

Centre paid farmers Rs 3.47 lakh crore in 2024-25 for purchase of crops at MSP

New Delhi: Minister of Agriculture Shivraj Singh Chouhan informed Parliament on Tuesday that the Centre has paid Rs 3.47 lakh crore directly to farmers for the purchase of 1,223 lakh metric tonnes of foodgrains at the minimum support price (MSP) during the 2024-25 crop year.

In a written reply to a question in the Lok Sabha, the minister said that every year, the government fixes the MSP for 22 mandated agricultural crops based on the recommendations of Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP), after considering the views of State Governments and Central Ministries concerned.

He explained that the Union Budget for 2018-19 had announced the pre-determined principle to keep MSPs at levels of at least one and half times of the cost of production. Accordingly, the government had increased MSPs for all mandated Kharif, Rabi and other commercial crops with a minimum return of 50 per cent over all India weighted average cost of production from year 2018-19 onwards.

The government offers to procure agricultural crops through designated procurement agencies and farmers have the option to sell their produce to the government agencies or in the open market whichever is advantageous to them. The data show that the increased MSP has benefited farmers of the country, he added.

The government has also taken several other initiatives for the benefit of farmers, which include Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana and Restructured Weather Based Crop Insurance Scheme, under which Rs 12,256 crore has been paid to farmers during 2024-25.

Chouhan said that the two insurance schemes were introduced from Kharif 2016 to provide financial support to farmers suffering crop loss arising out of natural calamities, adverse weather incidence and to stabilize the income of farmers, etc. Comprehensive risk insurance is provided under the scheme from pre-sowing to post-harvest losses. This scheme is voluntary for states and farmers as well.

The government has also paid Rs 76,980 crore under the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF) since it was set up in FY 2020-21, till November 25,



2025. This is a medium-long term debt financing facility for investment in viable projects for post-harvest management infrastructure and community farming assets through interest subvention and credit guarantee support.

As many as 1,39,837 projects have been sanctioned under AIF across the country. These sanctioned projects have mobilised an investment of Rs.1,22,731 crore in the agriculture sector.

Besides, the government is implementing the Agricultural Marketing Scheme and Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana to encourage organic farming in the country and increase the earnings of farmers in the country, the minister added.

Bojju patel exhorts cadres to ensure Cong's win in local body polls

Hyderabad Nirmal DCC president and MLA Vedma Bojju Patel emphasised that party workers must work with the goal of winning the upcoming local body elections. Speaking at a press meet held at Nirmal on Monday, he said that priority will be accorded to Backward Classes (BCs) in general seats.

This was Patel's first visit to Nirmal district headquarters after being elected as DCC president. He was warmly welcomed by former DCC president Srihari Rao and party workers.

Bojju exuded confidence that Congress candidates will win in all local body constituencies. Congress leaders in Nirmal district will be united and work collectively towards victory in the local body elections.

He emphasised that the people should be made aware of the 10 years of exploitation under the previous BRS government. He also mentioned that coordination committees will be set up soon. Patel announced that Chief Minister Revanth Reddy will visit Adilabad on December 4, and urged everyone to make the visit a grand success.





Satyanarayana assumes charge as Khammam DCC president

Khammam: Nooti Satyanarayana Goud assumed charge as the new president of the Khammam District Congress Committee (DCC) on Monday. The oath-taking ceremony, held at Sanjeeva Reddy Bhavan in Khammam, generated enthusiasm among Congress cadre across the district.

Ministers Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka, Tummala Nageswara Rao, and Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy attended the ceremony as chief guests and congratulated the newly appointed DCC president.

Addressing the gathering, Ponguleti said, "Under the leadership of Chief Minister Revanth Reddy and TPCC President Mahesh Kumar Goud, Congress workers across the State are being reassured and given due importance. Similarly, in Khammam district, the new president should work in full coordination and extend equal importance to all leaders and party workers who have long been loyal to the party."

The event presided over by outgoing DCC President Durgaprasad along with Mohammed Javeed was attended by MLAs Matta Ragamayeend Randas Naik, and other leaders.

MLA Satyam urges CM to help Kondagattu fire victims

MLA Medipalli Satyam, along with Minister Adduri Laxman Kumar, met Chief Minister Revanth Reddy and submitted a petition to the Chief Minister to grant Rs 5 lakh compensation to Kondagattu fire accident victims



Chief Minister Revanth Reddy responded positively and assured that he will support the victims of the fire accident that occurred in Kondagattu, a famous pilgrimage site in North Telangana. The MLA explained to the Chief Minister that the shops caught fire in the middle of the night and that those who depended on the shops for their livelihood lost everything and were stranded on the road.

The MLA said that the Chief Minister has instructed the officials to prepare and send the fire accident report. The MLA thanked Chief Minister Revanth Reddy for responding positively when asked to sanction compensation.

Sustainable coal mining needs ecological priority, says MoEFCC expert

Peddapalli: Sustainable coal mining is possible only when development and environmental protection move together, and ignoring the environment in the name of progress is no longer acceptable, said Inder Pal Singh Matharu, chairman of Expert Appraisal Committee of the Ministry of Environment,

floods, earthquakes, melting polar ice caps and the retreat of Himalayan glaciers. He urged participants to arrive at strong recommendations on how mining could continue while giving maximum importance to the environment.



Forest and Climate Change.

He was speaking at a national workshop on 'Coal Mining and Environmental Sustainability' organised by Singareni Collieries in Hyderabad on Monday. Matharu said many countries were giving top priority to environmental conservation, while India still had ground to cover. Human-induced environmental damage, he noted, was contributing to

carbon dioxide from thermal plant flue gas and convert it into methanol. Under the "Neeti Binduvu-Jala Sindhu" programme, SCCL constructed 62 new tanks and desilted 45 to improve groundwater levels.

