

## Basar temple town cut off as Godavari floods rise

Mancherial: The temple town of Basar was isolated by the backwaters of Godavri river, which is in spate following heavy rains in upstream areas on Saturday.

Several parts of the town such as Suryeshwara Shivalayam, Akshara Colony, SBI, union Bank, choultries of various communities were inundated by backwaters of the river. A road leading to the ancient Sri Saraswathi Devasthanam was submerged, affecting connectivity to the town.

## CM Revanth moves a condolence motion in memory of Gopinath in Assembly



Hyderabad, Aug.30 : Chief Minister A.Revanth Reddy on Saturday moved a condolence motion in memory of Jubilee Hills MLA Maganti Gopinath, who passed away recently, in the Assembly.

Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Minister recalled the services rendered by Gopinath from student days to as an active political leader. "Gopinath has been active since his student days and started his political career in the Telugu Desam Party in 1983. The departed leader served as Telugu youth president of the erstwhile united Andhra Pradesh state between 1985 and 1992. Recognising his services, Gopinath was appointed as the director of the Hyderabad Urban Development Authority in 1987-88 and as a member of the district consumer forum in 1988-93," he said.

The Chief Minister said that Gopinath was a great devotee of NT Rama Rao and also excelled as a producer in the film industry by producing 4 films - 'Patabasti' (1995), 'Ravana' (2000), 'Bhadradi Ramudu' (2004), and 'Naa Style Eru' (2009).Recollecting his close association with Gopinath, Revanth Reddy said the BRS MLA was a good friend of him although both of them follows different political ideologies. "Gopinath is one of those who have achieved the honour of being elected as an MLA three consecutive times. His death is a huge loss to his family as well as Jubilee Hills Assembly constituency.

## Telangana cabinet decides to hold local body elections in September

GNS News Agency, August 30

The Telangana government has announced that local body elections will be held in September, following cabinet approval. The state cabinet, led by Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, met today and decided to write to the Election Commission regarding the schedule.During the meeting in the Assembly Committee Hall, the cabinet lifted the limit on local election reservations and recommended names for the Governor's Quota MLCs—Azharuddin and Kodandaram. The discussion also focused on the 42 per cent reservation for BCs and support for farmers affected by recent rains and floods. A resolution was passed seeking assistance from the Central Finance Ministry for crop and infrastructure losses.The cabinet reaffirmed its commitment to conduct the elections by the September 30 deadline set by the High Court. The decision aims to ensure timely elections amid ongoing political and social concerns.

## BRS walks out of BAC meeting over 2-day Assembly session

Hyderabad, Aug.30 : The opposition Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) today staged a walkout from the Business Advisory Committee (BAC) meeting protesting the Congress government's decision to restrict the Assembly session to just two days.Former Minister T. Harish Rao, speaking at the Assembly Media Point, accused the government of ignoring pressing public issues, including flood devastation, urea shortage, viral fevers, student deaths in Gurukul schools and pending demands of government employees. "We demanded at least 15 days of Assembly sittings. Villages are still without electricity and roads. People are suffering and even losing lives. Instead of addressing their pain, the government wants to wrap up the assembly discussions in two days," he pointed out.The senior BRS leader stressed that the Assembly should first discuss the loss of crop and livelihood caused by recent floods, followed by the acute urea shortage that has left farmers in distress. BRS sought debates on rising cases of dengue and malaria, over 100 reported student deaths in Gurukul schools, fee reimbursement delays for SC, ST, BC and minority students, controversial land issues linked to the Chief Minister's relatives, and employee-related concerns like PRC and DA, he added.The opposition BRS objected to the government's move to prioritize discussions on the Kaleshwaram Commission report and the BC Bill within this short session. "We are ready to debate Kaleshwaram for four days if needed, but first let us discuss the people's issues," Harish Rao said and accused the Congress for using the Assembly for "political drama" ahead of local body elections.Criticizing the last-minute scheduling of Assembly business, Harish said, "How can the opposition parties prepare if the agenda is announced only after 9 PM the previous night? Silencing the opposition is nothing but a mockery of democracy", he remarked and declared that the party's walkout from the BAC meeting is a mark of protest against the Congress government's attempt to escape accountability.

## PM Modi concludes Japan visit, heads to China for SCO summit

GNS News Agency, August 30

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday (August 30, 2025) left for China to attend the SCO summit after wrapping up a two-day visit to Japan.During his visit, India and Japan firmed up 13 key agreements and declarations and announced the launch of several key initiatives."This visit to Japan will be remembered for the productive outcomes which will benefit the people of our nations. I thank PM Ishiba, the Japanese people and the Government for their warmth," the prime minister said in an X post.

The new measures to further expand the India-Japan special strategic and global partnership were unveiled following summit talks between Prime Minister Modi and his Japanese counterpart Shigeru Ishiba.Japan set an investment target of 10 trillion yen (approximately 60,000



crore) in India over a decade and the two sides sealed a raft of big-ticket pacts, including a framework for defence ties and a 10-year roadmap to largely boost economic partnership.Other agreements signed include an economic security architecture to promote supply chain resilience in strategic sectors such as semiconductors, clean energy, telecom, pharmaceuticals, critical minerals and new and emerging technologies.

The Prime Minister, who landed in Tokyo on Friday (August 29, 2025), said

## Cyberabad She Teams catch 45 men for harassing women

Hyderabad: The Cyberabad She Teams caught 45 persons for harassing women in public places during a special drive conducted at various locations between August 24 and 30.The Cyberabad Women Safety Wing officials said She Teams carried out 152 decoy operations and received 15 victim complaints through various platforms during the same period. Petty cases were booked and counselling sessions were conducted for the offenders.The unit also counselled 23 families in marital disputes and attempted to reconcile them. The Anti-Human Trafficking Unit (AHTU) sensitised over 125 people on issues such as trafficking, cyber fraud, child marriages and cyber-bullying.

## Telangana cabinet meets to discuss BC reservation, farmer support and local elections



GNS News Agency, August 30

The cabinet convened in the assembly committee hall under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Revanth Reddy. The meeting is expected to approve the release of a Government Order (GO) proposing 42 per cent reservation for Backward Classes (BCs).

Additionally, discussions are likely to focus on supporting farmers affected by recent rains and floods, with a possible resolution seeking assistance from the central finance ministry for crop and infrastructure losses.Meanwhile, the High Court has already directed that local body elections must be held by 30 September. A key agenda item is expected to be a discussion on this deadline.

## Revanth Reddy urge for united fight against 'Vote Theft'; warns of threat to democracy

Hyderabad, Aug.30 Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy on Saturday called upon all the like-minded political forces to unite in the fight against 'vote theft' in order to safeguard the democratic spirit of the country. "The rulers in Delhi are removing the voters who are against them, creating fake votes, and using the Election Commission as per their needs. This is a big threat to India's parliamentary democracy," he warned and reminded that Congress leader Rahul Gandhi is already fighting against such practices in Bihar.The Chief Minister, addressing at the memorial meeting of CPI national leader and former MP Comrade Suravaram Sudhakar Reddy here today, alleged that the ruling party at the Centre has been exploiting the Election Commission to consolidate its power. Alleging that the Union government is conspiring to alter the Constitution, he urged the Communist parties to intensify their struggles. "Communism is not about theory alone; it is about fighting for the people's rights. There are instances of dethroning the governments through prolonged struggles by the left parties in the country," he noted.Recalling his association with Sudhakar Reddy, the CM hailed him as one of the few communist leaders who dedicated his life to the party and the people. He also remembered the services of Suravaram Pratap Reddy, who resisted the Nizam's rule through Golconda Patrika. There is a dire need of a strong and dedicated leader like Sudhakar Reddy in the present national politics. The state cabinet would soon take a decision to honor Sudhakar Reddy's services. Telangana state had already recognized several icons involved in the people's struggles by naming institutions after Chakali Allamma, Konda Laxman Babuji and installing Sardar Sarvai Papanna's statue on Tank Bund, he noted.

## Harish Rao slams Revanth Reddy over urea crisis, demands apology to farmers



GNS News Agency, August 30

Hyderabad: Stating that the Congress government owed an unconditional apology to the farming community over the urea crisis, former Minister and BRS MLA T Harish Rao said Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy was mishandling fertiliser supplies during the critical Kharif season.Addressing the media on Saturday, he took strong exception to the police using force to stifle the voice of protesting farmers and questioned the Congress government's claims of people's governance and Indiramma Rajyam."Is this your so-called people's rule, slapping farmers for demanding urea?" he asked, referring to the incident in Narayanpet where an SI allegedly slapped a farmer who had sought adequate urea.Harish Rao criticised the Chief Minister for his inconsistent statements on the urea crisis, which has left farmers across Telangana struggling during the Kharif season.

## In a twist, Congress replaces Amer Ali Khan with Azharuddin in MLC nominations

GNS News Agency, August 30

Hyderabad: In a new twist to the MLC nominations under the Governor's quota, the Congress government has decided to nominate Prof. Kodandaram Reddy and Mohammed Azharuddin.The State cabinet, which met here on Saturday, decided on this, replacing Amer Ali Khan with Azharuddin in the wake of the Supreme Court annulling the nominations of Prof. Kodandaram and Khan recently. Interestingly, the former cricketer had contested from the Jubilee Hills constituency in the 2023 assembly elections on Congress ticket but lost.After the demise of sitting MLA Maganti Gopinath of the BRS, Azharuddin was considered to be among the front contenders from the Congress to contest the by-elections. He had even met Congress MP Rahul Gandhi and senior leader Sonia Gandhi in New Delhi to secure a ticket recently.However, the State unit appears to have different plans with a BC candidate to be reportedly fielded from Jubilee Hills. There were also chances of the AIMIM raising objections over Azharuddin being



fielded from the constituency, a senior Congress leader said.As there was no Muslim Minister in the State cabinet, the Congress government has been facing severe criticism from all sections. To counter this, the Congress is said to be contemplating to give a cabinet berth as well to the former cricketer.

## Telangana local body elections to have 42 percent reservation for BCs



GNS News Agency, August 30

Hyderabad: The State government has decided to conduct the local body elections by providing 42 percent reservations to BCs, while SC/ST reservations will be based on the 2001 population census.Announcing the decisions of the State Cabinet meeting here on Saturday, BC Welfare Minister Ponnam Prabhakar said it had been four months since the two Bills to extend 42 percent reservations to BCs in local bodies and employment opportunities were passed in the Assembly. These were sent to the Governor and subsequently to the President for assent, which is still awaited. Considering the Telangana High Court's orders to conduct the local body elections before September 30 and other factors, the Cabinet decided to go ahead with elections by providing 42 percent reservations, he said.

An ordinance was issued two months ago to clear the 50 percent ceiling on reservations under the 2018 Panchayat Raj Act and the 2019 Municipal Act. As per procedure, the ordinance turns into a Bill after discussion in the Assembly. Accordingly, the ordinance will be discussed in the Assembly on Sunday to seek suggestions from all parties, the Minister said.Meanwhile, Revenue Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy said a few lives were lost and property damage was reported, besides damage to national highways and railway tracks at several places due to the recent rains."The floodwater is receding and damage assessment is under way. Officials have been directed to submit reports on the

losses by Monday. A State-level meeting will be held at 4 pm that day to discuss the reports," Srinivas Reddy said.The Minister said that under the procurement of stocks in the rabi season of 2022-23, a few tenders were floated but some were deliberately delayed, rendering them ineffective. As a result, 7 lakh MTs of paddy offered to rice millers was not recovered. The issue was discussed at length, and it was decided to recover the funds from millers as per the rates quoted in the bids. If millers refuse to pay, the government will book cases against them under the PD Act, he said.The Cabinet also decided to appoint in-charges for the fisheries cooperative societies in view of the delay in conducting their elections.

## MIM urge for discussions on key public issues in Assembly

Hyderabad, Aug.30 AIMIM floor leader in the Assembly Akbaruddin Owaisi urged Telangana Legislative Assembly Speaker Gaddam Prasad to allocate more than 15 working days for having discussions in the ongoing assembly session. He also urged the Speaker to ensure strict adherence to rules for debates and discussions on urgent public matters.Owaisi, in a letter addressed to the Speaker, stated that the AIMIM has identified 13 major subjects for short discussions, ranging from floods and farmers' issues to welfare schemes and infrastructure development. Adequate time should be allotted for "Question Hour, Zero Hour, Short Discussions and Calling Attention motions" under relevant Assembly rules.

The issues identified included: Rains and floods in Telangana along with loss of life, property and crop damage; Farmers' distress, suicides, compensation, paddy procurement and shortage of urea; implementation of welfare schemes for BCs, SCs, STs, minorities and EBCs, developmental works in Hyderabad's Old city, works pertaining to SRDP, SNDP, CRMP, CPP, Musi beautification, MMTS-II, MRTS, HMWSSB, Transco,

# Indian Chronicle

## English Daily

### GCC ecosystem a powerful leverage for India on global stage

India-US relations show no signs of improvement in recent days even as the punitive 50 per cent tariff on India was kicked in from August 27. Meanwhile, top officials of the Trump administration continue to throw tantrums against India's purchase of Russian oil. Though New Delhi is conducting backchannel negotiations with Washington or reaching a trade deal, there are no visible signs of any tangible output soon. Rather, things seem to be worsening on the bilateral relationship front. Such is the level of accusations hurled on India that many analysts are now pondering whether the country remains a key partner in the strategic circles of the US. In this context, it is important to understand the strengths and weaknesses of India as a nation.

Moreover, Trump having hit India where it hurts, the Indian vulnerabilities stand exposed. In international relations, leverage counts and negotiations can only be fair when done from a position of strength. Take the example of China. When Trump administration threw tantrums and raised tariffs to astronomical figures, Beijing retaliated in a telling manner by stopping supply of rare earth metal to the US. One must remember that rare earth is a critical mineral used in chip, EV, and other high-value item manufacturing. As China played its card on rare earth, the Trump administration took a step back and deferred the tariff imposed on China. Now, both countries are negotiating a trade deal anew. Against this backdrop, India must evaluate its strengths before going about to get a fair deal with the US. India has emerged as a major business hub in the services space over the last three decades. Its IT services industry has served enterprises across the world, making a name for themselves.

## The Goals To Eradicate Human Trafficking: Quality Coordinator Srinivas“

“Indian Chronicle” kumrambheem, Asifabad. District Reporter Jade Srinivas. August, 29. “Asifabad District Quality Coordinator Uppuleti Srinivas said that it is the responsibility of all of us to eradicate human trafficking. On Thursday, District Education Quality Coordinator Srinivas inaugurated a two-day training program under the auspices of Prajyala NGO and State Educational Research and Training Council at Telangana Model School in the district center. Speaking on the occasion, he said that human trafficking is spreading rapidly all over the world and is destroying the lives of many girls. He said that students should be given



proper awareness about rights and values. Senior Project Manager Chandrayya said that laws BMS, ITPA, POCSO, PCMA, JJA City, Sakhi, Bharosa, Child Line, Police, 1098, 100, 181, 1930, Prajyala Apsa Amaran, Reports Person Swapna, and Model School Principal Maheshwar, among others, participated in this training program.”

## District SP Rohit Raju IPS felicitated six retired police officers.

“Kukkadapu Naresh Kumar, Kothagudem constituency, August 30, Indian Chronicle: Three SIs, two ASIs, and a Head Constable who retired today after serving in the police department for many years and rendering invaluable service were felicitated by District SP Rohit Raja IPS at the conference hall of the police headquarters in Hemachandrapuram today. Khwaja Maqsd Ali Khan, who is working as an SI at Kothagudem Two Tsd Police Station; Kotha Nageswara Rao, who is working as an SI at Ashwapuram Station; Mandapalli Prasad Rao, who is working as an SI at Lakshmidivipalli Police Station; ASI Kukkamalla Koteswara Rao, who is working as an ASI at Julurupadu Police Station; Chinnadhanapal Ravi, who is working as an ASI at Illandu Police Station; and the Head Constable at Mulakalapalli Police Station. Today, Kannidi Venkateswarlu retired. The six retired officers were felicitated with shawls and garlands by District SP Rohit Raju IPS. Later, they shared their experiences in the police department with the District SP. Speaking on the occasion, the SP wished the retired police officers to spend the rest of their lives happily with their family members. He said that the newly recruited officers in the police department should take inspiration from the experiences of the officers who have served the people in the police department for over 40 years. He advised the retired officers and staff to bring any problems they face to their attention immediately. He advised them to take special care of their health by following exercises, yoga, and meditation in their daily routines. Later, he presented certificates of appreciation to the six retired officers. DCRB DSP Mallaiah Swamy, AO Manjya Nayak, SB Inspector Srinivas, Chunchupally CI Venkateswarlu, Lakshmidivipalli SI Ramana Reddy, MTO Sudhakar, Admin RI Lal Babu and members of the District Police Officers Association and others participated in this program.”

## Telangana Assembly adjourned after condolence motion for MLA Gopinath

Hyderabad, Aug.30 (NSS): The Telangana Assembly was adjourned to 9 AM on Sunday following the adoption of a condolence motion in memory of the late Maganti Gopinath, the MLA for Jubilee Hills, who has recently passed away.

## Gokaraju Rangaraju Engineering College Celebrates 25th Graduation Day



Hyderabad: Gokaraju Rangaraju Engineering College, Bachupally, marked a significant milestone by celebrating its 25th Graduation Day with grandeur on 30th August 2025. The ceremony was graced by Prof. T. Kishen Kumar Reddy, Vice Chancellor of JNTU Hyderabad as the Chief Guest, and Mr. Pranav Bharadwaj, Vice President of Infosys as the Guest of Honor.

On this occasion, gold medals were awarded to top-performing students from each department, and degrees were formally conferred upon all graduates. Addressing the gathering, Prof. T. Kishen Kumar Reddy, VC JNTU Hyderabad, expressed that graduating from a prestigious institution like Gokaraju Rangaraju Engineering College is a matter of great privilege. He urged the graduates to act responsibly towards society and emphasized the impor-

tance of exploring global opportunities beyond the USA, particularly in countries like Germany, for employment and higher education. Highlighting the vision of “Think Local, Act Global”, he encouraged students to embrace sustainable practices, pursue research for the betterment of society, and learn foreign languages to enhance international prospects.

Guest of Honor Mr. Pranav Bharadwaj reflected on the resilience of the 2025 graduating batch, who began their engineering journey amidst the challenges of the COVID-19 era. He congratulated them for their determination and success, stressing that the knowledge and skills gained over four years should be leveraged to rise to leadership positions in the industry. He also reminded students to remain lifelong learners with a spirit of curiosity, which will help them excel in IT and other sectors.

## Indiramma Phase-II Sanction Letters Distributed to 45 Beneficiaries in Divisions 27 & 28“



“Medchal, Medipally, August 30:“A total of 45 beneficiaries under the Indiramma Housing Scheme Phase-II from Division 27 and Division 28 of Boduppal Municipality were given sanction letters today. Commissioner A. Shailaja stated that beneficiaries should follow government rules and regulations while taking up construction. Former mayor Thotakoor Ajay Yadav said that all eligible applicants would

be granted houses under the scheme and urged the beneficiaries to make the best use of the opportunity. Those present included Commissioner A. Shailaja, former mayor Thotakoor Ajay Yadav, housing AE Allaji, former corporators Pogula Narasimha Reddy, Kotha Chander Goud, Chirala Narasimha, Bandaram Sridhar Goud, Suman Bhukya, Jakkala Jayaramulu, Indiramma committee members of divisions 27 and 28, municipal officials, and staff.

## Vinayaka Chavithi Celebrations Foster Unity and Harmony in Society “– MLA Bandari Laxma Reddy“



“Special Pooja by MLA at Kapra Press Club Ganesh Mandap““Medchal, Kapra, August 30:“As part of the ongoing Vinayaka Chavithi celebrations, MLA Bandari Laxma Reddy along with local Corporator Singireddy Sirisha Somashekar Reddy participated in special pooja rituals at the Kapra Press Club Ganesh Mandap. On this occasion, they sought the blessings of Lord Ganesha for the well-being of all. Speaking to the media, MLA Bandari Laxma Reddy said that the Vinayaka Chavithi festival strengthens unity and harmony among people. He added that Lord Ganesha symbolizes wisdom and success, and such cel-

ebrations nurture good values in society. The MLA further appreciated journalists, stating, Journalists are like a mirror of society. By reflecting people's issues impartially, they strengthen democracy. Their dedicated efforts are commendable. The event was attended by BRS state leader Singireddy Somashekar Reddy, former Corporator Kotta Rama Rao, Kasam Mahipal Reddy, Kumaraswamy, Press Club members Empalli Padma Reddy, Belide Ashok, Patel Narasimhulu, Muthyam Mukesh, Ramachandra Murthy, D. Srinivasa Rao, Gangi Krishna, O. Narsimha, N Srinivas Reddy, Nirant and several others.

## About 570 children to showcase creativity at 'Kolor Champ 2025' in HYD

Hyderabad, Aug.30 Over 570 children from 26 centres across the city will unleash their creativity at 'Kolor Champ 2025' in Hyderabad, which will be the largest regional-level art festival or competition, to be held this Sunday at SR Classic Convention, Shamshabad. The event is being organised by Global Art Academy.

More than a contest, Kolor Champ is a platform to encourage imagination and artistic expression in children. From crayons and paints to original strokes of creativity,

the event seeks to highlight the joy of childhood art in an era dominated by screens. The event will be graced by Mrs Shailaja Reddy, Principal of Meridian School, Uppal as chief guest and Mr. Dinesh Victor, Managing Director of SIP Academy, as guest of honour. Both of them have decades of experience in education and skill development. Studies indicate that the children engaged in the arts build problem-solving skills, empathy and resilience - the qualities that are invaluable in today's fast-changing world.

## BRS stages unique protest against urea crisis in Telangana

Hyderabad, Aug.30 : Prior to the Assembly session, the Bharat Rashtira Samithi (BRS) conducted a protest at the Amaraveerula Stupam in Gun Park on Saturday, drawing attention to the severe urea shortage in Telangana. Party leaders and supporters prominently displayed empty urea bags as a form of symbolic protest and chanted slogans directed against the Congress government.

BRS leaders demanded the immediate resignation of the Congress government, citing its inability to provide fertiliser to farmers. They criticised the State government for letting farmers down during the agriculture season, noting that many were forced to wait in long queues, even on Ganesh Chaturthi, often getting soaked in the rain while trying to secure urea.

KT Rama Rao, the working president of BRS, asserted that the crisis stemmed directly from the Congress' mismanagement. He remarked, "In KCR's decade-long tenure, farmers never confronted such a fertiliser shortage. Now they are obliged to stand in lines with their shoes and Aadhaar cards while waiting for urea. This situation reflects a betrayal of farmers by Chief Minister Revanth Reddy,".

