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Bomb threat email triggers high alert at Hyderabad airport

Hyderabad: The Rajiv Gandhi International Airport (RGIA), received another threatening email, claiming that a bomb had been planted on a flight bound for the United States on Tuesday. According to reports, the sender warned that the explosive would be detonated unless one million dollars was paid. The message triggered immediate alarm among airport authorities. Security personnel from CISF and airport security units swung into action, launching intensive checks across the terminal, cargo zones, parking areas, and all aircraft scheduled for international departures.

Telangana Rising Global Summit: CM Revanth Reddy holds meetings with delegates for investment

Hyderabad, Dec 9

The second day of the Telangana Rising Global Summit at Future City has generated significant interest from various companies, both domestic and international, looking to invest in the state. Chief Minister Revanth Reddy is engaged in a series of meetings with representatives from these firms, resulting in numerous Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) signed in his presence.

Among the companies that have formalised agreements with the government are the Sumadhura Group and TCCI Taiwan Group. Notable attendees include Shalini Bhupal, Managing Director of Taj GVK, who, alongside representatives from Sumadhura Group, signed an MoU with the Chief Minister.

Other significant interactions included meetings with Prestige Group CEO Swaroop Anivesh, as well as representatives from Analog AI Autodloz, Dream Valley Golf and Resorts, Semb Corp from Singapore, and Taiwan Group. This day's events signal a strong commitment to fostering investment in Telangana.



Telangana Rising Global Summit: State aims to become innovation Capital by 2047, says Bhatti Vikramarka

Hyderabad, Dec 9

Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka announced ambitious economic targets during the Telangana Rising Global Summit, stating that the objective for 2047 is to elevate Telangana into an innovation capital.

Addressing participants in a session focused on capital increase and productivity, Vikramarka underscored the goal of transforming Telangana's economy, currently valued at approximately \$185 billion, into a \$3 trillion powerhouse over the next 22 years. This requires an unprecedented growth rate—16 times the current economy—an achievement that he believes no other Indian state, including Gujarat and Karnataka, has accomplished thus far.

Vikramarka emphasised that reaching this landmark cannot be achieved through mere in-



frastructure development alone, such as constructing more roads and buildings. Instead, he advocated for fundamental changes to economic principles, stressing the importance of enhancing productivity through the integration of capital and innovation.

The session featured key participants, including

Professor Prasanna Tantri, who contributed to the vision document, and notable figures such as ISB faculty member Aditya, industrialist Parasuram Pak, and IAS officer Krishna Bhaskar.

Highlighting the transformative potential of emerging technologies such as deep tech, AI, and

quantum computing, Vikramarka expressed confidence in Telangana's capability to lead as the innovation capital of Asia. He reinforced that the "Telangana Rising 2047" initiative is not merely a document but a commitment towards the future prosperity of the state.

CM Revanth Reddy assures support for Tollywood at Telangana Rising Global Summit 2025

Hyderabad, Dec 9

At the Telangana Rising Global Summit 2025 held in Future City on Tuesday, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy assured representatives from the film industry, including

renowned Tollywood celebrities, that the state government is committed to facilitating the growth of the film sector. CM Reddy invited filmmakers to present their scripts, promising to provide the necessary support for their projects.

During the summit, the Chief Minister outlined plans for a skills university aimed at training locals in the 24 specialised crafts needed within the film industry. He emphasised the government's readiness to assist in establishing studios in Future City, creating a favourable environment for film production. Prominent attendees included film legends Chiranjeevi, Ajay Devgan, Allu Aravind, Suresh Babu, and Genelia, among others from both Tollywood and Bollywood. Also present were Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka, Minister Komati Reddy Venkat Reddy, and other senior officials. The summit, which commenced on Monday, is scheduled to conclude today.

GHMC issues preliminary notification for delimitation of wards

Hyderabad: A day after the State government issued orders increasing the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation's (GHMC) 150 wards to 300 wards, a preliminary notification on delimitation of wards for hearing public objections was issued on Tuesday. Before issuing the final notification for the delimitation of wards, it is mandatory for the GHMC to seek people's objections, if any. The objections are expected to be received from the general public at the GHMC head office, zonal offices and circle offices. The details of boundary descriptions are placed on notice boards of all circle offices, zonal offices and GHMC head office. The same was also uploaded on the www.ghmc.gov.in website, officials said.



PM salutes Sahibzadas at NDA meet

New Delhi, Dec 9

Prime minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday saluted the sacrifice of Guru Gobind Singh's sons Sahibzada Zorawar Singh and Sahibzada Fateh Singh and called for nationwide awareness on the conviction to faith which the children of the tenth Sikh guru displayed.

Speaking at the NDA parliamentary party meeting in Parliament today, the Prime Minister referred to the upcoming Vir Bal Diwas on December 26, a day dedicated to the commemoration of the sacrifice of Sahibzadas, and called for it to be observed across India.

The PM also used the NDA platform to reiterate his commitment to reforms and said India was now in the "reform express

phase".

"The country is now in a full-fledged reform express phase, where reforms are unveiled rapidly and with a clear policy intent. The government's reforms are fully citizen-centric, not just economic or revenue-focused," said Modi adding that the goal is to remove everyday hurdles from the paths of people so that they can realise their full potential.

The PM urged MPs of the BJP and NDA alliance parties, which felicitated him for the recent Bihar win, to actively share day-to-day problems faced by ordinary people. "Improve your connection with the masses, flag their problems so that the reform express can reach every household and remove their day-to-day hardships," Modi said at a time when the IndiGo crisis is unfolding and the government has vowed strict action against the airline.

Cong move to split Vande Mataram led to Partition, claims Shah

New Delhi, Dec 9

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday said Partition of India would not have happened had the national song, Vande Mataram, not truncated by then Congress president Jawaharlal Nehru.

Initiating the debate on 'The 150th anniversary of Vande Mataram' in Rajya Sabha on Tuesday, Shah took a veiled dig at Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra who had claimed in the Lower House on Monday that the debate on Vande Mataram had been timed with the upcoming West Bengal elections in mind.

"Some people are trying to belittle the glorification of Vande Mataram by linking it to the upcoming elections in West Bengal. Vande Mataram was not restricted to Bengal...Wherever in the world there were lovers of freedom, Vande Mataram was on their lips, even in secret meetings. Even today, when a soldier on the border or a cop on internal security makes the supreme sacrifice of life, the mantra on their lips is Vande Mataram," said Shah, taking oblique



swipes at Gandhis, the Congress' first family -- for being absent during the Vande Mataram debate in the Lok Sabha yesterday

In the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday, Shah extended the attack Prime Minister Narendra Modi had launched on JL Nehru in Lok Sabha yesterday, accusing the first PM of truncating the national song to two stanzas in order to appease the Muslim League under Muhammad Ali Jinnah.

Shah repeated the charge today, saying, "If the leader of the then main political party had not split Vande Mataram and began a politics of appeasement, the partition of the country would not have hap-

pened," said Shah, attacking Nehru, under whose presidency the Congress Working Committee adopted two stanzas of Vande Mataram in its October 1937 Calcutta session. The rest, with references to Hindu deities, were dropped.

Shah also said when the golden jubilee of Vande Mataram was due, Nehru split the national song; while during the 100th year of Vande Mataram, patriots who sang the song were jailed as then PM Indira Gandhi had clamped the Emergency.

The Home Minister said the insult of Vande Mataram ran in the veins of Congress leadership and slammed the opposition for

speaking of the national song in demeaning terms - a claim whose authentication Congress chief whip in RS Jairam Ramesh demanded.

Shah later submitted a letter to the RS chairman authenticating his charges.

The Home Minister further said that the discussion, glorification, and celebration of Vande Mataram taking place in both Houses of Parliament will help India's children, adolescents, youth and future generations to understand its significance. He said in 1992, LK Advani as Leader of Opposition, urged Lok Sabha Speaker to resume Vande Mataram's singing in the House. That's how the singing resumed, he said.

Shah said when Indian culture was ravaged by Islamic and British invasions, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya reestablished cultural nationalism by composing Vande Mataram. "Even today, Vande Mataram remains the most powerful rallying cry of freedom, culture, and patriotism," said Shah.

Proactive Security Mobilisation Undertaken in Rachapally and Eklaspur Prior to Local Body Polls



"P. S. A. S. H. O. K. A. N. K. A. R. I. M. N. G. A. R. B. E. R. U. A. C. C. U. M. T. H. A. N. I. I. A. l. o. n. g. w. i. t. h. t. h. e. f. u. l. l. c. o. n. t. i. n. g. o. f. r. o. u. t. e. o. f. f. i. c. e. r. s, e. x. e. c. u. t. e. d. a. m. e. t. i. c. u. l. o. u. s. o. f. r. o. u. t. e. m. a. r. c. h. i. n. g. i. n. t. h. e. v. i. l. l. a. g. e. s. o. f. R. a. c. h. a. p. a. l. l. y. a. n. d. E. k. l. a. s. p. u. r. P. r. i. o. r. t. o. L. o. c. a. l. B. o. d. y. P. o. l. l. s."

this evening. The initiative was intended to augment territorial oversight, fortify public confidence, and uphold an atmosphere of tranquillity in the lead-up to the Local Body Elections.