The workshop was attended by representatives from various coal companies across India and eminent environmental experts.

SCCL CMD N Balram said Singareni had always operated within the guidelines of the Environment Ministry and had taken up several eco-friendly initiatives. These include sand manufacturing plants from overburden, mist spraying systems and dry fog dust suppression methods to reduce air pollution. The company has also set up solar plants and is working on pumped storage, green hydrogen and geothermal projects. He added that Singareni had begun a pilot project to capture

MP Kavya raises concern over lack of skill devt progs in Warangal



Warangal MP Kadiyam Kavya voiced strong concerns over the lack of effective skill development programmes in her constituency during the parliamentary session started here on Monday.

Questioning the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship on the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), she demanded details on operational centres, reservations for marginalised groups, industry linkages, and employment results in Warangal district.

Kavya expressed frustration with the government's reply, noting that while eight training centres were empanelled since PMKVY's launch, none are active under the current PMKVY 4.0. "This inaction leaves our youth without vital short-term train-

ing courses, hindering their progress in a competitive job market," she stated. She called for urgent reactivation, emphasising Warangal's need for demand-driven skills amid rising unemployment.

On inclusivity, the MP highlighted the absence of specific reservations in PMKVY 4.0 for women and Scheduled Castes (SC), despite past data showing 4,592 SC candidates trained with 76% certification, and 12,461 women at 80%.

"We must enforce targeted measures to uplift these communities," Kavya urged, pushing for better implementation.

She praised industry partnerships for apprenticeships and on-the-job training (OJT) with MSMEs and corporates but criticised the low 41% placement rate from 2015-2022, where only 6,322 of 15,398 certified candidates found jobs.

"Tracking wage increments and sustainable careers is essential," she added.

Minister Jayant Chaudhary responded that PMKVY 4.0 focuses on career-oriented OJT without reservations.

Undeterred, Kavya pledged to pursue the issue, saying, "Warangal's potential demands real action for empowered futures."

Her intervention spotlights Telangana's skill challenges in India's

Mancherial: Missing girl was raped, then murdered: Police

Mancherial: Police have solved the case of a missing and murdered girl in Nambala village, under Dandepalli police station limits of Mancherial district.

The girl, who went missing on the 24th of last month, was found dead three days later November 27 in a farm well.

Mancherial DCP Eggadi Bhaskar revealed the details of the case. The accused, Shanigarpapu Babu and Upparapu Satish, abducted the victim while she was playing under a tamarind tree. They gagged her and took her into a nearby cotton field. There, they assaulted her one after the other. Fearing that she might reveal the incident to others, they decided to kill her. They strangled her and then threw her body into a nearby agricultural well.

ACP Prakash, CI of Luxettipet Ramanamurthy,



SI of Dandepalli Taheesinuddin, Luxettipet SI Suresh, Jannaram SI Anusha, Head Constables Gouse, Ganga Naik, Vasanth, Zaheer, Anand, and other constables who worked to crack the case were commended by DCP Eggadi Bhaskar.

Collector inspects nomination centres

District Election Officer and Collector Rahul Sharma instructed that the nomination process for the 2025 Gram Panchayat elections in the district must be conducted transparently, and without any disruptions, and that all departments should work in coordination to achieve this.

He made surprise inspections of the nomination centers at Kamalapur, Amudalapalli, Rampur, Gollabuddharam, Lambadi Tanda 'B', and Dudeekulapalli within the Bhupalpalli mandal area on Monday.

He reviewed nomination receipt procedures, record entry, technical facilities, and arrangements for candidate conveniences. He examined the register entries for nominations, checking the date, time, and serial numbers.

With Tuesday being the final day for filing nominations for the second phase, he directed returning officers to make appropriate arrangements in view of the likely large number of candidates expected to arrive.



He advised that candidate details be uploaded to T-Poll immediately and that additional staff be arranged to ensure the upload process proceeds without any interruptions. He instructed officials and staff to carry out every stage of election management responsibly, impartially, and transparently.

MPDO Taruni Prasad, returning officers Sadanandam Anil Kumar, and MPO Nagaraju were present.

Karnataka's power struggle continues

The breakfast diplomacy has failed to break the logjam in Karnataka's power tussle between Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and his ambitious deputy DK Shivakumar. After gorging over sumptuous South Indian delicacies of idli and upma, the two warring leaders had to eat their own words and put up a show of unity before the media. As is the normal practice for Congress leaders engaged in a power battle, both vowed to abide by the decision of the high command and, in a good old-fashioned way, went on to blame the media for creating the crisis. What was supposed to be a truce meeting over breakfast at the Chief Minister's residence in Bengaluru ended up being a choreographed performance to send a message of cohesion. It was not clear what strategy the party high command has in mind to resolve the deepening leadership crisis in the State. And, Mallikarjuna Kharge being at the organisational helm has not helped matters in his home State. For now, the embers of the fragile egos are left unaddressed in the hope that the warring groups won't precipitate matters till the next Assembly elections,

due in 2028. A key takeaway from Karnataka's unending political drama is that the party's ability to negotiate with powerful regional leaders has weakened considerably. This is due to a series of electoral debacles that the Congress has suffered in recent times. Moreover, the scars of Madhya Pradesh, where its government collapsed due to an internal power struggle over five years ago, are still fresh in Congress' memory.

The Congressmen in Karnataka are divided into two camps, with supporters of Siddaramaiah rooting for him to complete his full term while backers of Shivakumar believe it's "now or never" for their leader to occupy the coveted post. An increasingly restless Shivakumar is staking his claim to the chief ministership, citing a purported rotational power arrangement. This has put the party high command in a fix. Complicating matters further, several other leaders sense an opportunity in this chaos, including veterans like G Parameshwara, MB Patil and Satish Jarkiholi. The caste dynamics add another layer of complexity.