KTR called for the Assembly to be assembled for a minimum of 15 days, expressing that the BRS was willing to engage in discussions on any government-related issues. "We are open to addressing all topics, including agriculture, irrigation, fee reimbursement, and the shortcomings of the six guarantees. Let the Assembly serve as a venue for meaningful discussions regarding the challenges faced by farmers and students, rather than selective debates that cater to the government's interests," he stated. The BRS leader noted that over 600 farmers had taken their own lives in the past months, and nearly 75 lakh farmers were struggling due to insufficient fertilizer and inadequate support from the Congress administration. He emphasised the necessity for the Assembly to thoroughly discuss agricultural distress, crop damages resulting from heavy rainfall, and the government's failure to fulfill its commitments. KT Rama Rao affirmed that the BRS was prepared to showcase the achievements of K Chandrashekhara Rao's welfare and irrigation initiatives, including the Kaleshwaram project, recognised as the largest lift irrigation scheme in the world. Regarding the disqualification of the rebel MLAs, the BRS leader remarked, "The process is in motion. We will see what decision is made by the Speaker." He also characterised the PC Ghose Commission as "not an inquiry commission but rather a Congress PCC Ghose Commission," adding that his party is ready to challenge the government on this matter too.

## Gitam hosts FDP on "Deepfake Threats and Gans in Cybersecurity"

Hyderabad, Aug.30 :The Department of Computer Science and Engineering (CSE) of GITAM School of Technology concluded a two-week "Faculty Development Program (FDP)" on "Deepfake Threats and Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs) in Cybersecurity: Detection, Prevention and Ethical Challenges". The programme, held under the AICTE-ATAL scheme from August 18 to 30, was aimed to equip faculty and researchers with advanced knowledge to combat Artificial Intelligence (AI) - driven cyber risks.

Experts from IIT Hyderabad, IIIT Hyderabad, University of Hyderabad, IBM, Google and Tech Mahindra have delivered sessions on deepfake generation, misinformation, cyber fraud, adversarial defense strategies and ethical challenges. Participants also featured four industrial visits - to T-Hub, T-Works, IIT Hyderabad's TIHAN Centre and GMR Innovex, gaining exposure to disruptive innovations ecosystems and smart and sustainable infrastructure. Key takeaways included proficiency in deepfake detection techniques, enhanced cybersecurity awareness and insights into ethical and legal frameworks. The program concluded with a vote of thanks by program coordinator Prof. Akkalakshmi.

## BIS concludes trng on National Building code 2016

Hyderabad, Aug.30 The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) successfully concluded a three-day capsule course on "National Building Code of India (NBC) 2016 - Structural Design", held from August 28 - 30 at its Hyderabad branch office, in coordination with the Civil Engineering department. The course was designed to enhance professional understanding of NBC 2016, which sets the essential provisions for structural safety, sustainability and quality in construction. A total of 36 delegates from industry, PSUs, academia and consultancy firms participated. It is important that various stakeholders contributing to building planning, design, construction and operation and maintenance are well aware of the provisions of NBC 2016 for judicious implementation of provisions and intent of the Code - BIS. The sessions featured eminent speakers who included PV Srikanth, Director and Head, BIS Hyderabad, Aman Deep, Managing Director, Creative Design Consultants, Dr. Padmaja Gokaraju of Kirby Building Systems and experts from L&T, ICFRE and Geo Dynamics Engineers. Topics ranged from concrete technology, prefabricated structures, timber applications and steel design to soil and foundation engineering. The programme concluded with certificate distribution and was widely appreciated for its mix of technical depth, case studies and practical applications.

## Union Minister Prahlad Joshi performs puja at Balapur Ganesh mandap

Hyderabad, Aug.30 Union Minister for consumer affairs, food and public distribution Prahlad Joshi performed puja at the famous Balapur Ganesh mandap here on Friday. The ritual is held at the request of the Central Government and the initiative of the Bhagyanagar Ganesh Utsav Samithi (BGUS). Joshi, talking to newsmen, lauded the BGUS representatives for promoting the concept of 'Swadeshi' through 1.4 lakh Ganesh pandals across the city as part of the 46th Samuhik Ganesh Utsav celebrations. He urged the citizens to adopt the 'Swadeshi' spirit championed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and stressed that the movement would strengthen the India's journey towards self-reliance by supporting indigenous goods and services.

## ICFAI Law School's Legal Aid Society Hosts Consumer Rights Awareness Program



“INDIAN CHRONICLE” “August 30” “The Legal Aid Society of ICFAI Law School, Hyderabad, organized a impactful legal awareness program on consumer rights and protection in Mahabubnagar District, in collaboration with the District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission of Mahabubnagar and the Nenu Saitham NGO. The event, held on Saturday, aimed to educate the public about their rights under the Consumer Protection Act of 2019, empowering attendees with knowledge to address consumer-related grievances effectively.” “The program was graced by Smt. M. Anuradha, President of the District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission, along with other distinguished commission members. Their participation underscored the importance of accessible consumer redressal mechanisms and highlighted the role of such initiatives in fostering informed communities.” “A key focus of the event was to raise awareness about the National Consumer Helpline, acces-

sible via the toll-free numbers 1915 and 1800-11-4000, which provide platforms for registering consumer grievances. The program featured an engaging poster presentation that outlined consumers' right to redressal and practical methods for exercising these rights. Additionally, a thought-provoking drama performance vividly illustrated consumer rights, captivating the audience and reinforcing the program's message.” “Funded by IFHE Management, this initiative by ICFAI Law School's Legal Aid Society reflects a commitment to social responsibility and legal empowerment. The event successfully bridged the gap between legal frameworks and public understanding, equipping attendees with the tools to navigate consumer disputes confidently.” “The Legal Aid Society and its partners expressed their dedication to continuing such efforts, ensuring that communities across the region are well-informed about their rights and the resources available to protect them.

## MLAs Submit Representation to CM Revanth Reddy on Development Works in Parigi, Shadnagar, and Tandur



“INDIAN CHRONICLE” “Shadnagar, Aug 30” “MLAs from Parigi, Shadnagar, and Tandur constituencies met Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy at the Assembly and submitted a representation seeking funds and approvals for key development works.” “Parigi MLA Rammohan Reddy, Shadnagar MLA Veerapalli Shankar, and Tandur MLA B. Manohar Reddy urged the Chief Minister to sanction funds for the Kondurg-Parigi-Lakshmidivipalli Irrigation Project and to ensure immediate commencement of the works.” “The Chief Minister responded positively to their appeal, following which the MLAs extended their gratitude to him.

## Shri N. J. Yasaswy Memorial 10th Moot Court Competition 2025 Begins



“INDIAN CHRONICLE” “August 30” “The Shri N. J. Yasaswy Memorial 10th Moot Court Competition 2025 commenced at ICFAI Law School, IFHE, Hyderabad, on Friday. The prestigious event has drawn participation from 37 leading law schools across the country, establishing it as one of the largest national-level moot court competitions.” “The inauguration ceremony was attended by Hon'ble Justice Narsing Rao Nandikonda, Judge, High Court for the State of Telangana, who graced the occasion as the Chief Guest. Addressing the gathering, Justice Nandikonda underscored the significance of moot courts in honing the advocacy skills of students and shaping them into competent legal professionals.” “Prof. (Dr.) Pujari Ravisekhararaju, Director of ICFAI Law School, delivered the presidential remarks, reflecting on the legacy of Shri N. J. Yasaswy. He emphasized that moot courts serve as a bridge between theoretical knowledge and practical application, equipping students with essential courtroom

experience.” “Dr. T. Himavathi, Coordinator of the Moot Court Society, and Dr. Karhale Sadanand Anantrao, Co-coordinator, welcomed the participants with words of encouragement. Mr. Shubham, from the student organizing team, also played a key role in ensuring the smooth execution of the ceremony.” “The three-day competition will run until August 31, 2025, providing a platform for budding lawyers to exhibit their research, analytical abilities, and advocacy skills.

## Is It The Negligence of The Authorities Or The Negligence Of The Bakery Owners

“Indian Chronicle” kumrambheem, Asifabad.District Reporter Jade Srinivas.August,30. “Consumers of spoiled goods without complying with the rules are in trouble. Earlier, I had taken a look at this baker once before. There is this bread near the bus stand going to Highway V Chandrapur in wankidi Mandal center. Earlier, the bakery owner was given notice and action was taken but the owner's behavior is like a dog's tail. Also, the small children have formed all the bad bacteria on the bread and the expiration date on it is not visible. Not even a single bread packet has been left. Fungus bacteria has formed on almost all the bread packets and the bun (thread) has become black in color.

## Please Raise Objections To The Voters' list.

“District Collector Venkatesh Dotre” “Indian Chronicle” kumrambheem, Asifabad.District Reporter Jade Srinivas.August,30. “Wave of movement, Asifabad Town: Local body voters District Collector Venkatesh Dotre said that if there are any objections to the draft list, they should be submitted by the 30th of this month. On Friday, a review meeting was held on the objections to the voters' list of local bodies with representatives of recognized political parties along with District Additional Collector (Local Bodies) Deepak Tiwari and Kagaznagar Sub-Collector Shradha Shukla at the Integrated District Collectorate Building in the district center. Speaking on the occasion, the District Collector said that the voters' list has already been prepared as part



of the local body elections, and the draft voters' list was displayed in all Gram Panchayats and Mandal offices on the 28th of this month. A meeting will be held with representatives of political parties in all Mandal Parishad Development Officers' offices on the 30th of this month to receive objections on the names in the

voter list and polling stations, and this He said that the objections will be resolved on the 31st of the month and the final list will be published on September 2. He said that there are 3 lakh 53 thousand 904 rural voters in the district, 335 gram panchayats and 2 thousand 874 wards. Eligible voters in local bodies will have the opportunity

to vote. He said that political parties should cooperate in utilizing the funds. District Panchayat Officer Bikshapati, Zilla Parishad Chief Executive Officer Lakshmi Narayana, Divisional Panchayat Officer Umar Hussain, representatives of political parties and others participated in this program.

## Food Distribution In Wankidi: Service To Devotees Under The Leadership of Congress Leaders



“Indian Chronicle” kumrambheem, Asifabad.District Reporter Jade Srinivas.August,30. “Wankidi After special prayers at the Shiva temple in Wankidi mandal center, a food distribution program was held under the auspices of Congress party president Gurnule Narayana.”

The leaders who participated in the program served

food to the devotees and said that all donations are great. Wankidi SI Durgam Mahender, former Ex MPTC Dhanwalker Kamlesh, former Deputy Ex Sarpanch Selvatkar Pentu, senior leader Kobraghade Vilas along with many Congress leaders, activists, fans and devotees participated in the program.

## Collector's Focus On Quality Education In Government Schools



“Indian Chronicle” kumrambheem, Asifabad.District Reporter Jade Srinivas.August,30. “On Saturday, District Additional Collector Deepak Tiwari visited the government primary school in Penchikalpet. He inspected the quality of mid-day meal, classrooms and cleanliness. He said that

facilities like drinking water, electricity and boundary wall have been provided to the students. He also inspected the construction work of Indiramma houses and arrangements for Ganesh immersion and gave instructions to the officials.”

## Sabyasachi Ghosh given additional charge

Hyderabad, Aug.30 Senior IAS officer Sabyasachi Ghosh (1994 batch), Special Chief Secretary to Government, Animal husbandry and forest department, has been placed in Full Additional Charge (FAC) of the post of Special Chief Secretary to Government Welfare. The senior IAS officer has also been assigned FAC of the post of Special Chief Secretary to Government,

# Telangana govt informs high court what likely caused Sigachi factory blast



GNS News Agency, August 30

An interim report was submitted before the high court as part of a counter affidavit in response to a public interest litigation. An interim report was submitted before the high court as part of a counter affidavit in response to a public interest litigation. The Telangana government on Thursday informed the Telangana High Court that a “dust explosion”, likely triggered by the ignition of a dust cloud within the unit or its equipment in a confined environment, may have caused the massive explosion at Sigachi Industries Limited at Pashamylaram in the state’s Sangareddy district.

Fifty-four people—eight people are still missing—are believed to have been killed in the accident on June 30. While the reports of the expert committee and high-powered committees constituted to investigate the accident are yet to submit their report, an interim report submitted by a technical expert committee shared the probable reasons for the accident and the same was submitted before the high court as part of a counter affidavit in response to a public interest litigation. The report said that a detailed analysis of the sequence of events leading to the explosion and fire is to be worked out based on several documents such as process chemistry, process flow information (PFD and P&IDs), equipment design and diagrams, past accident and near miss data, operability hazards, previous safety assessment reports (safety audits, PHA, risk assessment), occupational safety & health (OSH) assessments, site plan, floor plan, structural integrity assessments etc. It added that an accident culminates from a sequence of (long or short) failures, absence of adequate process control equipment, integrated safety interlock systems, poor choice of equipment, lack of preventive maintenance, poor safety culture, inadequate technical skills of the employed manpower and

# Delhi PWD set to redevelop 7 govt land pockets under private partnership model

GNS News Agency, August 30

Delhi PWDThe NBCC, a government-owned public sector undertaking, has previously undertaken similar redevelopment projects, including the construction of high-rise buildings in government housing complexes

The Delhi government is planning to rope in National Buildings Construction Corporation (NBCC) to prepare a proposal based on the public-private partnership (PPP) model to redevelop seven residential land pockets under the Public Works Department (PWD) to meet the housing requirements of government officials. Officials said seven locations — Vikas Bhawan 1 at ITO, Timarpur, Gulabi Bagh, Kalyanvas, Probyn Road, Sindhora Khurd, Sindhora Kalan, and Bahapur — have been selected for the redevelopment project to meet the future housing requirements and better utilise public land on the lines of the Union government’s General Pool Residential Accommodation (GPRA) scheme.

Recently, the PWD was asked to appoint a consultant to study the number of government complexes that can be redeveloped, how much space is available to build multi-storey buildings, and if there is space for commercial activities as well, said a senior official. Officials said the government has shown the seven land pockets to NBCC representatives for development of Type VII residential quarters, office buildings and commercial spaces. The NBCC, a government-owned public sector undertaking, has previously undertaken similar redevelopment projects, including the construction of high-rise buildings in government housing complexes at Kidwai Nagar, Sarojini Nagar, Nauroji Nagar, and Kasturba Nagar. According to a government document, details regarding the land, number of buildings, and plinth area have been provided to NBCC. Once the PPP proposal is received, agencies which would carry out the work would be invited to submit proposals. “Some of

# How UP govt is readying its big outreach plan for ‘Vision-2047’



GNS News Agency, August 30

Roping in nearly 500 experts from various fields, putting QR codes on display at public places and institutions to gather people’s sector-wise suggestions and launching a specialised web portal to connect with AI-based applications. These are some of the steps the state government is taking to prepare its massive public outreach programme from next week to seek feedback from the general public for the ‘Uttar Pradesh Vision-2047’. Before the official launch of the campaign, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath will hold an orientation programme with the experts, it is learnt. During the recently held Assembly session, a special 24-hour-long discussion was held on the ‘Uttar Pradesh Vision-2047’. The session, however, ended amid bickering and exchange of allegations between the ruling BJP and opposition MLAs. As part of the ‘Vision-2047’ exercise, the state Planning Department has identified the experts, including retired IAS and IPS officers, and specialists from agriculture, industry, scientific research, social sector and education sectors. Officials said the experts will then be allocated districts to reach out to the public at the grassroots level and explain to them the ‘UP Vision-2047’ for a developed Uttar Pradesh and also the ways in which they can provide their suggestions. “These experts are re-

human errors. “M/s Sigachi Industries Ltd. process for Micro Crystalline Cellulose (MCC) and its operations had an inherent danger of dust explosion hazard. Accidents involving Cellulose dust has been reported (Cellulose dust, Rosenberg, Germany, 2018). The site visit and subsequent inquiry and investigation with the workers revealed the occurrence of multiple explosions followed by severe fire which spread to adjacent buildings,” it said. “The blast and fire caused implosions of the major portion of the building with dark smoke, dust and projectiles (building materials and part of equipment). Thus, the dust explosion was the final culminating event in the confined environment, probably due to ignition of dust cloud within any of the unit operations or equipment,” it further stated, adding that the impact of the dust explosion’s shock waves lifted several equipment placed congestedly in confinement. The report has also suggested 23 technical recommendations to be implemented across all chemical process industries across the state. Meanwhile, the inspection report of the deputy chief inspector of the Factories Department listed 11 violations under the Factories Act. The violations range from failure to “provide explosion relief panel of adequate size and capacity for the spray dryer to ensure release of excessive pressure in the spray dryer” and “provide effective audio and visual alarm system to warn the temperature rise inside the spray dryer chamber above predetermined safe limits” to failure “to carry out prior dust hazard analysis of Micro Crystalline Cellulose Powder (MCCP) before starting using spray dryer and other powder processing equipment” and “prevent overcrowding of the employees in one building”. The report stated: “Consequently [to these violations] on 30.6.2025 at about 9.25AM, while carrying on the manufacturing of Micro Crystalline Cellulose Powder (MCCP) through acid hydrolysis of cellulose followed by neutralization and spray drying involving atomizing an MCC slurry in drying chamber of spray dryer where hot air of temperature at about 200°C to 205°C is passed, an excessive pressure is built up in the spray dryer due to formation of explosive and flammable mixture resulting in dust explosion and fire in the spray dryer and subsequent secondary dust explosion and fire took place in the powder processing area causing complete collapse of RCC G+1 building which accommodates production block having Spray Drier (1 No), Fluid bed driers (5 Nos), Blenders (2 Nos) & Spin Splash Dryers (1 No) etc., on the ground floor and Q.C. in the first floor and the following workers working in these areas got trapped and sustained serious injuries and fatalities.”



these locations already have houses and office spaces,” said an official. Among the seven sites, Vikas Bhawan at ITO is one of PWD’s largest office spaces in the city, housing Excise department, Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board (DUSIB), Environment department, and Delhi Commission for Women, among others. “The plan is to demolish these structures and construct multi-storey buildings on PPP model, under which private companies will be hired to build buildings and use available space to develop commercial spaces to recover the project cost... maybe even sell leftover land parcels to private developers,” an official said. North Delhi’s Gulabi Bagh, Sindhora Kalan, and Sindhora Khurd colonies currently have around 1200 type 1, type 2, and type 3 government quarters, which have been shortlisted for redevelopment. Near the Civil Lines area on Probyn Road, the PWD has 16 type 5 residential quarters and another 90 type 3 quarters in the Timarpur area, which have been selected. In East Delhi’s Kalyanvas area, 70 type 2 flats for government accommodation will also be part of the redevelopment project.

tired IAS, IPS officers, scientists, retired teachers of basic, secondary and higher education, former vice chancellors, IT professionals, doctors, agriculture scientists, retired railways officials and working professors,” said Alok Kumar, Principal Secretary, Planning Department, which is the nodal agency for preparation of ‘Uttar Pradesh Vision 2047’. He further said, “Five of these experts would be assigned a district and they would reach out to students, intellectuals, farmers, at schools, colleges, gram panchayats, higher education institutes for their opinion.” The officials said since they are expecting a large volume of suggestions, a dedicated web portal highlighting ‘UP Vision-2047’ will be launched. The government will also seek help from experts to introduce an artificial intelligence application that can segregate suggestions based on their types. The government is also planning to introduce a “reward-based system” for the best suggestions, which would be prominently included in the ‘UP Vision-2047’. The three broad themes under which 12 focus sectors have been divided are ‘Arthshakti’ (economic power), ‘Srijan Shakti’ (creation power) and Jeevan Shakti (life power). Under ‘Arthshakti’, suggestions on innovations in agriculture and allied sectors like horticulture, sugarcane production, irrigation will be sought. Also, animal husbandry and allied sectors like dairy, fisheries besides industry, innovation and promotion of IT and electronics and tourism will be included in this. Under ‘Srijan Shakti’ (creation power), suggestions on urban and rural development, and related sectors such as road, air or water transport and renewable and alternative energy sectors will be invited. Under Jeevan Shakti, suggestions on social welfare, upliftment of women, children, underprivileged, youth, labour force etc will be taken. It will also include health and medical care and allied sectors such as AYUSH as well as all four levels of education—basic, secondary, higher and technical. Suggestions on improving security and law and order will also be covered under this.

# Misuse of authority by certain officers of your agency: Bharadwaj writes to ED director



GNS News Agency, August 30

Former minister and AAP’s Delhi unit chief Saurabh Bharadwaj has written to the Enforcement Directorate (ED) director, alleging “grave irregularities” in the conduct of officers who searched his residence earlier this week in connection with an alleged hospital construction scam. In a letter dated August 27, Bharadwaj claimed that during the 19-hour-long search at his South Delhi home — from 7.15 am on August 26 to 2.20 am on August 27 — ED officers tampered with documents, pressured him to alter his statement, and destroyed evidence.

Bharadwaj alleged that his statement under Section 17 of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) was recorded on the laptop of Assistant Director Mayank Arora, and later “externally shared through Internet-based platforms

such as Google Drive/WhatsApp using my residence WiFi”. He further alleged that he was “repeatedly pressured” by officers to delete or modify portions of his statement, particularly those referencing the Lieutenant Governor and Delhi government officials, and was then presented with an altered version to sign. “I categorically refused,” Bharadwaj wrote, adding that he was “subtly threatened with arrest” under PMLA provisions if he did not comply. The AAP leader also accused officials of preparing “multiple versions” of the seizure memo. He claimed that in the first version, an affidavit filed by the Delhi Health department in the High Court — which he said supported his case that he had expedited hospital projects — was included, but later removed in a subsequent version, with the original allegedly destroyed. Further, he questioned the panch witnesses, who, according to him, “blindly signed the manipulated seizure memo,” questioning their impartiality. Bharadwaj has now urged the ED director to seize the laptop of the concerned officer as well as his home printer that was connected to it, and order a forensic examination of both devices by an independent agency to establish the sequence of events and alterations made. Bharadwaj had made similar allegations at a press conference earlier this week, where he had addressed the press with his printer by his side. “I cannot remain silent in the face of such grave procedural improprieties, evidence tampering, and misuse of authority by certain officers of your agency,” Bharadwaj wrote. His residence had been raided earlier this week, in connection with alleged irregularities in the construction of 24 hospitals.

# Greater noida dowry death: Woman’s kin meet top cop of Gautam Buddha Nagar

GNS News Agency, August 30

The family of 26-year-old Nikki Bhati, who was allegedly set ablaze over dowry demands in Greater Noida last week, met Gautam Buddha Nagar Police Commissioner Laxmi Singh on Friday, seeking to take strict action against the accused. On August 21, Nikki had died after allegedly being set ablaze at her in-laws’ home in Sirsa village of Greater Noida. The police have since arrested her father-in-law, mother-in-law, brother-in-law Rohit and husband Vipin. The arrests came after Nikki’s sister Kanchan — who is also Rohit’s wife — filed a police complaint.

