management Committee level. The experts favoured a State Snakebite Mitigation Action Plan toward setting up a Regional Venom Centre and facilitating collaborations with institutions across India for venomics research and antivenom standardisation. They also suggested an app or digital platform for the timely and ethical handling of snake-human encounters, increasing due to habitat encroachment, urbanisation, and seasonal flooding. Such an app is envisaged to serve as a life-saving tool for both humans and snakes by reducing panic and delays during snake sightings or bite incidents. "Beyond rescue logistics, the app can act as a centralised repository of real-time data on snake rescue, release locations, species involved, and conflict zones. This valuable information can be used to identify hotspots, monitor trends, and guide policy-level decisions for snake conservation, land-use planning, and public health interventions," Dr Purkayastha said. "Moreover, this digital platform can be integrated with hospitals, forest departments, and wildlife boards to streamline responses, improve awareness, and encourage coexistence," he said. "Snakebite deaths in India are largely preventable, and with coordinated action across health, forest, and community sectors, the country can move closer to eliminating avoidable snakebite fatalities," Assam's chief wildlife warden, Vinay Gupta, said.

# A case for judicial introspection

At least a few from the ruling dispensation have asked why the Opposition is not formally taking up the electoral roll issue before the Supreme Court. However, the reluctance shown by the major Opposition parties is quite reasonable and even justifiable. The Modi regime promulgated the Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act in 2023 with a view to nullify the Constitution Bench judgment in Anoop Baranwal v. Union of India (2023). The Act excluded the Chief Justice of India (CJI) and included a Cabinet Minister to be nominated by the Prime Minister in his place, as part of the Selection Committee for choosing the Election Commission of India (ECI). This statute was legally challenged in several writ petitions which are yet to be finally heard. Significantly, the petitioners also sought a stay of the enactment. A Bench, led by Justice Sanjiv Khanna (as he then was), heard the application for a stay and rejected it on March 22, 2024, by a detailed order in Dr. Jaya Thakur and others v. Union of India (2024). Had the statute been stayed, the country could have had a different umpire for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections and the subsequent Assembly elections. In all probability, a more independent ECI could have had the potential to conduct the elections more fairly and impartially. That this did not happen shows the Supreme Court's failure to act at a time when it was supposed to.

In Anoop Baranwal, the Constitution Bench analysed Article 324 of the Constitution dealing with the appointment of Election Commissioners. It spoke of the need to take the appointment "out of the exclusive hands of the executive". It said that "a pliable ECI, an unfair and biased overseer of the foundational exercise of adult franchise, which lies at the heart of democracy, who obliges the powers that be, perhaps offers the surest gateway to acquisition and retention of power". The Court was assertive when it said that "the outpouring of demands for an impartial mode of appointment of the members require, at the least, the banishing of the impression that the ECI is appointed by less than fair means". This shows the rationale behind prescribing the CJI as a member of the Selection Committee for the ECI.

Yet, a few months later, the Centre ensured that only "persons under the thumb of the executive", as feared by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, dominate the Selection Committee. When this was shown to the Supreme Court, it took a very conservative and dangerous stand, saying it won't interfere with a statute for it carries a "presumption of validity". This is how the present type of ECI was allowed to function. At a time when majoritarianism often rests on electoral frauds, courts across the world face newer challenges, both jurisprudential and political. In a paper titled 'Abusive Judicial Review: Courts Against Democracy' (2020), David Landau and Rosalind Dixon have conducted an extensive global



survey on the topic. According to them, "courts have upheld and thus legitimated regime actions that helped actors consolidate power, undermine the Opposition, and tilt the electoral playing field heavily in their favour". They explain that sometimes "(the) clever authoritarians often do their manipulation well before elections have actually been held, by consolidating power, stacking key institutions such as courts and electoral commissions, and harassing Opposition parties and leaders". The paper says courts in countries such as Venezuela, Ecuador, and Bolivia aided and facilitated electoral frauds which ensured continuation of autocracies. On the other hand, there are few instances where the courts could prevent electoral manipulation and the consequent subversion of democracy. The judgment in Baranwal exemplifies such judicial vigilance.

Article 324 failed to prescribe a body free from the ruling executive for installing the ECI. Modern Constitutions have reorganised the need to evolve fourth Branch institutions (in addition to the executive, the legislature, and the judiciary) which are autonomous and independent of the ruling dispensation. The Constitution of South Africa envisages a cluster of state institutions for "supporting constitutional democracy". The Chapter Nine institutions, as they are called, include the Electoral Commission of South Africa. The silence of the Indian Constitution prompted the Court in Baranwal to prescribe a fairer body for choosing the ECI. It was an instance of imaginative interpretation of the relevant constitutional provision. However, Parliament failed the Court and the people when it enacted the 2023 Act. The Court's refusal to stay the enactment practically nullified its own hard labour and intelligence in redefining the ECI as an independent fourth branch establishment. In India, electoral manipulation, as alleged by the Opposition, would call for a deeper and comprehensive analysis by a fair agency. The Court, on its own, will not be able to carry out this exercise. The only way to rescue our democracy would be to restore the position laid down in the Baranwal verdict and to nullify the 2023 enactment. A Selection Committee with the CJI in it will have to induct another ECI by way of a fresh selection process.

# Top 100 defaulters: 82 land in NCLT; liquidation rate squeezes bank recovery



A total of 82 companies out of the top 100 bank defaulters of 2019, including some of the biggest companies run by prominent industrialists, landed in the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) under Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), 2016 and out of this, nearly one third of the companies went into liquidation over the years, suggesting banks would have hardly recouped any money, an investigation by The Indian Express reveals. Since the IBC framework came into being in 2016, creditors i.e. banks had a way out. A status update of what happened to these top 100 defaulters shows that of the total 82 companies landed in NCLT, the corporate insolvency resolution process (CIRP) was initiated in 74 cases and as many as 28 companies went into liquidation over the years.

The investigation further reveals that these 100 companies together had a total debt of Rs 8.44 lakh crore in 2019. Of this, nearly half or Rs 4.02 lakh crore, was declared non-performing assets (NPA) or bad loans by March 2019. A total of 28 companies that went for liquidation, had a total debt of Rs 1.23 lakh crore. The average realisation by the creditors in liquidation cases is just 3.17 per cent. The data on outstanding debt of these 100 companies as on March 31, 2019 has been collated through their annual reports, audit reports, filings in stock exchanges, annual returns filed with Registrar of Companies (RoC) and NCLT orders, which run into thousands of pages for all companies put together. For the first time ever, the list of top 100 bank defaulters has been accessed by The Indian Express under the Right To Information Act. This list came after knocking at the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) doors through multiple RTI applications and appeals over a four year period since 2019. The matter reached up to the Central Information Commission (CIC) and after multiple hearings, the central bank disclosed the information in November 2023, and that also only partially. In fact, these top 100 defaulters accounted for nearly 50 per cent of the gross NPAs of Rs 9.33 lakh crore of all scheduled commercial banks as on March 31, 2019. Top 100 defaulters: 82 land in NCLT; liquidation rate squeezes bank recovery

Of the total outstanding debt of Rs 8.44 lakh crore of these 100 companies, just 15 companies concentrated in three sectors — manufacturing, energy and construction — accounted for over 50 per cent (Rs. 4.58 lakh crore) of the debt. As many as 34 of the 100 defaulters were in the energy business, 32 in manufacturing, 20 in construction or real estate, and five in telecom. The balance nine companies belong to other sectors. A closer look at the list of the top 100 defaulters shows that just 30 of them accounted for over 30 per cent of the gross NPAs of FY19 or Rs 2.86 lakh crore. Bhushan Power & Steel Limited topped the list with an outstanding debt of Rs 41,400 crore as on March 2019. The company was later taken over by Jindal Group's JSW Steel. Essar Steel — later acquired by ArcelorMittal is in second position, with an outstanding debt of Rs. 69,360 crore. The other companies in the top 10 are Videocon Industries, VOVL Limited, Jaiprakash Associates, KSK Mahanadi Power, Reliance Communications, Alok Industries, Prayagraj Power and Jaiprakash Power. Current status and steep haircuts A closer study of these 100 companies reveal that out of the initiation of CIRP against 74 companies for defaulting on loans, the resolution plan, which provides for the treatment of loans of creditors or banks, was approved in a total of 33 cases by the NCLT. A total of 28 companies were referred for liquidation by the NCLT. So many companies going into liquidation shows that banks have got very little money back. According to the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI), a government regulator for the implementation of the code, the average

realisation by the creditors against their admitted claims in liquidation cases is just 3.17 per cent. The analysis further shows that there are a total of 13 cases where CIRP proceeding is still ongoing. Apart from this, there are five more companies in the NCLT, where petitions have been filed for the initiation of CIRP against them. In a total of six cases, including third biggest defaulter Videocon Industries Limited, either the resolution plan was rejected by NCLT & NCLAT or the CIRP proceeding was closed after the settlement between the parties and withdrawn of the case.

The Indian Express has analysed a total of 20 resolution plans, out of 33 approved plans, available on the IBBI portal. It reveals that a total of Rs 2.25 lakh crore of the financial creditors i.e banks were admitted in these cases, but out of this, only Rs 82,961 crore was provided under the resolution plan. Thus, the banks took a haircut of Rs 1.42 lakh crore in just one-fifth of the top 100 bank defaulter cases. The realised amount is only 36.84 per cent against the admitted claims.