Collector stresses on spreading wide awareness about AIDS

On the occasion of World AIDS Day, December 1, Collector Abhilasha Abhinav flagged off an awareness rally on AIDS from the RDO office to the District Parishad office in Nirmal on Monday.

Speaking on the occasion, the Collector emphasised that officials should spread wide awareness about AIDS. She mentioned that the district has AIDS testing and counseling centers to support patients. She stressed that awareness about AIDS prevention should begin at the school level. Special groups at higher risk should be identified, and regular diagnostic tests should be conducted.

Those diagnosed should be provided immediate treatment. She also appreciated the efforts of grassroots staff and officials in reducing maternal mortality in the district. She noted that innovative programmes like Amma Rakshitha and the proactive involvement of field staff have significantly reduced maternal deaths.

She expressed determination to work further so that the district can be developed into a maternal-death-free district.

During the rally, cultural troupes performed songs on drum beats to spread awareness about AIDS prevention among the public.

Additional Collector Faizan Ahmed, DMHO Rajender, DLSA Secretary Radhika, DEO Bhojanna, ANMs, ASHA workers, students, other officials, and staff participated in the programme.

Two killed in separate road accidents in Hyderabad

Hyderabad: Two separate road accidents claimed the lives of a woman and a food-delivery executive on Monday night.

In the first incident, a fatal collision occurred on the national highway near Peddashapur Tanda in Shamshabad mandal. According to police, a speeding Bullet motorcycle hit two women who were crossing the road from Shapur Tanda. One of the victims, identified as Durga (35), died on the spot due to severe injuries. The Shamshabad Rural Police are investigating. In another incident, in Pet Basheerabad, a 23-year-old food delivery executive, Anjit Kumar, died on the spot after a speeding truck rammed his two-wheeler in Kompally. The Pet Basheerabad police are investigating. They are examining the CCTV footage to identify the vehicle and ascertain the sequence of events.

Four held for murder in Nandyal property grab



Nandyal: Nandyal SP Sunil Kumar Sheoran announced the arrest of four accused involved in the murder of Medari Pullaiah (65), a resident of VC Colony, Nandyal.

Addressing a press conference on Monday, the SP said the case originated from a man-missing complaint lodged by the victim's son, Chintala Aditya Prasad (32), a resident of Bengaluru, at Nandyal 3 Town Police Station on November 19. The complainant reported that his father had been untraceable since November 15 and that two DVRs connected to CCTV cameras from their agricultural land and his father's motorcycle were also missing. A missing case under Cr.No.163/2025 was subsequently registered.

SP Sheoran stated that during the investigation, police traced an unidentified body floating in the Kundu river near the Tellapuri-Banaganapalle road on November 29. The deceased bore serious head injuries and a skull fracture. The body was later identified as that of Pullaiah by his son. Following this, the case was altered into a murder investigation, and special police teams intensified efforts to trace the culprits.

Based on technical evidence and credible information, the police arrested four accused: Bhojanala Dhanunjaya (35), Gangadhara Raghava (33), Besta Srikanth (22) and Katepogu Santosh (20). The SP revealed that Dhanunjaya, who became acquainted with the victim 18 months ago during a property transaction, planned to eliminate him to seize his assets. On November 14 night, the accused lured the victim in a rented Bolero vehicle towards Bhogeswaram in Gadivemula mandal, demanded Rs 25 lakh, and when he refused, strangled him with a rope, assaulted him, and hit him on the head with a knife handle, causing his death. They later disposed of the body in the Kundu river near Madduru village and looted DVR units, documents, and a laptop from the victim's residence.

SP Sheoran said the police recovered a knife, two DVRs, a laptop, and several documents from the possession of the accused. He cautioned the public

to be vigilant while dealing with unknown persons and avoid sharing sensitive personal or property-related information. »»%If anyone senses suspicious activity or faces threats, they should immediately inform the police,%µµ %he added, assuring strict action against criminal elements in the district.

Spl focus on development of backward regions: Keshav

Anantapur: Finance minister P Keshav visited households in Boodigavi village of Uravakonda mandal on Monday to distribute pensions under the NTR Bharosa Scheme. Going door-to-door, he handed pensions to beneficiaries, interacted with residents, and assured quick action on local issues.

He later inaugurated the newly constructed Zilla Parishad High School building, developed at a cost of Rs 43.75 lakh under RMSA, and inspected the primary school.

Earlier, he offered special prayers at the Shiva and Suryanarayana Swamy temples.

Addressing the media, Minister Keshav said the government led by Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu is working to balance welfare and development across Andhra Pradesh. Despite



financial constraints, he said the NDA Government and Prime Minister Narendra Modi have supported major projects, with special focus on the development of backward regions including Rayalaseema and North Andhra. -He criticised the previous government for neglecting irrigation

Nara Lokesh submits report on Cyclone Montha damage to union home minister Amit Shah

State Ministers Lokesh and Anita have submitted a comprehensive report to Union Home Minister Amit Shah detailing the extensive damage caused by Cyclone Montha in Andhra Pradesh, estimated at Rs 6,352 crore. The meeting, held in Amit Shah's chamber in Parliament Hall, included TDP MPs who voiced their concerns over the profound suffering of the people in Andhra Pradesh and the significant infrastructure destruction caused by the cyclone.



According to the report, 3,109 villages have been impacted, prompting the Andhra Pradesh government to provide immediate assistance of ₹3,000 to each affected family. The financial breakdown of the losses includes Rs 271 crore for agriculture-related sectors, Rs 4,324 crore for roads and infrastructure, Rs 41 crore for the power sector, Rs 369 crore for water resources projects, and Rs 1,302 crore for permanent structures.