Nikki’s brother Atul Payla told The Indian Express that Singh has assured the family that a chargesheet will soon be filed in the case. “My father, along with other family members, met the commissioner and she told us that the case will be heard by a fast-track court,” Atul said. Nikki’s father, Bikhari Singh Payla, said he requested Singh to ensure that the culprits get severe punishment. “Commissioner madam has assured us that the accused will not be spared and stringent action will be taken against them,” he said. On



Wednesday, a member of the Uttar Pradesh State Commission for Women, Meenakshi Bharala, had met Nikki’s family at their residence in Roopwas village of Dadri. Bharala had also met Singh seeking a fast-track probe in the case. The investigating officer in the case, meanwhile, said that the probe will soon be completed. “We are questioning more people and are collecting the evidence. The probe will be concluded soon,” he added.

# Delhi HC reserves order on Gautam Gambhir Foundation’s plea seeking quashing of Covid drug distribution case

GNS News Agency, August 30

The Delhi High Court on Friday reserved its decision on Gautam Gambhir Foundation’s (GGF) plea to quash criminal proceedings against the organisation and its members — including Indian cricket team head coach and former BJP MP Gautam Gambhir — in a case involving the unlicensed distribution of drugs during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2021. Opposing GGF’s arguments, the Delhi’s Drugs Control Department raised the issue of maintainability of the plea before Justice Neena Bansal Krishna. The department argued that Gambhir and other accused are challenging the summons directly before the HC first without presenting it before the sessions court and asserted that “trial has to take place, to determine the veracity of the allegations.” In September 2021, the High Court had stayed proceedings in a criminal complaint filed by Delhi’s Drugs Control Department against GGF before a Rohini court. The interim stay was however vacated by the HC in April. Earlier this week, the HC had refused to restore the stay.

The complaint, filed under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, alleged unauthorised stocking and distribution of a Covid drug during a medical camp held by the Foundation during the second wave of the pandemic in Delhi. Also arraigned as accused in the complaint were GGF trustees — Gautam Gambhir, then BJP MP; his wife Natasha Gambhir; his mother Seema Gambhir, and CEO Aparajita Singh. The Drugs Control Department had alleged that the GGF did



not hold a licence for stocking or distributing the drugs, including medical oxygen, in contravention of provisions of the Drugs & Cosmetics Act, 1940 & Rules. The GGF, Gambhir and the other accused are seeking quashing of the complaint filed under Section 200 CrPC (Criminal Procedure Code) before the magistrate court. In May 2021, the BJP had said in a statement to Delhi Police that from April 22 to May 7 that year, the GGF organised a free medical camp at Jagriti Enclave to assist people suffering from Covid. Two probes were initiated by the Delhi Police, which had then given a clean chit. However, the Delhi government, through its drug inspector, had filed a complaint in relation to the incident before the magistrate court, alleging unlawful distribution of Covid drugs like Fabiflu and oxygen.

# People can now track road-sweeping machines in real time on MCD portal

GNS News Agency, August 30

Want to check on your phone if Delhi roads are being cleaned? The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) has now made this possible by giving people access to a live-tracking link found on the MCD portal. Stating that people can now track road-sweeping machines in real time, officials said that the initiative aims to enhance transparency, encourage public participation and ensure accountability.

Earlier, only the Deputy Commissioners of each zone could monitor the machines. There are 52 Mechanical Road Sweeping Machines (MRSMs) in the city that can collectively clean around 1,600 km of roads, of over 60 feet in width, each day. These machines, which operate daily from 10pm to 6am — except on Sundays and Gazetted holidays — also help control dust pollution. At seven each, the Central and the South zones of the city have the highest number of such machines. MCD Commissioner Ashwani Kumar said that the move marks a step forward in leveraging technology for better civic management. “Through this initiative, MCD is ensuring that our citizens are informed and empowered. The real-time tracking feature not only promotes accountability but also builds trust between the civic body and the people it serves,” he added. The MCD portal provides all the details of these machines, including their numbers, zones in which they are plying, routes, scheduled start and end points. A route map also pops up on the screen and when clicked one can check if a certain vehicle is overspeeding.

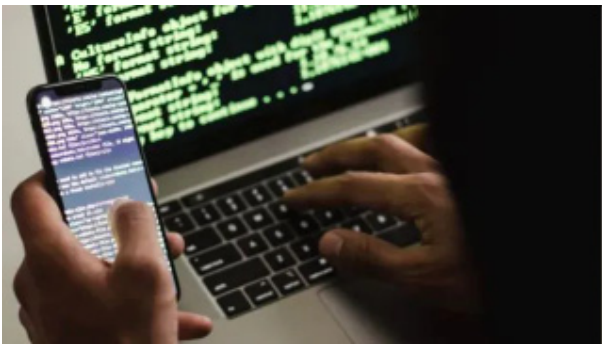
According to the civic body’s data, around Rs 2 crore



Stating that people can now track road-sweeping machines in real time, officials said that the initiative aims to enhance transparency, encourage public participation and ensure accountability.

are spent on the machines per month. “With the help of this platform, the public will also be able to view where and when the sweeping machines are working,” the MCD said in an official statement. Standing Committee chairperson Satya Sharma said that the portal was launched as the councillors had been persistently raising questions about the availability and functioning of the machines. “The councillors said that they were not aware of the timings and the route, but now with the portal, they will be,” she added.

## Claiming to have hacked fantasy cricket platform for winning combination, cyber criminals con Pune woman out of Rs 14 lakh



GNS News Agency, August 30

Claiming to have hacked into a well-known fantasy cricket platform, cyber fraudsters cheated a Pune woman out of Rs 14 lakh in May under the pretext of choosing and betting on a virtual cricket team, the police said, adding that she had transferred money to mule accounts 89 times over 10 days. The woman, 32, said in her police complaint that she came across a YouTube advertisement assuring a good winning rate on a fantasy sports platform. Fantasy sports platforms allow users to create virtual teams by selecting real players and earn points on the basis of the players' performance in real matches.

After she clicked on the link, she was added to a Telegram group. A contact on this group, who identified himself as a fantasy sports expert, offered to give names of 11 play-

ers who would make a winning combination for a fee of Rs 2,000. Subsequently, the fraudster asked the woman to make a payment to replace the players in her fantasy team who did not play the actual match that day. She was then told that she had incurred losses with the team. Later, she was told that her team had subsequently won, and was asked to pay 10 per cent of her purported earnings. In the same manner, she was given suggestions to pick teams and was asked to make payments. After 89 online money transfers totalling Rs 14.22 lakh, she exhausted her savings, but the fraudsters started to further pressure her to continue playing. When she tried to withdraw her earnings, she was asked to make more payments for various reasons. It was at this point that she got suspicious and approached the cybercrime police station in Pune city. Following an initial inquiry, the Hadapsar police registered an FIR. Their investigation revealed that the mule accounts she made transferred money to are registered in Pune, Raebareilly, and Allahabad. "Over the last few months, multiple cyber frauds have been reported from across India in which users of fantasy sports platforms have been duped by cyber fraudsters claiming to be hacking the platforms to get winning combinations. The modus operandi is very similar to share trading frauds, in which cybercriminals prey on the vulnerabilities of unsuspecting victims and manipulate them into making multiple payments for profits. We urge citizens not to fall prey to such scams," said an officer from the cybercrime police station.

## 100 'tainted' teachers apply for fresh recruitment process, rejected

GNS News Agency, August 30

Applications of 100 teachers, who were marked "tainted" for the way they got their jobs in state-run schools before those were invalidated by the Supreme Court, were rejected by the West Bengal School Service Commission (WBSSC) for the fresh recruitment process, an official said on Wednesday. They were among the 25,753 teachers and non-teaching staff whose appointments were terminated on April 3 by the Supreme Court, which termed their selection process conducted in 2016 "vitiated". A total of 1,803 teachers were marked "tainted" after it was ascertained how they got their jobs, and these 100 were among them.

"These 100 teachers had applied for the upcoming State Level Selection Test (SLST) 2025 on the WBSSC website. They were not allowed to download their admit cards. This was done in accordance with the Supreme Court order," the official said. The SLST is slated to be held on September 7 and 14 for 35,726 assistant teacher posts in state-aided secondary and higher secondary schools, he



said. About 5.8 lakh provisional admit cards were issued for the exam, he added. On Tuesday, the Supreme Court dismissed the West Bengal government's plea seeking review of its April 3 verdict, which invalidated the appointments of 25,753 teachers and staffers in the state-run and aided schools.

## Can't supply school uniforms to students this year, only subsidy: Delhi govt to HC

GNS News Agency, August 30

Delhi government school uniform scheme, Delhi High Court school uniform case, Right to Education Act free uniforms, The issue stems from a 2013 petition highlighting the failure to provide free uniforms as mandated under the Right to Education (RTE) Act. (Representational) The Delhi government has informed the High Court that it will not be able to provide school uniforms in kind to students this academic year — despite previously assuring the court it would do so before the new academic session. The issue stems from a 2013 petition highlighting the failure to provide free uniforms as mandated under the Right to Education (RTE) Act. The High Court has consistently directed that uniforms be supplied physically rather than by transferring money to families. In its latest submission, the Education Department cited "operational difficulties" and said the matter had been placed before the Council of Ministers.

As per the Cabinet decision taken on May 10, "The Council of Ministers approved the proposal of the Education Department for revision of rates of school uniform for students of Delhi government schools through the direct bank transfer (DBT) mode, due to operational difficulties in providing it in kind." It added: "The Council of Ministers further directed the Education Department to approach the Hon'ble High Court of Delhi accordingly." The government informed the court that students in Classes I-V will now receive Rs 1,250, those in Classes VI-VIII will receive Rs 1,500, and those in Classes IX-XII will receive Rs 1,700. These revised rates, which were notified on June 10, will apply to students in government and aided schools, as



well as to children from the Economically Weaker Section (EWS) and Disadvantaged Group (DG) categories studying in private schools under the RTE and Freeship quota. The previous rates of Rs 1,100, Rs 1,400 and Rs 1,500 respectively had remained unchanged since 2017-18. However, the petitioner, Justice For All, a Delhi-based NGO, has argued that the increase is "meagre" and that the subsidy continues to be misused by families instead of being spent on uniforms.

The Directorate of Education told the court that the rates were calculated after a market survey using wholesale prices. A uniform kit at wholesale cost typically includes two sets of clothing, a sweater, socks, shoes, a belt; in the case of girls, it includes a suit or dupatta. While the Cabinet approved the revised figures, the department has said it will continue to disburse the subsidy through the DBT mode for at least one more year.

## 'Playing with Pakistan sends wrong message': Himachal Congress MLA Malender Rajan urges Indian cricket team to withdraw from Asia Cup

GNS News Agency, August 30

Himachal Pradesh Congress MLA Malender Rajan, Malender Rajan Asia Cup demand, Himachal Assembly resolution on Asia Cup, Malender Rajan said allowing the Indian team to play in a tournament with Pakistan sends the wrong message at a time when relations remain bitter between the two nations. (Photo: Facebook) Himachal Pradesh Congress MLA Malender Rajan Wednesday demanded that the state Assembly pass a resolution urging the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) to withdraw from the upcoming men's Asia Cup, citing Pakistan's participation.

Raising the matter during Zero Hour in the Assembly, Rajan, the MLA from Indora constituency in Kangra district, said he recently learned that the BCCI has permitted the Indian cricket team to take part in the Asia Cup, where Pakistan is also a participant. "The Government of India should have intervened in the matter, given the country's strained relations with Pakistan, which has been involved in terror attacks on Indian soil and recent border skirmishes," he said. "The decision of the BCCI to allow participation in a tournament alongside Pakistan is highly objectionable, considering Pakistan's track record. The Assembly should pass a resolution urging the BCCI and the Union



government to cancel this permission," Rajan added. He said allowing the Indian team to play in a tournament with Pakistan sends the wrong message at a time when relations remain bitter between the two nations. Speaker Kuldeep Singh Pathania said the matter will be sent to the government. Later, interacting with the media, referring to the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack, Rajan said, "I raised this point in the interest of the country. It is about the sentiments of our people who lost their kin in Pakistani-sponsored terrorist attacks."

## Pet dog bites woman near lift in Ghaziabad residential society, incident caught on camera



GNS News Agency, August 30

dog bite The footage shows a young man and a woman, believed to be his mother, entering the lift with their dog. When the lift halts and the doors opens, the dog rushes out and pounces at Kalpana, who was waiting outside. (screen grab) A domestic help was bitten by a pet dog in the presence of its owner at a housing society in Uttar Pradesh's Ghaziabad Tuesday evening. The incident, recorded on CCTV, took place around 7.13 pm at the Amrapali Village Society in Indirapuram. Ravendra Gautam, Station House Officer, Indirapuram, said, "The house help has been contacted by the police, and she will be visiting the police station to lodge a complaint. She has been given medical treatment. We are looking into the matter." A domestic help

was bitten by a pet dog in the presence of its owner at a housing society in Uttar Pradesh's Ghaziabad Tuesday evening. The incident, recorded on CCTV, took place around 7.13 pm at the Amrapali Village Society in Indirapuram. pic.twitter.com/vXulviGOOk — The Indian Express (@IndianExpress) August 20, 2025 The victim has been identified as Kalpana, who works as a house help in CM Tower of the society, and was waiting for a lift when the dog bit her. The man whose dog attacked her is a resident of the same tower. The footage shows a young man and a woman, believed to be his mother, entering the lift with their dog. When the lift halts and the doors opens, the dog rushes out and pounces at Kalpana, who was waiting outside.

As Kalpana is seen limping and crying in pain, the dog runs towards the staircase before returning to the lift. The man, meanwhile, follows it back inside and boards the lift, without helping the injured woman. Inside the lift, the man and the woman appear to scold and slap the dog, ensuring it does not run out when the doors open again. Outside, Kalpana is seen groaning and clutching her thigh. Hearing her cries and the barking, a neighbour steps out to inquire. She then picks up her slippers and phone before taking another lift. She can be seen breaking down in pain after boarding the lift. The incident comes amid an ongoing debate following the Supreme Court's decision to relocate stray dogs in Delhi and the National Capital Region (NCR), citing an increase in rabies cases.

## Writer's Corner: 'Development shouldn't erase heritage,' says Meera Iyer who has spent years documenting Bengaluru's past

GNS News Agency, August 30

From a dovecote at Lalbagh to the old clubs of the city, if you are near a part of Bengaluru that is of any significant age, Meera Iyer has probably helped document it in her books. Iyer's first work, *Discovering Bengaluru*, is one of the more comprehensive and accessible English resources published in recent years, dealing broadly with the history of most parts of the city that one might see as a pedestrian. Her latest, *India in Triangles*, co-authored with Shruthi Rao, deals with the history of the Great Trigonometrical Survey of India, an initiative in which Bengaluru also played a part. Looking back on her memories of the city, Iyer told *The Indian Express* on Monday that she spent a good chunk of her childhood in Bengaluru. "I have stayed in Basavanagudi, Austin Town, Frazer Town... So I feel like I have personal connections in many different parts of the city which have many different cultures." Compiling hyperlocal history

Iyer, who also serves as the convener of the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) in the city, added, "I had come back to Bangalore in 2005 and used to travel on the weekends to places in and around the city. I remember going to the Devanahalli fort. It was a place full of historical importance, and yet there was nobody there to tell us anything about the place, no information on hand. At that point, I wanted to be in a place where I could change that." By 2007, she had begun volunteering with INTACH. As Iyer recalled, INTACH had also begun conducting heritage walks in the city in 2008, around one each month. She said, "At that time, there weren't so many people doing heritage walks. A lot of people who came on our walks said we ought to write a book about all this... It came to fruition in 2019 when the book was actually published." The book took four years to write, with the research beginning even earlier. Iyer said, "Of course, some great books have been written about Bangalore. Janaki Nair has written *The Promise of the Metropolis*, Fazlul Hasan has written a really popular and accessible history (*Bangalore Through the Centuries*). What we wanted was a book about the neighbourhoods, a hyperlocal kind of history. Something that is accessible to people, but when you read it, gives an idea of the evolution of the city." The research work involved poring over the archives in the Vidhana Soudha and sourcing information from abroad. She said, "You have access to information on the internet, so it makes things easier, but you still have to go back to the archives as not everything is available. It is such a connected world now, I can reach out to someone who is studying in a university in the US, etc, and ask them to find



some information, because very often they have information that we do not have in our libraries." Several sections of the book were also worked on by other contributors, including Krupa Rajangam, Hita Unnikrishnan, B Manjunath, S Karthikeyan, and Harini Nagendra.

Bengaluru "littered with remnants of Trigonometrical Survey" A key site that played its part in India in Triangles — the book was released in June — was the Great Trigonometrical Survey (GTS) Observatory off the Hennur-Bagalur Road. Iyer added, "The city is littered all over with remnants of this survey and traces. Many have been lost, but there is still a sizeable number." In 2024, her co-author Shruthi Rao reached out regarding collaborating on the book. Recalling the research process, she said, "I really loved the process of going through the archives... We are blessed with the ability to read reports that (William) Lambton (the British infantry officer who initiated the Great Survey) wrote after his early surveys in Bangalore and Chennai. A lot of the documents have also been digitised." But in Bengaluru, as elsewhere, history does not always stand protected. The GTS Observatory was heavily damaged and broken, with the land it stood on being subject to a property claim. Iyer said, "That was something that really shattered us when we were working on the book. But the demolition... There were people who lived there who tried to stop it. I think we should hold on to that. There were people who cared enough. That is our hope, that despite everything that happens, there are people who understand that such structures are important to our city." She added, "Urbanisation can proceed without erasing our past. Development does not have to be at the cost of heritage. If you look at New York, there are several hundred protected sites. It is not that we should import their lessons exactly, but we can be modern and still retain our past."

## Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu assures action on Himachal engineering student's death in Bengal, minor's rape in Chamba

GNS News Agency, August 30

Himachal "The victim's uncle also moved an application with Himachal Pradesh Police. I instructed DGP Himachal Ashok Tewari to take appropriate action," said CM Sukhu. Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu on Wednesday assured the Assembly that appropriate legal action would be taken in the Kapil Kumar case in which an engineering student from Hamirpur district died in West Bengal. He also informed the House that a suspect in a rape case involving a minor in Chamba district has been arrested. Replying to two separate motions of attention raised by BJP MLAs Inderdutt Lakhnarpal (Barsar) and Dr Janak Raj (Bharmor), Sukhu said that legal measures have already been initiated in both cases.

Lakhnarpal had sought the government's response on the death of 22-year-old Kapil, who hailed from Bhaged village in Hamirpur. Kapil was pursuing a course at Seacom Marine College, Howrah, since April this year and died under mysterious circumstances on August 9. His uncle, Rakesh Kumar, has lodged an FIR at Sankrail police station in Howrah City, alleging he was murdered. "The victim's uncle also moved an application with Himachal Pradesh Police. I instructed DGP Himachal Ashok Tewari to take appropriate action. The application for a fair and transparent probe has been forwarded to the Police Commissioner, Howrah, and correspondence has been made by the Himachal Pradesh DGP with his West Bengal counterpart on August 19," Sukhu said.

In another matter, Raj raised concerns over the alleged rape of a 15-year-old orphan girl in Chamba. "Based on her statement, an FIR was registered on August 18 under Section 65(1) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, sections 4 and 17 of the Pocco Act, and sections 9 and 11 of the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006. The minor delivered a child earlier this year, leading to the arrest of the main accused. The newborn's DNA profiling has been initi-



ated for paternity confirmation," Sukhu said, adding that it was a very sensitive matter.

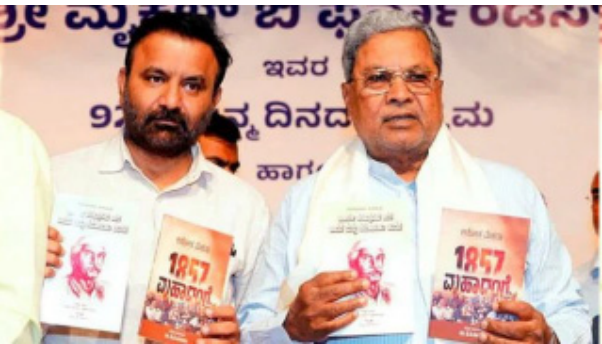
## Judges reduced to municipal commissioners, says Delhi HC

New Delhi: The Delhi High Court on Wednesday pulled up the civic authorities over unclean sewer lines in Tihar Central Jail, saying judges had been "reduced to municipal commissioners". A bench of Chief Justice D K Upadhyaya and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela was hearing a petition filed by lifer Sonu Dahiya, who claimed the inmates were living in "unhygienic living conditions" due to drainage issues.

"Can you understand the problem faced by the inmates due to sanitation problem of sewage lines? We have been reduced to municipal commissioners," the bench told a PWD official appearing in court.

The bench questioned the official over the fact that sewer lines were laid in 2024, but not connected with the main sewer line.

## CAG flags strain due to Congress' Karnataka guarantees: Rs 5,229 crore cut in infrastructure spend



GNS News Agency, August 30

The Congress's five guarantees in Karnataka, which are largely seen to have propelled it to power in the state in 2023, resulted in a Rs 5,229 crore reduction in capital expenditure on infrastructure in the 2023-2024 fiscal year and will cause a strain on the economy if the subsidies are not rationalised, a Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) report has said. According to the CAG report, which was tabled in the Assembly on Tuesday, the reduction in expenditure has also resulted in a 68 per cent delay in projects across the state. "The State also reduced the capital expenditure towards infrastructure by around Rs 5,229 crore when compared to previous year. This has an impact on the increase in incomplete projects by 68 per cent when compared to previous year. This compression in gross capital formation may prove to be detrimental to future growth prospects," the report stated.

Currently, the Siddaramaiah-led Congress government implements five direct benefit transfer (DBT) schemes: the Gruha Lakshmi (Rs 2,000 to each woman from poor households), Yuva Nidhi (a monthly unemployment allowance of Rs 3,500 for graduates and Rs 1,500 for diploma holders, Gruha Jyoti (free power), Anna Bhagya (free rice) and Shakti (free bus travel for women). For the schemes, the government had allocated a total of Rs 36,538 crore, which amounts to 15 per cent of the state's revenue expenditure for the 2023-2024 fiscal year. It used the entire amount to implement the schemes, except the unspent Rs 40 crore of the Rs 7,384 crore allocated for the Anna Bhagya scheme.

# Apple to make all iPhone 17 models in India

GNS News Agency, August 30

New Delhi: Apple is stepping up its manufacturing push in India, with all models of the upcoming iPhone 17 series, including the high-end Pro versions, being assembled in the country from the start. This is the first time the company will produce every new iPhone variant in India, a move seen as part of its strategy to reduce reliance on China and safeguard against US tariff risks. According to sources, Apple has spread iPhone 17 production across five local factories, two of which have just begun operations. However, the sources confirmed that the tech giant is expected to manufacture fewer units of the 'Pro' models. Tata Group's new plant at Hosur in Tamil Nadu and Foxconn's large new hub near Bengaluru airport are at the centre of this expansion. Tata, which has rapidly risen as one of Apple's key partners, is expected to handle nearly half of India's iPhone output within the next two years. Foxconn has already started rolling out iPhone 17 units at its new USD 2.8 billion facility in Devanahalli, near Bengaluru. The plant, which is Foxconn's second-largest iPhone factory outside China, is now running alongside its Chennai unit. The company overcame an early setback this year when several Chinese engineers left, bringing in experts from Taiwan and other locations to keep production on track.