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

A tragedy waiting to happen

The devastating fire that claimed the lives of 25 people at a nightclub in Goa was a tragedy waiting to happen. It is a classic case of how blatant violation of safety norms and callousness at all levels result in mishaps that could have been otherwise avoidable. The blaze at 'Birch By Romeo Lane', a nightclub in North Goa's Arpora, was caused by electric firecrackers when the premises were crowded with revellers. Victims got trapped on the dance floor or in the kitchen due to a lack of escape routes, while narrow lanes blocked the entry of fire brigade vehicles. Among those killed were tourists from Delhi and migrant workers from several States. The owners of the nightclub have since fled the country, while the government has ordered an inquiry into the accident. It has become a disturbing customary practice in India to discuss the efficacy of safety standards only when a major mishap occurs. After a round of routine condemnations and constitution of expert committees to probe the cause, it is back to business as usual. Accountability is never fixed, and lessons are never learnt. The pointless deaths in such avoidable tragedies soon become cold statistics in official records. The Goa nightclub, located on an island, was operating without the mandatory no-objective certificate (NOC) from the fire department. It is baffling how the local officials tasked with enforcing safety rules chose to overlook the illegality. Such blatant disregard for fire safety norms was an open invitation to disaster. A nightclub built on an island with just two entry points and decorated with inflammable materials is a virtual recipe for disaster.

Telangana's Self-Respect Triumphed on This Day Uppal MLA Bandari Laxma Reddy, Corporator Geeta Praveen

"KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, December 9 (Indian Chronicle):" "A "Vijay Divas" celebration was held at Chilukanagar Division under the leadership of Corporator Bannala Geeta Praveen Mudiraj. Uppal MLA Bandari Laxma Reddy attended the programme as the chief

BC Rights Movement Call for Chalo Delhi BC Bill Must Enter 9th Schedule Leaders Gear Up for Delhi Protest

CHITTIMALLA MAHENDAR, KARIMNAGAR BUREAU, DECEMBER 09, INDIAN CHRONICLE: "BC Yuvajana Sangham District President Narsingoju Srinivas has called for the success of the Chalo Delhi program demanding protection of BC rights. A dharna is scheduled to be held at Jantar Mantar on December 10, 11, and 12, with a major demand to implement 42% reservations for BCs and to establish a separate ministry for Backward Classes at the national level. BC Welfare Association National President and Rajya Sabha Member R. Krishnaiah has appealed to all BC communities across the nation to participate in the agitation. BC association leaders from the erstwhile Karimnagar district left for Delhi on Tuesday. Speaking on the occasion, Srinivas stated that the lives of BCs will change only when adequate reservations are provided in legislative bodies, education, and employment. He demanded the establishment of a separate BC ministry in the Central Cabinet and urged that the 42% BC reservation bill in Telangana be discussed in the ongoing Winter Session of Parliament. He further appealed to Congress MPs to exert pressure and ensure that the BC Reservation Bill is included in the 9th



Schedule through a constitutional amendment, enabling legal protection for BC reservations. He urged the Central Government to resolve the long-standing and justified demands of backward class communities who have been fighting for several years. BC state leaders Srimannarayana, Peddapalli District President Manoj Goud, Karimnagar District President Gunti Swaroopa, Rajender, and other BC association leaders participated in the program.

Grand Celebrations of Sonia Gandhi's Birthday Held in Ramanthapur Uppal Constituency Congress In-charge Parameshwar Reddy Attends as Chief Guest



"KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, December 9 (Indian Chronicle):" "Under the leadership of Ramanthapur Division Presidents Mohammad Rafiq and Habsiguda Division President Gannavaram Vijay Kumar, the birthday celebrations of "Telangana Talli" Sonia Gandhi were grandly organised on Tuesday at the Rajiv Gandhi statue in Ramanthapur. Chief guest Mandamula Paramesh Reddy, Uppal Constituency Congress Party In-charge, cut the cake along with Congress leaders and activists. Speaking on the occasion, he conveyed his wishes for Sonia Gandhi's long life and good health, expressing hope that she will continue to guide the party and help bring the Congress back to power at the national level. The event was attended by TPCC representative Mohammad Tofiq, former Market Committee Vice Chairman Kandi Aagi Reddy, ST Cell Malkajgiri District Chairman Ganesh

Naik, Shravan Kumar Reddy, Akar Arun Patel, Jaleel Pasha, Vallapu Srikanth Yadav, Nama Rajireddy, Upender Reddy, Bokka Suresh, Besta Bhaskar, Gym Sandeep, Muralikrishna Mudiraj, Sandeep, Bhaskar, Lokas, Aleem, Atiq, Arif, Gautam, Bunny Yadav, Malu Naik, Dharmendra Naik, Mogili Lingam, Poosa Sattaya, Garika Sudhakar, Srinivas Chari, Lagasani Srinivas Goud, Aziz Khan, Ramanthapur Division Mahila Presidents Sandhya Rani, Gayatri Goud, Manga Shobha, Ambika, Tabbusam Begum, Bullet Ashok, Mittu Goud, Sudhakar, Kishore, Jili Paramesh, Sanjay Kumar, Somesh, Kashamalla Shankar, Shakeel, Muthyala Jangaiah, Seemakolla Jangaiah, Samuel, Vijay, Arun Sai, Srinivas Chari, Narasimha, Chotu Boy, Suri Icon, Madhu Swamy, Sai, Vasu Naik, Khasim Goud, Saidulu Yadav, Nagamallaiah, Goutham, Kiran and many others.

Fruit Distribution to Patients at Ramanthapur Homeopathy Hospital on Sonia Gandhi's Birthday Program Held Under the Leadership of TPCC Member Vinod Darshanam



"KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, December 9 (Indian Chronicle):" "On the occasion of "Mother Who Gave Telangana" Sonia Gandhi's 79th birthday, former Indian Youth Congress National Coordinator and TPCC member Vinod Kumar Darshanam organised a fruit distribution program for patients at Ramanthapur Homeopathy Hospital on Tuesday. Hospital Superintendent Dr. Nomi, hospital staff, and Congress leaders Bandari Anil Kumar, Babu, Chintu, Madhu and others participated in the event. Speaking on the occasion, Vinod Mudiraj said that it was because Sonia Gandhi granted statehood that Telangana is now progressing rapidly under the Congress government. He stated that Chief Minister Revanth Reddy has launched the Telangana Rising 2047 - Global

Summit 2025 to place Telangana prominently on the world map. He explained that several top-level companies across the globe have already come forward with investment proposals ranging from ₹4 to ₹5 lakh crore. These investments would greatly increase employment opportunities for the youth and unemployed in the state, he said. Vinod expressed confidence that Telangana will soon reach the number one position globally in the software and pharma sectors. He also recalled that all of this progress was possible only because Sonia Gandhi granted Telangana statehood.

Confusion in under-14 cricket hca team selection.



"Secunderabad Cantonment, December 8 (Indian Chronicle):" "The game of cricket is very popular in the world and there is more cricket craze in India and apart from that our country has become more crazy with the IPL, in this order their children are also playing for the IPL and their parents are encouraging them in the cricket academies. Under the auspices of the Hyderabad Cricket Association, the Under-14 cricket team selection trials were held at the Gymkhana sports ground on Tuesday, more than the HCA organizers had expected, the players from different districts, their parents, and their parents came to the Gymkhana ground in Secunderabad in the early hours of the morning. Due to the failure of the HCA members to provide the facilities, many cricketers who came to the

Gymkhana sports ground were in dire straits. Around 3000 cricket players from various districts of Telangana state attended the selection trials on Tuesday. They stood in the queues from 5 am to 12 pm but turned back in frustration as they did not get a chance to play the selections. Meanwhile, when the parents of the players asked about the selections, the security personnel threatened the parents of the players with vulgar language, causing chaos in the stadium premises. But Begumpet ACP Gopala Krishna Murthy, who came to know about the matter, reached there along with his staff and inspected the situation, anticipating that there would be jostling in the queue lines, he and some officials called Sibandi there and gave instructions on microphones and formed

queue lines and expressed impatience with the HCA. Only 1000 players were allowed to enter and selections were started for them in 4 nets and tokens were issued to the remaining players saying that they will be released from 9 am on Tuesday morning and thus the problem was resolved a bit. The players and their parents left disappointed. Begumpet ACP Gopala Krishna Murthy explained to the media that even in the past, the parents of the players are appealing to the police to take strict action against the HCA, who is neglecting the same, but they do not have any prior information. Many coaches are conducting these selection trials under the supervision of former Indian cricket player Kanwal Jit Singh. A large number of players from different districts of the state have

Uppal Degree College Telugu Students Visit Telangana State Central Library

"KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, December 10 (Indian Chronicle):" "Students of the Telugu Department from Uppal Government Degree College enthusiastically participated in a study visit to the Telangana State Central Library at Afzalgunj on Tuesday. College Principal Dr. K. Vijay Kumar advised the students not to postpone reading, emphasizing that "a good book is equal to a good friend." He described the library visit as the first step towards a journey of knowledge. Telangana State Library Council Chairman Dr. M. D. Riaz, who took part in the programme, said that libraries are true treasure houses of knowledge. He explained that this pub-



lic library, established even before Independence, is a rich repository of rare books in various languages. He encouraged students to fully utilise the resources available to widen their intellectual horizons. He appreciated the college's initiative in promoting the habit of reading, stressing that "book reading itself is a journey of wisdom." Programme coordinator and Telugu Assistant Professor Jaldha Vishwanath Kumar urged students to cultivate reading as a habit. He introduced them to rare dictionaries, palm-leaf manuscripts, handwritten books, and Braille script books preserved in the library. He also highlighted the importance of public libraries in a knowledge-driven society. Students expressed happiness over the visit, stating that it deepened their interest in books. They admired the magnificent heritage structure and said the tour provided valuable insights for their research pursuits. They also interacted with competitive exam aspirants studying in the serene environment of the library. The programme successfully ignited curiosity among students and contributed to their intellectual growth. On this occasion, the college announced essay writing and book review competitions.