Of the total loss of Rs 6,352 crore, Rs 902 crore is needed for immediate relief and temporary restoration, as outlined by NDRF guidelines. Lokesh also informed Amit Shah that a central team had recently conducted a field survey of the cyclone's damage. Subsequently, he met with Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan to present a report on the destruction caused by the cyclone and appealed for prompt compensation.

projects in Rayalaseema, noting that no canals or trenches were developed in the past five years.

He said works on Handri-Neeva, Galeru-Nagari and other stalled projects have been revived.

The first phase of Handri-Neeva widening is complete, and second-

phase lining works are underway.

Emphasising education, he said ₹90,000 is being spent per student annually and assured prompt resolution of sanitation issues in schools. Officials, local leaders, teachers and villagers participated in the programme.

Tourism minister urges film fraternity to look up to AP

Vijayawada: Andhra Pradesh is positioning itself as India's premier film production destination, with tourism and cinematography minister Kandula Durgesh unveiling ambitious plans at Mumbai's CII Big Picture Summit 2025.

The state government is preparing to launch a comprehensive Film Tourism Policy designed to strengthen the Telugu film industry across all aspects—from production through exhibition. Addressing the CII Big Picture Summit in Mumbai on Monday, Durgesh called for investor collaboration, promising robust support for ventures in India's expanding media and entertainment sector.

Speaking of Telugu cinema's prominence, Durgesh noted it ranks second nationally after Hindi films, contributing approximately 20 per cent to India's film industry. Blockbusters including Baahubali, RRR, Kalki 2898 AD, the Push paseries, Salaar and OG exemplify the industry's global appeal through exceptional storytelling, visual effects,



and production quality that have transformed Telugu cinema into an international brand.

The minister stressed Andhra Pradesh's determination to lead India's digitally expanding entertainment sector transformation, pledging to make the state the country's most shooting-friendly location.

The forthcoming policy promises swift, transparent permissions for filming in government and public spaces, removing bureaucratic obstacles.

The government plans substantial invest-

ments establishing AP as a global hub—dubbed 'Andhra Valley'—for artificial intelligence, visual effects and gaming sectors.

The new Film Policy will incentivise critical infrastructure development, offering competitive rewards for investments in studios, dubbing facilities, re-recording centres, and support services.

Minister Durgesh aims to attract high-value intellectual property to Andhra Pradesh's media and entertainment sector.

AP Tourism Development Corporation managing director Amrapali Kata presented infrastruc-

ture strengthening proposals to industry leaders including Cube Cinema's Senthil Kumar, central government officials, and prominent producers. The minister held discussions with YouTube India MD Gunjan Soni and representatives from numerous entertainment companies, including Basic Play Studio, Papa Film Entertainment, Picture Perfect, Kalpavanam Studios and major amusement industry associations. These meetings detailed investment opportunities and state incentives available for establishing integrated film cities and modern production facilities.

Strict measures are being taken to ensure beneficiaries receive pension: Farooq

Nandyal: Minister for Law and Minority Welfare, N.M.D. Farooq, visited Bhimavaram village in Nandyal mandal on Monday to personally distribute pensions under the NTR Bharosa social security scheme. Accompanied by District Collector G Rajakumari, the minister handed over pensions directly to the beneficiaries at their homes, emphasizing the government's commitment to reaching the underprivileged across the state.

Speaking on the occasion, Minister Farooq said that strict arrangements are in place to ensure that all beneficiaries receive their pensions on the 1st of every month. In cases where the date falls on a holiday, pen-



sions are provided a day in advance. He expressed delight in seeing the joy on the faces of senior citizens, persons with disabilities, and widows who received their pensions, highlighting the program's positive impact on the lives of the most vulnerable.

District Collector Raja Kumari interacted closely with the beneficiaries, inquiring whether pensions were received on time and if they faced any difficulties during distribution.

She personally attended to the request of a mentally challenged individual whose pension approval was pending, assuring immediate action for resolution. The collector noted that pensions are not just financial assistance but have become a vital source of livelihood for many families. Following the pension distribution, Minister Farooq and District Collector Rajakumari inaugurated the new village secretariat building, constructed at a cost of Rs 40 lakh, and a CC road developed with a Rs 7 lakh investment in Bhimavaram. The minister remarked that the new secretariat would bring government services closer to the people, ensuring faster and more efficient administration.

The collector emphasized the importance of community participation in the development of rural infrastructure. The event was attended by RDO Vishwanath, MRO, MPDO, MPP, revenue officials, secretariat staff, and local representatives.

Janardhan Reddy visits Soudardinne village

Kovelakuntla: Road and Buildings Minister BC Janardhan Reddy visited Soudardinne village on Monday to personally distribute NTR Bharosa social pensions to senior citizens. The minister went door-to-door, interacting with beneficiaries, checking on their well-being, and handing over pensions directly at their homes, ensuring a personal touch in the welfare programme.

During the visit, Minister Janardhan Reddy engaged with the villagers to understand local issues, including public amenities, infrastructure needs, and government service delivery. He emphasized the coalition government's achievements, noting that over Rs.50,000 crore in pensions had been provided to beneficiaries across the state in just 17 months, highlighting the administration's focus on welfare and inclusive development.

The minister also reminded that pensions had been increased from Rs.3,000 to Rs 4,000 per month immediately after taking office and are disbursed promptly on the 1st of every month to over 64 lakh beneficiaries. Additionally, a facility allowing seniors to receive three months' pension in advance has been introduced, reflecting the government's commitment to the comfort and welfare of the elderly population.