Out of this in 10 cases, the realisation amount is less than 30 per cent. In cases like MCNALLY Bharat Engineering Company Limited and ACIL limited, the amount realised is just 9 per cent and 5.94 per cent respectively. In case of Reliance Naval and Engineering Limited and GVK Power (Goindwal Sahib) Limited, the realised amount is just 16.30 per cent of the admitted claims. Similarly, in Essar Power M P Limited and Diamond Power Infrastructure Limited, the realised amount is only 20 per cent of admitted claim. The highest realisation is in the Jaypee Infratech case, where financial creditors got 79 per cent of their admitted claims in the successful resolution plan. In case of top two bank defaulters — Bhushan Power & Steel Limited and Essar Steel India Limited — financial creditors got 41 per cent and 60.70 per cent amount respectively against their claims in the plan. The third biggest bank defaulter Videocon Industries Limited is still in limbo as the resolution plan approved by NCLT was set aside by NCLAT in January 2022 and a fresh resolution plan was ordered. According to the IBBI, the average realisation amount against the admitted claims where the resolution plan has been approved is 32.30 per cent. The data is based on the analysis of 1,005 companies where the resolution plan has been approved till June, 2024.

Lower recovery and time consuming A study by Indian Institute of Management (IIM), Ahmedabad, published in August 2023, shows that for financial creditors, the highest recovery rates were observed in the hotels and restaurants and construction industry and the lowest for electricity, gas and water supply. "Interestingly, the highest recovery rates are not for asset-heavy industries but rather for asset-light industries with substantial intangible assets. It also highlights the importance of an auction to realise the going concern value of an entity. Manufacturing is also among the lowest in terms of recovery," said the report. The IIM study is concerning for banks especially in terms of these 100 defaulter companies as over 60 per cent of these defaulters are from Energy and Manufacturing sectors. The resolution plans of some of other big companies such as Jaiprakash Associates Limited, KSK Mahanadi Power Company Limited, Reliance Communications Limited, Videocon Telecommunication Limited, Rolta India Limited, Advantage Overseas Private Limited etc is still pending. While, according to IBBI, the resolution process, on an average, is taking 679 days to conclude as against the standard timeline of 330 days, the delay is much higher in these top 100 default cases. On an average it took 960 days from commencement of Insolvency process to the approval of resolution plan by the NCLT in these top NPAs cases. Similarly it took an average 690 days from initiation of CIRP to order of liquidation, while the overall average is 493 days. The delays are often due to litigations by multiple stakeholders with competing interests, which erodes the value of already distressed corporate debtor further and minimises the recovery value of the creditors. An analysis of 947 resolved cases as of March, 2024 indicated direct correlation between the length of the resolution process and the recovery rate. According to the bankruptcy board, 453 companies took 600 or more days in resolution and it resulted in recovery of just 26.11 per cent. Whereas resolution in 0-330 days (140 cases) shows the recovery of 49.22 per cent and 330-599 days (354 cases) shows recovery of 35.98 per cent.

# Funding, infrastructure, general environment woes unattractive for senior international scientists to work in India: Nobel laureate Venki Ramakrishnan

With the U.S. terminating several research programmes, firing thousands of federal scientists, and cancelling important, high-value federal research grants — \$8 billion already and further cuts of almost \$18 billion next year for National Institute of Health (NIH), proposed cuts of about \$5 billion next year to National Science Foundation (NSF), proposed cut of nearly 25% to NASA's budget for 2026, and billions of dollars cut in grants to several universities — many U.S. scientists are planning to move to other countries.

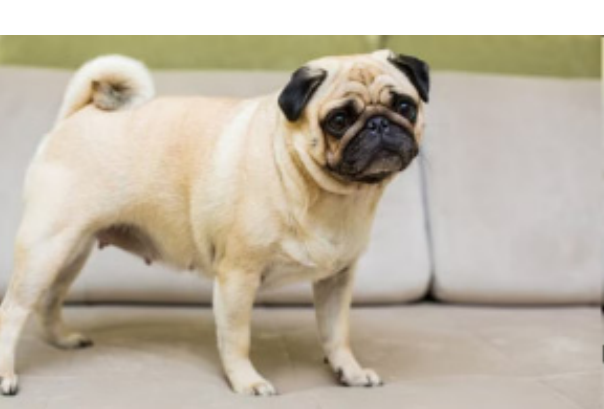
According to an analysis carried out by Nature Careers, U.S. applications for European vacancies shot up by 32% in March this year compared with March 2024. A Nature poll found that 75% of respondents were "keen to leave the country". The European Union and at least a handful of European countries have committed special funding to attract researchers from the U.S. But since the committed funding is dwarfed by the scale of funding cuts by the U.S., and the funding is already highly competitive in Europe, senior scientists from the U.S. may not move to Europe in large numbers. "There will be a few scientists who will move, but I do not see a mass exodus. Firstly, salaries in Europe are well below those in the U.S. Secondly, moving is always difficult both professionally and personally. Finally, the U.S. is still the pre-eminent scientific country, and that will be hard to walk away from. I say this as someone who actually did move from the U.S. to England over 25 years ago, with a salary that was just over half what I was making there," Nobel Laureate Venkatraman Ramakrishnan, professor at the MRC Laboratory of Molecular Biology, Cambridge, U.K., says in an email to The Hindu. In comparison, India has only a handful of institutions such as IISc, NCBS, TIFR, IISERs, and IITs that can possibly attract U.S. scientists. According to him, even the renowned institutions in India are "world class only in some very specific areas".

"I do not see India as a general magnet for international science," Prof. Ramakrishnan adds. Though funding for science in India has increased in absolute terms, the percentage of GDP allocated to R&D has actually reduced. India's gross expenditure on R&D is estimated to be 0.6-0.7% of GDP in 2025. Specifically, with long-term assured funding for basic research, which is absolutely necessary to attract researchers based in the U.S., not guaranteed by existing

programmes, can India take advantage of the situation in the U.S.? "India's R&D investment as a fraction of GDP is much less than China's and is about a third or less of what many developed countries have, and far below countries like South Korea. It will not be competitive without a substantial increase," Prof. Ramakrishnan says. Lack of funding, infrastructure

Prof. Ramakrishnan says: "Neither the funding, the infrastructure nor the general environment in India is attractive for top-level international scientists to leave the U.S. to work in India. There may be specific areas (e.g. tropical diseases, ecology, etc.) where India is particularly well suited, but even in these areas, it will be easier for scientists to do field work there while being employed in the West." Given a choice between some European country or India, he strongly vouches for Europe as being "far more attractive as a scientific destination". Some of the key pain points in Indian science are delayed release of funds every year, research scholars not being paid scholarships for as long as a year, and whimsical ways in which science policies are changed with little discussion with scientists. Even the Ramalingaswami re-entry fellowship, which aims to support the return of early-career life scientists with at least three years of international postdoctoral training, has faced abrupt policy changes. Currently, there are no national policies to attract senior scientists from other countries. "If India is serious about attracting Indian scientists abroad to return, it needs to provide far better incentives. China has shown that with sufficient investment and a stable commitment, it can be done," he says. Funding in India is available mainly from the government agencies such as DBT, ICMR, DST, and SERB, with negligible private funding. In 2021, the government announced ₹50,000 crore for the Anusandhan National Research Foundation, which will replace SERB. In December 2024, Minister of State (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of Science & Technology and Earth Sciences Dr. Jitendra Singh in a written reply to the Lok Sabha said that a budgetary provision of only ₹14,000 crore had been made by the government for 2023-2028. The balance ₹36,000 crore will have to be sourced through "donations from any other sources" including public and private sector, philanthropic organisations, foundations, and international bodies.

# Short-nosed dog breeds and air pollution: Understanding the risks for pugs and bulldogs



Brachycephalic breeds, such as pugs, bulldogs, and Shih Tzus, are beloved for their unique appearance; but their distinctive short noses and flat faces come with significant health challenges. Among these is an increased vulnerability to air pollution, which can exacerbate their already compromised respiratory systems. With rising air pollution levels in urban areas, these breeds face heightened risks, including breathing difficulties and long-term respiratory conditions. While these pets require special care under normal circumstances, air pollution demands additional precautions to protect their health. Owners must be proactive in mitigating the impact of environmental pollutants, especially during peak pollution periods.

But, why are brachycephalic breeds more affected by air pollution compared to other dogs?

Dr Deepraj Prajapati, MVSC and senior veterinarian at

# What Malaika Arora eats in a day

Malaika Arora, known for her commitment to fitness and health, has always been candid about her love for food. While she often shares snippets of indulgent treats from special occasions or travel adventures, she recently gave fans a peek into her typical daily diet. Sharing an Instagram reel, Malaika detailed what fuels her active lifestyle. Malaika starts her day early, but her first nourishment comes at 10 am with her signature ABC(G) juice. Made from apple, beetroot, carrot, and a hint of ginger, this drink is packed with vitamins and detoxifying properties, ensuring a nutritious kickstart to her day.

ABCG juice is a popular detoxification drink that has become the favourite of many fitness enthusiasts in recent times, Dr Santosh Pandey, acupuncturist and naturopath, Rejua Energy Center told indianexpress.com in a previous conversation about Malaika's love for the juice. "The ABCG juice is packed with essential nutrients like zinc, potassium, manganese, and many vitamins like vitamin A, B6, C, and more," Dr Pandey shared. Around noon, the newly-minted restaurant owner opts for an "avo toast" that forgoes traditional bread. Instead, it features avocado and eggs as its primary components, delivering a wholesome punch of protein. She pairs it with a tangy dip or chutney, showing how simple swaps can still make for indulgent, healthy snacking.