Telangana State gave mother Sonia Gandhi.

"Secunderabad Cantonment, December 8 (Indian Chronicle):" "Sonia Gandhi is the mother of Telangana state Senior leaders of the Congress Jampana Pratap, former vice-president of Cantonment Board said. Con-

gress leaders organized the birthday celebrations of Congress party president Sonia Gandhi at Bowenpally playground on Tuesday. Jampana Pratap, who was the chief guest of the event, along with the local leaders garlands on the statue of Mother of Telangana and cut a cake at Sonia's portrait. He said that Sonia Gandhi announced the Telangana state on December 9 as per the wishes of the people of Telangana state. Harikrishna in this program. Shashiraj Yadav, Vara prasad, Mukesh Yadav, Suresh Yadagiri, the place Moula, Tent raju, Yadagiri Yadav, Kumar, Saibaba Yadav and others participated

attended. Around 44 people will be selected for the team selection and a camp will be held for them and the final team of 22 members will be selected who have fitness and skill. Former Indian cricket player Kanwal Jit Singh said. Begumpet ACP Gopala Krishnamurthy said that selection competitions will be held on Wednesday also according to tokens. Children and parents are asked to cooperate as they are getting mixed. Sports means discipline so that every athlete participates in the selection competition with discipline. Begumpet ACP asked everyone to cooperate that the association should advise them to complete the selection competition as soon as possible.

Sai Eshwar Chari's Sacrifice Will Not Go in Vain: Uppal MLA Bandari Laxma Reddy



““KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, December 9 (Indian Chronicle): “The sacrifice made by Sai Eshwar Chari for the implementation of 42% BC reservations will not go in vain, said Uppal MLA Bandari Laxma Reddy. He paid floral tributes to Eshwar Chari’s portrait at Chiluka Nagar. Speaking on the occasion, the MLA said it was extremely unfortunate that Sai Eshwar Chari took such a harsh step by ending his life demanding the implementation of 42% reservations for BCs. He urged the government to provide a Double Bedroom House, ex-gratia, a government job for his wife, and to take responsibility for

Telangana Diwas is grand in Bowenpally

““Secunderabad Cantonment, December 8 (Indian Chronicle): “Jakkula Maheshwar Reddy, the former Vice President of the Cantonment Board, said that the Congress government has completed two years of but no development in the state. Tuesday on the occasion of Telangana Diwas a celebration was held in Bowenpally under the patronage of Jakkula Maheshwar Reddy and former board members paid tribute to the martyrs in this program. Anita, Nalini Kiran, BRS members and others participated.



Drinking water facility inaugurated in court by Judge Devarapalli Kirti Chandrika Reddy



““Yellandu, December 9: (Indian Chronicle) Drinking water was arranged for the litigants in the court premises on Tuesday under the auspices of the Yellandu Bar Association. Local Principal Junior Civil Judge Devarapalli Kirti Chandrika Reddy attended as the chief guest and cut the ribbon and handed over drinking water to the litigants. Later, speaking about the program, they said that it is a pleasure to arrange drinking water for the litigants under the auspices of the Bar Association, that litigants coming to the court from far-away places are facing serious difficulties due to lack of basic facilities, that drinking water will be very useful for the elderly litigants and the children accompanying the litigants, and that such infrastructure facilities are very necessary for the litigants in the future. Along with the judge, Bar Association President Kampalli Umamaheswara Rao, General Secretary Kirti Karthik, senior lawyers Dantha Anand, S. Venkateshwarlu, P. Balakrishna, and B. Urmila, junior lawyers P. Dhananjaya Rao, Bharat, and Pooja, court staff, police personnel, clients, and others participated.

Separate Telangana is the result of Sonia Gandhi's sacrifice



““Nacharam, Indian Chronicle, December 9: “The dream and aspiration of the people of Telangana for a separate Telangana state was fulfilled only because of the sacrifice of Sonia Gandhi, said VS Prakash Reddy, Vice President of TPCC Labour Cell, Congress Party. Under the instructions of Uppal Congress Party In-charge Mandumoola Parameshwar Reddy, the birthday celebrations of former AICC President Sonia Gandhi were grandly organized on Tuesday under the leadership of

TPCC Labour Cell Vice President VS Prakash Reddy. Later, a cake was cut at the portrait of Sonia Gandhi and the Jayanti celebrations were held. VS Prakash Reddy also felicitated the Mahankali Temple Committee members on the occasion. Participants in this program included Methuku Srinivas Reddy, Krishna Yadav, Nursing Rao, Sharafuddin, Sunil Reddy, Nagesh, Naresh, CH Naresh, Firoz, Revanth, Srinivas Reddy, Naresh, Yusuf, Aqueeb, Suresh, women leaders Uma, Vijayamma, Yasmin, Mamatha, and several party work-



““Mandava Srisailam.. Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau.. Indian Chronicle..December 9): Bhuvanagiri MLAs Kumbham Anil Kumar Reddy, former Municipal Chairman Barre Jangir, DCC Delegate Tangallapalli Ravikumar, Town President Kura Venkatesh, Seva Dal Secretary Pittala Balaraju and others participated in the Sonia Gandhi birthday celebrations.

HYDRA Commissioner Ranganath Inspects Ramantapur Chinna Cheruvu and Pedda Cheruvu



““KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, December 9 (Indian Chronicle): “HYDRA Commissioner Ranganath, along with Uppal MLA Bandari Laxma Reddy and Ramantapur Corporator Srivani Venkat Rao, inspected the Chinna Cheruvu and Pedda Cheruvu located in Ramantapur under the Uppal constituency. Speaking on the occasion, Commissioner Ranganath said that MLA Bandari Laxma Reddy and the local corporator had brought to his notice the deteriorating condition of the lakes in Ramantapur. He stated that a major portion of the lakes had been encroached upon, and the remaining water bodies had become polluted and degraded. The issue has already been escalated to the notice of the Chief Minister, he added. Ranganath explained that around 10,000 poor families reside around the Chinna Cheruvu, and the pollution in the lake has been causing health concerns for the local residents. HYDRA prioritizes the East and South zones of Hyderabad, and since this area falls within the Musi river basin, protecting the

lakes, preventing contamination, and ensuring there is no flooding is a key objective, he said. He further assured that the lakes would be developed into beautiful recreational spaces—similar to the Bathukamma Kunta model—with walking tracks, play areas for children, and landscaped surroundings. MLA Bandari Laxma Reddy, speaking on the occasion, said that the issues concerning Ramantapur Chinna Cheruvu, Pedda Cheruvu, Nacharam lake, and Kapra lake had been brought to the attention of Chief Minister Revanth Reddy as well as the HYDRA Commissioner. Responding immediately, Commissioner Ranganath inspected the lakes personally. After visiting the lakes, the Commissioner remarked that he had never seen lakes in such a condition anywhere else and stressed that the State Government must give special attention to these water bodies. The MLA expressed gratitude to Commissioner Ranganath for visiting the lakes and assuring that they would be taken up for beautification and restoration.



““Mandava Srisailam.. Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau.. Indian Chronicle..December 9): The 5th birth anniversary of Congress party senior leader Taduri Krishna was celebrated at the local area hospital in Bhuvanagiri town. Library Chairman Awais Chisti, former municipal chairmen Pothamsetty Venkateshwarlu, Barre Jangir, DCC Delegate Tangallapalli Ravi Kumar, town presidents Kura Venkatesh, Taduri Narasimha Taduri Sai Padigela Pradeep, Mazar Azhar Attar Venkat Ramana, Ramulu, Abhid Ali and others participated in this program.

Sonia Gandhi's Birthday Celebrations Held Grandly in Secunderabad



““Indian Chronicle, Secunderabad, December 9: “The birthday celebrations of Congress party chief Sonia Gandhi were conducted grandly across the Secunderabad Assembly constituency. Congress cadres organized celebrations in various areas of the constituency, where Secunderabad Congress MLA contestant Adam Santosh Kumar participated as the chief guest, cut the cake, and celebrated with party leaders and workers. As part of the program, fruits were distributed to patients, notebooks and school bags were given to students, and blankets were distributed to the elderly. Speaking on the occasion, Adam Santosh Kumar said that it was Sonia Gandhi who overcame several challenges and fulfilled the aspirations of the people by granting separate statehood to Telangana. He stated that Telangana has been progressing rapidly ever since she

International Human Rights Day Observed in Kapra



““NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, December 9, (INDIAN CHRONICLE): “International Human Rights Day is marked worldwide on December 10 every year to promote awareness about dignity, freedom, justice, and the fundamental rights of all individuals. The day commemorates the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) by the United Nations in 1948 and highlights the need to protect human rights and prevent violations across the globe. As part of these observances, the Human

Rights Protection Committee Telangana, Malkajgiri Parliament Committee, conducted a programme at the Human Rights Parliament Office in the Kapra area. State President Dr. R.V. Lakshmi attended the event, addressed the gathering on the importance of human rights, and presented appreciation certificates to committee members for their services. Malkajgiri Parliament President Venkatesh Chari, Uppal Constituency President Taduri Gagan Kumar, and members Ramesh, Manjula, Akula Padmavathi, Mangamma, and Narsimha Chari participated in the programme.