NEET PG percentile slashed so seats don't go vacant; may open doors to seat sale racket

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) has lowered the NEET PG counselling 2024 percentile. The move aims to ensure seats don't go vacant in the ongoing counselling process. Most of the vacant seats are from pre-clinical and para-clinical branches like Biochemistry, Anatomy, and others. Experts say providing better paying jobs to candidates emerging from these branches could help resolve the issue. From the General/EWS category, candidates with 15 percentile and above will be eligible to participate in counselling. From the SC/ST/OBC/ PwD category, candidates with 10 percentile and above will be eligible to participate in counselling. At the start of counselling, the qualifying percentile for General/EWS candidates was 50 percentile. It was 40 percentile for SC/ST/OBC/ PwD category.

According to Dr. Pravin H. Shingare, Former Director of Medical Education and Research, Maharashtra State, Mumbai, says approximately 80% of the seats of pre-clinical and para-clinical branches like Anatomy, Physiology, Microbiology, Forensic Medicine, Community Medicine remain vacant every year. He says studying these branches leads to job roles like performing autopsy examinations, biochemical tests, blood and urine tests, and so on. They also open up opportunities in the pharmacy industry and teaching space. "MBBS graduates are not keenly pursuing these branches as the courses and the careers they will embark upon rarely come with patient exposure to which they are inclined."

Dr. Dhruv Chauhan, National Council Member, Indian Medical Association: Junior Doctors' Network (IMA-JDN), says pursuing these branches makes MBBS students feel on the same threshold as BSc graduates since there is little to distinguish between them and other graduates performing similar roles at work. Although only MBBS graduates can do these PG courses, they don't choose to opt for these branches. "But that is only one aspect of it. These branches don't offer any patient exposure and the payscale is not good, so the seats remain vacant", he said. Dr. Shingare says this decision to increase the qualifying criteria by reducing the percentile is not new. A lot of candidates who take the exam do not qualify. Students who don't get any seats when the admission process is concluding will be willing to take the vacant ones if provided with an opportunity. "As you take qualifying criteria down you open up opportunities for them. These experiments are done every year. So last year the qualifying percentile was made zero", he said.

Dr. Shingare says the NEET PG exam was introduced in 2013, before that there were no qualifying criteria for studying PG in India. He says this decision to take the qualifying criteria down could be soon applied to super speciality courses as well, which are studied after PG. "Any student who cleared MBBS was qualified to apply for PG education. Since this exam came, that has changed. Does that mean the way we functioned for the last 75 years was wrong?" he said. Dr. Chauhan adds a note



of caution, however. He says that reducing the percentile creates a loophole for private medical colleges to sell their seats for crores of rupees. "During counselling, some students block seats in clinical branches after a round but don't join, leaving the seats vacant in subsequently. When the percentile is reduced, these seats that

are in demand can be illegally sold to candidates with as little as 10 percentile for a hefty sum. In effect, you are downgrading merit in exchange for money that is the intent behind NEET", he said. Dr. Shingare seeks to dispel any impression that Deemed Universities can make money by increasing the number of seats. They do

not get permission to increase the number of seats at the fag end of admission process. "They need to do it a year in advance. For 2026 seats, they need to get approval in August 2025". Dr. Chauhan says it needs to be investigated why non-clinical seats are not getting filled. "

How AI is redefining death, memory and immortality

Imagine attending a funeral where the person who has died speaks directly to you, answering your questions and sharing memories. This happened at the funeral of Marina Smith, a Holocaust educator who died in 2022. Thanks to an AI technology company called StoryFile, Smith seemed to interact naturally with her family and friends. The system used prerecorded answers combined with artificial intelligence to create a realistic, interactive experience. This wasn't just a video; it was something closer to a real conversation, giving people a new way to feel connected to a loved one after they're gone.

Virtual life after death Technology has already begun to change how people think about life after death. Several technology companies are helping people manage their digital lives after they're gone. For example, Apple, Google and Meta offer tools to allow someone you trust to access your online accounts when you die. Microsoft has patented a system that can take someone's digital data – such as texts, emails and social media posts – and use it to create a chatbot. This chatbot can respond in ways that sound like the original person.

In South Korea, a group of media companies took this idea even further. A docu-

mentary called "Meeting You" showed a mother reunited with her daughter through virtual reality. Using advanced digital imaging and voice technology, the mother was able to see and talk to her dead daughter as if she were really there. These examples may seem like science fiction, but they're real tools available today. As AI continues to improve, the possibility of creating digital versions of people after they die feels closer than ever.

Who owns your digital afterlife?

While the idea of a digital afterlife is fascinating, it raises some big questions. For example, who owns your online accounts after you die? This issue is already being discussed in courts and by governments around the world. In the United States, nearly all states have passed laws allowing people to include digital accounts in their wills. In Germany, courts ruled that Facebook had to give a deceased person's family access to their account, saying that digital accounts should be treated as inheritable property, like a bank account or house. But there are still plenty of challenges. For example, what if a digital clone of you says or does something online that you would never have said or done in real life? Who is responsible for what your AI version does?

When a deepfake of actor Bruce Willis appeared in an ad without his permission, it sparked a debate about how people's digital likenesses can be controlled, or even exploited, for profit. Cost is another issue. While some basic tools for managing digital accounts after death are free, more advanced services can be expensive. For example, creating an AI version of yourself might cost thousands of dollars, meaning that only wealthy people could afford to "live on" digitally. This cost barrier raises important questions about whether digital immortality could create new forms of inequality.

Grieving in a digital world Losing someone is often painful, and in today's world, many people turn to social media to feel connected to those they've lost. Research shows that a significant proportion of people maintain their social media connections with deceased loved ones. But this new way of grieving comes with challenges. Unlike physical memories such as photos or keepsakes that fade over time, digital memories remain fresh and easily accessible. They can even appear unexpectedly in your social media feeds, bringing back emotions when you least expect them. Some psychologists worry that staying connected to someone's digital presence could make it harder for people to move on.