Avocados are rich in healthy monounsaturated fats and can help support heart health and reduce cholesterol lev-



els. They are also a good source of dietary fibre, which aids in digestion and promotes a feeling of fullness, according to Dr Rajkumar, Senior Consultant, Internal Medicine, Indian Spinal Injuries Centre, New Delhi. At 2:30 pm, Malaika digs into her favourite comfort food—khichdi. This classic Indian dish, loaded with vegetables, is her go-to meal for its simplicity and nourishing properties. She shared her enthusiasm for the dish, emphasizing its suitability for the season. For her 5 pm snack, the fitness icon reaches for nature's candy—fresh fruits. Blueberries and cherries, packed with antioxidants, are her top picks for staying refreshed and energised. Malaika leaves fans intrigued about her evening meal, teasing a possible follow-up in her Instagram caption: "Should I drop a PART 2?"

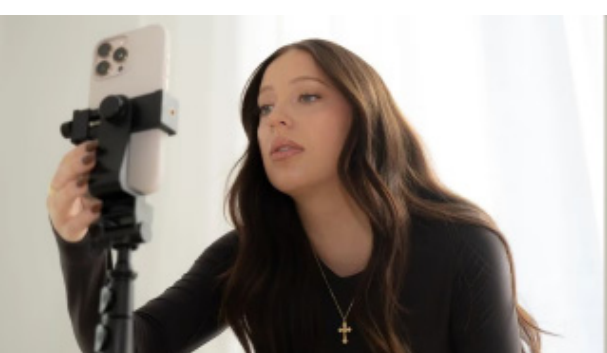
# Can you copyright a vibe?

The oversize beige cable-knit sweater. The center-parted hair. The right knee pointed out, creating a curve at her left hip. Practically every detail in the photo — right down to the matching short set — looked familiar to Sydney Gifford. So did the woman posed in front of the nondescript white wall. Days earlier, Gifford, a 24-year-old lifestyle influencer, had shared a photo with her thousands of followers that was virtually identical. The woman in this new photo was a fellow influencer, Alyssa Sheil, with whom she had gone shopping and done a photo shoot months earlier. At the time, she thought their interactions had been merely awkward. But as she scrolled through Sheil's photos on Instagram for the first time in nearly a year, she said, Gifford suspected those meetings had been some kind of aesthetic espionage. Gifford claims that Sheil, 21, not only started to mimic her online persona but also appropriated her entire look. And now she is suing.

Gifford had copyrighted several of her social media posts in January, after noticing the similarity between Sheil's posts and her own. Several photos were submitted as evidence in the lawsuit Gifford filed this year in a federal court in Texas accusing Sheil of copyright infringement. But in the carefully curated world of social media, Giffords has leveled a perhaps more severe charge against her: stealing her vibe. "This isn't a coincidence," Gifford, who has about 300,000 followers on Instagram and more than 500,000 on TikTok, recalled thinking at the time. "Something is definitely happening here." What might appear to be a superficial spat over sweaters and hairstyles could actually be a legal fight that gets at the heart of social media influence. The very nature of successful trendsetting requires some degree of replication. As much as platforms like TikTok and Instagram may seem like free-for-alls, lifestyle influencers exist in an ecosystem that prizes homogeneity — one of the surer ways to appease the algorithms that are the ultimate arbiters of their success online. As the creator economy booms, teasing the possibility of a lucrative livelihood, Gifford's case seeks to clarify the line where imitation may turn from flattery into forgery. In several interviews beginning in August, experts said influencers have to navigate a blurry landscape in which assigning credit to who created what can be daunting and, in some cases, impossible.

"There really is a sense that you're both a creator and a borrower," said Jeanne Fromer, a professor of intellectual property law at New York University. "Fashion is built on that. All the creative industries — painting, music, movies — they're all built on borrowing in certain ways from the past and also ideally trying to bring your own spin to something. I don't know that anyone wants to go too far as a result."

Sheil said that Gifford's claims about her posts were unfounded and that she found them deeply upsetting, as an influencer in her own right. "This is how I make my living and not only that, this is my personal brand," Sheil said in an interview. "I kind of feel like I need to defend myself." Fromer described the lawsuit as one of the first of its kind, in which one social media user is suing another — rather than the tech company behind the platform. Despite its seeming outlandishness, this "kitchen sink intellectual property complaint" could hold up in court, she said, adding that the most substantial claim was copyright infringement. Depending on what comes of the lawsuit, it could set an important precedent for other influencers and how they present themselves online. I Didn't Feel Welcome The first time Gifford and Sheil met, at a luxury outdoor mall in Austin, Texas, Sheil felt like



a third wheel. According to Sheil, Gifford had sent her a private message on Instagram asking if she wanted to hang out with her and another influencer friend. The women walked around, perused the offerings at H&M and Aritzia, had lunch, and went their separate ways. "I was definitely anxious because they were already friends," Sheil said. "I didn't really know what I was walking into with them already being friends, and it went OK." Gifford described the get-together as "professional," and said it was mainly to film content and bounce ideas off one another. "I really don't recall who reached out to who," said Gifford, who now lives in Minnesota. "I know we had been mutually following each other for a while, so I'm not sure who initiated it."

The three women met up again the next month at a parking garage in downtown Austin to shoot photos together to post on their individual accounts. This time though, Sheil did not feel welcome, she said. "I wasn't spoken to for the first 45 minutes to an hour of getting to the parking garage," Sheil said. "Sydney also took photos with the third friend that was there and posted it and didn't tag me." When Sheil went home, she blocked Gifford across all platforms. "I didn't really see anything wrong with blocking her," Sheil said. "I didn't feel welcome. I didn't feel like that was someone that I needed to have a relationship with on social media if the relationship we had in real life wasn't good." Livelihoods on the Line For Gifford, the lawsuit isn't a matter of personal pride: It's about protecting her business. Gifford and Sheil both create social media content meant to induce their followers to buy items — tumblers, coffee tables, pajama sets — from their Amazon "storefronts."

This is how both women make their living, they said, and it is what Gifford is claiming in her lawsuit that Sheil infringed on by copying her posts and aesthetic. "There were multiple people, some followers, some close friends of mine, that her content had popped up on their 'For You' page and they thought it was mine, genuinely," Gifford said during a video interview from Minnesota.

They obviously looked at the name on the account and were confused," Gifford said of her followers, who she said alerted her to the similarities in their content. "It was very emotional to see that." This confusion by her followers is a focus of Gifford's suit. She also said that she had noticed a dip in the sales of items she posted about when Sheil made a post similar to hers, citing information from Amazon. In the lawsuit, Gifford identified a list of items that she claims Sheil copied from her posts and sold on her Amazon storefront — items, she said, that she spends considerable amounts of time curating. Over the summer, lawyers for Sheil filed a motion to dismiss most of the charges presented in the complaint. Decrying Gifford's "throw ev

# In industrial belt near Delhi, Trump’s tariffs cloud outlook for export of engineering goods



In one of the many cavernous sheds dotting Ghaziabad, the industrial suburb on the outskirts of the Capital, a giant stands silent. The massive metal forging machine, hauled from China only months ago at a cost of Rs 20 crore, glints under the dim factory lights, its steel body collecting a fine coat of dust. It was meant to be the future: sleek, electric-powered, capable of shaping metal with precision and scale.

Yet, in its shadow, the old ritual continues. A knot of workers, sleeves rolled, faces flushed with heat, gather around a much smaller press, striking molten metal with steady, rhythmic blows. The clangs echo through the workshop like the heartbeat of an older era. For Ghaziabad-based CD Industries, a manufacturer of metal flanges feeding oil and gas exploration rigs across the US, the dormant machinery was supposed to answer the shifting demands of its overseas clients. Instead, it waits, inert. “Baal mundwaate hi ole padne lage (It started raining hail stones as soon as one got his hair shaved),” Pankaj Agarwal, Director, CD Industries, told The Indian Express at his manufacturing plant in one of Ghaziabad’s biggest industrial belts on the Bulandshahr Road. Agarwal had purchased the electric metal forge to exclusively service client requests from the US, who had asked him to make flanges of up to 16 inches, as opposed to his current capacity of eight-inch flanges.

But, with US President Donald Trump’s decision to raise tariffs on several Indian goods – to 25 per cent, with a further 25 per cent increase threatened by August 27 – new orders have dried up for Agarwal, and many engineering goods exporters like him. Increasingly, several US-based vendors are even cancelling earlier orders, resulting in significant financial losses for several Indian medium and small enterprises. Engineering is the largest industrial sector in India and accounts for 3.53 per cent of the country’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The engineering goods export of India had a share of 25.22 per cent out of the total exports during the financial year FY24, as they jumped to \$109.22 billion as compared to \$106.93 billion during FY23. In FY25 (April to December), India’s top five export destinations in the sector were the US (15.82%), the UAE (7.36%), Saudi Arabia (5.24%), Singapore (4.46%) and Germany (3.52%). Industries like auto components and metal works are particularly at a disadvantage. For CD Industries, the US is its exclusive export market, accounting for 50 per cent of the company’s turnover. “While we are continuing to deliver the previously placed orders, new enquiries have stopped coming in. For some companies, their previous orders have been cancelled, as importers are seeking a discount, which many manufacturers are not in a position to accept,” Agarwal said. His products are supplied across the length and breadth of

the US, from the West Coast to the East Coast, and Texas to New York.

His plant in Ghaziabad employs 225 people, including floor workers, project managers and quality control managers. For now, he says the older orders not getting cancelled – a fact he attributes to his long-standing relationship with his vendors, dating back 20 to 30 years – has allowed him to not trim the workforce. But if the situation continues for a longer time, he may have to let go of some workers, Agarwal said. Sanjeev Sachdev, general secretary of the Industrial Area Manufacturers’ Association in Ghaziabad, said there are more than 400 manufacturing plants in the belt, which employ over 75,000 people. “If the tariff situation is not resolved, and the government does not alternatively help the industry financially in the meantime, easily 5,000-7,000 people will lose their jobs. Many companies, who have purchased raw material and made finished goods, are starting at generations getting into debt,” Sachdev said.