Our goal is to secure housing plots for journalists

“TWJF is not affiliated with any political party or newspaper:

- Founder President Mangodi Somaiya

- All previous state and district committees will be dissolved..

New state and district committees will be formed soon..

Founding President Mangodi Somaiya



“(Mandava Srisailam.. Hyderabad.. Indian Chronicle.. December 9):- The Telangana Working Journalists Federation (TWJF) will continue to fight until all eligible journalists get housing plots, the federation's founder president and state convener Mangodi Somaiya has made it clear. He was speaking at the TWJF preparatory meeting organized under the auspices of Santosh Chakravarthy at the Konark Hotel in Khammam on Monday. He said that the association works for the welfare and development of journalists. Mangodi Somaiya strongly condemned the false propaganda being spread against TWJF by some. He called on journalists not to believe the propaganda being made by some former leaders to confuse journalists and claim that the association is theirs. He said that the founding members of the federation are trying to strengthen the association by touring all the districts. In this context, he said that it has been decided to hold a district congress in Khammam district soon to strengthen the association. He expressed his concern that even after two years of the Congress government coming to power in the state, the main problems of journalists have not been resolved yet. He demanded that Chief Minister Revanth Reddy respond immediately and resolve the problems of journalists immediately. He warned that if not, TWJF would be ready for a statewide movement. He clarified that TWJF is the only organization that stands by the side of journalists and continuously fights on their issues. IFWJ National Secretary Pulipalupula Anandha said that IFWJ is continuously fighting on the main problems faced by journalists across the country. They demanded that the central government implement a special protection law for journalists and introduce a pension scheme for senior journalists. Mamidi Somaiya once again clarified that every decision taken by the federation is entirely for the welfare of journalists. He said that TWJF is working with complete independence, without the influence of any political party. He criticized that in the past, some people tried to misuse the name of the association and gain personal benefits. He

assured that from now on, they will take the association forward with disciplinary policies without resorting to such things. He said that in addition to the issue of journalists' houses and plots, they will also launch a comprehensive struggle at the government level on issues such as health insurance, accident insurance, wage security, old age pension, and transparency in accreditation procedures. He revealed that a petition will be submitted to the government on all these issues soon and that they will organize movement programs at various stages. He called on the journalists of Khammam district to actively participate in the reconstruction of the association and cooperate in building a strong committee. He stated that due priority will be given to young journalists in the newly formed district committees and that the association will be led forward with the advice and guidance of experienced senior journalists. Mangodi Somaiya called on all journalists, including small and big newspapers, to come together with him to address the problems of journalists. The journalists who attended the meeting welcomed the objectives of the TWJF and expressed their full support. They made it clear that they would be partners in every struggle taken by the association to resolve the problems of journalists. At the end of the meeting, the meeting was concluded by raising slogans that journalists' rights can be achieved only through a collective movement. On this occasion, an ad hoc committee was announced for Khammam district. The state committee announced T. Santosh Chakravarthy as the Khammam district TWJF convener, and Arvapalli Nagesh, Antoti Srinivas, Nanabala Ramakrishna and Vandananu Samrat as co-conveners. It was clarified that all the existing TWJF state and district committees have been dissolved and a new state committee and all the district committees will be formed soon. Federation state convening committee co-conveners Valla Jagan and G. Venkateswarlu, state council members P. Gopal, Palvai Janaiah, Raghuram, Sadik Pasha, legal advisor Pasupuleti Srinivas and others participated in this meeting.

Grand Celebration of Sonia Gandhi's Birthday in Kapra Division

Medchal-Malkajgiri AMC Vice Chairman J. Vitthal Naik Participates



the most influential leaders in the country, noting that she declined the Prime Minister's post in the interest of stable governance and public welfare. He added that as Chairperson of the UPA, she played a significant role in shaping national politics. Despite knowing the political consequences, she supported the formation of Telangana, understanding the sentiments of the people like a mother, he said. The programme was attended by Medchal District SC Cell President Patti Kumar, former AMC Director Kobbanuri Nagaraju, senior Congress leaders Padamati Mallareddy, Orla Sridhar Reddy, Narender Goud, Rakesh Yadav, Totakoor Srikanth, K. Raju, Rizwan Khan, Syed Moortaza, Santosh Chari, Nagaraju Yadav, Jagadish, Shabuddin, Division Youth Congress President Prashant Goud, Youth Congress leaders Imran, Arif, and several others.

The concerned officials should act responsibly for the smooth conduct of the second phase of postal ballot voting process:-
Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Collector Hanumantha Rao



the voters who come to the polling station and give them the ballot paper and observe them until the voter casts his vote in the ballot box. Every officer should perform his duties in a coordinated manner to ensure that the elections are held smoothly. He said that the polling equipment should be inspected and the Gram Panchayat Secretary should check all the polling equipment of the village once or twice and prepare it. He said that the responsibility of ensuring that no problem arises on polling day lies with the concerned Panchayat Secretaries. The concerned officials participated in this program.

Marikonda Ganesh selected for national level athletics competitions..

Sri Vaishnavi College Principal Madhira Mallesham congratulated



“(Mandava Srisailam.. Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau.. Indian Chronicle.. December 9):- Marikonda Ganesh, a student of Sri Vaishnavi Junior College in the

district headquarters, has been selected for the national level athletics competitions. He will participate in the under 17 1500 m. Athletics in the 69th School Games Federation of India national level competitions to be held in Patna, Uttar Pradesh state from 13th to 17th of this month. On Tuesday, Sri Vaishnavi Junior College Principal Madhira Mallesham congratulated Ganesh and presented him with a shawl. Later, he said that he should achieve schemes not only at the national level but also at the international level and bring fame to the district. Ganesh is undergoing training under the supervision of Koneti Gopal, District General Secretary of the Athletics Association. Former President of the Rotary Club of Bhuvanagiri, Bandari Srinivasa Rao, faculty members participated in the program.

We will not sell our vote for money and alcohol..

We will elect leaders who work for the development of villages with honesty

Women voters who put up boards in front of their houses:

- Women responded to the call of Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Collector Hanumantha Rao



“(Mandava Srisailam.. Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau.. Indian Chronicle.. December 9):- Women voters who put up boards in front of their houses saying that we will not sell our vote for money and alcohol and that we will elect leaders who work for the development of villages with honesty.. Seeing the scenes of women responding to the call of District Collector Hanumantha Rao, the people of the respective villages are responding more and more. Our vote is for the development of the village..not for the money given by the leaders for one day.. The call of District Election Officer Collector Hanumantha Rao, who took up voting rights awareness programs in Yadadri Bhuvanagiri district, received a good response from the voters. In the context of awareness

programs on voting rights being conducted in the 6 mandals where the first phase of Gram Panchayat elections will be held on Friday morning, the District Collector provided extensive awareness to women on voting rights at the Bommalam Ramaram Mandal Center. All the women voters were made to pledge that they would use their votes for village development and that they would not sell their votes for alcohol or money, but would use their votes to elect leaders who would develop the village. The women, who had gained awareness, today put up boards in front of their houses asking some voters from Jalalapur village in Bommalam Ramaram Mandal to voluntarily sell their votes for money and gifts, and to vote voluntarily with integrity.

Voters can exercise their right to vote by showing 18 different types of cards prescribed by the Election Commission:
District Election Officer, Collector Hanumantha Rao

“(Mandava Srisailam.. Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau.. Indian Chronicle.. December 9):- Voters can exercise their right to vote by showing 18 different types of cards prescribed by the Election Commission. District Election Officer, Collector Hanumantha Rao said in a statement on Tuesday. In the three-phase elections held during the last Gram Panchayat elections, voters should exercise their right to vote.. This time, they want 100 percent voting in the elections. As part of this, the details of the 18 types of identity cards are as follows. 1. UIDAI Aadhaar card is Aadhaar issued by the Unique Identification Authority of India. 2. PHC can be used as a photo identity. 3. Driving license, 4. State/Central Governments, Public Sector Undertakings, Local Bodies. These include identity cards issued to employees. 5. Banks/TSCAB/DCBs/Cooperative Societies, identity cards with photo issued to employees. 6. Health Scheme (Health Card) Cards issued under government health schemes. 7. National Population Register (NPR) Identity documents issued under NPR conducted by the Registrar General of India. 8. Card issued to workers working in MNREGA. 9) Health Insurance Scheme Card (ESIC) with photo issued by the Ministry of Labour (issued on or before the date of announcement of elections) 10) Pension book/pension payment order of ex-servicemen, certificates of widow/dependents of ex-servicemen, old age pension order, widow pension orders with photo, etc. (is-

sued on or before the date of announcement of elections) 11) Identity card with photo issued by the Secretariat of the Legislative Council for MLAs/MLCs. 12) Ration card with photo (issued on or before the date of announcement of elections) 13) Photo issued by an authorized officer SCST/BC certificate with photo (issued on or before the date of announcement of elections) 14) Freedom Fighters Identity Card with photo, 15) Arms License with photo (issued on or before the date of announcement of elections) 16) Disability Certificate with photo (issued on or before the date of announcement of elections) 17) Identity Card with photo issued by the Lok Sabha/Rajya Sabha Secretariat to Members of Parliament. 18) Pattadar Pass Books with photo (issued on or before the date of announcement of elections) In addition to these, the voter slip can also be downloaded online from the website tsec.gov.in, the Collector said.