Astronomers build galaxy-sized 'detector' to map universe's vibrations

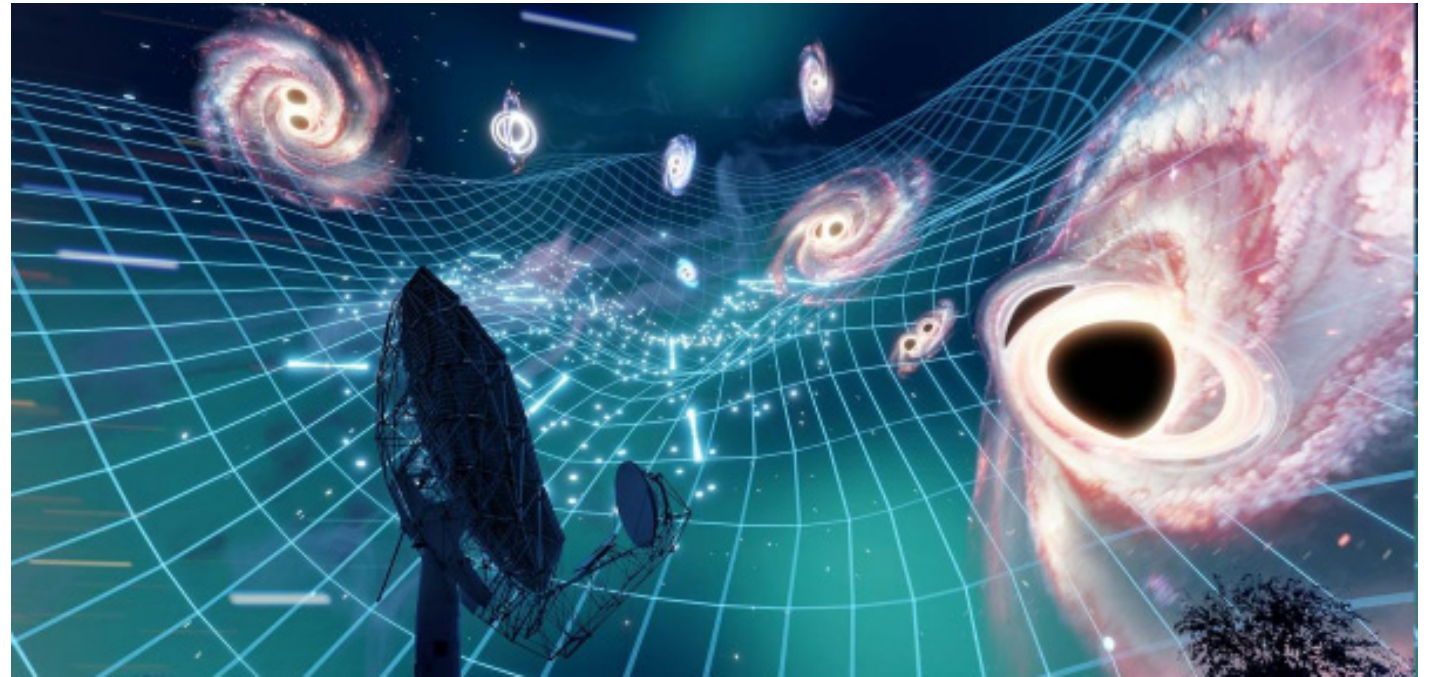
Using the largest gravitational wave detector ever made, we have confirmed earlier reports that the fabric of the universe is constantly vibrating. This background rumble is likely caused by collisions between the enormous black holes that reside in the hearts of galaxies. The results from our detector – an array of rapidly spinning neutron stars spread across the galaxy – show this “gravitational wave background” may be louder than previously thought. We have also made the most detailed maps yet of gravitational waves across the sky, and found an intriguing “hot spot” of activity in the Southern Hemisphere. Our research is published today in three papers in the *Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society*. Ripples in space and time. Gravitational waves are ripples in the fabric of space and time. They are created when incredibly dense and massive objects orbit or collide with each other.

The densest and most massive objects in the universe are black holes, the remnants of dead stars. One of the only ways to study black holes is by searching for the gravitational waves they emit when they move near each other. Just like light, gravitational waves are emitted in a spectrum. The most massive black holes emit the slowest and most powerful waves – but to study them, we need a detector the size of our galaxy.

The high-frequency gravitational waves created by collisions between relatively small black holes can be picked up with Earth-based detectors, and they were first observed in 2015. However, evidence for the existence of the slower, more powerful waves wasn't found until last year. Several groups of astronomers around the world have assembled galactic-scale gravitational wave detectors by closely observing the behaviour of groups of particular kinds of stars. Our experiment, the MeerKAT Pulsar Timing Array, is the largest of these galactic-scale detectors. Today we have announced further evidence for low-frequency gravitational waves, but with some intriguing differences from earlier results. In just a third of the time of other experiments, we've found a signal that hints at a more active universe than anticipated. We have also been able to map the cosmic architecture left behind by merging galaxies more accurately than ever before. Black holes, galaxies and pulsars

At the centre of most galaxies, scientists believe, lives a gargantuan object known as a supermassive black hole. Despite their enormous mass – billions of times the mass of our Sun – these cosmic giants are difficult to study. Astronomers have known about supermassive black holes for decades, but only directly observed one for the first time in 2019. When two galaxies merge, the black holes at their centres begin to spiral towards each other. In this process they send out slow, powerful gravitational waves that give us an opportunity to study them.