Pankaj Chadha, chairman of the Engineering Export Promotion Council (EEPC) of India, said about \$5 billion worth of engineering goods exports are at risk due to US tariffs. “Unlike other sectors, for us the pain started early on when the US announced 50 per cent tariffs on steel and aluminium. At this tariff rate, we cannot be competitive and we are not in a position to retain our market share in the US,” he said. Sachdev speaks with the quiet fatalism of someone who is anticipating to see too many balance sheets bleed red. Between raw metal and a gleaming finished part lies a steep markup – not just in price, but in labour, skill, and the hours of heat and noise that shape it. Yet that value can vanish in an instant. If an overseas buyer pulls the plug, the goods, tailored to a single client’s specifications, are suddenly orphaned, with no other market to call home. In that moment, there are only two doors left open: swallow the buyer’s demand for a deep discount, or consign the work to the scrap heap, where months of craft and capital dissolve into a fraction of their worth. For some manufacturers, it is not just a bad deal – it is the slow tightening of a noose. One too many of such blows, and the factory floor falls silent.

Many in the industry, who spoke on condition of anonymity, warned that the real weight of the new tariffs will fall not on the industry’s giants, but on the small and medium enterprises. The big players can simply pivot, scouting for new markets, absorbing the shock with the comfort of deep reserves. For the smaller firms, there is no such cushion, no easy escape route. The blow, when it lands, goes straight to the bone. Agarwal, Chadha and Sachdev, all said that the government’s help to support companies in distress is the need of the hour. “We expect the government to extend Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products (RoDTEP) to the steel sector and restart the interest subvention scheme to ease the pain,” Chadha said. Vinod Kumar, president of the India SME Forum, said that export-focused countries like China have heavily invested in promoting their products globally. “India has not done that over the years. This is a systemic problem. The nature of trade has changed over the years. Only production is not going to solve your problem, we have to market them effectively,” he said.

# GST restructure plan: In new regime, online gaming likely to be placed in top bracket

With the Government proposing to overhaul the GST regime with a special rate of 40 per cent on “sin and demerit goods”, the top slab is likely to see the inclusion of pan masala, tobacco, cigarettes, luxury cars, SUVs — and online gaming. According to sources, the Department of Revenue has kept in mind the country’s “social ethos” while tagging goods and services in the “sin and demerit” category, and online gaming is seen to be fitting that definition. If this move is finalised, it is likely to cause an upheaval among online gaming companies, ranging from fantasy sports and real gaming platforms, which have previously complained of the 28 per cent GST levied on them. The latest consideration also comes amid growing concerns within the Central and state governments over the amount of money being spent on these platforms, and the ease with which these companies enable automatic deductions for payments, sometimes without consent, during consecutive rounds of a game.

The 40 per cent rate, which is likely to be recommended by the GST Council, could also benefit the Central and state governments fiscally, with substantial revenue gains expected. The sector has shown fairly inelastic demand previously, when the GST rate was set at 28 per cent from October 1, 2023. Prior to that, many online gaming companies were not paying 28 per cent saying there were differential tax rates for games of skill and games of chance. Official data shows GST revenues jumped sharply after the Council’s decision in July 2023 to impose a uniform 28 per cent levy on online gaming, horse racing and casinos with effect from October 1, 2023.

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had said last September that revenue from online gaming “increased by 412 per cent and reached Rs 6,909 crore in just six months... from Rs 1,349 crore before the notification issued on online gaming”. For casinos, she had said the revenue increased by 30 per cent, from Rs 164.6 crore in the six months prior to the decision to Rs 214 crore in the same period after the move. The need for a higher GST rate for online gaming may also find support among policymakers as they have been raising concerns over the amount of time being spent by users on these platforms that is resulting in them spending increasingly high amounts of money on such activities. A key consideration behind the move is concerns among policymakers over the time and increas-



ingly higher amounts of money being spent by domestic users on online gaming platforms. The domestic spend on online games is not “particularly small”, Chief Economic Advisor V Anantha Nageswaran had said on August 14, days after the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) for the first time released monthly data breaking up payments made to various categories of merchants via the Unified Payments Interface (UPI). As per the data, UPI payments on digital games averaged more than Rs 10,000 crore in the first four months of 2025-26. “...take a look at how much Indians are spending on online gaming every month. And the number isn’t particularly small — it is Rs 10,000 crore per month. That’s Rs 1.2 trillion (in a year),” Nageswaran said at a meeting with statistical advisers in various ministries and departments, organised by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation. The Indian Express had earlier reported that the Centre is also finalising a move that could bring online real-money gaming companies under the ambit of anti-money laundering laws and subject them to stricter obligations, such as know-your-customer (KYC) requirements, and tracking and reporting suspicious transactions. According to a report by FICCI and EY from March 2025, online gaming companies in India collectively earned a revenue of close to \$2.7 billion in 2024. These companies typically make money by taking a cut from a user’s winnings. As per the report, more than 155 million Indians engaged with real money gaming sub-segments such as fantasy sports, rummy, poker and other transaction-based games in 2024, marking a 10 per cent increase over 2023. On an average, around 110 million people played these games daily.

# Apple signs 10-year lease for Bengaluru office space worth over Rs 1,000 crore

New Delhi: iPhone maker Apple India has leased around 2.7 lakh square feet of office space in Bangalore for 10 years with a starting monthly rent of Rs 6.3 crore, according to data analytics firm Propstack. Apple is the biggest exporter of mobile phones from India. It exported iPhones worth about Rs 1.5 lakh crore in the financial year 2024-25. The company has taken multiple floors including car parking space on lease from real estate firm Embassy Group. The iPhone maker is estimated to pay more than Rs 1,000 crore in rent, car park and maintenance charge over a period of 10 years, as per Propstack, which has reviewed the registration document of this leasing transaction. Apple declined to comment on an email query. The lease has been signed for a period of 120 months or 10 years with effect from April 3, 2025. The fresh investment



from Apple comes despite US President Donald Trump openly calling out the company for expanding operations in India.

# PM Modi repeats 10% less oil mantra to fight obesity: Doctor suggests how you can do that across 3 meals



Prime Minister Narendra Modi has reiterated that people should reduce the use of oil in the fight against obesity in his Independence Day speech. “We have to get freedom from obesity. That’s why I suggested that every family decide to buy 10% less oil, use 10% less oil,” he said. While healthy fats are essential for energy, vitamin absorption and cellular function, excessive oil intake burdens the digestive system, increases calorie load and contributes to long-term risks such as fatty liver disease, obesity, acid reflux and gallbladder disorders. Even a 10% reduction — about one teaspoon less daily for a family — adds up to nearly half a litre of oil saved each month. Trimming even 10% of daily oil intake can significantly improve digestion, reduce reflux symptoms, obesity and promote gut health without compromising taste. The key lies in adopting small, sustainable changes across breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

Deep-fried items such as puris, parathas and fritters can contribute disproportionately to daily oil consumption. Practical steps include the following: • Switch to non-stick cookware: Cooking omelettes or dosas on a non-stick pan requires just a few drops of oil or a light spray instead of a tablespoon. • Choose steaming over shallow frying: Idlis, dhoklas, poha with vegetables or upma cooked with minimal oil provide satiety without extra fat. • Use oil spray bottles: Instead of pouring oil directly, using a spray helps control quantity. One quick spray often equals less than a quarter teaspoon.

• Flavor with herbs and spices: Fresh coriander, curry leaves, or green chilies enhance taste, reducing reliance on oil for palatability. Even reducing oil by a teaspoon in breakfast preparations daily translates into a meaningful cut over weeks. Lunch: Balanced Cooking with Water-Based

Methods Lunch in most Indian households is the heaviest meal, with curries, dals and stir-fries often carrying hidden oil. Gastroenterologically, heavy oily lunches slow gastric emptying, worsen acidity, and can trigger bloating. To reduce oil practically: • Start with water-based cooking: Many curries can begin by sautéing onions, tomatoes, or ginger-garlic paste in a splash of water or vegetable stock rather than oil. Once softened, only a small amount of oil can be added later to enhance flavor. • Steam and boil: Vegetables can be lightly boiled or steamed before tempering. This reduces the need for prolonged frying. • Use curd, tomato, or lemon for consistency: Instead of adding oil for richness, yogurt or tomato puree can provide body to gravies. • Smart portioning of tempering (tadka): Instead of adding oil throughout cooking, use a small, flavorful tadka at the end. The aroma makes food satisfying without excess fat. • Mindful accompaniments: Replace fried papads or pooris with roasted papad or phulkas made on a dry skillet. These methods not only save oil but also preserve micronutrients better, aiding digestion and nutrient absorption. Dinner: Keeping it Light on the Stomach

Dinner ideally should be the easiest meal for the stomach to process. Late-night heavy, oily foods are a common trigger for acid reflux, gastritis, and disturbed sleep. Small but effective steps include: • Opt for grilled, steamed, or baked dishes: Paneer tikka, grilled chicken, or baked fish need only a brushing of oil. • Soups and broths as starters: Water-based soups with minimal oil not only reduce fat but also promote satiety, preventing overeating. • Salads with oil-free dressings: Replace mayonnaise or heavy dressings with lemon juice, hung curd, or mustard dips. • Avoid double tempering: Dal at night can be cooked with one light tadka instead of heavy oil layers.

• Early dining: Eating two to three hours before bedtime allows the stomach to process food better, minimizing reflux.