Apple's bet on India has already started to pay off. Between April and July this year, iPhones worth USD 7.5 billion were exported from India, compared to USD 17 billion in the entire previous fiscal year. In the financial year ending March, Apple assembled iPhones worth about USD22 billion in India — marking a 60 per cent jump from the year before. The tech giant is expected to scale up production to 60 million iPhones this year, compared with



around 35-40 million in 2024-25. Apple CEO Tim Cook recently underlined India's growing role in the company's supply chain, revealing during a July earnings call that a majority of iPhones sold in the US in June 2025 were made in India. Analysts say Apple's shift has boosted India's status as a global manufacturing hub. With S&P Global estimating US iPhone sales at nearly 76 million units in 2024, Apple will need to double its shipments from India or reallocate devices from other markets to meet American demand. Apple's presence in India's own smartphone market is also growing steadily. Shipments rose 21.5 per cent in the first half of 2025 to 5.9 million units, with the iPhone 16 emerging as the most shipped model. In the June quarter, Apple's shipments in India rose nearly 20 per cent year-on-year, giving it a 7.5 per cent share of the market. Industry experts view the Bengaluru factory's launch and the broader manufacturing shift as a major milestone in Apple's diversification strategy.

## Punjab and Haryana High Court again gets email with bomb threat, search yields nothing

GNS News Agency, August 30

bomb threat Nearly three months after the Punjab and Haryana High Court received a bomb hoax email, officials of the court again got a similar email on Tuesday, warning about an “explosion” on the court premises, the police said on Wednesday. Nearly three months after the Punjab and Haryana High Court received a bomb hoax email, officials of the court again got a similar email on Tuesday, warning about an “explosion” on the court premises, the police said on Wednesday.

According to sources, the threat mail was delivered to the official email ID of the high court registrar on Tuesday night. The sender warned of multiple blasts on the court premises, specifying that the explosions would occur around 1.35 pm on Wednesday. After the registrar informed Chandigarh Police on Wednesday, they conducted a massive search inside the high court complex. Sumer Partap Singh, Senior Superintendent of Police (Security), along with the deputy superintendent of police and the station house officer of the Sector 3 station, reached the spot. Sniffer dogs, a bomb disposal squad, experts from a Central Forensic



Science Laboratory, and the operations cell of the police jointly searched the entire premises, including judges' chambers, for nearly two hours but found nothing objectionable, the sources said. The police have launched an investigation and are verifying the email's origin and the sender's details. It may be recalled that the Sector 3 police registered an FIR against unknown people after the high court received an email on May 22 with the threat that a bomb had been planted near the court's Gate No 1.

## Haryana notifies definition of forest, experts express concerns

GNS News Agency, August 30

Chandigarh: The Haryana government has defined the expression "dictionary meaning" of a forest, with some experts expressing concern that the state's definition will further exclude much of the potential deemed forest of the Aravallis from the protective embrace of the Forest Conservation Act. The Environment, Forest, and Wildlife Department of Haryana has notified the definition of forest.

In the notification dated August 18, the state government has defined the expression “forest as per dictionary meaning.” A patch of land shall be deemed to be “forest as per dictionary meaning” if it fulfils certain conditions, reads the notification. The definition requires forest areas to have a minimum canopy density of 40 per cent and cover at least five hectares if isolated, or two hectares in contiguity to government-notified forests, states the notification. However, all linear/compact/agro-forestry plantations and orchards situated outside the government-notified forests shall not be



# Protests erupt after Class 10 student stabbed outside Ahmedabad school, dies of injuries



GNS News Agency, August 30

Massive protests erupted at a school in Ahmedabad on Wednesday morning, just hours after a Class 10 student succumbed to a stabbing wound he suffered outside the main gate on Tuesday. The deceased had been allegedly stabbed by a Class 8 student of the same school. The protests intensified as the accused minor and the deceased were from different communities, with members of the VHP and Bajrang Dal joining the protest at the school. Teachers and the principal were also assaulted, and damage was caused to the school building and property, before police could bring the situation under control.

The situation subsided by about 2 pm after senior police officials and local politicians pleaded with the crowd to remain calm. JCP (Crime) Sharad Singhal, present at the

## After Gurgaon detentions, Punjab and Haryana HC seeks SOP for identifying illegal migrants

GNS News Agency, August 30

The petitioner told the bench that the police in Gurgaon had rounded up people from minority linguistic groups, branding them as illegal foreign nationals, despite their possessing Aadhaar, voter ID, ration cards and documents proving parentage. The petitioner told the bench that the police in Gurgaon had rounded up people from minority linguistic groups, branding them as illegal foreign nationals, despite their possessing Aadhaar, voter ID, ration cards and documents proving parentage. The Punjab and Haryana High Court Wednesday asked the Haryana government to place on record whether any standard operating procedure (SOP) exists for verification of migrant workers after a petition alleged that several bona fide citizens were wrongly picked up in Gurgaon and kept in "inhumane" conditions.

A Public Interest Litigation (PIL) filed by a lawyer sought directions for framing a uniform procedure for identifying illegal migrants. The petitioner told the bench that the police in Gurgaon had rounded up people from minority linguistic groups, branding them as illegal foreign nationals, despite their possessing Aadhaar, voter ID, ration cards and documents proving parentage. "They were detained in community centres, sometimes in groups of two to three hundred, with no access to family members or lawyers," the counsel submitted, adding that even when local police and gram panchayats from West Bengal certified that the detainees were Indian citizens, they were not released for days.

The petitioner argued that while both Punjab and Haryana must already have a verification procedure in place, it was either absent or being “flagrantly violated”. He relied on documents citing a May 2, 2025, communication of the Ministry of Home Affairs’ (MHA) Foreigners Branch, which reportedly authorised states to detain and deport



Bangladeshi and Rohingya nationals. However, he pointed out that the SOP referred to in those instructions was not traceable on the MHA website. The counsel for Haryana defended the detentions, saying the state police had acted in accordance with directions issued by the Union government. "Special search operations were launched in Gurugram to find illegal residents. Those found without valid proof of nationality were kept in holding centres as per MHA instructions," the state submitted. At this, the bench asked the government counsel to either produce the SOP on record or categorically state through an affidavit that no such SOP was available. "Unless you produce it before us, we will not be able to assess the validity of the procedure," the court observed. The court directed Haryana to file an affidavit clarifying whether the SOP exists on the MHA website and, if so, to place it on record. The matter was then adjourned. The police over the last few weeks allegedly rounded up several migrant workers as part of the drive aimed at identifying illegal immigrants in Gurgaon, and it sparked panic among the Bengali-speaking migrant community, prompting many to leave the city.

## Howrah to Sealdah in 12 mins, fare Rs 5 to Rs 70: New metro lines to transform Kolkata's travel

GNS News Agency, August 30

Kolkata The new services, offering fares starting at Rs 5 and capped at Rs 70, are aimed at providing a more affordable and efficient way to travel in a city long known for its traffic congestion. Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday will inaugurate three new metro lines in Kolkata, a major development set to transform the city's transport landscape. With Durga Puja approaching, the metro's expanded reach is expected to make celebrations more accessible and stress-free for residents. The new services, offering fares starting at Rs 5 and capped at Rs 70, are aimed at providing a more affordable and efficient way to travel in a city long known for its traffic congestion. The fare structure is distance-based, with slabs across the different corridors. For the East-West Metro (Green Line), which now connects Howrah Maidan to Salt Lake Sector V, travel up to 2 km costs Rs 5, while the end-to-end journey is Rs 70. The Yellow Line, connecting the airport, charges Rs 5 for the shortest distance (Airport to Jessore Road). A ride from the Airport to Noapara costs Rs 20, while a longer journey to Esplanade or Chandni Chowk is Rs 40. The fare from the Airport to Howrah is Rs 50, and to Kavi Subhash, Rs 45. On the Orange Line, fares from Hemanta Mukhopadhyay (Ruby Crossing) to various stations on the Blue and Green Lines are integrated, with the fare to Howrah Maidan being Rs 50. The fare from the Airport to Hemanta Mukhopadhyay is Rs 65. The final 2.6 km stretch of the East-West Metro corridor now fully connects Howrah Maidan to Salt Lake Sector V. This line, featuring India's first underwater metro tunnel, will drastically reduce travel time between Howrah and Sealdah. The journey from Howrah to Sector V, which earlier cost a minimum of Rs 500 by cab,



will now be possible for Rs 70. Yellow Line (Noapara-Jalangi and Hind Bimanbandar) The 7 km section is the first phase of a direct metro link to Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose International Airport. It connects the airport to Noapara, a key interchange with the Blue Line. A journey from Airport to Noapara will cost Rs 20, to Esplanade Rs 40, and to Kavi Subhash Rs 45.

The 4.4 km extension connects Hemanta Mukhopadhyay (Ruby Crossing) to Beleghatta, serving important locations like Science City and nearby hospitals. The fare from Airport to Hemanta Mukhopadhyay is Rs 65. The inauguration marks a significant leap in Kolkata's metro expansion. In the three decades since 1984, when India's first metro was established in the city, only 27.99 km of track was built. In contrast, over 45 km of new lines have been added in the last 10 years — a 161% increase. The expanded network is expected to ease traffic congestion, boost economic growth, and improve daily commutes for millions of passengers.

open forest (10-40 per cent) and scrub (0-10 per cent) categories should have been treated as forest as per dictionary meaning, and 10 per cent should have been the threshold in the rest of the state. "The decision to keep such a high threshold of forest cover of 40 per cent will further exclude much of the potential deemed forest of the Aravallis from the protective embrace of the Forest Conservation Act and open them up to the ravages of the licences of Town and Country Planning and Mining departments and their clients," Agarwal claimed.

Agarwal said that if such a high threshold of 40 per cent was applied to the notified Aravalli forests under special orders of Section 4 of the Punjab Land Preservation Act, most of these notified forests would also not meet this threshold, being mostly in the scrub or open forest cover.

"While the Shiwaliks in the north get 1,000 to 1,200 mm rainfall, the Aravallis in the south and west get just 300 to 600 mm rainfall annually.

## White House launches TikTok account with Trump saying 'I am your voice'



GNS News Agency, August 30

The White House launched an official TikTok account on Tuesday (August 19, 2025), taking advantage of the short video app's more than 170 million U.S. users to spread the messages of President Donald Trump. Mr. Trump has a soft spot for the popular app, crediting it with helping him gain support among young voters when he defeated Democrat Kamala Harris in the November 2024 presidential election. Lawmakers in Washington worry, however, that its U.S. user data could fall into the hands of China's government. Mr. Trump has been working on a deal for U.S. investors to buy the app from TikTok's Chinese parent, ByteDance. Past intelligence assessments have said the app's owners are beholden to the Chinese government and

that it could be used to influence Americans. The new account, @whitehouse, went live on Tuesday (August 19, 2025) evening with an initial video showing footage of Mr. Trump as he declares: "I am your voice."

The TikTok account Mr. Trump used for his presidential campaign last year, @realdonaldtrump, has more than 15 million followers. The Republican President also relies heavily on his Truth Social account to deliver his message and posts occasionally on his X account. "The Trump administration is committed to communicating the historic successes President Trump has delivered to the American people with as many audiences and platforms as possible," White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said. "President Trump's message dominated TikTok during his presidential campaign, and we're excited to build upon those successes and communicate in a way no other administration has before," she said. A 2024 law required TikTok to stop operating by January 19 of this year unless ByteDance had completed divesting the app's U.S. assets or demonstrated significant progress toward a sale. Mr. Trump opted not to enforce the law after he began his second term as President on January 20. He first extended the deadline to early April, then to June 19 and then again to September 17. Extensions to the deadline have drawn criticism from some lawmakers, who argue the Trump administration is flouting the law and ignoring national security concerns related to Chinese control over TikTok.

## Trump says U.S. air support possible for Ukraine security guarantee

GNS News Agency, August 30

President Donald Trump said Tuesday (August 19, 2025) that U.S. air support and European ground troops could be part of security guarantees for Ukraine, warning of a "rough" situation if talks between Moscow and Kyiv fail. "When it comes to security, they're willing to put people on the ground," he told Fox News, referring to European allies whom he met in the White House. "We're willing to help them with things, especially, probably, if you talk about by air, because no one has the kind of stuff we have, really, they don't," Mr. Trump said.

He added his "assurance" that no US ground troops would deploy to Ukraine, and he categorically ruled out Ukraine joining the Western military alliance NATO. Post-war security is a key concern for Kyiv after more than three years of Russian invasion. Moscow has long said it will not tolerate Ukraine joining NATO and has been hostile to the idea of Western troops deploying to the former Soviet territory. Mr. Trump said that "France and Germany, a couple of them, UK -- they want to have boots on the ground." "I don't think it's going to be a problem, to be honest with you. I think, I think Putin is tired off the war, he added. Mr. Trump said that following his talks Monday with European leaders he is pushing to organize a bilateral summit between Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy -- followed by another where he will join. "I called President Putin, and we're trying to work out a meeting with President Zelenskyy. We'll see what happens there," he said. "If that works out, if it works out, then I'll go to the trilateral and close it up." "Saying it was possible Mr. Putin would back out, Mr. Trump said "I hope President Putin's going to be good and if not, it's going to be a rough situation." Mr. Zelenskyy "has to show some flexibility also."



In addition to the question of guaranteeing Ukraine's future security, the other key sticking point in ending the war is the status of the huge swaths of land occupied by Russia. Mr. Trump said Ukraine has to accept it will not get its lost territories back -- including the eastern Donbas region -- but in return will get peace. "I assume you've all seen the map. You know, a big chunk of territory is taken and that territory has been taken. Now they're talking about Donbas, but Donbas right now, as you know, is 79 percent owned and controlled by Russia," Mr. Trump said. The US leader said Ukraine was not powerful enough to change the situation. "This was a war and Russia is a powerful military nation, you know. Whether people like it or not, it's a powerful nation. It's a much bigger nation," he said. "You don't take, you don't take on a nation that's 10 times your size." "Everybody can play cute and this and that, but, you know, Ukraine is going to get their life back," Mr. Trump said about a peace deal involving Ukraine surrendering land. "They're going to stop having people killed all over the place and they're going to get a lot of land."

## Israel approves settlement project that could divide West Bank

GNS News Agency, August 30

Israel gave final approval for a controversial settlement project in the occupied West Bank that would effectively cut the territory in two, and that Palestinians and rights groups say could destroy plans for a future Palestinian state. Settlement development in E1, an open tract of land east of Jerusalem, has been under consideration for more than two decades, but was frozen due to U.S. pressure during previous administrations. On Wednesday (August 20, 2025), the project received final approval from the Planning and Building Committee after the last petitions against it were rejected on Aug. 6. If the process moves quickly, infrastructure work could begin in the next few months and construction of homes could start in around a year. The plan includes around 3,500 apartments to expand the settlement of Maale Adumim, far-right Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich said during a press conference at the site last Thursday.

Mr. Smotrich cast the approval as a riposte to western countries that announced their plans to recognize a Palestinian state in recent weeks. "This reality finally buries the idea of a Palestinian state, because there is nothing to recognize and no one to recognize," Mr. Smotrich told reporters. "Anyone in the world who tries today to recognize a Palestinian state will receive an answer from us on the ground." "The location of E1 is significant because it is one of the last geographical links between Ramallah, in the northern West Bank, and Bethlehem in the southern West Bank.

The two cities are 22 kilometers (14 miles) apart by air, but Palestinians traveling between them must take a wide detour and pass through multiple Israeli checkpoints, adding hours to the journey. The hope for final status negotiations for a Palestinian state was to have the region eventually serve as a direct link between the cities. Peace Now, an organization that tracks settlement expansion in the West Bank, called the E1 project "deadly for the future of Israel and for any chance of achieving a peaceful two-state solution."



tion" which is "guaranteeing many more years of bloodshed." Israel's plans to expand settlements are part of an increasingly difficult reality for Palestinians in the occupied West Bank as the world's attention focuses on the war in Gaza. There have been marked increases in attacks by settlers on Palestinians, evictions from Palestinian towns, and checkpoints that choke freedom of movement, as well as several Palestinian attacks on Israelis. More than 700,000 Israelis now live in the occupied West Bank and east Jerusalem, territories captured by Israel in 1967 and sought by the Palestinians for a future state. The international community overwhelmingly considers Israeli settlement construction in these areas to be illegal and an obstacle to peace. Israel's government is dominated by religious and ultranationalist politicians with close ties to the settlement movement. Mr. Smotrich, previously a firebrand settler leader and now finance minister, has been granted Cabinet-level authority over settlement policies and vowed to double the settler population in the West Bank. Israel has annexed east Jerusalem and claims it as part of its capital, which is not internationally recognized. It says the West Bank is disputed territory whose fate should be determined through negotiations. Israel withdrew from 21 settlements in Gaza in 2005.



## Trump imposed sanctions on India to end Russia-Ukraine war: WH

GNS News Agency, August 30

New York: US President Donald Trump imposed sanctions on India to bring an end to the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt has said. Trump has imposed tariffs totalling 50 per cent on India, including 25 per cent for Delhi's purchases of Russian oil that will come into effect from August 27. Replying to a question at a press briefing on Tuesday, Leavitt said that Trump has put "tremendous public pressure" to bring the nearly four-year war "to a close." "He has taken actions, as you've seen, sanctions on India and other actions as well. He has made himself very clear that he wants to see this war end," she said. "The president wants to move and bring this war to an end as quickly as possible."

## Albanese unfazed as Netanyahu brands him 'weak' over Palestine



GNS News Agency, August 30

Melbourne: Prime Minister Anthony Albanese on Wednesday brushed off accusations from his Israeli counterpart Benjamin Netanyahu that the Australian leader is a "weak politician who had betrayed Israel" by recognising a Palestinian state. Netanyahu's extraordinary public rebuke came after Albanese's August 11 announcement that his government's recognition of a Palestinian state would be formalized at the United Nations General Assembly in September. Tit-for-tat cancellations of Australian and Israeli visas followed the announcement. "History will remember Albanese for what he is: A weak politician who betrayed Israel and abandoned Australia's Jews," Netanyahu posted on social media Tuesday.

Albanese responded pointedly Wednesday: "I treat leaders of other countries with respect. I diplomatically engage with them." "I don't take these things personally," Albanese said. "Increasingly there is global concern and global concern because people want to see an end to the cycle of violence that we have seen for far too long. That is what Australians want to see as well." Australian Home Affairs Minister Tony Burke further inflamed Israel's anger Monday by cancelling the visa of far-right Israeli lawmaker Simcha Rothman, a member of Netanyahu's coalition, who planned an Australian speaking tour.

Rothman is a member of the Religious Zionism party, which supports continuation of the war, the mass relocation of Palestinians through what it describes as voluntary migration and the reestablishment of Jewish settlements in Gaza. Burke on Wednesday accused Netanyahu of "lashing out" against Australia as he had done against Britain, Canada, France, Ireland, Norway and Spain over recognition of a Palestinian state. Burke denied Albanese was weak. "Strength is not measured by how many people you can blow up or how many children you can leave hungry," Burke told Australian Broadcasting Corp. Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar retaliated Monday for Rothman's treatment by revoking visas of Australian representatives to the Palestinian Authority. Saar also told the Israeli Embassy in Australia to "carefully examine" any official visa applications from Australia to Israel. Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong responded by accusing the Netanyahu government of isolating Israel. Alex Ryvchin, co-chief executive officer of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, the nation's peak advocacy group, said the Jewish community was "profoundly disturbed and concerned by the rapidly deteriorating state of relations" between the two countries. Australian Jews did not feel "abandoned" by the Albanese government, rejecting Netanyahu's accusation, Ryvchin said.

"When allies speak, they should speak frankly, robustly, but also in a dignified way, and I think firing off tweets which contain elements of abuse to them," Ryvchin said. "I don't think that's the way to operate." Australia is an increasingly multicultural country where more than half the population was born overseas or has at least one foreign parent. There is widespread community concern over the Israel-Hamas war, indicated by tens of thousands of pro-Palestinian demonstrators marching over the Sydney Harbor Bridge earlier this month. Antisemitism has reached unprecedented levels across Australia, which the government acknowledged last year by appointing the nation's first Special Envoy to Combat Antisemitism, Sydney lawyer Jillian Segal. Australia's conservative opposition party has pledged to reverse Australia's recognition of Palestine if it wins the next election, which is due in 2028. The worsening bilateral relationship with Israel was spilling over into Australia's relationship with the United States, an important ally that doesn't recognise a Palestinian state, opposition leader Sussan Ley said. "The prime minister needs to explain how he is going to get this relationship (with Israel) that he has so badly mismanaged back on track," Ley told reporters.

## Israel readies expanded Gaza City offensive as ceasefire talks drag on

GNS News Agency, August 30

Jerusalem: Israel is preparing to launch an expanded military operation in Gaza City, possibly in the coming days, even as negotiators scramble to bring Israel and Hamas to a ceasefire to end 22 months of fighting. The Israeli military said Wednesday that the country's defence minister has approved plans to begin a new phase of operations in some of Gaza's most densely populated areas, and that it would call up 60,000 reservists and lengthen the service of an additional 20,000 reservists currently serving.

It comes as human rights groups warn that a humanitarian crisis could worsen in Gaza, where most residents have been displaced, vast neighbourhoods lie in ruins, and communities are facing the threat of famine. A military official, speaking on the condition of anonymity in line with military regulations, said that the military will be operating in parts of Gaza City where the Israeli military has not yet operated and where it believes Hamas is still active. The official said that Israeli troops are already operating in the Zeitoun and Jabaliya neighbourhoods of Gaza City to prepare the groundwork for the expanded operation, which is expected to receive approval from the chief of staff in the coming days. Gaza City is Hamas' main military and governing stronghold, and Israeli troops will be targeting Hamas' vast underground tunnel network, the official added. Although Israel has targeted and killed much of Hamas' senior leadership, parts of the militant group are actively regrouping and carrying out attacks, including launching rockets towards Israel, the official said. Gaza City operation could begin within days. It remains unclear when the operation will begin, but it could be a matter of days. The official said 50,000 reservists will be called up in the coming month, one of the largest mobilizations in months. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has consistently said the objective of the war is to secure the release of the remaining hostages and ensure Hamas and other militants can never again threaten Israel. The planned offensive, first announced earlier this month, has heightened international condemnation of Israel and fuelled fears of another mass displacement among Palestinians. Netanyahu said on August 9 that it would span parts of Gaza City and the central camps. Hundreds of thousands of displaced people are sheltering in the city and it holds some of the last remnants of critical infrastructure. AP journalists saw small groups heading south from the city this week, but how many will voluntarily flee remains unclear. Some said they were waiting to see how events unfolded before moving yet again, and many insist that nowhere is safe from airstrikes. The call-up comes as a growing campaign of exhausted reservists is accusing the government of perpetuating the war for political reasons and failing to bring home the remaining hostages. The families of the hos-



tages and former army and intelligence chiefs have also expressed opposition to the expanded operation in Gaza City. Most of the families of the hostages want an immediate ceasefire and worry an expanded assault could imperil bringing the 50 hostages still in Gaza home. Israel believes that 20 are still alive. The former chiefs are sceptical that the goal of destroying Hamas is attainable. Former Shin Bet head Yoram Cohen called it a "fantasy," saying that "if anyone imagines that we can reach every terrorist and every pit and every weapon, and in parallel bring our hostages home -- I think it is impossible." Hamas-led militants started the war when they attacked Israel on October 7, 2023, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting 251. Most of the hostages have been released in ceasefires or other deals. Hamas says it will only free the rest in exchange for a lasting ceasefire and an Israeli withdrawal. Mediation is underway in Cairo as worries grow about a humanitarian crisis. Mediators and Hamas both said this week that Hamas leaders had agreed to cease-fire terms, though similar announcements have been made in the past that did not lead to ceasefires.