We do this using another group of exotic cosmic objects: pulsars. These are extremely dense stars made mainly of neu-



trons, which may be around the size of a city but twice as heavy as the Sun. Pulsars spin hundreds of times a second. As they rotate, they act like lighthouses, hitting Earth with pulses of radiation from thousands of light years away. For some pulsars, we can predict when that pulse should hit us to within nanoseconds. Our gravitational wave detectors make use of this fact. If we observe many pulsars over the same period of time, and we're wrong about when the pulses hit us in a very specific way, we know a gravitational wave is stretching or squeezing the space between the Earth and the pulsars. However, instead of seeing just one wave, we expect to see a cosmic ocean full of waves criss-crossing in all directions – the echoing ripples of all the galactic mergers in the history of the universe. We call this the gravitational wave background. A surprisingly loud signal – and an intriguing ‘hot spot’. To detect the gravitational wave background, we used the MeerKAT radio telescope in South Africa. MeerKAT is one of the most sensitive radio telescopes in the world. As part of the MeerKAT Pulsar Timing Array, it has been observing a group of 83 pulsars for about five years, precisely measuring when their pulses arrive at Earth. This led us to find a pattern associated with a gravitational wave background, only it's a bit different from what other experiments have found. The pattern, which represents how space and time between Earth and the pulsars is changed by gravitational waves passing between them, is more powerful than expected. This might mean there are more supermassive black holes orbiting each other than we thought. If so, this raises more questions – because our existing theories suggest there should be fewer supermassive black holes than we seem to be seeing. The size of our detector, and the sensitivity of the MeerKAT telescope, means we can assess the background with extreme precision. This allowed us to create the most detailed maps of the gravitational wave background to date. Mapping the background in this way is essential for understanding the cosmic architecture of our universe. It may even lead us to the ul-

timate source of the gravitational wave signals we observe. While we think it's likely the background emerges from the interactions of these colossal black holes, it could also stem from changes in the early, energetic universe following the Big Bang – or

perhaps even more exotic events. The maps we've created show an intriguing “hot spot” of gravitational wave activity in the Southern Hemisphere sky.

LG to unveil its “AI Home” concept vehicle at CES 2025



LG Electronics (LG) is redefining the boundaries of home and mobility at CES 2025 with its “Lifestyle Solution for Mobility” concept vehicle. At the heart of this vision is the LG Mobility Experience (MX) platform, an AI-powered innovation that seamlessly integrates the comfort and convenience of LG's AI Home solutions into vehicles. By leveraging advanced appliance technology and AI capabilities, LG introduces the concept of “Space-as-an-Experience.” The MX platform transforms a vehicle's interior into a multipurpose, modular space that functions as an extension of the home, a media lounge, or even a creative studio. The concept reflects evolving consumer trends, where vehicles are being seen as personalized lifestyle

spaces.

The MX platform features a dual-cabin design. The front cabin is dedicated to driving and operational functions, and the rear cabin can be customised to users' preferences. To make the MX platform widely accessible, LG plans to offer it as a subscription service.

To make the MX platform widely accessible, LG plans to offer it as a subscription service | Photo Credit: Special Arrangement. The modular rear cabin can be configured to suit various needs, such as a business lounge, relaxation zone, or creative studio. Users can select appliance and technology combinations that align with their lifestyles.

Why poetic coaches need pragmatic prose to perfect their playing patterns

On a windy night in Stockholm, Jose Mourinho planted a red flag in the corner of Friends Arena, where his Manchester United had just toppled Ajax to hoist the Europa League title. After the revelry of the night, he delivered another caustic one-liner of his: "There are a lot of poets in football but they don't win titles." He was laughing, rather than ranting, at those managers that obsessed systems and structures, the Johan Cryuff and Marcelo Bielsas of the world, the romantics that never sacrificed their principles for functionality or trophies. Mourinho was the pragmatist, who would bend the team whichever way he wanted, depending on what suits the team best. If his Inter Milan brigade that stunned Pep Guardiola's tiki-takaing Barcelona blended impregnable defending and needle-eye counterattacking, his first Chelsea iteration, played fluid and dynamic football. As did his Real Madrid.

The snide didn't age well, Mourinho has not won another major trophy yet. He has slumped from being one of the hottest managers in Europe to one that is pursued by the clubs from outside Europe's top five leagues. Men of systems captured the consciousness of football, Jurgen Klopp and Pep Guardiola, Hansi Flick and Xabi Alonso, even the modestly successful Roberto De Zerbi. So much so that every aspiring club wants not just titles with a clear and distinct identity, pushing the pragmatists to the lower echelons of the league. Another pragmatist manager Massimiliano Allegri is without a job, echoed by Mourinho who said that "every club wants a philosopher, not a manager." At the heart of the function-ideal debate, caught in neither worlds, are some of the leading clubs. Like Manchester United. They hired Ruben Amorim because they were not only impressed by the unbeaten, title-winning streaks, but also by the dynamic brand of football Sporting CP embraced. But he came at the wrong club at the wrong time. The United team at his disposal possessed none of the virtues required to thrive in a three-man defence formation that the Portuguese adamantly clings to. Rather it had exactly the men ill-fitted for such a high-energy structure.

Three-man defence thrives when the wingbacks are quick and robust, when the double midfield pivot are strong and strapping, when the forwards are incessant pressers and runners. In just a couple of practice sessions, Amorim would have realised that he cannot replicate a 3-4-3 or a 3-4-2-1 here. Yet, he remained religiously wedded to his drama, despite shuddering reality checks every week. Like for instance, starting with midfield pair of Cristian Eriksen and Casemiro against the muscular and faster trio of Bruno Guimaraes, Sandro Tonali and Joelinton. In the first 30 minutes, they were run ragged. But Amorim would stick to his beliefs. "I was here because of my idea and I will continue to do my idea until the end. I have to sell my idea. I don't have another one," he said. He did make minor tactical tweaks or in-game alterations, but everything was frame-worked in an inflexible three-man defence. The consequence was a wholly incoherent and scattered bunch, sleepwalking through a game. The transi-

tion could have been smoother had Amorim arrived between seasons where he could have cajoled the club into buying players that would have suited the system as well as regimented them into the formation in the pre-season. The club's management too should apportion some of the blame because they knew the manager's profile when they hired him, they could have foreseen the struggles.