Practical Strategies for Daily Oil Reduction Measure consciously, use a teaspoon rather than pouring oil straight from the bottle. This helps track usage. Switch cooking techniques. Water sautéing, pressure cooking and steaming preserve taste with minimal fat. If possible, rotate between heart-friendly oils like mustard, groundnut, rice bran or olive oil in small quantities. Educate family members. Often, excess oil comes from habit. Encourage families to appreciate lighter meals.

# To prevent sudden cardiac arrests in gym-goers, Punjab govt rolls out advisory: PGI doctor explains risk factors for the young

Heart disease is no longer restricted to the elderly or those with known chronic illnesses. Heart disease is no longer restricted to the elderly or those with known chronic illnesses. With the rising number of cases of cardiac arrests during gym workouts and sporting activities, Punjab Health Minister Dr Balbir Singh recently issued a health advisory titled, ‘Prevention of Sudden Cardiac Arrest Among Gym Goers and Sports persons.’ The advisory flagged undiagnosed medical conditions, unregulated dietary choices, use of unchecked, unsafe, and quick-result supplements, energy drinks and steroid-based performance enhancers as risks for heart health. Endorsing this preventive approach, Prof Rajesh Vijayvergiya, Department of Cardiology, Advanced Cardiac Centre, PGIMER, Chandigarh, describes the recent surge in sudden cardiac arrests as a silent threat. “While heart disease has long been a leading cause of mortality globally, sudden cardiac arrests among young and middle-aged adults call for urgent public awareness and action,” he says.

What’s the startling shift in heart disease?

Heart disease is no longer restricted to the elderly or those with known chronic illnesses. Increasingly, it is affecting people under 40, including students, athletes, professionals and homemakers. There are increasing cases of Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA), which occurs when the heart suddenly stops beating due to an electrical malfunction, resulting in the immediate cessation of blood flow to the brain and vital organs. It can cause death within minutes if Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) is not initiated promptly. In contrast, a heart attack is caused by a blockage in the coronary arteries that reduces blood flow to the heart muscle.

Why is sudden cardiac death rising among the young?

Underlying coronary heart disease often triggers a heart attack when under stress. This happens in about one-third of under-40 people. The rest may have diseases of cardiac muscle known as cardiomyopathy or specific electrical impulse abnormalities, causing arrhythmias or irregular heartbeats. Triggers such as intense physical activity, dehydration, electrolyte imbalance and substance use — stimulants, anabolic steroids, gym supplements, recreational drugs, or even excessive caffeine — further elevate the risk. Lifestyle factors like stress, sleep deprivation, smoking, uncontrolled hypertension and undiagnosed diabetes also raise cardiac risks for the young. Obesity can result in structural changes of the heart, chronic inflammation and myocardial fibrosis, all of which predispose the heart to fatal arrhythmias.

Has COVID-19 and vaccines impacted the cardiovascular system?

Emerging evidence has shown that COVID-19 infec-



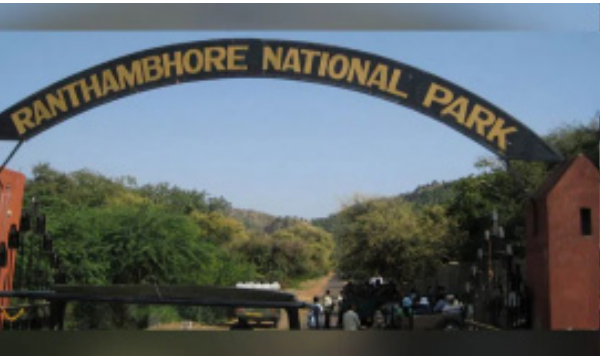
tion, even in mild or asymptomatic cases, can lead to myocarditis or inflammation of the heart muscle, which increases the risk of arrhythmias and sudden cardiac death. This risk persists even after recovery, particularly among young individuals who resume intense physical activity. While COVID-19 vaccines have played a critical role in reducing severe illness and mortality, some rare cardiac side effects have been reported, particularly vaccine-associated myocarditis, predominantly in young males who took mRNA-based vaccines. Notably, the overall incidence of vaccine-induced myocarditis remains significantly lower than cardiac complications caused by COVID-19 itself. Vaccine gains outweigh the risks. The dangers of weight-loss and anti-ageing products Stay away from unregulated slimming pills or herbal supplements. These may contain banned substances like sibutramine or potent stimulants such as ephedrine and ephedra, which can dangerously elevate heart rate and blood pressure, sometimes leading to sudden cardiac arrest, especially during physical exertion. Anti-ageing therapies, though popular, lack comprehensive safety data. Many such drugs, including glutathione, growth hormones, testosterone, and nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide (NAD+) boosters are used off-label or in unregulated settings. These compounds may influence cardiovascular parameters by increasing blood pressure, thickening blood or accelerating metabolism, which can lead to arrhythmias or thrombotic events.

Can you experience symptoms before sudden cardiac arrest?

Before a sudden cardiac arrest, the body often sends subtle warnings like dizziness or fainting, shortness of breath, chest discomfort or tightness at rest or during exertion and heart palpitations. Get tested. With the out-of-hospital cardiac arrest survival rate under 10%, early CPR can double or triple survival chances. Everybody should be trained in CPR. Besides, defibrillators should be installed in schools, gyms, offices and public places. All fitness centres and sports clubs must mandate pre-participation cardiac evaluation.

# Twenty tourists stranded in Ranthambore as safari vehicle breaks down

Jaipur: Twenty tourists were stranded inside the Ranthambore National Park after their safari vehicle broke down mid-route and the accompanying guide left them to fetch another vehicle, officials said. The incident took place on Saturday evening in Zone 6 of the park and the matter came to light after purported videos of the incident surfaced, prompting the park administration to take action. The vehicle broke down while carrying 20 tourists, after which the guide left to bring a replacement. With darkness falling, heated exchanges broke out between tourists and the guide, parts of which were recorded. The tourists were escorted out of the park after remaining stranded for an hour. Deputy Conservator of Forests (DCF) Pramod Dhakad said on Sunday that three canter drivers and the guide have been barred from entering the park till the probe is completed. He



said Assistant Conservator of Forests Ashwini Pratap has been assigned to conduct a detailed inquiry.

## ‘If our physios are telling a player to manage workload..’: Chetan Sharma lends support to Jasprit Bumrah over recent criticism



Jasprit Bumrah India EnglandIndia captain Shubman Gill, left and Jasprit Bumrah speak, during a nets session at Edgbaston, in Birmingham, England, Monday June 30, 2025. (Jacob King/Pavia AP)India's ace pacer Jasprit Bumrah has copped a lot of flak recently for playing 3 Tests out of 5 against England in the Anderson-Tendulkar trophy. However, former BCCI chairman of selectors Chetan Sharma, who was a pacer himself, backed Bumrah saying that a player should go by what the physios say.

"If the medical team advises, if the doctor tells me that I have to take antibiotics, then I have to consume them. If our physios are telling a player to manage workload, I think we should listen to them because they are the better judges," said Sharma on the sidelines of the country's pub-

lic service broadcaster Prasar Bharati signing a deal with London-based cricket analytics company CricViz on Monday for the telecast of 104 episodes of "The Great Indian Cricket Show" on Doordarshan.Sharma also said that India's performance against England has given him the confidence that the team can also win the upcoming Asia Cup.

"I know that whoever is selected will be the best for the country. And the kind of cricket we are playing right now, I'm really proud with the way India played in England. And I'm very confident that we are definitely going to win the Asia Cup (to be played in T20 format) because soon after that we are playing the T20 World Cup (in 2026) in India," he said."It's a very big thing when you are playing (the World Cup) in your own backyard. If the intent is right, the results will also be good," added Sharma after the event.Thoughts on Asia Cup squadWith the Asia Cup set to begin on September 9, there is a lot of chatter on if Test skipper Shubman Gill should be included in the side. Weighing in on that debate, Sharma said, India should select its best possible 15-member squad for the continental showpiece."Look, that is up to the selectors what they see. My opinion does not matter because I am no longer the chairman (of selectors), so I will only say that the best possible team should be selected. We have such good cricketers that not just the top-15 but even if the top-30 are selected, they are all very good. Really proud of them," he said.

## ‘When does the finalist play?: Jannik Sinner argues against Cincinnati Open’s 12-day expansion, backs one-week tournament structure

GNS News Agency, August 28

Ahead of yet another showdown against Carlos Alcaraz in the Cincinnati Open, world no. 1 Jannik Sinner has argued against the expanding schedule of the Northern American Masters 1000 event, alongside the Canadian Open.The Canadian Open and Cincinnati Open have been extended to 12 days, changing their usual Monday-to-Sunday format. The men's final in Toronto took place on a Thursday, and the Cincinnati title match will be held on Monday. While the expansion has found supporters claiming more opportunities for lower-ranked players, Sinner has given a thumbs down to the move.

Sinnner remained firm on his support for one-week events like the Monte Carlo Masters. "It's a question that's quite irrelevant now to answer because we are in that position," Sinner said after beating Terence Atmane in the semi-finals."Losing a little bit of the week" "My personal view...I love the one-week events. I love it when you see that the tournament in Monaco, for example, you have for Monte Carlo, you have this one-week event, and you have the first-round matches, which are incredibly good. And if one good seeded-player loses, the next match is an incredible match still, and you have the quarterfinals and you know exactly when you buy the tickets." "While Sinner noticed the positives in a day's break before the finals under the new structure, the 24-year-old explained the flipside." "You have the quarterfinals and then you have the semi-final, which is Saturday, and then you have finally Sunday. And now I lost a little bit of the view of when does actually a finalist [plays],



because it used to be always Sunday," he said."Now, here (in Cincinnati) it's Monday. In Toronto, it's Wednesday or Thursday. So it's difficult even for us players. We lose a little bit of the days of the week, I would say." ATP CEO Andrea Gaudenzi exhorted in a recent interview that the new 12-day format allowed tournaments to enhance the overall experience. "The shift to a 12-day format gave tournaments the time, stability and confidence they needed to think bigger — and what's happening in Cincinnati is a perfect example," Gaudenzi told atptour.com. "Just look at what's happening: record bonus pools, nine-figure infrastructure projects in Rome, Madrid, Shanghai, Cincinnati. None of this happens without the breathing room provided by the 12-day window. It's allowed promoters to reinvest and enabled a 50-50 share of profits. That's money flowing straight back to the locker room," he added.