An Israeli official who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to speak to the media said that Israel is in constant contact with the mediators to secure the release of the hostages. Netanyahu has repeatedly said he will oppose a deal that doesn't include the "complete defeat of Hamas." More than 62,000 people have been killed during Israel's 22-month offensive, Gaza's Health Ministry said on Monday. The ministry is part of the Hamas-run government and staffed by medical professionals. The ministry does not say how many of the dead were civilians or combatants, but says women and children make up around half of them. In addition to that toll, 154 adults have died of malnutrition-related causes since late June, when the ministry began counting such deaths, and 112 children have died of malnutrition-related causes since the war began.

## Canada Opposition leader Poilievre wins seat, to take on Carney over tariffs

GNS News Agency, August 30

The leader of Canada's official Opposition Conservatives, Pierre Poilievre, secured a return to Parliament and a chance to grill Prime Minister Mark Carney, staging a comeback after unexpectedly losing his seat in an April election. Mr. Poilievre won 80.4% of the vote in a special election on Monday (August 18, 2025) in the Parliamentary constituency of Battle River-Crowfoot in the province of Alberta, a Conservative stronghold. The sitting legislator stepped down to allow Mr. Poilievre to run in his seat, thereby allowing him to return to the House of Commons. Mr. Poilievre, who accuses the Liberal government of botching its handling of U.S. relations and running up out-of-control deficits, will be able to confront Mr. Carney when the House of Commons returns on September 15.

Mr. Carney, who took over as Prime Minister in March, secured a strong minority government in April's federal election on a promise to stand up to U.S. President Donald Trump. He has since moderated his approach even as Washington imposed more tariffs. "The deficit is spiraling

out of control, inflation is up, elbows are down," Mr. Poilievre told a victory rally. Mr. Carney offered his congratulations in a post on X. Mr. Carney is in no immediate danger politically. Although the Liberals have a minority, they should be able to rely on the support of smaller parties to survive confidence votes. A Nanos Research poll earlier this month put the Liberals at 44% popular support compared with 33% for the Conservatives. Mr. Carney has pulled the Liberals more to the center and Mr. Poilievre will find it harder to draw a sharp contrast, said pollster Nik Nanos, CEO of Nanos Research. "Poilievre needs to articulate what he learned from the last federal election and how his government would be different than a Carney government," he said via email.

At the start of the year the Conservatives looked set for a crushing election victory over the Liberals of then-Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, who were far behind in polls after more than nine years in power. But Liberal fortunes soared after Mr. Trudeau announced he was stepping down and Mr. Trump began threatening Canada with tariffs and annexation.

# Meet the Anands: How chess icon Viswanathan Anand’s son has taken to art



Art has taken over a bulk of the space at his luxurious residence in Chennai’s Kotturpuram. If a painting of lord Hayagriva is located next to a fancy chess board that was gifted to him abroad, a sketch of a tiger is perched right near a chess board made of paper.Anand does not mind at all... because the brain behind these works is his son, Sai Akhil Anand, who is gearing up for his solo exhibition, Morphogenesis.“My house is now 50% art, 50% chess,” beams Indian chess legend Viswanathan Anand, “Traditionally, it has always been full of my trophies and newspaper clippings about my achievements. Recently, it has started to fill up with Akhil’s budding art journey. I’m happy to share what art means to the family.”The Anands will do more of that in the first week of August when Morphogenesis opens in Chennai. “I do a lot of Indian art like Gond, madhubani, worli and cheriyal and connect it with math patterns,” says 14-year-old Akhil about the elements of his show, which has been curated by his teacher, Diana Satish.Akhil, currently studying in Class IX at Chennai’s Beyond 8, might be the son of a champion synonymous with chess, but it was art that appealed to him from a young age. “I once observed the stripes of a zebra and tiger and noticed its patterns. Ever since, I have been fascinated with patterns.His early works were about people – of popular personalities like Newton, Einstein and Gandhi. This fascination grew into a passion during the COVID lockdown a few years ago. Explains Anand, “With more time in his hands, he (Akhil) got deeper into art. He was deeply inspired by the programmes of David Attenborough that spoke about about patterns and colour in Nature.”Morphogenesis will fea-

ture all that. If the series called the Bindu Bovine involves Akhil’s artistic interpretation of a cow using elements of fractal geometry, the UnBinary series – inspired by the geometric works of Dutch painter Piet Mondrian – features subjects in binary colours. So, what’s his personal favourite? Akhil states, “The series on animal superheroes, which talks about a few animals that are endangered and close to extinction.” In that series, close to Akhil’s heart, are sketches on animals like Moo Deng, the hippopotamus from Thailand Zoo that went on to become an Internet sensation, and Tajiri, the giraffe at New York’s Animal Adventure Park, which has become a symbol for giraffe conservation.The Anands – both Viswanathan Anand and his wife, Aruna – are cheerleaders for their son’s pursuit of art. Anand recalls, “When I was growing up, my father – who worked in the Railways – had a more conventional job, which meant strict working hours. He tried to keep up with my passion for chess, and was very supportive. I think it’s the same for me; I try to keep up with Akhil’s artistic pursuits.”He points out that there are many similarities between chess and art. “In chess, you are forced to sit in front of a board and focus on the job at hand. It’s quite similar in art; you have your tools in front of you, and you need to focus. While technology can help with research, you still need to get back to the job at hand and focus,” he explains.When they are not discussing chess or art, the Anands dig a lot into music; English musician Sting and Irish rock band U2 are among their favourites. Anand explains, “For me, it was quite surprising that Akhil ended up liking a lot of music from my teenage days. He is well informed of that time. I have the habit of listening to my favourite song from an album and moving on, but he listens to all of them. But, he is also my gateway into modern music and singers.”Even as Anand keeps up his duties as a mentor to the current crop of rising Indian chess talents, he still plays doting dad at home. Akhil and Anand bond over not just art and music, but also enjoy playing a game of table tennis whenever they find time. And of course, they also play chess. Akhil is yet to win against Anand – but he is currently mastering the hyper accelerated dragon and London System to get one up against the Indian chess legend. He says, “I play a lot of chess, but my dream is to become an environmental lawyer and bring upon awareness about issues like climate change and global warming. I want to fight against plastic and air pollution. My role model is BR Ambedkar, the father of the Constitution of India.”

# Is Labubu mania still going strong or has India moved on? And how do you snag one?

They are small, mischievous, and impossible to ignore. With their fang-toothed grins and pointy ears, Labubus — once just quirky vinyl toys — have unexpectedly become 2025’s “it” accessory. No longer the preserve of toy collectors, these blind-box figurines are now dangling from luxury bags, trading hands across continents, and powering a global consumer craze.Labubu first sprang to life in 2015 as a character from The Monsters, a children’s book series by Hong Kong-born, Belgium-based illustrator Kasing Lung, whose work draws heavily from Nordic mythology. Initially produced in Taiwan, it was not until Pop Mart — the Beijing-based toy giant founded by Wang Ning in 2010 — licensed the character in 2019 that things really took off. Using a signature blind-box model, where each sealed box contains a mystery figure, Pop Mart turned Labubu into a must-have collectible.

But the tipping point came in November 2024, when Lisa of South Korean girl group Blackpink clipped one to her Louis Vuitton bag and later revealed her “Labubu obsession” in a Vanity Fair interview. The Internet lost it. And just like that, labubu became a viral hit across Asia and beyond.It did not stop there. International stars like Dua Lipa, Rihanna, Kim Kardashian and even David Beckham have been spotted with Labubus — often attached to their bags, backpacks or keychains — catapulting the character into global fashion consciousness. By mid-2025, Pop Mart had released over 300 variants, with a mint green, 131 centimetre (4.3 feet) tall Labubu figure being sold at Yongle International Auction in Beijing in June 2025 for 1.08 million yuan (approximately ₹1.3 crore). As Labubu mania went global, Pop Mart CEO Wang Ning’s personal stake in the company skyrocketed, placing him among China’s 10 richest individuals. With an estimated net worth of ₹1.734 trillion, Wang is now one of the youngest billionaires in the country.In India, Labubu’s rise has been just as wild. The Pop Mart outlet at Bangkok’s Siam Centre has become a kind of pilgrimage site, as Mumbai-based filmmaker Faraz Arif Ansari discovered earlier this year. “So, I got my first one (labubu) end April, early May, from Bangkok’s Pop Mart. It is the best stocked and priced,” Faraz recalls. “Then I started hunting for limited editions. Got a few from resellers in Bangkok and others through friends travelling around Malaysia, Hong Kong and Singapore.” While blind boxes cost around 550 THB (almost ₹1,500) in Thailand, resellers in India list the same figurines for ₹6,000–7,000. “It’s mad,” they (Faraz identifies as non-binary, their pronouns are they/ them) laugh. “Even the Thai resellers are way cheaper — and they bargain too. I picked up a few limiteds for about 1,500 THB (₹4,035) each.” Their collection now sits at around 20 figures — placing them somewhere between casual collector and hardcore enthusiast.Anchit Kapil, co-founder of CrepDog Crew (CDC), was quick to spot the trend brewing on Instagram. “Honestly, it was both demand and instinct,” he says. “Collectors in India were already hooked, but there wasn’t a reliable source to buy from — at least not without months of waiting or risking fakes. We’ve always curated what’s culturally relevant, so bringing Labubu into the CDC world just made sense.”

The reaction was instant. “We teased a drop in May, and it went off,” he says. “It validated itself before we even launched.” Unlike traditional retailers working off projections and data, CDC taps directly into the pulse of youth culture. “Sometimes the community tells you what’s hot before the numbers do,” he says with a shrug.What has been surprising, even to Anchit, is the diversity of Labubu fans. “You had sneakerheads who were like, ‘Why would I buy a toy?’ And now, some of them are our most die-hard collectors,” he laughs. “It’s not just lads in their 20s either. Labubu’s gone beyond ‘toys’. It’s gender-neutral, age-neutral, everything-neutral. We’ve seen uni students and working professionals alike building collections.”While CDC took the organic route, another player moved fast and commercial. Abbas Ali Zaveri, founder and CEO of HypeFly India (an online retailer of sneakers and streetwear), approached Labubu like he does all things viral — with a sharp eye and even sharper instincts.“We’re always scanning global trends. If it’s hot internationally, we want to be the first to



bring it here,” he says. “It’s about aspiration. People see something trending in the US or Korea and don’t realise they can get it locally.”Abbas’s team first clocked Labubu in May. “We did a test run. My team wasn’t convinced, they were like, ‘Who’s paying ₹5,000 for a toy?’ So I posted a few videos myself. First day, we sold 10. I knew we were onto something.”A bold ‘buy one, get one’ launch followed just as the buzz reached fever pitch. “In that first week of pre-orders. It wasn’t just a toy anymore; it was a flex.”Abbas believes Labubu’s success is about access. “It’s a gateway to the culture. Before, being part of the hype scene meant dropping 45,000 on Off-White or Jordans. Now with 5,000, you’re in.”Of course, success breeds counterfeits. “Fakes are everywhere,” Abbas says bluntly. “We’ve got a zero-tolerance policy. If it doesn’t come with a Pop Mart invoice, we won’t stock it.” He recalls spotting a fake barcode (the only way to tell if the Labubu is fake) that said “Top Marie” instead of Pop Mart. “The bootleggers are getting smarter. It’s a full-time job keeping ahead.”Labubu figures and dolls are seen on display at a Pop Mart store in Shanghai, China

That is where trusted platforms like HypeFly and CDC stand apart, offering guarantees in a sea of fakes. “Anyone can buy a ₹2,000 labubu online,” he says. “But they’ve no idea what they’re getting. There is no regulation.”Interestingly, while demand in Mumbai and Delhi is beginning to plateau, interest is spreading elsewhere. “Now it’s Dehradun, Sikkim, the Northeast,” Abbas says. “Tier-2s and 3s are waking up to it. It’s going national.”From toy to trophyIn the world of luxury resale, Labubu has taken on a new identity, that of an accessory enhancer. “Bag charms are very ‘in’ right now,” says Anvita Mehra, founder and CEO of Confidential Couture. “We’ve always seen that desire to personalise classics like Birkins and Kellys. Now, Labubu fills that space.”Hermès has long capitalised on this with its Rodeo charms, and Anvita believes Labubu works on the same principle. “It’s about adding personality. We once gave out free Labubus to some of our customers from stock we picked up in Thailand. But in the resale market in India, they can fetch up to ₹20,000 because most people want Labubus almost immediately. But like all trends, it eventually cools.”She believes Labubu landed at just the right moment. “It’s access, availability, and the thrill of the hunt. People were asking friends to pick them up from Dubai or Singapore. Now they’re everywhere. That might cool the hype slightly but the desire to personalise luxury is here to stay.”A collector’s tale

Still, few stories capture Labubu’s magic quite like Ensito’s (@ensito\_20). Based in Charlotte, North Carolina, he has a collection of over 500 Labubus — figurines, pendants and plushies. “It all started when a friend asked me to pick some up during a trip to London,” he says. “I queued for three hours. Sold out two people ahead of me. But I was instantly hooked.”He was drawn in by the designs, the blind-box surprise, and the narrative behind each release. “At first, they were just fun accessories to go with my designer bags. Then it became about the stories. The thrill of the hunt is real.”Ensito has shopped Labubus across the US and Europe, visiting over 15 Pop Mart stores. “London used to be the best, but now it’s all lottery-based. In the US, you’ve got to be fast online. I’ve found Seattle and parts of Texas are easier — less competition.But for him, the real game-changer has been TikTok Lives. “Pop Mart has live shopping channels in the US, UK, and now Canada’s gearing up too.

# Wagamama is here. What other new Mumbai restaurants should you try this weekend



Mumbai’s dining scene never sits still. Just when you think you have found your favourite pasta joint or sushi bar, along comes a fresh opening, promising slow-fermented breads, house-cured meats, or cocktails made with foraged botanicals. From sleek chef-driven menus to playful pop-ups turned permanent, here is a guide to Mumbai’s buzziest new restaurants.The arrival of Wagamama in Mumbai’s Churchgate is, at the very least, a confident flex. Housed inside the restored Cambata Building — neighbours with Eros Cinema and Churchgate station — the global ramen chain has made its India debut with a splash of polished minimalism and fast-casual fun.The interiors play to type: neutral tones, soft industrial textures, communal benches, and open kitchens designed for flow. It is slick, unfussy, and designed to look great on your feed without being overtly curated. You can see the London blueprint in every inch and that is both its strength and limitation.

The menu is a calibrated “greatest hits” — katsu curry, bang bang cauliflower, kare burosso, gyozas and donburi bowls all present and accounted for. The ramen is warm and filling, though the broths do not quite achieve the layered complexity of other pan-Asian spots in the city. The chicken tantanmen hits the right spice notes, but the noodles can feel just a touch overcooked if you wait too long. That said, it is comforting in the way airport ramen rarely is.The star, surprisingly, might be the banana katsu — a golden-fried dessert that balances sweetness and crunch with more finesse than expected. Drinks include refreshing cold-pressed juices and zingy mocktails, although cocktails lean a bit too saccharine for their own good.Over 50% of the menu is vegetarian or vegan, which is admirable, but expect a very pan-global interpretation of Asia, not necessarily regionally accurate, nor pretending to be.Set across two levels in the West Zone of Phoenix Palladium, the newly launched Gourmet Village is less a food court and more a curated lifestyle destination for the city’s discerning diners. Reimagining the traditional mall dining experience, this up-scale zone brings together over 50 restaurants and cafés under one roof. Designed to feel like an eclectic village, the space is laced with greenery, warm lighting, and airy al fresco sections that invite you to linger a little longer than you had planned.There is much to explore: Burma Burma brings its vegetarian Asian fare. Their new dessert menu, called The Sweet Life, fuse timeless classics with Burmese flavours and modern textures. Created in collaboration with award-winning pastry chef Vinesh Johny, the seven-part menu is a punctuation mark to the meal, whether it’s jaggery-and-coconut-laced reinterpretations or delicate international patisserie with a twist. Kuuraku offers an authentic izakaya experience (skewers, sake and all), and Delhi’s cult favourite Andrea’s makes its Mumbai debut with a menu of polished global comfort food. The presence of local staples like Kitchen Garden by Suzette, Foo, Le Pain Quotidien, and Cream Centre adds familiarity, while spots like Fountain Sizzlers and The Silver Train dial up the nostalgia. Sweet finishes come courtesy Harley’s Fine Baking and Gold by Ice Cream Works, while the plush Game Palacio lounge throws in some leisure.Fireback is what happens when high-concept Thai cuisine meets good execution. With Chef David Thompson, the revered interpreter of Thai culinary history, at the helm as culinary director, the Fireback outpost in Mumbai gets a number of things right.The space inside Nilaya Anthology is predictably striking, but never sterile. Earthy tones, a glowing Jospier grill at centre-stage, and atmospheric lighting all give it a refined warmth. It feels upscale, but not intimidating.Food-wise, it is not all pad thai and green curry Expect jungle curries that bite, salads that crunch with toasted rice and lime, and flame-grilled proteins rubbed with pastes made from scratch. Highlights include the smoky lamb chop gorlae with crispy shallots, a well balanced scallop salad brightened with coconut and lemongrass, and the soft-shell crab red curry, which manages to be indulgent without overwhelming. The crab fried rice is unfussy but elevated.The vegetarian options are more than just filler, especially the grilled pumpkin and sweet potato in gorlae sauce, but meat and seafood still lead the narrative.The cocktail menu, created by Varun Sharma, who also leads Comorin downstairs, is layered playful. The Tom Yum Highball has its flaws but it does have bite, while the Galangal — with whisky and pickled galangal brine — is all depth and intrigue. Not every drink hits the mark (some teeter toward over-invention), but the overall bar experience

feels well-matched to the food.Prices lean high, and it is not for the unadventurous. But if you are looking for one of the city’s most assured openings this year, Fireback is your place.A meal for two, including drinks, will cost ₹4000; Entrance through Comorin at Nilaya Anthology, Peninsula Corporate Park, Ganpatrao Kadam Marg, Lower Parel (West), Mumbai - 400013 Not new, but newly reimagined, Sahib Room & Kipling Bar at The St. Regis Mumbai returns after a renovation, and it will charm those with a taste for the slow and subtly theatrical. The relaunch brings a revitalised elegance to this jungle-retreat-meets-regal-dining-room, without abandoning its old-world soul. Think tented ceilings, dark wood flooring, antique mirrors, and carved wooden accents. The updated space pays homage to Rudyard Kipling and the princely shikar camps of yore, with richer textures, sleeker lighting, and a new Spectacle Kitchen that lets guests witness the finesse behind the flames.

The kitchen continues to serve its unapologetically traditional Indian menu, dialled up with refinement. The murgh rezala is well balanced, while the panch phoron ki sabzi and dahi ke gullar highlight how vegetarian dishes can be treated with as much reverence. The Rampur ki gosht dum biryani and sahib ki yakhni remain rich and comforting.The new drinks programme is an ambitious trail through Kipling’s India. From The Bay (Mumbai) to A Sip from the Mahal (Bundi), each cocktail carries layers of local memory, finished with aromatic flourishes and sleek storytelling. The beverage list, featuring Indian spirits, heritage liqueurs, and reinvented classics, is quietly sophisticated and contextual.A meal for two, including drinks, will cost ₹4000 plus taxes; 462, Senapati Bapat Marg, Lower Parel, Mumbai - 400013What began as a cheeky, sugar-dusted pop-culture café in Delhi has now evolved into a full-blown Japanese restaurant in Mumbai. At its newest address in Jio World Drive, Harajuku Tokyo Café & Bakehouse opens its most ambitious outpost yet with a multi-sensory restaurant-bar and a bright, pastel-soaked bakehouse.

Split across two zones, the 72-seater restaurant comes with a sushi conveyor belt by day and sake bombs and karaoke by night. Expect sushi boats, robot DJs, manga murals, and retro signage, all orchestrated around a menu co-curated with Japanese chefs Asami Indo and Higuchi Nariaki. The food is comfort-led but layered: from the spicy, buttery seafood shio ramen and coal-fired miso salmon off the robata to zany street-style plates like corn dogs, bubbling UFO chicken platters and the umami bomb Naruto’s Rush cocktail (yes, vodka, gochujang, and ramen broth in a drink). The sushi section is no afterthought either — the rainbow roll and spicy avocado cream cheese roll are fast favourites.