All basic facilities should be completed at the model polling station

- District Election Officer, Collector Hanumantha Rao



“(Mandava Srisailam.. Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau.. Indian Chronicle.. December 9):- District

Election Officer, Collector Hanumantha Rao said that all basic facilities should be completed at the model polling station. The District Election Officer, Collector, who inspected the model polling booth in Sarvepalli village of Atmakur mandal, where the first phase of polling will be held as part of the Gram Panchayat elections on Tuesday, said that the entire model polling station should be set up as a plastic-free polling booth, wheelchair facilities should be provided for the elderly and the disabled at the polling booth, and a special room should be set up for mothers of children.. It was suggested that the area in front of the polling booth should be made pleasant with green plants. It was suggested that good water facilities and shaniana (tent) should be set up for the people who come to vote. The concerned officials participated in this program.



Arrangements should be completed for the first phase of elections

- State Election Commissioner Rani Kumudini



“(Mandava Srisailam.. Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle..December 9):- General Panchayat Elections- State Election Commissioner Rani Kumudini said that arrangements should be made in full for the first phase of Sarpanch and Ward member elections to be held on the 11th of this month in 2025. On Tuesday, the Election Commission, along with the members of the Commission, held a review meeting with the Collectors of all districts, senior police officers, general and expenditure observers, and district Panchayat officials through video conference from Hyderabad on the conduct of the elections, steps to be taken on the day before polling and on polling day, vote counting, election of Deputy Sarpanch, implementation of the election code of conduct, and prevention of voter-influencing factors. On this occasion, the State Election Commission Commissioner said that in the context of the Panchayat elections, elections will be held for 3,834 Gram Panchayat Sarpanch and 27,628 ward member posts in the state in the first phase, and for this, 56 lakh 19 thousand 430 voters will exercise their right to vote in 37,562 polling stations. He said that 12,960 candidates are in the fray for the post of Sarpanch and 65,455 candidates for the post of ward member. He said that the Panchayat elections should be held in a peaceful and transparent environment with-

out any room for mistakes and in accordance with the rules of the Election Commission. He said that precautions should be taken during the polling and counting times and the election process should be conducted efficiently. Speaking at this VC, District Election Officer and Collector Hanumantha Rao said that complete arrangements have been made to hold the first phase of elections in the district. He said that training classes have been given to the polling staff. He said that counters have been set up for the use of postal ballots. He said that the distribution of voter slips has been completed and infrastructure has been provided at the polling stations so that the staff does not face any inconvenience. He said that counters have been set up at the election material distribution center in the respective mandal centers and appropriate measures are being taken. He said that security has been arranged at each polling center and webcasting arrangements have been made at the polling centers. He said that after the polling is over, the counting of votes and the election of the deputy sarpanch will be monitored to ensure that it goes smoothly. Additional Collector of Local Bodies Bhaskara Rao, Expenditure Observer Srinivas, District Revenue Officer Jayamma, District Panchayat Officer Vishnuvardhan Reddy and concerned officials participated in this program.

Liquor shops should be temporarily closed to maintain public peace and security during the Gram Panchayat elections.

Police Excise officials should cooperate:

Election Officer District Collector Hanumantha Rao

“(Mandava Srisailam.. Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle..December 9):- District Collector Hanumantha Rao has ordered the police, excise and revenue department officials to temporarily close liquor shops to maintain public peace and security during the Gram Panchayat elections. According to the rules of the Telangana State Election Commission, during the polling and counting of the elections, bars, restaurants and toddy shops in the respective mandals across the district have been ordered to close as per the following instructions so that the Gram Panchayat elections are held peacefully, freely and impartially.” Shop Closure Details: Phase – Ist 6 Mandals: (Aleru, Rajapet, Yadagirigutta, Atmakur (M), Bommalaramaram, Turkapalli Mandals Date: 09-12-2025 5.00 PM till the end of polling and counting (11-12-2025). Phase – IInd Mandal Names (Bhuvanagiri, Bibinagar, Pochampally, Valigonda, Ramannapet) Mandals Date: 12-12-2025 5.00 PM till the end of polling and counting (14-12-2025). Phase – III (Choutuppal, Narayanpur, Addagudur, Motkur, Gundala, Motakondur) 6th Mandals Date: 15-12-2025 5.00 PM. The polling and counting will be closed from 12:00 PM till the end of the counting (17-12-2025). “The District Collector has asked everyone to strictly follow these orders for the sake of public peace and security. He said that the police, revenue and excise departments will strictly monitor the election process to ensure that there is no disruption. He warned that appropriate action will be taken if there is any violation of the law.



The development and welfare schemes implemented by the public government in the state will make the Congress party candidates win

- Telangana State Government Whip Aleru MLA Beerla Ailaiah



“(Mandava Srisailam.. Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle..December 9):- In Yadagirigutta Mandal of Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District, Telangana State Government Whip Aleru MLA Beerla Ailaiah campaigned during the Gram Panchayat elections. Beerla Ailaiah's own village in Yadagirigutta Mandal continued in Saidapur, Masaipet village, Gourapalli, Sadhuvelli, Kacharam, Dharmareddy Gudem, Chinna Kandukur, Pedda Kandukur, Cholleru, Vangapalli, Ramajipet villages. Speaking on the occasion, Beerla Ailaiah said that the Congress party should make the Sarpanch candidates win with a large majority and develop the villages under this public administration. The development and welfare schemes being implemented by the people's government in the state will help the Sarpanch and ward candidates supported by the Congress win, he said. He said that the people are happy with the development and welfare schemes being implemented by the state government. He said that the Congress government has implemented schemes like Indira Mamma Houses, new ration cards, and distribution of rice in just two years, which were not implemented by the BRS government that was in power for the last ten years. He said that he is happy when people say that the infrastructure in the villages has improved since the Congress party came to power. He said that the BJP and BRS are looking to win with illegally earned money in the name of religion. He said that the people will not succumb to the temptations of BRS and BJP. He expressed confidence that he is going to win more than 90 percent of the sarpanch seats in the constituency with the support of the

people. He explained that once the Congress government comes to power, it will provide free bus travel for women, 200 units of free electricity, ration cards, farmer loan waiver, insurance for farmers, Indiramma houses, and interest-free loans to women's groups. “He said that the welfare of the people is the goal of the Congress government's areas, and that people are being attracted towards the Congress due to the impact of the schemes implemented by the Congress government for rural development, public welfare, and social justice, and that there will always be a party for everyone.

Sonia Gandhi – the mother who fulfilled the dream of four crore Telangana people: Nemali Anil Kumar



“Nacharam, Indian Chronicle, December 9: “Sonia Gandhi is the mother who fulfilled the longstanding aspiration of a separate state and realized the dream of four crore people of Telangana, said Greater Congress senior leader Nemali Anil Kumar. On the occa-

sion of Sonia Gandhi's birthday, Anil Kumar participated in the celebrations organized under the leadership of Mallapur Congress Party at the Mallapur Elephant Circle. Senior Congress leaders, Seva Dal members, Minority, Dalit, OBC Cell, Women, Student, and Youth Congress leaders also took part in the program.

Grand Celebrations of Sonia Gandhi's Birthday in Nacharam



Minister Vakati Srihari Reviews Arrangements for Friendly Exhibition Football Match with Messi at Uppal Rajiv Gandhi International Cricket Stadium on December 13

“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, December 9 (Indian Chronicle): “In view of the friendly exhibition football match featuring global football legend Lionel Messi, scheduled to be held on December 13 at the Uppal Rajiv Gandhi International Cricket Stadium, Minister for Sports Vakati Srihari and Telangana State Sports Authority Chairman Shivasena Reddy inspected the arrangements at the stadium on Tuesday. The Minister reviewed the stadium facilities thoroughly and issued several instructions to the officials. Additional DGP Charu Sinha, Joint Commissioner Joel Davis, Malkajgiri ACP Chakrapani, and various sports officials participated in the inspection. Speaking on the occasion, Minister Vakati Srihari said that the arrival of world football icon Messi to Hyderabad is a matter of great pride for Telangana. He stated that Messi's visit will inspire the youth and bring a positive shift in the mindset of sportspersons across the state. He added that the Chief Minister's vision is to encourage youth to stay away from intoxicants and come to the playgrounds, and Messi's visit will greatly support this mission. The Minister criticized the opposition for opposing Messi's visit and the Global Summit, calling their stand “ridiculous.” He said Telangana is receiving



global attention due to such events, and the opposition's comments reflect their immaturity. “They could not do such things when they were in power, and now they cannot tolerate Chief Minister Revanth Reddy achieving them,” he remarked. Vakati Srihari also revealed that the Global Summit attracted investments worth 24 lakh crore from various international companies. He further added that the Congress government has allocated 2850 crore in the budget for the sports sector—more than any previous government.