## How is Julian Weber, Neeraj Chopra’s biggest competitor training ahead of Worlds? Juggling tennis balls on one leg, chess & flexibility drills



GNS News Agency, August 28

Julian Weber has the season's best throw, and in an Insta post titled "POV: You are the best javelin thrower in the world for one day", the German has record a recovery training day which has everything from imbalanced juggling of tennis balls to chess, as he prepares for the upcoming World Championships at Tokyo. "This is a small excerpt of what I do Tuesday and, Thursday. (On) Mon, Wed, Fri, I train specifically on javelin," Weber told a fan. While the sport is viewed as a power game, Weber's twice a week schedule in a gym studio points to just how much of agility flexibility drills go into making a thrower. In the vlog, Weber is seen awaking and then having a hearty breakfast of scrambled eggs, sausages, some fresh cut colourful veggies and

strawberries. He then drives to his facility in a wine coloured Audi, with loud English music playing. "...and feeling goes on," he sings along. Weber is the leading thrower in 2025 with 91.06, having crossed the 90 m barrier alongside Chopra, at Doha. The Indian took second place behind Weber at Janusz Kusocinski meet at Poland, but is expected to offer his best fight at the World's after pushing back at Paris where he beat Weber after two meets. Brazilian Luiz Mauricio Da Silva is second this season with 91 metres, while Chopra threw a nice 90.23, which he can build upon. In the insta vlog, after a cup of milk coffee, he offers a snapshot of a back flip bridge and some head volleyball for mobility.

One of the most interesting snapshots is of Weber standing on a wobbly unsteady cushioned surface, on one leg, and juggling three tennis balls while he bends at knees. A steak and rice lunch takeaway is followed by a game of chess where he prefers a Queens Pawn opening of 1. d4. In a gym studio where he drives to, there's the low exi-cycle, almost simulating high knee sprinting, then flexibility stretches on a raised platform and plenty of elastic resistance band workouts around the neck for a rubber back. A disc weight simulates the javelin elbow extension action, while there's more of dumbbells. His recovery workout twice a week also includes plenty of very low squats and knee rolls at a gun studio that has posters of the 'Road to Cortina' Winter Olympics in Berlin. He heads home then in the video and drinks a giant mug of choco protein shake.

## Why Kuldeep Yadav will add the most potent fang to India’s spin dagger at Asia Cup

Before the England tour, Kuldeep Yadav had only one wish from his new Test captain, Shubman Gill. "He should include me in the eleven for all matches, what else!" he said, grinning eloquently, in an interview to this newspaper. His wish remained unrequited, as he warned the benches in all five Tests, the television cameras often capturing him chewing nails on dressing room balconies. It sums up the plight of Kuldeep; he is arguably the finest spinner across formats in his country, yet he finds himself chewing his nails, uncertain he would play in every game, befitting a spinner of his wiles. He finds himself a casualty of the thriving stock in Indian cricket, the spin-bowling all-rounder. Consequently, he finds himself out-weighted by the utility artistes in Tests abroad. He has not featured in the 19 games India had stacked since lifting the T20 World Cup in Barbados last year, even though an ill-timed injury did little favours. Only

in the 50-overs is he a non-negotiable. But with the T20 World Cup defence at home on the horizon, he has soared back into the selectors' consciousness and could be picked for the Asia Cup. He could feature prominently too in the UAE showdown as India galvanise their spin ammunition before the World Cup. Post World Cup, under Gautam Gambhir, an admirer of spin-bowling all-rounders, India had embraced a standard approach in most games. Starting with the series against Bangladesh last year, India have employed two specialist spinners (plus one or often two spinning all-rounders) in nine of the eleven games. The trifecta of Varun Chakravarthy, Ravi Bishnoi and Axar Patel has been the usual suspects, appearing in seven of the games. There was an instance when India unleashed a four-eyed spin attack against England, the additional component being Washington Sundar.

## Rana Daggubati fronts Telugu Titans’ PKL 12 campaign Ghus Kar Maareng



GNS News Agency, August 28

Hyderabad: JioStar has unveiled the first film from its high-voltage campaign for Season 12 of the Pro Kabaddi League, titled Ghus Kar Maareng, featuring actor Rana Daggubati. The film is one of several adaptations under the campaign theme and comes ahead of the league's official commencement on August 29, live and exclusive on JioHotstar and Star Sports Network.

## ‘From my angle I couldn’t really see’: Shoaib Bashir opens up about match-winning delivery that dismissed Mohammed Siraj at Lord’s

GNS News Agency, August 28

Shoiaab Bashir mohammed Siraj lords test Siraj played the delivery down onto the pitch in front of the crease but it spun back and rattled the base of his leg stump which led to England's win with the hosts taking a 2-1 lead in the 5-match Test series. (AP) England off-spinner Shoaib Bashir who broke Indian hearts at the Lord's Test when he ended Mohammed Siraj's 30-ball resistance, helping the hosts to a tight 22-run win, recently opened up about the delivery that did the India pacer in and the scenes that unfolded thereafter.

Siraj played the delivery down onto the pitch in front of the crease but it spun back and rattled the base of his leg stump which led to England's win with the hosts taking a 2-1 lead in the 5-match Test series. The seamer, who was the last man to be dismissed, looked devastated and he sunk down on his knees. If Siraj had survived, India might have pulled off a miracle of epic proportions courtesy of allrounder Ravindra Jadeja who stayed unbeaten at 61. "We were creating chances, but just couldn't get that wicket. I really wanted to get out there. Stokesy knew and gave me the go-ahead when he was on the field and I was on the bench. My left hand felt pretty good when I was bowling. I'm just glad I could make a difference. We got Joe Root to come into silly point to put pressure on Siraj, and I just tried to put as many revs on that ball as I could. Luckily it popped from a length and when it hit his bat (and down into the ground), everyone was just looking. 'Where is it?', " Bashir said to The Sunday Times. "From my angle I couldn't really see (the ball coming off). My reaction was off a lot of other peoples' reaction. I was just relieved. That feeling will stay



with me forever — at the home of cricket in front of a packed crowd. It doesn't get better," he added. That was Bashir's last match of the series with the bowler missing the next 2 Tests due to an injury to his no bowling hand. He later underwent surgery, with two pins inserted in his finger as he's still awaiting clearance five weeks on. He also talked about how he batted through he pain at Lord's and added 2 runs in 9 balls in a 7-run partnership with Jofra Archer. "It (the injury) happened. I came off the field and went for a scan," he recalled. "I knew it was pretty bad at that point, but I had plenty of pain-killers. There was no real conversation about me batting. My first ball from (Jasprit) Bumrah was a bouncer and the next ball a yorker, and it was one of those where the vibrations went right up through your hands. But I was always going to bat, even if it was only to add five-to-ten runs. In the grand scheme of things, they might matter," he said.

## ‘No Indian player was better than him in middle overs’: Shreyas Iyer worthy of T20I comeback in Asia Cup, reckons Aakash Chopra

GNS News Agency, August 28

Aakash Chopra has backed Shreyas Iyer to make a comeback in the T20I squad for India. (BCCI) Aakash Chopra has backed Shreyas Iyer to make a comeback in the T20I squad for India. (BCCI) A blockbuster IPL season with the bat for the Punjab Kings must keep Shreyas Iyer in worthy contention of a recall into the T20I team for the Asia Cup, reckoned former India opener Aakash Chopra. With the squad announcement slated to be held on Tuesday, the Indian Express has learnt that Iyer is in stiff competition with at least three other players for the final spot in the Suryakumar Yadav-led side.

"Shreyas Iyer needs to be spoken about because when we were watching the Champions Trophy, no Indian player was better than him in the middle overs. He was the guy who was taking the attack to the opposition. He was the guy who was hitting boundaries whenever he wished, and removing the pressure on the batter at the other end," Chopra said on his YouTube channel. Iyer walloped over 600 runs for the first time in an IPL season, with his 175.07 strike rate ranking the best among all batters. Iyer also clobbered 39 sixes as Punjab finished runners-up under his leadership.

"After that came the IPL. There were plenty of pressures. This was Shreyas Iyer's best-ever IPL season. We have repeatedly seen that T20 selections are based on IPL performances. We have seen that with Varun Chakravarthy, Rinku Singh, Harshit Rana, Abhishek Sharma, Sanju Samson, and everyone. If we see it from that token, Shreyas Iyer deserves to play," he observed. However, Chopra conceded that though Iyer may



make the cut to the squad, he would find it hard to pip Hyderabad batter Tilak Varma, who had struck back-to-back centuries in South Africa last year. Despite batting at No.s 4 and 5 in the IPL with Mumbai Indians, Tilak is likely to be persisted with at one-down in the T20I set-up. "We have built a case that Shreyas' name should be there, but the truth is that Tilak Varma is playing either at No. 3 or No. 4. Since he has started playing at No. 3, he has been unstoppable. Since he bats lower down the order in the IPL, it's an apple vs orange comparison. If you see his numbers, you feel the guy hasn't done anything wrong," he said. "He also allows us one more thing. You can maintain a left-right combination. Will you drop Tilak Varma from the XI because I believe Shreyas Iyer's best place to bat is either No. 3 or No. 4? If he goes to No. 5, I think it will be a little too low in T20 cricket, and Surya is at No. 4," Chopra observed. Iyer last featured in a T20I for India in December 2023. In 51 T20Is, the Mumbaikar has recorded 1104 runs, averaging 30.66.