Ange Postecoglou criticism playing style Spurs Tottenham's head coach Ange Postecoglou reacts during the English Premier League soccer match between Tottenham and Liverpool at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium in London, Sunday, Dec. 22, 2024. (AP Photo/Dave Shopland) As unwilling to budge has been Tottenham Hotspur manager Ange Postecoglou. Come feast or famine, hell or high water, his teams spot a high defensive line, despite being burned repeatedly, even though most of his first-choice back four had been absent this season. Southampton's Russell Martin was similarly deluded by his expansive build-up before the club axed him. The Spurs manager would recently say: "I do not know what a Plan B or C is," he said. "If people want me to change my approach, it's not going to change. We are doing it for a reason." It is not to suggest that philosophy-slaved managers are living a delusional world. There are benefits if the team is guided by a definite theme. Movements become synchronised, hence more aesthetic, the roles are clear, everyone knows what everyone is supposed to do, the squad is unified by a guiding vision, the scouts and recruiters know what kind of players to hire. It promises sustenance and smoother inheritance, as Liverpool discovered in Arne Slot.

Arne Slot Liverpool Manchester City Mohamed Salah Liverpool's manager Arne Slot and Real Madrid's head coach Carlo Ancelotti, in the background, stand by the touchline before the Champions League opening phase soccer match between Liverpool and Real Madrid at Anfield Stadium, Liverpool, England, Wednesday, Nov. 27, 2024. (AP Photo/Jon Super) Klopp's successor is perhaps the best example of someone striking the balance of being flexible as well as idealistic. He has by and large stuck to Klopp's dogma, but made subtle changes too. Like, repurposing Mohammed Salah to centre-forward role (but on the right wing). He has lost a few yards, but sharpened his shooting skills even more. Trent Alexander Arnold is now the marauding orthodox full back rather than one who dropped into the midfield. Encouraged by the resurrection of Ryan Gravenberch, Liverpool progressed the ball through central channels. The great idealist Guardiola too has not been averse to change, though not of a radical nature. He changes functions within functions of the player.

Like John Stones in the treble-winning season operating as sweeper-playmakers, or Joao Cancelo functioning as a full-back forward. Another fitting example is Carlo Ancelotti. In his first year at Parma, he refused to buy Roberto Baggio because he didn't play with No 10s (but twin strikers). Baggio went to Bologna and



netted 22 goals that season (1997-98). He picked the essence of coaching from that incident. "After that season, I was con-

vinced that I should plan my style according to the strengths of my team," he once said.

Experts raise concerns over rising reliance on melatonin

The supplement, a synthetic version of the natural hormone produced by the body's pineal gland, is readily available in various forms. Experts are raising concerns about the growing trend of people, particularly young adults, turning to over-the-counter melatonin supplements to manage sleep disorders without proper medical supervision. The supplement, a synthetic version of the natural hormone produced by the body's pineal gland, is readily available in various forms including gummies, sprays, powder and tablets through both offline pharmacies and online retailers. Melatonin is naturally released when it's dark outside, with levels falling by morning to regulate the body's internal clock. Sleep specialists warn that unsupervised consumption of melatonin could lead to long-term side effects, including disruption of the body's natural hormone synthesis and symptoms such as stomach ache, night terrors and anxiety. "Melatonin is the buzzword when talking of sleep health, especially among adolescents," said Dr Vikas Mittal, director of Wellness Home Clinic and Sleep Centre in Paschim Vihar. He attributes its widespread use to increasing sleep-related issues and self-medication habits. "People are consuming melatonin without understanding the appropriate dosage, potential side effects, or its impact on their natural sleep-wake cycles," Mittal added. He also warned about additional ingredients in some supplements: "Many of these gummies have other ingredients including sugar. Further, there are two ingredients known to be present in some gummies - Kava and Valerian - they are known to be liver toxic and can cause damage in the longer run." The natural hormone helps regulate sleep patterns, with the body producing between 0.1 and 0.9 milligrams daily. However, users report taking much higher doses, ranging from 3mg to 10mg daily, often without knowing the appropriate amount. Shonak Gosain, 21, began using melatonin in 2020 during the Covid pandemic when online studying disrupted

his sleep pattern. "Initially, these seemed to work wonders, helping me fall asleep faster," he said. However, after six to seven months of use, he experienced side effects including headaches, fatigue and irritability.

Another 21-year-old user, who requested anonymity, discovered melatonin through social media. "I started with the gummies, and at first felt like they were working for me. However, after I was diagnosed with dengue, I felt it gave me headaches," she said. Not all users report positive effects. Ananya Shirivstav, 36, a working mother, found the supplement ineffective. "Often, I have trouble sleeping and people around me suggested taking melatonin. Even after trying it multiple times, I felt that it wasn't working for me," she said. Dr Vibhu Kawatra, a paediatric specialist at Rainbow Hospital, expressed particular concern about young users. "The brain is still developing throughout childhood and adolescence, with maturation continuing well into the early 20s," she said. "The early introduction of synthetic melatonin might interfere with the body's natural hormonal production and regulation." Research published in the National Library of Medicine suggests limited effectiveness, with melatonin treatment reducing sleep onset time by only four minutes, increasing sleep efficiency by 2.2%, and extending total sleep duration by 12.8 minutes. Dr Shabiullah Syied, a Delhi-based sleep medicine expert, emphasised the importance of proper dosing. "It has to be low initially, which can be increased. One also has to make sure to take melatonin a few hours before the onset of sleep and not right before going to bed," he said. Experts recommend prioritising good sleep hygiene over supplements. This includes maintaining regular bedtime routines, reducing screen time before bed, ensuring a comfortable sleep environment and engaging in physical activity during the day.