Bishop Maddella Emmy appointed as General Secretary of NCC National Women's Wing.

“Indian Chronicle OU December 09: In a major appointment for the women's wing of the National Christian Council, Bishop Maddella Emmy has been appointed as the General Secretary of the NCC National Women's Wing. On this occasion, Bishop. Maddella. Emmy expressed his heartfelt gratitude to NCC Founder President Rev. Dr. Sam Paul, as well as National Vice President Rev. Brighty Beulah for giving him this prestigious opportunity. During her appointment

Former Chief Minister KCR... December 9... With Deeksha Vijay Diwas..

Delhi bows its necks and announces Telangana state:- TRS state leaders Chintala Venkateswar Reddy



“(Mandava Srisailam.. Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle..December 9):- December 9 is the day when Telangana movement leader KCR bowed his necks in Delhi after undertaking an 11-day fast unto

death for his homeland. December 9 is the historic day when the announcement for the formation of a separate state was made and the first step towards the realization of the aspirations of the people of Telangana was taken. BRS Party senior state leaders Chintala Venkateswar Reddy and former MLA Bhullu Bikshamayya Goud, who organized a fruit distribution program at the Beejala Lakshmaiah Foundation Old Age Home in Chimalakondur village of Bhuvanagiri mandal of Bhuvanagiri Single Window Chairman Nomula Paramesh Reddy, former Market Committee Chairman Nallamala Ramesh Goud, Chandupatla Rajeshwar Rao, Katika Jangaiah, district leaders Kutadi Suresh, Vallapu Vijay, Dandaboina Balaraju Yadav, Pallapate Ravi Kumar, Mothe Manohar, Miriyala Seshu, Nagar Naresh, leaders and activists.

'Was handed weapons and sent to Ukrainian territory': Rohtak man's kin seek help after he was lured into Russian army



GNS News Agency, Dec 9

After two men from Haryana's Fatehabad were reported to have been trapped in the Russia-Ukraine war zone, one more family from the state has come forward claiming that their son was allegedly lured into joining the Russian Army, along with two others from Ambala and Sonipat. The family of Sandeep, 29, from Jethpur (Taimurpur) village in Rohtak, said he sent them a video informing them of his situation and pleading to be rescued. Sandeep had travelled to Russia along with youths from Sonipat, Ambala, and Uttar Pradesh. He went on a study visa on September 23, 2024, and was working part-time at a restaurant while studying. During his stay, his family claimed, he was 'tricked' into joining the Russian army as a cook. Soon after, he was handed weapons.

His maternal uncle, Shribhagwan, told media persons that they had paid Rs 6 lakh to an agent from Charkhi Dadri to send Sandeep abroad. "Initially, he worked at a restaurant in Russia, but now the army has handed him weapons and sent him to occupied Ukrainian territory — just 2.5 km from the city," Shribhagwan said. Sandeep's father, Bakshe Ram, added, "Our family is financially very weak. Sandeep is the youngest of five siblings. He has completed his BA degree. One of his brothers is a hairdresser in Jhajjar, another works in Gurgaon. One sister is divorced, while another sister is married. The family was hoping that sending him abroad will improve our financial situation. We took a loan to send him to Russia. 'Our family is going through a terrible situation. We sold all our jewellery and borrowed money to pay around Rs 6 lakh to an agent to send Sandeep to Russia. Since then, he hasn't been able to send even a

rupee back. The house is now in a dilapidated condition," the father added. "Non-Russians sent out on patrol at night" His sister Saroj said he informed them over a video call that their group was not even allowed to light fires. "They are given only one meal of porridge per day. He fears being attacked during night patrols. He spends the day in a bunker, and at night, non-Russian recruits are sent out on patrol. He begged us to bring him back home somehow," she said. Shribhagwan said they have written to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), the Embassy, and the Prime Minister's Office requesting to bring Sandeep back. They also met BJP national secretary Omprakash Dhankar, who forwarded their letter to External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar. The family is pleading with the government to help bring their son back.

Bakshe Ram said multiple surgeries have rendered him unable to work. Sandeep's mother has also undergone surgery. They had pinned their hopes on him, but now he is too trapped. They are urging the Indian government to contact Russian authorities and help bring their son home. A man from Ambala and another from Sonipat too have been trapped in the war zone, Sandeep's family said, but their details are yet to be ascertained. Earlier, the families of Ankit Jangra and Vijay Poonia of Kumharia village in Fatehabad alleged that they were forcibly recruited into the Russian army. The two were sent to the warzone, following which their families have lost contact with them for over three weeks now. Fatehabad native Ramesh, who returned from Russia, revealed that a network is "actively recruiting youth into the Russian army" using monetary temptations. "They give 10 days of basic weapons training, then send them to the frontlines with the harsh choice — kill or be killed," he said. Ramesh added that this network is not limited to Indians. "They are targeting young men from Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Pakistan as well. They promise a luxurious life and high salaries. Youths from Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan often resist because they understand the Russian language. But Indians, Nepalis, Pakistanis, and Sri Lankans fall into the trap easily," he added. The families of Jangra and Poonia now see a ray of hope after the MEA released a list of 27 Indian youths forcibly recruited into the Russian army and sent to fight in the Ukraine war. Their names are on the list, and the government is now in talks with the Russian authorities to bring them back home.

Canadian PM Carney visits Trump as relations between them remain at a low point



GNS News Agency, Dec 9

Washington: Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney will meet with President Donald Trump in the Oval Office on Tuesday at a time when one of the world's most durable and amicable alliances has been fractured by Trump's trade war and annexation threats. Carney's second visit to the White House comes ahead of a review next year of the free trade agreement, which is critical to Canada's economy. More than 77 per cent of Canada's exports go to the US. Trump's talk of making Canada the 51st state and his tariffs have Canadians feeling an undeniable sense of betrayal. Relations with Canada's southern neighbour and longtime ally haven't been worse. "We've had ups and downs, but this is the lowest point in relations that I can recall," said Frank McKenna, a former Canadian ambassador to the United States and current deputy chairman of TD Bank.

"Canadians aren't being instructed what to do; they are simply voting with their feet," he said. "I talk every day to ordinary citizens who are changing their vacation plans, and I talk to large business owners who are moving reward trips away or executive business trips. There is an outright rebellion." There is fear in Canada over what will happen to the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement. Carney is looking to get some relief on some sector-specific tariffs, but expectations are low. "Improving relations with the White House ahead of the USMCA review is certainly an objective of the trip, but opposition parties and part of the Canadian public will criticise Prime Minister Carney if he doesn't achieve some progress on the tariff front at this stage," said Daniel Beland, a political science professor at McGill University in Montreal. Trump said Monday that he anticipated Carney wanted to use the meeting to discuss trade.

"I guess he's going to ask about tariffs, because a lot of companies from Canada are moving into the United States," Trump told reporters after signing an executive order related to Alaska. "He's losing a lot of companies in Canada." Carney has said the USMCA, which is up for review in 2026, is an advantage for Canada at a time when it is clear that the US is charging for access to its market. Carney has said the commitment of the US to the core of USMCA means that over 85 per cent of Canada-

US trade continues to be free of tariffs. He said the US's average tariff rate on Canadian goods is 5.6 per cent and remains the lowest among all its trading partners. But Trump has some sector-specific tariffs on Canada, known as Section 232 tariffs, that are having an impact. There are 50 per cent tariffs on steel and aluminum imports, for example. McKenna said he is hearing Canada might get some relief in steel and aluminum. "It could be 50 per cent to 25 per cent or agreeing on tariff-free quotas to allow the steel and aluminum to go through at last year's levels," he said.

The ties between the two countries are without parallel. About USD 2.5 billion (nearly USD 3.6 billion Canadian) worth of goods and services cross the border each day. Canada is the top export destination for 36 US states. There is close cooperation on defense, border security and law enforcement, and a vast overlap in culture, traditions and pastimes. About 60 per cent of US crude oil imports are from Canada, and 85 per cent of US electricity imports are from Canada. Canada is also the largest foreign supplier of steel, aluminum and uranium to the US and has 34 critical minerals and metals that the Pentagon is eager for and investing in for national security. "The bigger prize would be getting a mutual agreement to negotiate as quickly as possible the free trade relationship," McKenna said. "If the United States were to threaten us with the six months' notice of termination, I think it would represent a deep chill all across North America."

Canada's PM Mark Carney makes second White House visit to talk trade with U.S. President Trump

GNS News Agency, Dec 9

Canada's Prime Minister Mark Carney is making his second visit to the White House in five months on Tuesday (October 7, 2025) under increasing pressure to address US tariffs on steel, autos and other goods that are hurting Canada's economy. A Canadian government official and several analysts played down the chances of an imminent trade deal with US President Donald Trump and said the mere fact that discussions are continuing should be considered a success for Carney.