## Who is Indian tennis ace Dhakshineswar Suresh who beat former Top 20, Alejandro Tabilo?

Dhakshineshwar Suresh upset the current World No 103, whose ranking does no justice to his pedigree - Tabilo beat Novak Djokovic earlier this season. Dhakshineshwar Suresh upset the current World No 103, whose ranking does no justice to his pedigree - Tabilo beat Novak Djokovic earlier this season. (X) Twenty five year-old Dhakshineswar Suresh, the strapping 6 feet-5 tennis player from Madurai, created quite the stor at Winston-Salem ATP 250, by making the main draw with a thundering, rollicking comeback win over former Top 20 Alejandro Tabilo.

The wildcard entrant upset the current World No 103, whose ranking does no justice to his pedigree - Tabilo beat Novak Djokovic earlier this season. The former Georgia Gwinnett student (they are called Grizzlies), has played tennis at the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics, before transferring to Wake Forest (Demon Deacons). He is currently ranked No 664. His highest career ranking was 663 last week. Going up against Tabilo in the qualifying, however, he was to face someone who's been as high as World

No 19 just last fall. It ended up as the highest ranked scalp for Suresh, and also gave him a maiden entry into an ATP Tour main draw. He next plays Argentine Mariano Navone. The big serving Madurai player sent down 15 aces, and was 1-6, a set and 1-3 down in the second set tiebreak before he turned it around. Strong in serve and on his forehand, Suresh is making

How the Accelerator helped Suresh Suresh was among the among 22 college players who will benefit from direct entry into ATP Challenger Tour events as part of the third year of the ATP Next Gen Accelerator. According to their website, this initiative between ATP and the Intercollegiate Tennis Association (ITA) was created to increase the development pathway for top players in the American collegiate system. Following the NCAA Championships in May, players qualified based on their year-end ranking and/or performance in the NCAA Championships. This was his third win over a Top 150 player, after defeating Billy Harris (No 146) and Estonian Mark Lajal (147) at Lexington in late July.

# Shamed for skin colour, Bollywood actor was thrown out of a film after winning National Award; Zeenat Aman saved him, went on to do 350 films



Bollywood's "Disco Dancer" Mithun Chakraborty has seen life in all its forms and embraced its best and worst surprises with open arms, and lived every moment fully. Mithun, in the truest sense, is a self-made superstar who came from a lower middle-class family in Bengal, struggled his way to the top in Mumbai, and went on to become one of the most loved actors of the Hindi film industry in the late '70s and '80s. Let's take a look at Mithun's early life and how he forged his way to stardom.

Mithun was born on July 16, 1950. His original name was Gouranga Chakraborty. He studied at Kolkata's prestigious Scottish Church College. Born into a lower-middle-class family in Bengal, Mithun faced financial constraints from the very beginning of his life. During the political unrest of the 1960s, the actor was drawn toward the Naxalite movement and even joined the movement. However, he decided to walk away from radical groups after his brother met with an accident. Though Mithun had distanced himself from the movement years before joining the film industry, the tag never left him and he continued to be viewed through that lens for a long time. Mithun had once told journalist Ali Peter John in an interview, "People in the industry and outside it knew all about my involvement with the Naxalite movement in Calcutta and my close links with Charu Mazumdar, the fiery leader of the Naxalites. I had quit the movement after there was a tragedy in my family, but the label of being a Naxalite moved with me wherever I went, whether it was the FTII in Pune or when I came to Bombay in the late seventies."

After his brother's death, Mithun disappeared for a while, only to re-emerge after cracking admission into India's most prestigious film school, the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII), where he trained as a professional actor. Shakti Kapoor, who was Mithun's junior at the institute, once shared an incident from their FTII days when Mithun ragged him so much that he cried. On the Timeout with Ankit podcast, Shakti recalled how Mithun cut his hair and locked him in a room at night. He shared, "He entered college as a hero. Let's cut his hair." They grabbed a pair of scissors and cut my hair. I was looking like a monkey. I started crying, touched their feet. They took me to the swimming pool and told me to do 40 laps. I started crying and then they gave me a break." Mithun Chakraborty slept on footpaths during his struggling days

Mithun made his Bollywood debut with Mrigayaa, directed by acclaimed filmmaker Mrinal Sen. But before this break, he faced years of intense struggle. From sleeping on an empty stomach to spending nights on footpaths, Mithun's journey is a true rags-to-riches story. He once recalled his hardships on the singing reality show Sa Re Ga Ma Pa Li'l Champs. He said, "I have seen days when I had to sleep with an empty stomach, and I used to cry myself to sleep. In fact, there were days when I had to think about what my next meal will be, and where I will go to sleep. I

have also slept on the footpath for a lot of days."

Shabana Azmi recently shared an anecdote about Mithun Chakraborty and his insecurities, and how her mother, legendary theatre and film actor Shaukat Kaifi, motivated him to look past such things. Bollywood icons Mithun Chakraborty and Shabana Azmi on the sets of Hum Paanch. (Express archive photo)'My life story won't inspire but break people': Mithun'And that's the only reason I don't want my biopic to be ever made! My story will never inspire anyone, it will break them down (mentally) and discourage people from achieving their dreams. I don't want that to happen! If I can do it, anyone else can do it. I have fought a lot to prove myself in this industry. I am not legendary because I have given hit movies, I am a legend because I have surpassed all the pains and struggles of my life," he added.

While most actors work for years before receiving their first National Award, Mithun bagged the honour for his very first film, Mrigayaa. But this success made him overconfident, which eventually harmed his career. In an interview with India Today, he recalled, "After Mrigayaa, I got my first National Award. Jo hota hai, I started acting like Al Pacino. Aisa lag raha tha that I am the greatest actor. As it happens, I started acting like Al Pacino. It felt like I was the greatest actor. My attitude changed, so the producer saw this and said, 'get out.' Then I realised my mistake." Apart from his own mistakes, Mithun also faced severe discrimination because of his skin colour, which pushed him into doing small roles or leads in low-budget films. The actor once recalled losing projects because of his complexion. He said, "I was always called out for my skin colour. I have been disrespected for a lot of years because of my skin colour..."

While fans remember Mithun as the king of dance moves, not many know that he honed his dancing skills to divert attention from his appearance. Mithun developed a unique style that won over audiences and redefined stardom. In an interview with Radio Nasha, Mithun said, "I thought that if I danced with my legs, nobody would see my colour and that happened. My dance made people forget my colour. Nobody imagined a hero with my colour. I used to feel very bad and I used to cry." He added, "Looking at me, people's expectations increased and they thought that even my son can become an actor despite living in a chawl or village. I became a common man's hero. It was a very big thing for me to become a superstar of a common man." In an old interaction, Mithun also revealed how many A-listers refused to work with him in the early days of his career because of his looks. He said, "Nobody wanted to work with me because I am not an acceptable hero. Working with me would not get them fame and that's why nobody wanted to work with me." Despite proving himself, Mithun struggled to be counted among the A-list actors. However, at this crucial stage, Zeenat Aman, an A-lister at that time, came to Mithun's rescue. She readily agreed to star opposite him in filmmaker Brij Sadanah's Taqdeer, officially introducing Mithun as a fellow A-list Bollywood hero. "It was Zeenat ji who broke the jinx. Zeenat ji had the status of the number 1 heroine of that time, so following her footsteps, every other actress started saying yes to the films that I worked in. With Taqdeer's release, I became an A-category actor," he shared on Sa Re Ga Ma Pa. Three years after the release of Mrigayaa (1976), Mithun saw another breakthrough with the 1979 spy thriller Surakshaa. The film laid the foundation for his superstardom in the '80s, which was further cemented by blockbusters like Disco Dancer, Dance Dance, Pyar Jhukta Nahin, Kasam Paida Karne Wale Ki, and Commando. Over the years, he went on to bag two more National Awards for Tahader Katha (1992) and Swami Vivekananda (1998). Most recently, he was honoured with the Dadasaheb Phalke Award at the 70th National Film Awards in 2024.

# Actor rebelled against conservative Muslim family to work, fans wrote her letters in blood, left industry for inter-faith marriage

Actor who rose to fame in the 2000s and was one of the most loved faces of Indian television. She became a household name and ruled the TV industry with her role as Kashish Sujal Garewal in Ekta Kapoor's hit show Kahiin To Hoga. Aamna Shariff, whose on-screen chemistry with co-star Rajeev Khandelwal holds a lot of importance in the history of Indian TV, belonged to a conservative Muslim family. She eventually gathered the courage to fight through her personal struggles, to fulfill her dream of becoming an actor. Began career with ads

The actor was born on July 16, 1982, in Mumbai to an Indian father and a Persian-Bahraini mother. In an interview with Hindi Rush recently, Aamna recalled her family struggles and shared, "I always wanted to become an actor, but I came from a very conservative Muslim family. My dad passed away very early on, so it was just me and my mom." She further added, "No one ever thought anyone from the family would go in the acting line. I also had to give up earlier, because the circumstances were such that I had to work at a boutique to go ahead with my education." Aamna Sharif started her career with modeling, advertisements and music videos before transitioning to television and films. She did videos for artists such as Kumar Sanu, Falguni Pathak, and Daler Mehndi. "But, destiny is destiny. I got an offer for an ad when I was in college. I gathered the courage to take permission from my mother again. My mom said that it's impossible, I kept convincing for six months, she went against the entire family," she said.