The cocktail menu, curated by Fay Antoine Barretto, comes with Japan-meets-nightlife references, where every drink tells a manga-worthy story. Think Cal Me Kimchi, spiked with tequila and house-fermented heat, or the delicate Whisper of the Peach, a Kyoto-inspired blend of Japanese whisky and chamomile.Next door, the 12-seater Harajuku Bakehouse is all soft pinks and Japanese patisserie glow. With soufflé pancakes, cottony cheese-cakes, and a new pet-friendly dessert menu.After years of whispers, Nando’s has finally fired up its grills in Mumbai with a flagship casa now open in Kamala Mills, Lower Parel. Known for its cult-favourite flame-grilled peri peri chicken, the brand’s arrival is less of a soft launch and more of a full-blown entry for fans of their spicy, saucy poultry.The space itself is bright and expansive, blending Nando’s signature Afro-Portuguese design cues with India-specific warmth. Think rustic textures, woven pendant lights, and enough red to match the sauce.The chicken is dependably good. The skin is crisp, the insides juicy, and the basting options range from the gentle lemon and herb to the masochistically fiery extra hot. It is the kind of food that does not pretend to be complex; it is about craveability, not craft. That said, if you’re expecting gourmet, slow-cooked nuance, this is not your spot. It is loud, quick, and a bit brash but that is also its charm.Sides like peri-peri fries and spicy rice still hit the spot, but the vegetarian options feel like an afterthought compared to the protein-rich offerings. Service is fast but not fussy, and there is enough room to host a group without elbowing for space.A meal for two will cost 1000 inclusive of taxes; Unit 2, Ground Floor, Trade Garden Building, Kamala Mill’s Compound, Senapati Bapat Marg, Lower Parel

# Warangal’s underground drainage plans remain on paper

Hyderabad: Last November, the State government gave in-principle approval for allocation of Rs.4,170 crore to establish a comprehensive underground drainage (UGD) network in the Greater Warangal Municipal Corporation (GWMC). Nearly 10 months later, the project remains only on paper.Except for a few works taken up in Khila Warangal limits, the UGD network across most parts of GWMC has not progressed beyond planning, leaving residents anxious. The allocation was announced during Praja Vijayotsavulu to mark the Congress government’s completion of one year in office.The problem is not new. Even last monsoon, residents in several areas under GWMC limits waded through knee-deep water, while low-lying colonies were submerged. The situation has not changed this year either.Last week, heavy rains led to flooding in several colonies, including Hunter Road, NTR Nagar, Ramannapet, Shivanagar, Kareemabad and Sakarashi Kunta. Warangal railway station was inundated with knee-deep water, leaving passengers struggling to reach platforms. Traffic on the Warangal–



Khammam main road was also disrupted by stagnant water.Frustrated residents have lashed out at the government for failing to act despite repeated monsoon misery. Adding to their disappointment is the fact that Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, who also holds the Municipal Administration and Urban Development (MAUD) portfolio, had assured development of Warangal on par with Hyderabad.

# UG, PG medical seats may increase by 8,000 this academic year: NMC chief



New Delhi: The number of undergraduate and post-graduate medical seats in the country is expected to see a cumulative increase of around 8,000 this academic year, and an assessments of medical colleges is underway, National Medical Commission chief Dr Abhijat Sheth has said.

Counselling for the NEET-UG is already underway and the first round has been completed. The second round of counselling is expected to start by August 25. There are concerns about the number of medical seats decreasing this year after the CBI busted a network of officials of Union health ministry, National Medical Commission (NMC), intermediaries and representatives of private medical colleges allegedly involved in a litany of "egregious" acts, including corruption and unlawful manipulation of the regulatory framework governing medical colleges, in July this year.

When the CBI probe began, the NMC had put on hold the process for increasing the number of seats or starting new courses. The agency had named 34 people in an FIR, including eight health ministry officials, a National Health Authority official and five doctors who were part of the NMC inspection team.

Dr Sheth said, "Along with my appointment, the president of the Medical Assessment and Rating Board (MARB) also has been appointed. We have taken up completion of inspection of UG medical seats on a priority basis and the assessments are under progress." "We expect an increase of roughly around 8,000 seats (UG and PG seats combined) based on the number of applications we have received in this academic year," he said. Presently, there are 1,18,098 UG seats with 59,782 in government and 58,316 in private. The number of PG seats is 53,960 with 30,029 in government and 23,931 in private. On the total number of MBBS seats decreasing as compared to the last academic session, Dr Sheth said, "Because of the ongoing (CBI) inquiry, the numbers of UG seats may have reduced. However, overall, the number of seats is eventually going to increase by 8,000 or even more after the completion of the total inspection process."

For the PG counselling, Dr Sheth said the process for the inspections of medical college, which have applied for new PG seats, has been initiated and that the counselling for it is going to take place in September. "We are confident that new seats will also be added to the PG counselling process," he said. Asked when the National Exit Test (NExT) for final year MBBS students, as envisaged in the NMC Act, will be held, Dr Sheth termed the exam as a "novel concept", but stressed that consensus among all stakeholders have to be reached. He added that concerns of students about the exam need to be addressed before conducting it, saying its implementation "will take a while". "NExT

is a novel concept no doubt but there are many unanswered questions. We have to ensure that this model is compatible with the medical education that we are providing to our students," he told PTI. Elaborating further, Dr Sheth said, "The main unanswered questions are — how we are going to transit from the state level university examination to the central model. Second is, we want to ensure what difficulty level we are going to set up with this examination."

"Third important question for us is how we will create a positive perception of this examination across stakeholders — both the faculties as well as the medical students. And in this direction we are working," he said. Dr Sheth said the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has worked in this direction for the last couple of years. "However, I feel it will take a while to start the NEXT exam. We need consensus amongst all stakeholders and student perspectives regarding any concerns for this examination should be addressed. Fear among students has to be allayed and their confidence level for this exam has to be created. Awareness has to be made that this examination is not going to be difficult for them but it is going to be a fair assessment for them," he said.

"Till we address all these ground level issues and we make sure that it is acceptable to all stakeholders to take this examination comfortably, to run across the country in uniform way it will take a little while. But we certainly support the NEXT examination as a novel concept and eventually we will like to work for it," he said. On number of medical colleges in the country having increased significantly since 2014 and there being concerns regarding the quality of doctors passing out from these medical colleges, Dr Sheth said both numbers of medical colleges and quality of medical medical education are equally important. The increase in number is required to bring sustainable quality in the medical education over the long term and to bring uniformity of delivery in the healthcare across the country, he explained. "At the same time while increasing the number of colleges, we will have to ensure the quality of medical education doesn't get diluted," he said.

Dr Sheth said that NMC has initiated strengthening the process of accreditation to ensure that the bare minimum standards in faculty requirements, infrastructure requirements and in clinical material requirements are met up with, and that will certainly be helpful to escalate the quality. "Also, we have initiated a process of phydigital model where we are encouraging our institution to adopt a new solution beyond physical education that includes skill and virtual education to address competency based training and digital and e-learning solutions to bring uniformity in medical training across the board," he said. "At NMC, we strongly believe in innovation, integration and implementation. We are promoting innovative medical practices amongst our stakeholders, and NMC will be very happy to support the new innovative models to adapt into the medical education system," Dr Sheth stated. Simultaneously, when it comes to integration, Dr Sheth said a lot of clinical material is there with private hospital setups as well as the government hospitals which are not utilised in the NNC program. "We want to tap this opportunity to integrate these institutions for the medical education purpose, to ensure that we can get better clinical resources for the aspiring medical students. And hence, the integration is very important, and this is the concept which my team would like to take forward, and we are going to stay very strong at the implementation of whatever the reforms are there," he stated.

# In an unstable world, energy sovereignty is the new oil

India imports over 85% of its crude oil and more than 50% of its natural gas. This is not just an economic figure. It belongs in our national risk register. As conflict zones multiply, sea lanes narrow and supply chains fragment, every imported barrel becomes a liability. In this landscape, Russian oil has become India's biggest swing factor. Since 2022, Russia has emerged as the country's single largest supplier, accounting for roughly 35%-40% of total crude imports in 2024-25 — up from barely 2% before the Ukraine war. While discounted barrels have offered temporary relief to the import bill, the heavy concentration also underscores the vulnerability of relying too much on one geopolitical partner. Diversification, not substitution, is the real currency of sovereignty.

In FY2023-24, India's merchandise imports stood at \$677 billion. Of this, crude oil and natural gas alone accounted for nearly \$170 billion, or over 25% of the total import bill. This outflow of foreign exchange pressures the rupee, inflates the trade deficit, and compromises macroeconomic stability. In June 2025, the world narrowly avoided a full-blown regional conflict following tensions between Israel and Iran. Had that flashpoint ignited, over 20 million barrels a day of global oil flows would have been threatened. Brent crude prices, already sensitive, could have breached the \$103 a barrel mark within days. The war did not begin, but the world came close enough to remember just how fragile its energy lifelines are.

First, the 1973 oil embargo. The Arab oil embargo against the United States and allied nations caused crude prices to quadruple, and exposed the West's overdependence on the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries. But it catalysed the creation of strategic petroleum reserves, efficiency mandates, and diversified sourcing strategies. Second, the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster. A tsunami-induced nuclear meltdown in Japan triggered a global crisis of confidence in nuclear power. However, with emissions rising due to increased coal and gas use, nuclear energy is again regaining favour. Third, the 2021 Texas Freeze. Extreme cold froze gas pipelines and disabled wind turbines in energy-rich Texas. The event underscored the limits of systems built for cost efficiency rather than resilience and the importance of diversified and weather-hardened infrastructure. Fourth, the 2022 Russia-Ukraine war. Europe's reliance on Russia for over 40% of its gas ended abruptly when Russia weaponised energy. The continent faced record liquefied natural gas prices and a coal revival. It was a stark lesson: no energy strategy is sovereign if it is single-sourced. Fifth, the 2025 Iberian Peninsula Blackout. Spain and Portugal suffered a grid collapse due to over-reliance on intermittent renewables without sufficient dispatchable backup. The lack of inertia in the grid exposed the risks of phasing out conventional capacity too rapidly. These events remind us that every major pivot in global energy thinking has followed a breakdown. What we face now is the opportunity to pivot by foresight rather than by force — and the Israel-Iran ceasefire is that opportunity. Despite the rhetoric of global energy transition, the real picture is sobering. Fossil fuels still meet over 80% of global primary energy demand. More than 90% of trans-

portation runs on hydrocarbons. Solar and wind, though scaling fast, are still under 10% of the global energy mix. Exploration investments in oil and gas have fallen sharply even as demand remains high. The result is a structurally tight supply that is vulnerable to even minor shocks. Energy realism must guide the transition. Energy realism does not reject transition. It enables it. It means understanding that transitions are pathways, not switches. The lesson from all these flashpoints is clear. Energy security is no longer a climate policy discussion. It is a survival strategy. India must now decisively move toward an energy sovereignty doctrine that is anchored in domestic capacity, diversified technology, and resilient systems. It has five foundational pillars. First, coal gasification and unlocking indigenous energy. India has over 150 billion tonnes of coal reserves. For decades, high ash content made them unattractive. But with technological advances in gasification and carbon capture, this domestic resource must be leveraged to produce syngas, methanol, hydrogen and fertilizers. We must overcome the ash barrier with innovation. Second, biofuels or where rural empowerment meets national security. The ethanol blending programme has already reduced crude imports and transferred over 792,000 crore to farmers. It has also delivered substantial savings in foreign exchange savings. With E20 on the horizon, annual income to the rural economy may grow further. Through the Sustainable Alternative Towards Affordable Transportation (SATAT) scheme, hundreds of compressed biogas (CBG) plants are generating clean fuel and producing bio-manure rich in 20%-25% organic carbon. This can restore North India's degraded soils, where organic carbon has fallen to 0.5%, versus a healthy level of 2.5%. Improving soil health also enhances water and fertilizer retention, reducing runoff and pollution. Third, nuclear or a zero-carbon baseload for a dispatchable future. India's nuclear footprint has remained stagnant at 8.8 GW for too long. We must revive the thorium road map, secure uranium partnerships and localise Small Modular Reactor technologies. In a grid dominated by renewables, nuclear provides the dispatchable backbone. Fourth, green hydrogen, or 'own the tech, secure the chain'. India's target of five million metric tonnes a year by 2030 must be matched by localised electrolyser manufacturing, catalyst development and storage systems.

The goal is not just green hydrogen. It is sovereign hydrogen. Fifth, pumped hydro storage or the inertia backbone. Pumped hydro is durable, proven, and essential for grid balancing. It complements renewable energy and provides the inertia missing in wind and solar-heavy systems. India must use its topography to create the storage infrastructure of the future. Until a few years ago, India sourced over 60% of its crude oil from West Asia. That figure is now below 45%, as per S&P Global Commodities at Sea. This is not a short-term workaround but reflects a deliberate long-term shift in India's sourcing strategy. The age of sovereignty The Israel-Iran ceasefire offers India a rare chance to act without the scars. India must lead with energy realism — not as a fallback but as the foundation of resilience and sovereignty. It has diversified its sources, reduced dependence on Hormuz, and buffered better than ever.

# 45 crore people lose money in online gaming every year, says govt



New Delhi: The government estimates that around 45 crore people lose close to Rs 20,000 crore every year in online real money gaming, an official source said on Wednesday. According to the source, the government has realised that online real money gaming is a major problem for society and chose to forego revenue loss in preference to people's welfare. "There is a rough estimate that 45 crore people lose money every year. The total impact of the loss is estimated to be tentatively around Rs 20,000 crore," the source added.

The government has tabled "Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Bill 2025" in the Lok Sabha, which proposes to promote eSports and online social gaming while banning money gaming in any form. "Online gaming involving money has become a major problem for society. Every Parliamentarian has raised concerns about its ill effects. Between revenue from one-third of the industry segment and society welfare, the government has chosen society welfare," the source said. According to the source, actions against entities involved in money gaming under the bill will be mainly taken by State governments. The bill proposes that any person offering an online money gaming service in

# Omega-3 fatty acids in diet linked to lower risk of myopia in children: Study

New Delhi: A diet rich in omega-3 fatty acids is not only good for adults, but also crucial to ward off the development of shortsightedness (myopia) in children, according to a global study. Omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids (ω-3 PUFAs), which can only be obtained from the diet — found predominantly in fish oils — are thought to improve or prevent several chronic eye conditions, including dry eye disease and age-related macular degeneration.

But whether they can help ward off myopia wasn't clear, as studies to date have been experimental and haven't included people. "This study provides the human evidence that higher dietary ω-3 PUFA intake is associated with shorter axial length and less myopic refraction, highlighting ω-3 PUFAs as a potential protective dietary factor against myopia development," said corresponding author Prof Jason C Yam, from the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Axial length is the measurement of the eye from the cornea at the front to the retina at the back, and it is an indicator of myopia progression, while myopic refraction, also known as near-sightedness, is a refractive error where the eye focuses light in front of the retina, causing distant objects to appear blurry. "Omega-3 fatty acids may suppress myopia by increasing blood flow through the choroid — a vascular layer in the eye — responsible for delivering nutrients and oxygen, and so staving off scleral hypoxia — oxygen deficiency in the white of the eye and a key factor in the development of shortsightedness," Yam explained. The research published online in the British Journal of Ophthalmology also

violation of the stipulated provisions will face imprisonment of up to three years or a fine that may extend to Rs 1 crore or both. The provisions also stipulate imprisonment of up to two years and or a fine of up to Rs 50 lakh, or both, for those indulging in advertisements in contravention of rules. Several online real money gaming platforms masquerade themselves as a "game of skills" to differentiate themselves from gambling or betting, the source said.

"Those who play the games are victims. They will not be punished as per the bill, but there will be action on those who provide real money gaming platforms, facilitate transaction services, etc," the source said. On the other hand, the bill seeks to promote eSports and online social games, which are a part of the creative economy. "There will be a budget for it, schemes and authority for their promotion. They are two-thirds of the industry. It will create job opportunities for the online gaming industry," the source said. The government has been making efforts for the last three and a half years, which were being bypassed by the real money gaming players, the source added. "The government tried to check it through GST, but it was being bypassed. There was a proposal for a regulatory body, but it was impacted by a conflict of interest. The provisions under the bill were taken after several complaints were received from the public and their representatives," the source said. Meanwhile, industry bodies representing real money game players — India Gaming Federation (IGF), E-Gaming Federation (EGF), and Federation of Indian Fantasy Sports (FIFS) — in a letter to Home Minister Amit Shah raised concerns over the bill, saying it would kill the job-creating industry. The letter stated that the online skill gaming industry is a "sunrise sector" with an enterprise valuation of over Rs 2 lakh crore and annual revenue exceeding Rs 31,000 crore. It contributes over Rs 20,000 crore in direct and indirect taxes annually and is projected to grow at a 20 per cent compound annual growth rate (CAGR), doubling by 2028.



found that a high intake of saturated fats, found in foods such as butter, palm oil, and red meat, may boost the risk of myopia. For the study, a team of researchers from China, the US, and Singapore drew on data from 1,005 children aged 6-8 years old in China. They assessed the children's eyesight and measured their regular diet and physical activity. In all, around a quarter of the children (276; 27.5 per cent) had myopia. Higher dietary intake of omega-3 fatty acids was associated with a lower risk of the condition, while those with regular increased intake of saturated fats had a higher risk. This is an observational study, and as such, can't establish causal and temporal factors, said the researchers, while acknowledging that food frequency questionnaires rely on recall and only provide a "snapshot in time" of diet.

# Coding, community, and collaboration



The first line of code that I ever wrote was in a language called BASIC. That was more than three decades ago, at a summer class in Salem in Tamil Nadu, conducted by college graduates who wanted to teach code during their free time. The instructor, a woman in her twenties, was thrilled to see my excitement at the output — the first 50 numbers of the Fibonacci series. While I was fascinated with coding then, it took me a few more years to become a software programmer. That career lasted four years. The fascination persisted even when I was bit by the journalism bug. However, after I became a journalist, code was no longer a routine job requirement; it became a side hustle.

As a data journalist, though, knowing how to program is a decisive advantage for extracting structured data from websites, such as the Election Commission of India's, which publishes detailed electoral data. But to be a good coder/programmer, a journalist had to stay in touch with the activity. It was not easy to remember syntax, programming techniques, and procedures to repeat tasks much after they were done the first time. This is why data journalists always leaned on full-time programmers and coders to help with more difficult tasks. In India, the free and open source (FOSS) movement has always allowed for voluntary help by enthusiasts in public interest. In line with the FOSS ethos, another voluntary group emerged in the mid-2010s, the 'Open Data' community, which included programmers, data scientists, GIS experts, and hobbyists besides journalists. The Indian community dedicated to promoting Open Data is Datameet. While programmers in the community help retrieve data for journalists, journalists help them in turn by publishing data-based stories in public interest.

My colleagues and I not only relied on the Open Data community to access data sources, but also took the help of talented programmers to create web interactives and do investigative journalism. Prominent examples of these collaborations include several 'Data Point' stories on these pages, hosting the live State-wise vaccination tracker from the CoWIN database, and downloading data and analysing it to calculate excess deaths during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Today, journalists have been further assisted by Gen

AI tools. It is no longer necessary to remember exact syntax or procedures to write robust programs; we have to think algorithmically. By using Gen AI prompts effectively, we can 'vibe code', that is, ask a Gen AI model to write code according to specific instructions. Vibe coding has helped journalists like us scale new heights. We can now write intricate interactive code in JavaScript to analyse in depth the Lok Sabha election results, learn how to leverage open source hardware (Arduino Nano) to collect primary data on issues such as the heat impact in Chennai, and scrape thousands of image PDFs to study electoral rolls for aggregated information. Does that mean we no longer need to leverage the help of the Open Data community? Certainly not. When we found that it took hours to parse image PDFs of one Assembly Constituency (and its nearly 400 parts) using OCR (Optical Character Recognition) libraries recommended by Gen AI large language models, we reached out to a Datameet volunteer who promptly optimised the code to significantly speed up the process. The lesson? It helps to have learned to code to function as a journalist, particularly a data journalist, today. It helps to partake in the AI revolution by using Gen AI to help with coding tasks. But it is even more gratifying to have been part of the FOSS and Open Data movements and to lean on voluntarism for the sake of public interest. My first coding teacher, wherever she is, would be even more proud today.

# TTD CHAIRMAN INSPECTS NEWLY CONSTRUCTED PAC-5 COMPLEX

Tirumala, Aug.30 The TTD Chairman B.R. Naidu, along with Additional EO Ch. Venkaiah Chowdary inspected the newly built Pilgrim Amenities Complex-5 (PAC-5) at Tirumala on Saturday. The Chairman personally inspected the halls, Kalyana Katta, restrooms, and Annaprasadam distribution centres in the building and issued several instructions to the officials concerned. He directed that all facilities be arranged without causing any inconvenience to the pilgrims. Speaking to the media later, the Chairman appreciated the Engineering officials for constructing this complex in an excellent manner. He recalled that the project was approved by the TTD Board in 2018 during the previous TDP Government. He added that this new complex would help ease the accommodation problem to some extent in Tirumala. At present, accommodation is available for only around 45,000 pilgrims in Tirumala.

# Ban on real money games, penalties for endorsements, warrantless searches: What India’s gaming Bill says

GNS News Agency, August 30

The Lok Sabha Wednesday passed the Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Bill, 2025 minutes after it was introduced in the House, offering a legal framework to regulate online gaming companies in India. With the Bill, the government is preparing to take aim at the lucrative yet controversial world of real-money online gaming, and is proposing sweeping bans and harsh penalties for both platforms and their celebrity promoters. The move—framed as a response to mounting national security worries and social harms—is a striking reversal from previous pro-industry overtures. At the heart of the proposed law are blanket prohibitions on online money games, multi-crore fines and potential jail sentences, as officials attempt to rein in an industry increasingly accused of fuelling money laundering, addiction and law evasion, even as it hurtles towards a projected \$9 billion market by 2029.

The Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Bill, 2025, which was shared with Members of Parliament late Tuesday night and is expected to be introduced in Parliament Wednesday, has been drafted over national security concerns related to online gaming platforms, including the use of digital wallets and cryptocurrencies for money laundering and illicit fund transfers, these platforms serving as potential messaging and communication grounds for terror organisations, and offshore entities circumventing Indian tax and legal obligations, among others. Though the IT Ministry has drafted the legislation, it is understood that the Home Ministry has played a crucial role in offering its inputs to the proposed law. A senior government official also said that the government has “made a calculated decision to take a revenue hit in terms of GST collection from the sector, and the regulation is needed in larger public interest”. The Bill, in its current version, is a sharp departure from just about two years ago, when in April 2023, the IT Ministry had introduced rules for online gaming, which were largely seen as pro-industry. However, those rules proved difficult to implement due to potential conflict of issues, as the rules envisioned creating a self regulatory structure, which could have been influenced by the industry. As such, they remained stuck in limbo, even as national security and socio-economic concerns due to such platforms gained traction.

If the Bill is implemented in its current form, it will be a death blow to the online real money gaming industry, which is projected to be a \$9 billion market by 2029. The industry also faces a 28 per cent Goods and Services Tax (GST), with proposals to increase the rate to as high as 40 per cent. The online gaming industry is a sunrise sector in the country, with a collective enterprise valuation of over Rs 2 lakh crore. 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”. The government has calculated that banning online money games will result in a revenue loss of about Rs 15,000 crore to Rs 20,000 crore. As per the industry, it pays over Rs 20,000 crore annually in direct and indirect taxes. The sector has attracted foreign direct investment of over 25,000 crore till June 2022, and currently supports over 2 lakh direct and indirect jobs. 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. In a letter to the Home Ministry late Tuesday night, three major gaming industry associations – the E-Gaming Federation (EGF), All India Gaming Federation (AIGF) and Federation of Indian Fantasy Sports (FIFS) – said that the blanket prohibition will “strike a death knell for this legitimate, job creating industry, and would cause serious harm to Indian users and citizens”. Congress MP Karti Chidambaram said that the law has been introduced without industry consultation, and risks driving financial transactions offshore and pushing users toward the dark web. He has called for the Bill to be

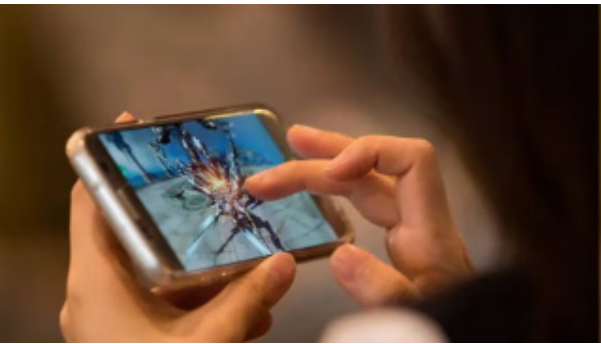
# Trump’s tariffs create ‘urgency to transform India’: billionaire Uday Kotak

Uday Kotak Uday Kotak said policymakers and businesses should use the trade war to “get focused on productivity, efficiency, excellence and building world-class brands”. (X) Kotak Mahindra group founder Uday Kotak on Wednesday said the uncertainty of Donald Trump’s tariff regime had created “a sense of urgency for transforming India” and offered “a great opportunity to pivot”.