The prime minister last visited the Oval Office in May, when he bluntly told Trump that Canada would never be for sale in response to Trump's repeated threat to purchase or annex Canada. Since then, the prime minister has made numerous concessions to Canada's biggest trading partner, including dropping some counter-tariffs and scrapping a digital services tax aimed at US tech companies. PM Carney's office has said the working visit will focus on forging a new economic and security relationship with the US. White House spokeswoman Karoline Leavitt said Monday (October 6, 2025): "I'm sure trade will be a topic of discussion ... and all of the other issues that are facing both Canada and the United States." While the majority of Canada's exports are entering the United States tariff-free under the US-Canada-Mexico free trade agreement, tariffs have pummeled Canada's steel, aluminum and auto sectors and a number of small businesses. "The reality is that right now, Canadian products have among the lowest

tariff rate," said Jonathan Kalles, a former adviser to Carney's predecessor, Justin Trudeau. "You don't want to poke the bear when things could be much worse," he said, adding that any meeting with Trump is a calculated risk. Carney will probably get a better deal through private negotiations, not the pomp and ceremony of going to the White House," he said.

Mr. Carney won an election in April promising to be tough with Trump and secure a new economic relationship with the United States. Shachi Kurl, President of the Angus Reid Institute, said polls show Canadians have largely been willing to give Carney time to deal with Trump. "But that amount of time is finite," Mr. Kurl said, noting pressure may build with job losses mounting and economic growth hobbled by US tariffs. The US is the destination for nearly three-quarters of Canadian exports.

Canada's opposition leader, Pierre Poilievre, has criticised Mr. Carney's approach to Mr. Trump, noting the prime minister's earlier pledge to "negotiate a win" by July 21. Asa McKercher, a specialist in Canada-U.S. relations at St. Francis Xavier University, said Mr. Carney's meeting with Mr. Trump would be a success if there is any recognition that Canada has moved to address some of Trump's persistent grievances. "Carney has just set up this new defense agency and boosted military spending, so it would be great if Trump could reduce some of those sectoral tariffs on autos," Mr. McKercher said, citing Trump's past complaint that Canada is a "military free-rider."

Houthis detain nine more U.N. staff as part of Yemen crackdown



GNS News Agency, Dec 9

Iranian-backed Houthis in Yemen have detained nine employees of the United Nations as part of a long-running crackdown on the organisation, the U.N. said. The detentions bring the number of detained U.N. workers in Houthi-held territories in Yemen to 53 since 2021, U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric said in a statement late Monday (October 6, 2025). No details about the circumstances or timing of the latest detentions were given.

Mr. Dujarric said the crackdown has impeded "the U.N.'s ability to operate in Yemen and to deliver critical assistance" to the local population in the Arab world's poorest country. He called for "the immediate and unconditional release" of all U.N. staff as well as workers from other international organisations and diplomatic missions who have been detained by the rebels. "They must be respected and protected in accordance with applicable international law,"

Mr. Dujarric said. A spokesman for the rebels did not respond to calls and messages seeking comment.

The rebels have previously said that their crackdown on the U.N. and other international groups is linked to suspected members of an alleged espionage network. In August, the rebels raided U.N. offices in the capital, Sanaa, and detained 19 employees, according to the U.N. They later released Lana Shukri Kataw, the deputy director of UNICEF in the country. The raids were the latest in a long-running Houthi crackdown against the U.N. and other international organisations working in rebel-held areas in Yemen. The crackdown has forced the U.N. to suspend its operations in the Houthi stronghold of Saada province in northern Yemen, following the detention of eight staff in January 2025.

The U.N. also relocated its top humanitarian coordinator in Yemen from Sanaa to the coastal city of Aden, which serves as seat for the internationally recognised government. Yemen has plunged into civil war in 2014 when the Houthis seized Sanaa and much of northern Yemen, forcing the internationally recognised government into exile. A coalition led by Saudi Arabia and including the United Arab Emirates intervened the following year in an attempt to restore the government. The war has been stalemated in recent years, and the rebels reached a deal with Saudi Arabia that stopped their attacks on the kingdom in return for ceasing the Saudi-led strikes on their territories. The rebels are engaged in tit-for-tat attacks with Israel over the war in Gaza. They have also attacked ships sailing in the Red Sea off Yemen over allegations of links to Israel. Israel has previously launched waves of airstrikes in response to the Houthis' firing of missiles and drones at Israel.

Intruder with mental health issues vandalises Washington state Capitol



GNS News Agency, Dec 9

An intruder broke into the Washington State Capitol and smashed a glass door, set fire to a rug and flag, and knocked over busts of George Washington and Martin Luther King Jr. before he was taken into custody by State troopers. The man, who has a history of mental health challenges, was booked into Thurston County Jail on suspicion of first-degree burglary, first-degree arson and first-degree malicious mischief, said Chris Loftis, spokesman for the Washington State Patrol. "The suspect's actions were very purposeful at the Capitol, but appears to be an individual experiencing a mental health crisis of some sort," Mr. Loftis said in an email to The Associated Press. The man parked in a flower bed in the flag circle in front of the Legislative Building at about 10:15 p.m. on Sunday (October 6, 2025) and was spotted by someone with the Department of Enterprise Services, which stewards the state Capitol Campus. They alerted the State Patrol. The suspect had two hammers and broke in through a ground-floor office window, proceeded upstairs where he damaged items as he

moved through the building, Mr. Loftis said. Lt. Gov. Denny Heck said the flags on the side of the Rotunda were knocked over and one was burned. "He broke a glass door to enter the State Reception Room, where he also set fire to several objects, including the original rug, which is a priceless treasure," Diandra Asana, spokesperson for Mr. Heck, said that the State Patrol did not find the incident to be politically motivated.

World Bank ups FY26 growth outlook to 6.5% on but downgrades next year's forecast due to Trump tariffs



The World Bank has upgraded its growth outlook for India to 6.5% in 2025-26, from the earlier 6.3%, citing stronger domestic conditions and also the impact of the GST rate cuts. However, it has revised downward its forecast for 2026-27 to 6.3%, saying the impact of the US tariffs will dampen growth. In its South Asia Development Update released on Tuesday (October 7, 2025), the World Bank said India's real GDP growth "exceeded expectations" in the April-June 2025 quarter, accelerating to 7.8%. It noted that growth was bolstered by strong private consumption and investment and boosted by lower-than-expected prices.

For the current financial year, the World Bank said India's growth has been revised upwards to 6.5% from the earlier prediction of 6.3%. "India is expected to remain the world's fastest growing major economy, underpinned by continued strength in consumption growth," the report said. "Domestic conditions, particularly agricultural output and rural wage growth, have been better than expected."

"The government's reforms to the Goods and Services Tax (GST) — reducing the number of tax brackets and simplifying compliance — are expected to support activity," it

In Bangladesh's flooded plains, schools in boats keep learning afloat



Each morning, he waits on the edge of his flooded village in Bhangura, western Bangladesh, for the solar-powered classroom that sails right to his doorstep. His home lies deep in Chalan Beel, a sprawling 26-square-kilometre (10 sq miles) wetland where seasonal floods often cut off roads and submerge entire villages.

But for Islam and hundreds of other children, education floats. The initiative, launched in 2002 by architect Mohammed Rezwan using \$500 of his scholarship money, has grown into a nationwide model run by the non-profit Shidhulai Swanirvar Sangstha (SSS). Now, more than 100 boats serve as schools, libraries, and clinics. The project has educated over 22,000 students and won a UNESCO Confucius Prize for Literacy this year for its work.

In Chalan Beel, around two dozen boats serve as classrooms, visiting riverside villages six days a week. The school boats are made of local timber and are equipped with benches, blackboards, and bookshelves. Solar panels power lights and computers. Item 1 of 5 Kulsun Khatun, an eight-year-old girl, takes notes while attending a class in a floating school, built on a boat by an NGO named Shidhulai Swanirvar Sangstha, in Bhangura area of Pabna, Bangladesh. [1/5] Kulsun Khatun, an eight-year-old girl, takes notes while attending a class in a floating school, built on a boat by an NGO named Shidhulai Swanirvar Sangstha, in Bhangura area of Pabna, Bangladesh, September 25, 2025. REUTERS/Mohammad Ponir Hossain Purchase Licensing Rights, opens new tab "Right now, we have 2,240 pupils enrolled in 26 boat schools," said Madhusudan Karmaker, a senior manager at SSS. "Over 22,500 students have graduated so far, and during severe floods, these boats also double as shelters for displaced families."

Other NGOs have adopted similar models for their

work in the country's wetland areas. Classes are run in three shifts a day, lasting about three hours each. Teachers navigate narrow waterways to collect students, conduct lessons in Bengali, maths, and general knowledge. "We never had the chance to study," said parent Sufia Khatun, waiting on the riverbank for her son Islam to return. "But this boat lets my children dream of a better future." Teacher Sakhina Khatun, who has been with SSS for over a decade, said similar floating school initiatives have since inspired projects in countries like Nigeria, Cambodia, and the Philippines. "These schools never close — not even during floods," she said. "That's what makes them special." Founder Rezwan, a World Fellow at Yale University, said: "I haven't had many things during my life and these children don't have much either. But giving them access to schooling, healthcare and seeing that replicated around the world — that gives me motivation."

In a village known for unopposed polls, woman farmer being prevented from filing nomination papers



GNS News Agency, Dec 9

The Maharashtra Election Commission is probing the allegations of a woman candidate—a farmer being fielded by Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar's NCP for a Nagar panchayat poll in Solapur district who is being prevented from filing her nomination by some "anti-social elements" for the last two days. Speaking to The Indian Express on Sunday, State Election Commissioner Dinesh Waghmare said, "We will look into the matter."