"They didn't talk to her for two years. I did music videos after that, and there were many other ad films as well. Ekta Kapoor saw me there and called me to audition. That is how my main journey began. I am very grateful to her. My mom has complete faith in me," the actor continued. After her successful television show Kahiin To Hoga (by Ekta Kapoor) finished in 2007, Aamna tried her hand in the Bollywood industry, appearing in films like Aloo Chaat, Aao Wish Karein, and Shakal Pe Mat Ja. However, none of her films worked at the box office and were major commercial failures. After a series of flop films, she made a comeback to the small screen with the show Hongey Judaa Na Hum, featuring opposite Raqesh Bapat. But, the TV series recorded very low TRPs and was taken off the air within six months.

In 2013, Aamna Sharif moved away from limelight and



She further added, "No one ever thought anyone from the family would go in the acting line. I also had to give up earlier, because the circumstances were such that I had to work at a boutique to go ahead with my education."

She tied the knot with her longtime boyfriend, Amit Kapoor, a film producer. The couple welcomed their first child, son Arain, in 2015. The duo keeps sharing pictures on social media, while celebrating both Karwa Chauth and Eid, reflecting how they embrace both Hinduism and Islam. After going on a hiatus for six years after her wedding, Aamna Sharif made a return in 2019 with Ekta Kapoor's Kasautii Zindagii Kay 2, which was a reboot version of the iconic 2001 TV show. She played the role of the popular antagonist Komolika Chaubey, originally played by Urvashi Dholakia, replacing Hina Khan in the portrayal. Recently, the actor starred in two web series in 2022 – Damaged Season 3 on Hungama Play and Aadha Ishq on Voot Select.

# Amitabh Bachchan says doctors advised him to sit while wearing trousers, has handlebars installed throughout Jalsa: 'I smile in disbelief until...'



Although he is inching closer to 85, Amitabh Bachchan is in no mood for retirement and continues to entice fans with his magnetic presence both on and off screen. Just recently, he launched the 17th edition of his much-acclaimed television game show Kaun Banega Crorepati (KBC), making a grand comeback to our mini-screens. With a massive fanbase spanning multiple generations, Bachchan can undoubtedly be dubbed one of the most accomplished actors in the history of Indian cinema. Despite his efforts to stay young at heart, it seems that old age is finally catching up with Big B. Recently, he opened up about struggling with even the simplest tasks, like putting on trousers. The superstar also revealed that handlebars have been installed throughout his official residence, Jalsa. After the custom of greeting fans who gather outside his house, Bachchan penned a long note on his blog on Sunday, expressing his feelings about this tradition. He also commented on his deteriorating physical ability to perform certain mundane tasks. Mentioning that he still hesitates to believe all these fans have gathered outside his house just to catch a glimpse of him, Big B shared that it only feels real when he actually sees

them. "As I climb the steps to face them, the reassurance grips my body and the reactions all come with the provocation of the cheers from all to steady my nerves. Then the love and admiration take over," he wrote. Sharing that he observes the absence of regular faces too, Bachchan noted, "Am I too common and unwanted? Are they fed up with this 5-10 minute appearance for those who have gathered from the afternoon to get vantage positions? Why and what?" He shared that the routines planned for the day are now dictated by the routines of medication and essentials, which include mobility exercises at the gym to be able to "walk the talk and talk the walk". He quipped, "Some routines that were there earlier seem to suggest that because it was done some years ago, it shall be a cake walk to initiate them again. Nah, no baby! Just one day's absence and the pains and the mobility go for a very long walk." Opening up about his struggles with previously easy routine tasks, Big B wrote, "It is a wonder that the normal actions earlier, now require the mind to think before they can be exercised. Simple acts like putting on the trousers. The doctors advise, 'Please Mr Bachchan, sit down and wear them. Do not try to stand while you put them on... You could lose balance and fall.' And inside, I sort of smile in disbelief until I find they were so right." To assist him with such tasks, he revealed that handlebars have been installed throughout the house. "You need them all over to hold and steady thy body before any physical act. The simplest of them (the actions) is bending down to pick up a piece of paper that has flown off your desk with the breeze. The bravado tells you to go ahead until you realise, 'goodness, it's a major problem.' The rapidity of its performance has slowed down with uncertainty." Expressing his deep desire that none of his fans have to go through such a phase in life, Bachchan stated that such a time will, nonetheless, come for everyone. He added, "The down trend begins at birth. Sad, but that's the reality of life. Youth races through life's challenges with aplomb. Age suddenly speed brakes your vehicle and tells you, 'Apply the brakes to avoid the accelerated bump when you drive the vehicle of life.'"

# Shakun Batra on going the AI way: 'I'd love to marry Artificial Intelligence with flesh and blood, but actors are rarely available within budget today'

What if Artificial Intelligence is employed to change the ending of Shakun Batra's 2012 directorial debut, Ek Main Aur Ekk Tu? Kareena Kapoor finally falls for Imran Khan, happy ending enough? Or Rajat Kapoor isn't run over by a truck in Kapoor & Sons (2016)? Or maybe Deepika Padukone just brings Siddhant Chaturvedi back to life in Gehraiyaan (2022)? Shakun is aware in light of the recent Raanjhanaa controversy that AI can be used by studios to alter any of the existing creative works, but he's hopeful that's just an aberration. He's created a five-part short film series, Imagine with Shakun Batra X Google Gemini, using Veo 3, Google's advanced AI video generation model. The first short, The Getaway Car, already out, is a stylish car chase sequence. Five years ago, I wouldn't have imagined a car-chase film coming from Shakun Batra. Would you have ventured into this genre if it weren't for your experimentation with AI?

I wouldn't have thought about it even two years ago! It's really funny why I even tried a car chase in the first place. I had a script which had a couple of small stunt pieces. And I could see apprehension in people. The biggest stunt I've had in any of my films is a slap. So I thought, if I have the tools or resources, what would I do? Around the time, AI had just started to make the shift when you could try things out in video. That's when I came across Google Veo 3 and started to play more. I was surprised at how quickly I got the hang of it, and it's been a wonderful journey ever since.

Do you believe AI can only be used to achieve scale, and not to create intimacy?

I started seriously toying with it last November. I didn't know then that by August, I'd have a full car chase film with high production value. I thought we were a while away; that dialogues and lip-sync would take a while. But that happened very fast. Last year, when I was talking about AI, a few friends were dismissive of it. But I've seen its usage. In February, I was shooting for a commercial where I used AI, and the client used the AI shot instead of the shot I created on set. I have seen the shift. I'm sure somebody would be able to achieve intimacy through AI tools.

Do you think AI is more useful in ad films, instead of features where there's more scrutiny?

An ad film has always been an easier place to experiment because the shots are much shorter, and you can get away with a lot. To be honest, even in the car chase, the cutting is so fast it's hard for you to capture flaws. It wouldn't be wrong to say I see it happening in feature films soon. One of the biggest drawbacks of AI four months ago was consistency, whether it's faces, detailing or environment. We've seen a huge shift on that front. AI is going to be like VFX. When VFX came in, there was bad VFX and Chroma work. But there were filmmakers like SS Rajamouli, or even Sanjay Leela Bhansali, who took those tools and really mounted a canvas we hadn't imagined before. So there'll be filmmakers who'll use AI better, and there'll be others who'd use it in a way it discourages others. Since AI is in the early stages, we're going to see the good, the bad, and the ugly. It's going to be up to us to see what we want to do with it.

What's your response to those who dismiss AI by arguing it doesn't have childhood trauma?

Well, you still have childhood trauma, right? Look at AI as a tool. What defines an artist isn't the tool, but the intent. You can still use it to communicate better. A lot of filmmakers never get the opportunity to even make a short film. People who come out of film schools take years of assisting to save the money to make a short film. But now, they can make a short film even without going to a film school, using AI. There's enough information on YouTube. I've learned almost all the AI tools I use through YouTube. Of course, I've taken a couple of online courses, but the biggest learning was doing YouTube lessons and then trying it out. So, the next generation of filmmakers isn't going to wait 10-12 years for someone to give them funding. They'll move to this straight away.

What would you suggest budding filmmakers to learn



along with getting equipped with AI?

AI only echoes your taste. If you don't have a personal taste, AI is going to give you only generic stuff. Very soon, I see the ecosystem get filled with a lot of generic stuff. Content creation is far easier today than it was 15 years ago, whether on Instagram or YouTube. The only people who'll really shoot through are those with actual tastes, thoughts, philosophy, and beliefs that they want to communicate via AI. It's only going to ease and accentuate your journey, but it's not going to say something you don't have. Everyone's using AI to sound smarter. But if you don't have your own thoughts, at some point, it'd just plateau.

# 'Anil Kapoor had a problem with me': When Farah Khan recalled how the actor wanted Saroj Khan to choreograph songs in 1942: A Love Story, later apologised

Farah Khan began her journey in the film industry



not as a director or host, but as a choreographer. Her first notable break came with Jo Jeeta Wohi Sikandar, where director Mansoor Khan recognized her raw talent early on. While Farah has often shared in interviews that her entry into choreography was purely accidental, there's one story she recalled in an old interview with Lehren Retro that stands out. It involves none other than Bollywood star Anil Kapoor, during the making of the 1994 classic 1942: A Love Story, directed by Vidhu Vinod Chopra.

Farah recalled, "I never had any problems with working with stars. Though when I was working on 1942: A Love Story, Anil Kapoor had a problem with me. He told Vinod Chopra that this is such a big film and she won't be able to manage. He said, 'You should call Saroj Khan.' But till now he says sorry to me about this because I keep reminding him about it. Because the minute I shot the first song