In an interview with the Financial Times, Kotak said policymakers and businesses should use the trade war to “get focused on productivity, efficiency, excellence and building world-class brands”. “Manufacturing has to play a very important role”, he said, advocating that producers should not focus on India’s large domestic market to avoid the need for “cutting-edge precision”. “We must think about this as an opportunity for us to get out of our cruise mindset and from a comfort mindset to ‘we are at risk’,” he told the London-based newspaper.

He called for “direct fiscal support” from the government to “turbocharge” small businesses in manufacturing, research and technology. The government should channel more budgetary support to small and medium-sized businesses as the economy grapples with Donald Trump’s punishing tariffs, Kotak told the FT. India’s economy has come under renewed strain after Donald Trump’s recent move to impose an additional 25 per cent tariff on Indian exports to the US, on top of the earlier 25 per cent “reciprocal” levy. The additional tariffs are linked to India’s continued purchase of discounted Russian oil — a practice Trump claims indirectly supports Russia’s war effort in Ukraine. Analysts have warned that the dual tariff regime could shave off 0.5 to 0.7 percentage points from India’s GDP growth, making it critical for India to respond with robust internal reforms. These tariffs have woken Indians up to the risks of global dependency and the urgent need to strengthen our domestic ecosystem.

Trade tariff shock, strong fundamentals and the middle income trap Kotak described the tariffs as “a major shock” that had “woken Indians up” to the economic risks posed



referred to a select committee.

As per the current version of the draft law, the government will prohibit any person from offering online games in India, failing which they could be imprisoned for up to three years, and penalised Rs 1 crore. Those promoting such platforms, such as social media influencers, will also face jail time of two years, and a penalty of Rs 50 lakh. The government will also prohibit banks and financial institutions from facilitating financial transactions on such platforms.

The Bill applies to all online money gaming platforms irrespective of whether they are games of skill or chance, a distinction the industry had lobbied hard for in the past. An “online money game” has been defined as a service played by a user by paying fees, depositing money or other stakes in expectation of winning which entails monetary and other enrichment in return of money or other stakes; but shall not include any e-sports. This is an expansive definition, and is likely to cover all major gaming platforms like Dream11, Winzo, MPL etc. The government, though, is viewing competitive e-sports and game development as crucial drivers of the online gaming industry in the country, and via the proposed law, is keen to promote them. As such, it wants to recognise e-sports as a legitimate form of competitive sport in the country. The government will also help in the creation of platforms or programmes to support game development and distribution. The Bill has envisioned the creation of a central authority to promote competitive e-sports, while ensuring overall compliance with the law. The Centre will recognise, categorise and register “online social games” with the authority and facilitate the development and availability of such games for recreational and educational purposes. These may have an option to accept payment in the form of a subscription fee or access fee, as long as it is not in the form of a stake or wager. Similar to the approach the government has taken in its recent Income Tax Bill on digital search and seizures, the online gaming Bill too allows for authorised officials to carry out search operations at physical and virtual places, even without a warrant....any (authorised) officer...may enter any place, whether physical or digital, and search and arrest without warrant any person found therein who is reasonably suspected of having committed or of committing or of being about to commit any offence under this Act,” the Bill said. “Any place” includes any premises, building, vehicle, computer resource, virtual digital space, electronic records or electronic storage devices and the authorised officer can gain access to such computer resources by overriding any access control or security code. Key reasons for Central control: national security, socio-economic harm

The Bill said that the unchecked expansion of online money gaming services has been linked to “unlawful activities including financial fraud, money-laundering, tax evasion, and in some cases, the financing of terrorism, thereby posing threats to national security, public order and the integrity of the State”. The need for such a law arises from the “deleterious and negative impact of online money games on the individuals, families, society and the nation and given the technical aspects including the very nature of the electronic medium used for online money games, the algorithms applied and the national and transnational networks,” it added. The parallel proliferation of online money games accessible through mobile phones, computers and the internet, and offering monetary returns against user deposits has led to “serious social, financial, psychological and public health harms, particularly among young individuals and economically disadvantaged groups,” it said, adding that such games often use “manipulative design features, addictive algorithms, bots and undisclosed agents, undermining fairness, transparency and user protection, while promoting compulsive behaviour leading to financial ruin”.



The Kotak Mahindra group founder called for “direct fiscal support” from the government to “turbocharge” small businesses in manufacturing, research and technology.

by Trump’s trade war.

According to Kotak, India’s macroeconomic situation is very comfortable. “Our fiscal deficit is under control, our current account is under control, you’ve got macroeconomic stability,” he said. Policymakers and businesses should use the trade war to “get focused on productivity, efficiency, excellence and building world-class brands,” he told the FT. He said manufacturing has to play a very important role and advocated that producers should not focus on India’s large domestic market to avoid the need for “cutting-edge precision”. With a per capita GDP of \$2,700 — against \$13,300 for China and almost \$89,000 for the US — India “cannot be in a comfort zone”. “At the current ‘cruise’ level, we’ll keep on improving our position, but is it fast enough for us to get past the middle-income trap? I think there’s a gap,” he was quoted as saying. The “middle-income trap” refers to a situation where a country achieves a certain level of development but then stagnates, unable to compete with either low-wage economies or high-innovation ones.

# Mumbai rains trigger flooding: What to remember when you are wading through water to avoid infection?

When cities like Mumbai go through heavy rains, flooding and water-logging, a lot of people find themselves walking through contaminated water to get home or reach their workplace. Flood water is more than rainwater and often contains sewage, garbage, industrial contamination and pathogenic microorganisms. Contact with flood water for a prolonged duration can produce a variety of skin and gastrointestinal infections.

The immediate impact on skin One of the conditions commonly seen after floods is the development of skin infections. “Contaminated water can have bacteria and fungi; and skin infections can include, but are not limited to cellulitis, fungal foot infections, or boils. Cuts, scratches and other minor skin wounds serve as entry points for infection, especially in humid conditions when the skin is wet. Other identifiable conditions that are regularly encountered after flooding are contact dermatitis, which is caused by chemicals, detergents or sewage irritants that cause itching, redness and rashes,” says Dr Chandani Jain Gupta, dermatologist, Elantis Healthcare, New Delhi. Extended periods in wet clothing and shoes can also lead to trench foot which includes swelling, numbness and peeling. “In addition, prolonged conditions of warmth and moisture can cause an overgrowth of fungus resulting in itch and rashes, especially between the toes or in skin folds,” she adds. Risk of bacterial infection

Flood water also presents an increased risk for leptospirosis, a bacterial infection that can be spread via rat urine. “Aside from requiring contact with urine, it can also enter the blood through a small crack in the skin. If left untreated, it can become serious,” says Dr Gupta. Many bacteria, viruses and parasites that cause gastrointestinal infections can survive in unchlorinated water for extended periods. “While less likely to be infected by simply walking, people can unknowingly swallow floodwater while wading through high levels or through hand-to-mouth contact, leading to infection. Sometimes freshwater supplies get con-



taminated through broken pipes and get into your supplies,” says Dr Rommel Tickoo, Director, Internal Medicine, Max Healthcare. Even the moisture-laden air, given the wetness all around, can lead to growth of molds in fabrics, carpets, inside cabinets and even AC filters. “Now the mold spores easily travel through air and are drawn deep inside the lungs. This can cause upper respiratory tract infections and pose a threat to older adults, immunocompromised people and those with respiratory conditions like asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease,” adds Dr Tickoo. How can you protect yourself

To ensure your own protection, avoid wading in floodwater as much as possible. If it is unavoidable, use protective footwear like rain boots and change out of wet clothes as soon as possible. “Another safety tip is to wash skin and discard clothing as soon as you reach home, using clean water and a mild soap. Dry out the skin between the toes, where fungus can begin to grow,” says Dr Gupta. She suggests applying antiseptic solution to any small cuts just to ensure that bacteria hanging around floodwater do not make an unwanted entrance. “Rehydrate the skin barrier we just washed off by applying moisture to the skin if conditions allow,” she says. Dr Tickoo suggests using dehumidifiers for damp rooms.

# Amitabh Bachchan reveals ageing challenges: Geriatric doctor shares exercise routines that can build muscle and shield you from falls

Although Bollywood icon Amitabh Bachchan, 82, wrote about the challenges of ageing and balance in his blog post, Dr Mohsin Wali says that the megastar could still be at his busiest best at this age because of his long-term exercise routine and discipline. “Coincidentally, I chanced upon him during an exercise session at St James Court Hotel in London about 25 years ago. I am an exerciser myself and I was most impressed because, unlike Bollywood stars, he woke up real early and devoted time to exercise. That’s the secret of anti-ageing and keeping your balance in old age,” says Dr Wali, senior consultant, medicine, Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, New Delhi and former specialist in Geriatric Cardiology at the University of Michigan.

In his post, Bachchan mentioned how his health is now closely monitored by doctors, how he is advised to sit and wear his pants and how he has handle-bars around the house to avoid falls. His daily routine is now shaped by medicines, yoga and mobility training, he wrote. “Any age is good to exercise. A lot of patients ask me if they can begin exercising after retirement at 60 after a largely sedentary and stressful work life. I say it is the best time to begin without work bothering you anymore. The human body is extremely adaptable and learns fast. In seven days, the muscles can recondition themselves to a new regime you subject them to. I myself lost 40 per cent of my muscles while battling Covid in ICU but my previous exercise drills helped me bounce back while muscle memory helped me begin again,” says Dr Wali, who, at 72, exercises for an hour 8.30 pm onwards every day once he reaches home after his OPD.

Why do the elderly need to build muscle?

That’s needed so that you can avoid falls and move around independently. Without exercising, your muscles start wasting (sarcopenia) from age 45. They shrink and your posture and gait get affected. The ICU admission rate goes up for such elderly people. Their falls increase and their lifespan reduces. Sarcopenia leads to a decline in the amount and quality of muscle tissue, particularly in the lower limbs, which are crucial for maintaining balance and mobility. Sarcopenia can affect daily activities, such as standing, walking and climbing stairs, further increasing the risk of falls and injuries.

With pollution anyway shortening lifespans, it is important that we exercise to counteract that effect. I have a 94-year-old patient, whose angiogram was fine and who had no signs of diabetes or dementia either. All he did was walk, climb stairs and eat clean. Of course, each person’s session has to be individualised rather than saying “exercise for 25 to 30 minutes.” First assess which muscle groups are weak — usually it’s the back and knee muscles — and then work on them under supervision. A trainer and a tutorial video help.

How important are breath exercises?

# CMR Engineering College holds Orientation Day 2K25 for freshers

Hyderabad: CMR Engineering College organised its Orientation Day–2K25 for first-year B.Tech students, welcoming over 2,000 students along with their parents to mark the beginning of their academic journey at CMREC.

Prof. Dr S P Singh gave a presentation on academic rules, while Dr M Amru, Controller of Examinations, explained examination guidelines. Dr M Vijay Karthik, Training and Placement Officer, highlighted career opportunities.

The event featured a cultural performance by the Prajwala Cultural Club and an audio-visual presentation by the Photography Club, setting the tone for the ceremony. Principal Dr A Srinivasula Reddy, Secretary and Correspondent Ch Srisailem Reddy, and Vice-Chairman Ch Bhooal Reddy addressed the gathering. Guest speaker Srisharan Lakkaraju, CEO of Student Tribe, delivered an impactful address on career readiness, skill development, and adaptability in a changing job market. Dr K V Reddy, Convener and HoD of H&S, also spoke on the occasion.



The event featured a cultural performance by the Prajwala Cultural Club and an audio-visual presentation by the Photography Club, setting the tone for the ceremony

## Mohamed Salah wins record 3rd PFA Player of the Year award



GNS News Agency, August 30

Salah emerged as the winner from a six-player shortlist including Liverpool teammate Alexis Mac Allister, Chelsea's Cole Palmer, Manchester United captain Bruno Fernandes, Arsenal midfielder Declan Rice and Newcastle striker Alexander Isak. (AP Photo) Salah emerged as the winner from a six-player shortlist including Liverpool teammate Alexis Mac Allister, Chelsea's Cole Palmer, Manchester United captain Bruno Fernandes, Arsenal midfielder Declan Rice and Newcastle striker Alexander Isak. (AP Photo) Liverpool's Mohamed Salah has become the first man to have won the Professional Footballers' Association (PFA) Player of the Year award a third time. Arsenal's Mariona Caldentey was voted the women's player of the year at the PFA's award ceremony on Tuesday.

Salah, who was previously voted the Player of the Year in 2018 and 2022, powered Liverpool to the Premier League title by scoring 29 goals and providing 18 assists last season. It was the second time Liverpool had won the Premier League since its first season in 1992/93 and the 20th time

overall that the club won England's top flight league, thus equalling the record held by Manchester United. The Egyptian star emerged as the winner from a six-player shortlist including Liverpool teammate Alexis Mac Allister, Chelsea's Cole Palmer, Manchester United captain Bruno Fernandes, Arsenal midfielder Declan Rice and Newcastle striker Alexander Isak. Salah had also collected the Football Writers' Association's Footballer of the Year award for a third time earlier in the year. Aston Villa forward Morgan Rogers was voted as the PFA Young Player of the Year — Villa's first winner since James Milner in 2010 — ahead of fellow nominees Liam Delap (Ipswich / Chelsea), Myles Lewis-Skelly and Ethan Nwaneri (both Arsenal), Milos Kerkez (Bournemouth / Liverpool) and Dean Huijsen (Bournemouth / Real Madrid). Upon receiving the award, Salah said: "I look at myself now, a guy coming from Egypt and making it to the top level, making history today, it's something that makes me so proud."

Liverpool dominated PFA Premier League Team of the Year. Liverpool were also the best represented team in the PFA Premier League Team of the Year. Salah, Mac Allister, Virgil Van Dijk and Ryan Gravenberch were all selected, along with Arsenal's William Saliba, Gabriel and Declan Rice; Nottingham Forest's Matz Sels, the goalkeeper in the eleven, and Chris Wood; Bournemouth's Milos Kerkez, and Newcastle United's embattled forward Alexander Isak. The 29-year-old Caldentey enjoyed a brilliant first season at Arsenal, scoring 19 goals in all competitions — including eight on her team's journey to lifting the Champions League trophy with a victory in the final against her former club, Barcelona. Aston Villa midfielder Morgan Rogers was voted as the men's young player of the year, while Olivia Smith — the Canada striker now at Arsenal after a world-record transfer — won the women's equivalent after a strong season at Liverpool

## Aakash Chopra questions Harshit Rana's spot in Asia Cup squad: 'The last IPL was extremely ordinary...doesn't seem like his numbers are strong enough'

GNS News Agency, August 30

Former Indian cricketer Aakash Chopra has questioned the selection of Harshit Rana in the 2025 Asia Cup squad. Rana, who made his debut for India against England earlier this year as a concussion substitute for Shivam Dube, went on to have a mediocre Indian Premier League 2025 season for the Kolkata Knight Riders.

"Harshit Rana's case is very interesting. His case needs to be discussed because he came as a concussion replacement for Shivam Dube once, picked up three wickets as well, and became the Player of the Match, which was brilliant, but what about before and after that?" Chopra said on his YouTube Channel. "The last IPL was extremely ordinary. His performances have not been very good. His numbers are not flattering. It doesn't seem like his numbers are strong enough to deserve a place in the side." Chopra also predicted that Rana might not get to play all the games, and he might be selected only for the ones that ace pacer Jasprit Bumrah might be missing. "The truth is also that he won't get to play all matches. In fact, he might get to play even one match when Bumrah isn't available," Chopra said. "If he isn't getting a chance to play, you would say that whoever is sitting out doesn't make a difference. However, if you see the recent record, you will find that



Prasidh Krishna should have got a chance, or you could have thought about rewarding Mohammed Siraj. But the team has once again gone towards Harshit," added Chopra. Another former cricketer Krishnamachari Srikkanth to questioned the selection of Rana in the squad. "They have gone backwards. Axar Patel has been axed from vice-captaincy. I don't know how Rinku Singh, Shivam Dube, and Harshit Rana have come in. IPL is considered the main criterion for selection, but the selectors seem to have considered performances before that," he said on his YouTube channel.

## 'Got someone else to take SAT exams for me for US colleges... was born with diamond spoon but life was tough'

GNS News Agency, August 30

Former IPL commissioner Lalit Modi gives an interview to ex-Australian cricketer Michael Clarke at his home in Sardinia. (Screengrab via Beyond23 Cricket Podcast YouTube) Former IPL commissioner Lalit Modi gives an interview to ex-Australian cricketer Michael Clarke at his home in Sardinia. (Screengrab via Beyond23 Cricket Podcast YouTube) The mastermind behind the Indian Premier League (IPL), Lalit Modi, who is currently living in exile in Sardinia, has opened up about what he called a "tough" childhood growing up, even though he himself said that he was born with the proverbial "diamond spoon" in his mouth. Modi was interviewed by former Australian cricketer Michael Clarke for the Beyond23 Cricket Podcast, where the former IPL Commissioner opened up about the league, his personal life and many other things. "I was born with a diamond spoon. Not a silver spoon, not a gold spoon, but with a diamond spoon. And so I always grew up having everything. I went to boarding school at the age of five. It was tough. I went to seven different boarding schools, by the way," Modi told Clarke in the podcast. "It was very tough. My grandfather was very strict. My father was very strict. I came up with a very strict upbringing." "How Modi cheated his way into Duke University

Modi also revealed that he had actually paid someone else to take the SATs (Scholastic Assessment Test, which is a standardized test used in the USA for college admissions) for him.

"I was always the black sheep of the family and I always broke every rule in the book because I always wanted more and more and more. It wasn't easy, you know? I went to seven different schools. I finally ended up in Delhi and I flunked the 12th exam. But I fudged myself because I wanted to go to America, because I wanted to go there and party. I had to get into college. And I got into every college. Somebody did my SATs for me. I got 1560 on 1600. It was my name and his picture. We got away with it in those days. You can't today. When I went to college again I went to a place in North Carolina called Duke University. I was probably one of the very few Indians that were there and I never lived away from home as such outside the country. I was in boarding school so I knew how to make my bed. I knew how to live and look after myself from the age of five. But what made a difference was you went from a world in India to a totally developed first world America," Modi added.

Modi said that in his early days in university he would face questions about life back in India. He said he would be asked if there were vehicles in India or people used bullock carts. He said he had learnt to look the other way in the face

## How Shubman Gill completes India's T20 batting puzzle



GNS News Agency, August 30

After the 2023 IPL, where Shubman Gill amassed 890 runs, he had made a compelling case to be considered as an opener for the 2024 T20 World Cup. He wasn't able to replicate a similar form in India colours and lost his spot for the tournament in the US and Caribbean. This time, 650 runs — which was not even the highest for a Gujarat Titans player, has proved enough to make India's T20 cut not just as another batsman but with a vice-captain designation next to his name. So what has changed between 2024 and now? There were Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli then, and having Gill would have been having three batsmen in a similar mould in T20s. Especially Virat and Gill.

The one aspect that India was missing in their T20 batting ranks, filled with aggressive stroke-makers, since the retirement of the big two, was a batsman who could bat in different gears. Gill's inclusion now takes care of that aspect as well. Apart from offering leadership material, India's team management also seems to have weighed in what Gill's batting brings to this set-up with his approach, where he has shown in the last IPL that he is capable of being aggressive without taking way too many risks and ability to bat in different gears. In the past, Gill has come across as a T20 batsman for whom, manoeuvring through different phases by altering gears isn't easy. However, last IPL, with Gujarat heavily dependent on top three, Gill had shown he has come of age in T20s. It was not just a case of him beginning slow and gradually catching up by shifting gears. He showed he can start on top gear, slow down and play catch up and go full throttle, the entire distance. He did all of it by not embracing a high-risk approach, but merely by backing his own game, where instead of power-packed sixes, he was hurting teams by creaming boundaries after boundaries.

That Gill's accumulation mastery had unlocked new levels wasn't only reflected by the volume of runs this year, but also the synchronous uptick in middle-overs striking and scoring across venues, all done while remaining rooted to his core principles. For the three years between 2022-24, Gill's T20 game largely revolved around his incredible success at his IPL home ground in Ahmedabad. Of the 2637 runs he scored in the period, 1027 runs were piled on at the Titans' base with a jaw-dropping 79.00 average and 166.99 strike rate in 17 innings. Outside the Narendra Modi Stadium, Gill's shares were middling, restricted to 1610 in 55 innings, scoring about 31 runs per dismissal at a 135.97 SR. Notably, the most recent IPL saw a dramatic shift in this regard, with Gill doubling his scoring (446) outside Ahmedabad (204) at a significantly higher average. Gill ar-

## Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli back in ICC ODI rankings after brief disappearance, Babar Azam pushed back to third place

GNS News Agency, August 30

The last time Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli played any form of international cricket was the final of the Champions Trophy against New Zealand on March 9. (File Photo) The last time Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli played any form of international cricket was the final of the Champions Trophy against New Zealand on March 9. (File Photo)

India veterans Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli are back in the International Cricket Council's ODI rankings after a brief disappearance earlier on Wednesday. The pair had disappeared from the standings in the latest update in which Pakistan's Babar Azam took the second spot that Rohit was occupying and New Zealand's Daryl Mitchell replaced Kohli at fourth spot. While the ICC's statement on the rankings, which they had posted on X at 1.33pm IST, didn't make a mention about the pair being dropped, it had caused a flurry on social media. Rohit and Kohli were then back in the rankings a few hours later and the ICC is yet to say anything about the sequence of events. Rohit remains in second spot, thus pushing Babar back down to third place, while Kohli has returned to fourth and pushed Mitchell back down to fifth. Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli were briefly absent from the ODI rankings. (ICC screenshot) Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli were briefly absent from the ODI rankings. (ICC screenshot)

The 38-year-old Rohit and 36-year-old Kohli have both retired from T20Is and Test cricket, making ODIs the only format of international cricket that they are still active in. With the frequency of ODI matches nosediving in recent years, it has led to a lot of speculation over whether they still remain in Indian selectors' plans going into the swing of games for the 2027 World Cup. Rohit remains India's captain in ODIs. He had retired from Tests during the 2025 IPL and Kohli did the same towards the end of the season. Both players retired from T20Is after powering India to victory in the T20 World Cup last year. The last time they played any form of international cricket was the final of the Champions Trophy against New Zealand on March 9, which India won by four wickets, Rohit was declared player of the match for his 76 off 83 balls.

## BAI, Yonex flag urgent need for alternatives

New Delhi: The humble shuttlecock, the lifeline of badminton, has become the sport's biggest worry with prices of imported feather shuttles more than doubling in the past year amid an acute shortage of raw material in China.

A recent article in French newspaper L'Equipe attributed the crisis to changing food habits in China, where preference for pork over duck and goose meat has reduced poultry farming, and to a global surge in badminton's popularity. The squeeze has forced India's top stakeholders to admit the sport can no longer depend solely on goose and duck feathers. "Sooner or later, we have to move away from feathers as a natural product. The sport has grown exponentially, and between China, Indonesia and India alone, we account for nearly two-fifths of the world's population

guably clocked his best ever middle-overs (7-16) striking this year, glimpsing his evolving aptitude. Only two batters (Suryakumar Yadav and Jos Buttler) recorded more runs at a higher strike rate than Gill's 323 at 163.13 in the phase, with 82 percent of those runs made outside Ahmedabad. Playing 198 balls, Gill's 80.90 average also ranked the highest among the nine Indians who had scored at least 250 middle-overs runs in the 2025 season. Although Gill had aggregated higher in the middle overs (454) in 2023, he had yet to set the charts on fire away from home, a significant box ticked in his second year as GT skipper.

This versatility is a luxury that India believe they will need as they are putting together a squad keeping the next year's T20 World Cup in mind. One of the reasons why India's team management was averse to make any huge changes to the batting line-up was it felt more than any other format, in T20s batsmen needed to be given a long rope. Having adapted a high-risk approach, dropping a batsman in case of a failure in search of aggressive intent, could have an adverse impact as they could potentially slow down and look for runs to cement the spot. However, with the T20 World Cup being part of the big picture, there were also enough reasons to have a batsman of Gill's calibre, one who could score without taking high-risks. In the last IPL, where he finished fourth in highest run-scorers list, he showed he can inflict damage at the top in boundaries alone. In that list, his strike-rate of 155.87 was higher than that of only Virat Kohli (retired) and KL Rahul (not in T20 frame) is also a point worth taking into consideration as he still has plenty to improve in that aspect. But for now, India are in a position to accommodate him as they have enough strikes around him. For the T20 World Cup at home, if India happen to play on pitches that are not on a flatter side, then they will surely need a batsman to play the situation rather than go in search of intent. In that regard, there is no better option than Gill.

Who makes the top three?

With Gill now certain to bat at the top, India will now have to slightly shuffle their batting. If they are not keen on disturbing Abhishek Sharma and Sanju Samson at the top, slotting Gill at No 3 could be a way forward with Tilak Varma, Suryakumar Yadav, Hardik Pandya, Axar Patel and Rinku Singh to follow. If India believe Gill needs to be slotted at the top, then it alters their batting dynamics a bit. With Samson being a top-order batsman and chairman of selectors Ajit Agarkar revealing that he stepped in because Gill wasn't available, there is a strong chance that India now look at a wicketkeeper who can bat in the lower middle-order. It is with this complex situation in mind that the selectors preferred Jitesh Sharma over Dhruv Jurel, who had been India's second wicketkeeper in the T20 squad. While India have shown no signs of not compromising on batting depth — most teams with high-risk approaches embrace similar strategy — Gill's inclusion could change that as well. Unless India see Hardik Pandya as their new ball bowler, they need room for at least two seamers and two other slots to include Varun Chakaravathy and Kuldeep Yadav — two X-factor spinners. When that happens, it automatically compromises on batting depth — and Gill's solidity becomes all the more vital. It could mean a slight change of approach, but India feel it is better to test it now rather than close to the T20 World Cup.



Shubman Gill remains top, Kuldeep Yadav slips to third India wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav has slipped to third place, with South Africa's Keshav Maharaj returning to the top spot. Maharaj regained the top position after helping his team beat Australia by 98 runs in the first ODI of their three-match series in Cairns. The 35-year-old left-arm spinner, who was named Player of the Match after grabbing five for 33, overtook Kuldeep and Sri Lanka's Maheesh Theekshana to the top spot, which he had earlier held briefly in November and December 2023. In the men's batting rankings, Shubman Gill continues to top the list with 784 points. He is one of four Indians in the top 10 of the rankings, with Shreyas Iyer being the other Indian apart from Rohit and Kohli. Iyer sits at sixth place. West Indies captain Shai Hope is up two places to ninth position after scoring 120 not out in the final ODI against Pakistan while Aiden Markram (up four places to 21st), Temba Bavuma (up five places to 23rd) and Mitchell Marsh (up six places to 48th) are the others to progress.

In the men's T20I rankings, India's Abhishek Sharma and Tilak Varma remained on the top two places with skipper Suryakumar Yadav in the sixth spot and Yashasvi Jaiswal in 10th position. South Africa's Dewald Brevis continues his upward movement, gaining nine spots to reach 12th position while Australians Marsh and Glenn Maxwell have progressed four and 10 spots, respectively, to reach 25th and 30th positions.

consuming shuttles," chief national coach Pullela Gopichand told PTI. "The scarcity isn't just about fewer ducks or geese being reared, it's also because more people are playing badminton. That's a good sign, but unless we find lab-grown or synthetic options, we will have a problem. I am confident a breakthrough will come in the next five years." While reports suggested Gopichand's academy in Hyderabad was left with less than two weeks of shuttle reserves, BAI secretary Sanjay Mishra said supply to national camps will stabilise this week but admitted the long-term challenge remains. "Yonex has assured us shipments after August 20, so there's no immediate panic. The shortage hasn't affected the camp or any tournament. But these shuttles are made of goose and duck feathers, and as demand rises globally, we have to think of alternatives."

# The Ba\*\*\*ds of Bollywood preview: Karan Johar swears, Salman Khan glowers, Ranveer Singh goes ‘bohot hard’ as Aryan Khan takes a dig at his jail time



The Ba\*\*\*ds of Bollywood preview: Written and directed by Shah Rukh Khan's son Aryan Khan, the preview of The Ba\*\*\*ds of Bollywood dropped on Wednesday. The preview introduces the character of Aasman Singh, played by Lakshya, who gets his dream launch in Bollywood, and is on his way to becoming a star in the movies. The show is a faint reminder of Zoya Akhtar's film Luck By Chance where an outsider rises up amid competition from the biggest stars of Bollywood. Here, Raghav Juyal plays the quintessential 'best friend of the hero' and unlike their relationship in their big screen debut Kill, this one has them supporting each other. Sahher Bambba is introduced as the 'nepokid' and it is suggested that Bobby Deol is playing her father in the series. Karan Johar appears in the teaser in a cameo and it seems like he is taking a dig at the filmy Bollywood producers who swear at the drop of the hat. His sweatshirt reads, 'I did nothing. I just got lucky'. As expected, the show appears to be made on a massive budget with cars flying across VFX screens, and it appears that no expense was spared in enhancing the production value of the project. In a rather fun surprise for the fans, a glowering Salman Khan and Ranveer Singh repeating his 'bohot hard' line appear in cameos in this preview. Aasman is also seen behind the bars with a cop telling him not to worry because cinema people actually become more famous after they spend time in the prison. Many took this as a self-deprecating dig by Aryan who was wrongfully imprisoned in 2022.

The Ba\*\*\*ds of Bollywood released its first glimpse earlier this week with a video featuring writer and director Aryan Khan, and some of the actors of the show. The show stars Lakshya and Sahher Bambba, along with Bobby Deol, Mona Singh, Manoj Pahwa, Manish Chaudhari, Raghav Juyal, Anya Singh, and Gautami Kapoor. So far, the show has presented itself as an Entourage-like take on

the Hindi film industry though it is yet to be known if it will be on the lines of the hit HBO series. The first look of the show had Shah Rukh Khan voicing some of his most popular film dialogues. As Aryan carries over that voice over, he declares that this show will be a mix of "bahut saara pyaar (lots of love)" and "thoda sa vaar (a little bit of a roast)" about Bollywood. The official synopsis of the series reads, "An ambitious outsider and his friends navigate the larger-than-life yet uncertain world of Bollywood. The series blends self-aware humour with a high-stakes narrative — and promises a host of unforgettable cameos, blockbuster thrills and an adventurous ride into the world of Indian cinema."

In an earlier chat with Raj Shamani, Karan Johar praised Aryan's directorial talent and said, "I don't know if I'm even supposed to say this, but I have huge belief in Aryan Khan's directorial talent. I don't want to say anything about his Netflix show, because he'll get very angry, but all I'll say is this: watch out. If there is a King, there will be a Prince. I can say this with confidence, because I've seen the show. He has an individualistic voice as a director. He's not anything like you'd expect Shah Rukh Khan's son to be. He's his own person. He works quietly, he doesn't carry the baggage of his father, he doesn't carry the weight of his legacy. He works hard; he works 20 hours a day. He is a rare personality type." He added, "Whether it was board games or sports or this massive series, he has to win. He likes to win. He takes losses personally, and he gets even more motivated by success." In an earlier chat with Hindi Rush, Manoj Pahwa echoed the same thing and shared, "Aryan doesn't have any starry airs. He is a young and hardworking boy. The process of filming this series was quite long, but it was definitely fun." He added, "I know Shah Rukh works 18-20 hours a day if required. He is a workaholic, and I have seen Aryan work in a similar fashion too." Shah Rukh Khan Aryan Khan Shah Rukh Khan will appear in a cameo in son Aryan Khan's series The Ba\*\*\*ds of Bollywood. During the Waves Summit held earlier this year, Netflix co-CEO Ted Sarandos praised the show and said, "We have a show called The Ba\*\*\*ds of Bollywood coming up that is really fun, and I am going to leave the audience to try to figure out the title completely, but it is so fun. I am four episodes in." In another chat with Nikhil Kamath on his YouTube channel, Ted elaborated, "I think people in India and people outside of India know nothing about the inner workings of Bollywood. So it's a really fun world. He's (Aryan) a very good director."

During an #AskSRK chat on X, Shah Rukh revealed to his fans that he would be appearing in a cameo in his son's show. He shared, "Lots of lovely friends from the industry have participated in Aryan's series. They have been very very gracious and loving to him. Main toh hun hi... Haq se!" The Ba\*\*\*ds of Bollywood revealed its title earlier this year with a video also featuring Shah Rukh Khan. The video did not reveal much about the show but it gave the audience their first glimpse of the creator of the show, Aryan Khan. SRK's son Aryan has chosen an unexpected path as many of his contemporaries have chosen to start their careers as actors. Previously, SRK's daughter Suhana Khan made her debut as an actor in Zoya Akhtar's 2023 film The Archies. Suhana is set to star with her father in his next film, King, which is being directed by Siddharth Anand.

## At Zakir Khan's historic Madison Square Garden event: 'Sakht launda, narm dil'

There is an iconic scene in the movie Lakshya where Hrithik Roshan stands at the Indo-Pak border and says that, though he had always known he was an Indian, until that moment, he had never truly experienced this reality emotionally. For me, that moment was on the 17th of August when I saw Zakir Khan perform at Madison Square Garden. It was the first time that an Indian standup comic had performed at the esteemed venue in Hindi, filling the massive stadium with over 6,000 people who had travelled by train, car, and even flown into New York to be a part of this historic event. Zakir's good friend Tanmay Bhat and popular American comedian, writer and actor Hasan Minhaj opened the evening for him.

Zakir Khan has distinguished himself from his peers by creating a mosaic of humour, pathos, narrative and the bittersweet truths of the human condition through his performances. His family and close friends are an integral part of his sets and stories, and on this special evening, Kuntal, Vishwas, his mother, and most importantly, his father were all with us in story and spirit. Zakir's performance was titled 'Papa yaar', and for two hours, he took us down memory lane, into the gullies of Indore, telling us how his relationship with his father evolved, and evocatively recreating what life was like before social media, smartphones and millions of different parenting styles. To be fair, there were elements from a lot of his previous specials like Class, Kaksha Gyarvi, Haq Se Single and my personal favourite Tathastu. But the presentation was just as impactful. The ease with which Zakir moves from humour to heartbreak and back to humour again is something that never fails to amaze me. He plays to the galleries with jokes about his ex-girlfriend and how men will be men, but he also makes space for the poet and philosopher in him. Amidst the laughter, he gently diverts us onto another path, forcing us to think, feel, fall in love with language and acknowledge that our parents are imperfect but irreplaceable.

While Zakir kept us engaged for over two hours, what was also special was the atmosphere inside the venue. There was such an overwhelming sense of pride and patriotism in the air. A man from our country was performing at the same venue that has seen artists like Elvis Presley, John Lennon, The Rolling Stones, Bob Dylan, Madonna, Elton John, Stevie Wonder, U2, and Bruce Springsteen. We smiled at each other, took pictures of each other and guffawed together when reminded of how parents in the 90s focused on three main things: feeding us, educating us, and disciplining us with a variety of slaps and whacks. Yet when the time came, they let us go. Let us leave home, let us leave them behind, and let us make mistakes as we seek our purpose and identity. There were two extra special moments that evening. The first was when Zakir called his parents on a video call after his performance and had all of us say 'Thank you, Papa' together. The joy and pride on their face to see their son fulfil his dreams and find so much appreciation was heartwarming. The second was when all of us turned on the torchlight on our phones for a picture



It was the first time that an Indian standup comic Zakir Khan had performed at the esteemed venue in Hindi, filling the massive stadium with over 6000 people who had travelled by train, car, and even flown into New York to be a part of this historic event.

and became a night sky of shining lights for the man who dared to soar.

My friend and I had dressed in Indian clothes, since Zakir had said, "kurta pehen ke aye, sundar ban ke aye". Ordinarily, I feel conscious about wearing my Indian clothes in public in the US since it makes me feel like the odd one out. All the stereotyping in cinema, television, and now OTT content has not helped things either. But that day, we wore our Indian finery with pride. People all around us had come dressed in Kurtas, sarees, Salwar kameez or western clothes. But each one of us there wore our identity as an Indian or person of Indian origin with pride. In the current political environment in the United States, where racial minorities are being made to feel unsafe, and India is being targeted with tariffs and punitive economic measures, gathering in such a large group at Madison Square Garden and later Times Square was a moment of great significance.

In addition to the thousands of Indians there, there were also Zakir's fans of Pakistani origin in the audience. A man from Karachi was three seats away, and two more men of Pakistani origin were sitting in the row ahead. If he hadn't said he was from Karachi, I would have never known. Here, thousands of miles away in America, we are just brown immigrants looking to forge a connection to home, our childhood, and the experience of growing up in the subcontinent. Blending in while living in a foreign country often demands erasing parts of yourself that cause you to be othered. Thanks to Zakir Khan, for two hours, all of us at Madison Square Garden felt whole again and laughed like we do when we are in a safe space.

## Actor who appeared in films headlined by Mohanlal, Mammooty, Rajinikanth and Kamal Haasan lost in love; was forced into sex work, died of AIDS



Though enchanting and enticing from the outside, the world of cinema has often been described as beguiling by many of those on the inside. While several aspirants have eventually achieved stardom and ascended to the top, the number of people whose lives withered away without their dreams being fulfilled is far higher. Among such artistes whose lives took a massive nosedive and ended in tragedy is actor Nisha Noor. Despite appearing in films headlined by South superstars like Mohanlal, Mammooty, Rajinikanth, and Kamal Haasan, it was cinema itself that led to Nisha's downfall and eventual lonely death. Born in Tamil Nadu, she was reportedly married off to one of her cousins during her teenage years, but that relationship did not last long. They eventually parted ways, as per a Mathrubhumi report. Although her foray into cinema was accidental, Nisha grew too big too soon

in the 1980s and early '90s.

After debuting in director duo Krishnan–Panju's Mangala Nayagi (1980), she went on to work in films headlined by industry giants like Mammooty, Mohanlal, Rajinikanth, Kamal Haasan, Bharathiraja, K Balachander, IV Sasi, SP Muthuraman, Bhadrar, Madhavi, Lakshmi, MG Soman, Swapna, and Visu. Notable films in her repertoire included Tik Tik Tik, Sri Raghavendrar, Iyer the Great, Devasuram, Kalyana Agathigal, Aval Sumangalithan, Inimai Idho Idho, Ilamai Kolam and Enakkaga Kaathiru, which all showcased her charm that once captivated audiences. However, her life took a tragic turn when she fell in love with a film producer. Her affection, unfortunately, was exploited. Under the pretence of love, he drained her savings before abandoning her. By then, her acting career had also begun to fade, pushing Nisha into financial issues, with no one to help. Her hardships did not end there. As the financial crisis worsened, she was reportedly forced into sex work, with rumours even suggesting that her former partner himself played a role in this desperate turn of events in her life. With this, the doors of the cinema world closed before her forever, and no one was willing to collaborate with her anymore. Sooner or later, everyone forgot her, and Nisha faded from the memories of people as well. Years later, she was spotted sleeping outside a dargah. Unfortunately, she had become unrecognisable due to poor physical health. A Tamil NGO rescued the emaciated woman, and while she was undergoing medical examination in a hospital, they all learned that this was none other than actor Nisha Noor, who had once lit up people's faces whenever she appeared on screen. Police investigations reportedly revealed that she had been living with her mother and after the latter's death, she was completely alone. Later, according to the Times of India, it was revealed that she was suffering from Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS). Nisha Noor passed away in 2007 at a hospital.

## Ba\*\*\*ds of Bollywood: Shah Rukh Khan said Aryan Khan doesn't have what it takes to be an actor', called son 'his set-up for the future'

The wait for fans eager to catch a glimpse of Aryan Khan's directorial debut The Ba\*\*\*ds Of Bollywood will soon be over. Before the makers unveil the web show's teaser on Wednesday, we look back at moments when Shah Rukh Khan praised his son Aryan for his writing skills, while also openly pointing out his shortcomings as an actor. 'Aryan is my set-up for the future'

After Aryan announced his directorial debut, an old clip of Shah Rukh from the promotions of his film Zero resurfaced online. In the clip, King Khan cheekily admitted that Aryan is his "set up" for the future, while also revealing that his son has no interest in acting. He said, "My son does not want to act, he wants to make films. He writes a bit, and he writes quite well. He's learning to be a film director or writer." He added, "He is my set-up for the future. When no big director wants to work with me, I'll bring my own big director." Shah Rukh Khan spoke in detail about Aryan's future plans during his interaction with David Letterman, when the talk show host visited his Mumbai bungalow. In that conversation, SRK revealed that Aryan himself recognises that acting is not his forte. He said, "He (Aryan) doesn't have what it takes to be an actor and he realises that too, but he's a good writer. I think wanting to be an actor has to come from within. Something you really need to do and find a set of skill that helps you do it and learn it. But I think I realised it from him when he said that to me."

Shah Rukh also admitted that Aryan feels the pressure of living up to his father's legacy and is wary of constant comparisons. "He came to me and said, 'I don't think I want to act.' His issue was – which I think is practical and honest – he said, 'Every time I'll be compared to you... and I don't want to be in that position'," Shah Rukh had revealed. Interestingly, while SRK has often expressed doubts about Aryan's ability to act in past interviews, fans have been going gaga over his screen presence, looks, and voice after watching the recent promotional video of The Ba\*\*\*ds Of Bollywood". The clip featured Aryan making a cameo to introduce his show, and fans were quick to point out that his screen presence is eerily similar to Shah Rukh's. Some even vouched for him to consider an acting debut. Aryan had made his interests clear to SRK years ago,



and the superstar respected his choice by encouraging him to focus on filmmaking instead. In an old interview, Shah Rukh recalled sending Aryan to celebrated cinematographer Ravi Varman to learn camera work, and explained why he never imposed acting on his son. He said, "I told him to learn whichever aspects of film he can go and learn... The other day I met (famed cinematographer) Ravi Varman, I told him go and learn camera (work) with him. He has been doing that." During the same interaction, Shah Rukh also stressed that he wants his children to carve out their own path and not ride on his stardom. "As actors and filmmakers, my kids, in case they wish to come in, they have to bring something new. They can't live off the stuff their father has managed to do. It's important they bring in something new and if I impose myself, they won't be able to. Let them go and bring in something radical and strange. Wrong, maybe. But it should be newer than what I have been able to give," the actor had said.

## Tiger Shroff and family owns MMA league, training facility with 16 gyms across India: Ayesha and Krishna Shroff explain their business empire

Almost all Bollywood celebrities diversify their portfolio and have multiple income sources, like businesses and real estate. Similarly, actor Tiger Shroff has invested in his own training facility called MMA Matrix and an MMA fighting league called Matrix Fight Night. However, he isn't the sole owner of these and shares the control with his mother, Ayesha Shroff, and sister, Krishna Shroff. In a recent interview, Ayesha talked about her own career as a film producer in Bollywood and how the family have overcome tough times to create an empire for themselves. While talking to Zero1 Hustle, both mother and daughter shared the story behind the gym, and Krishna said, "Our gym is basically a passion project that my mother, brother, and I came together for. There is no one better than Tiger to represent something like fitness; he is the epitome of it. I think a lot of tier-2 and 3 cities have shown him a lot of love, and some of his most loyal fans come from those places. Tiger was very keen to bring these facilities to them." Ayesha added that the idea behind the Matrix gym was to create a premium space that combined several different aspects of fitness and martial arts. "No one really had what our gym possessed, at least in the city. Tiger already did martial arts, and Krishna was big on strength training. So we thought of building a space which combines both those disciplines. The name came from the film Matrix. There is no division, and everyone contributes equally to the venture, Tiger less in terms of time, because of his acting career. We put

in our own money, and we weren't answerable to any investors. Today we have 16 gyms Pan-India, including our mothership here. Now we have involved some partners as well, and we choose between franchising or partnering up with someone, based on the kind of money they can put in," said Ayesha. Talking about the martial arts promotion company Matrix Fight Night, Ayesha took the viewers back to where the journey started for them and said, "It all started when we attended an MMA show here in India, and Tiger was a part of the organisation that hosted it for some time as well. Krishna had been a fan of MMA for a long time, and she was also very familiar with a lot of Indian and international fighters, so that's her strong point. I take care of the organising aspect of it all, and my love for films and production translates here. Everything, down to the very last detail, goes through me." She explained the pay scale of their organisation and the business model and stated that they are on their way to competing with the biggest brands in the world of MMA. "The ticketing thing doesn't work in India yet, because we still don't have the megastars to bring in those huge crowds. When we came into the space, the starting salary for an Indian fighter was \$200 (Rs 17k), and now a debut fighter gets paid \$2000 (Rs 1.74 lakh). If you are fighting for a title, you get paid \$10k (Rs 8.7 lakh). So if you compare our pay scale with a lot of other promotions globally, we are still pretty good."