The allegations were raised by NCP Solapur district president Umesh Patil at a press conference on Sunday. Speaking to The Indian Express, Patil said the matter pertains to Angar Nagar panchayat in Solapur district. "Earlier, Anghar was a gram panchayat which had a tradition of electing candidates unopposed for the last 60 years. Even though now it has become a Nagar panchayat, some people want to continue the same tradition that was going on for so long by threatening candidates, forcing them to withdraw from the race and getting elected unopposed. What kind of tradition is this? What are the election officers and the State Election Commission doing?" he asked. Patil said the candidate, Ujwala Thite, went to file nominations on three occasions in the last one week. "However, goons are blocking her way by placing tractors on the roads. She is being chased by goons brandishing sharp weapons. Every trick is being used to prevent her from filing the nomination papers."

National Green Tribunal pulls up Himachal govt over Kullu waste crisis

GNS News Agency, Dec 9

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has pressed the Himachal Pradesh Government for a detailed, top-level account of solid waste management in Kullu, observing that the "magnitude of the problem" required stronger action and full compliance with the Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016. The case stems from a viral video published as a news item titled 'From paradise to landfill?' showing a popular Himachal hill station buried under garbage, prompting NGT to take suo motu cognisance earlier this year.

Pointing to the seriousness of the waste accumulation captured in the viral video, the Tribunal said last Thursday that despite action already initiated, additional "appropriate alternative arrangements" were needed. The order was uploaded Friday. All parties have been given one month to complete the remaining pleadings. The matter has been listed for final hearing on January 16, 2026. At the hearing, the Himachal Advocate General informed the Tribunal that the state High Court had also taken suo motu cognisance and was conducting independent monitoring through CWPIL 36 of 2025. He argued that, in view of orders passed by the High Court on June 5, July 24, September 1, October 10 and November 12, NGT may not proceed further. The bench, however, declined to step back. It noted that the Tribunal had taken cognisance on June 5 and proceedings had already reached an "advanced stage of hearing." Holding that both forums could proceed concurrently, NGT clarified that if any conflict arose, "the order passed by the Hon'ble Himachal Pradesh High Court shall prevail," and the Tribunal's order would be ignored only to the extent of such conflict. After reviewing the replies filed so far, NGT directed the Himachal Pradesh chief secretary to submit an affidavit, either personally or through an authorised officer, detailing action taken to ensure compliance with the Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016, in the Kullu district. The Tribunal further directed the chief secretary to issue instructions to the adjudicating officer appointed under the amended Environment (Protection) Act, 1986—specifically Sections 15, 15B and 15C as revised through the Jan Vishwas Act, 2023—to take suo motu cognisance of violations and impose



penalties on defaulting departments, officers and private parties. Relevant details must also be included in the affidavit. To ensure accountability across departments, NGT also impleaded the chief secretary as respondent no. 6, and the principal secretaries of Urban Development and Rural Development departments as respondents no. 7 and 8. Notices were accepted in court by the Advocate General.

These departments must file their own responses, detailing compliance with Rules 11 and 13 of the Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016.

While the deputy commissioner, Kullu, has already submitted a reply dated November 10, the Tribunal directed him to file an additional response specifically addressing compliance with the waste management rules. Respondent no. 5, responsible for municipal waste management, was asked to furnish a comprehensive, tabulated account of compliance with Clause (a) to Clause (z) of the Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016. The Tribunal noted that although the municipal body claimed to have e-filed its reply on November 12, the Registry was unable to retrieve it. NGT asked the Registry to ascertain why the e-filed reply did not reflect on the portal and to coordinate with NIC for corrective action. NGT directed the local body to work with the District Environment Committee, headed by the deputy commissioner, to put these in place and file a detailed compliance report within two months.

Two men picked up from Nuh, police say Umar stayed at one of their homes for 10 days



GNS News Agency, Dec 9

Red Fort blast: The detentions came after Delhi Police Special Cell sleuths camped in the Nuh and Mewat region for nearly five days. In fresh detentions related to Red Fort blast case, two men who allegedly sheltered the prime accused, Umar Nabi, in Nuh have been picked up by the Delhi Police for questioning, officials said. A Delhi Police investigator revealed that one of the men, a peon-cum-electrician at the Al-Falah University in Faridabad, who knew Umar as he was a doctor there, was contacted by him for a room about 10 days before the blast. "He took Umar to Sahar Hidayat colony in Nuh, where his brother-in-law lives. He asked him to give Umar a room in his house for some days, and his brother-in-law obliged," a police officer said. The brother-in-law, however, started having issues with Umar as he was very 'unhygienic', the police officer said.

"Umar stayed there for about 10 days and then left. As of now, it seems that the brother-in-law was unaware about who Umar was... but Umar did stay at his house and plan the blast," the police officer said. The Indian Express had earlier reported that Umar had left the Al Falah campus after another doctor at the university, Muzammil Ganai, was picked up by Jammu & Kashmir Police on October 30, and had travelled to Nuh in the Hyundai i20—that later blew up near Red Fort. Umar had returned to Delhi only on the day

of the incident. The peon and his brother-in-law were detained from Nuh on November 15, a police officer said. The detentions came after Delhi Police Special Cell sleuths camped in the Nuh and Mewat region for nearly five days, where they tracked nearly 200 contacts related to Umar and co-accused Ganai. Investigators also revealed that staff of a hospital inside the Faiz-e-Illahi mosque in Central Delhi, where Umar was seen for 15 minutes before he went to the Red Fort parking lot, have also been questioned, but no links have emerged so far. "The staff, a man who was seen following Umar, were all questioned in detail, but no links with the accused have been established. The peon (at Al Falah) is being questioned further to see if he was aware of Umar's plans or has any kind of links with the terror module," a senior police official said.

Woman dies after saree gets entangled in motorcycle wheel in Mancherial

GNS News Agency, Dec 9 Mancherial: A woman was killed when her saree got entangled in the wheel of a motorcycle on which she was travelling at the high-level bridge across the Godavari near Indaram village in Jaipur mandal on Sunday night.

Police said Madhyarla Pushpapalatha, 35, from Vemanaipalli mandal centre, suffered severe head injuries after she fell from the motorcycle when her saree was caught in the wheel of the two-wheeler. Her husband Venkanna had earlier died of Covid-19.

Chandigarh admin cuts power to India's tallest air purifier, asks firm to dismantle it



GNS News Agency, Dec 9

India's tallest air purifier at Transport Chowk in the city is set to be dismantled, with the Chandigarh Administration disconnecting power to the device and directing the firm to dismantle the structure immediately, as a three-month deadline given to them ended in October. Before terminating the contract with the firm, Pious Air Private Limited, which installed the air purifier in 2021 and had to operate and maintain it for five years, the Chandigarh Administration got a third-party assessment of the air purifier done. National Institute of Technical Teachers Training and Research (NITTTR) found that the air purifier covers a very limited area.

Following this, the Chandigarh Pollution Control Committee (CPCC) issued a notice to the firm for the removal of the air purifier within three months. The firm, however, sought time and allowances from the UT Administration. "We

have disconnected the power supply and directed the firm to remove the structure with immediate effect. Two studies were conducted, and it was found that the air purifier was not delivering the results as claimed. So, it's of no use, and thus, we took the decision," CPCC Member Secretary Saurabh Kumar told The Indian Express. In July, the CPCC governing body had decided to terminate the contract with the firm. The firm bore the cost of the 24-metre-tall tower on its own, but the UT Administration would supply electricity to operate the device and pay approximately Rs 25,000 monthly, around Rs 3 lakh annually, power bill for the tower, according to an official. The company had claimed that the air purifier tower would clean air in a radius of 500 metres. While operating for 18 hours a day, it was stated that the tower would reduce the ambient temperature by a few degrees, and cut pollutants such as PM2.5, PM10, nitrogen oxides, and sulphur dioxide by up to 50 per cent. The air purifier tower was a pilot project of the Chandigarh administration, which had then decided to install similar air purifier towers at six major intersections in the city. However, the failure of the pilot project came as a setback to the decision. "Transport Chowk was chosen for the pilot project as it witnesses heavy vehicular traffic, and thus, heavy vehicular emissions, but it never purified the air as claimed by the firm," a UT official said. Hina Rohtaki is a Special Correspondent with The Indian Express, Chandigarh. She covers Chandigarh administration and other cross beats. In this field for over a decade now, she has also received the prestigious Ramnath Goenka Excellence in Journalism Award by the President of India in January 2020. She tweets @HinaRohtaki

Issue of alliances to become clear after nominations end, say Fadnavis

GNS News Agency, Dec 9

With elections to the local government bodies round the corner and uncertainty over alliance looming large, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis urged BJP workers to explore the possibility of tie-up with other parties wherever it proves beneficial. Speaking at the inauguration of the BJP's regional office in Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar's Chikalthana on Sunday, Fadnavis said, "We should enter into alliances wherever it is beneficial to us. But at the same time, if an alliance does not materialise, we must remember that the parties currently fighting against us were once our allies." BJP leaders Raosaheb Danve, minister Atul Save, Pankaja Munde, Meghna Bordikar, and MP Bhagwat Karad were also present for the inauguration. Fadnavis said the decision regarding alliances and distribution of seats takes place at the district-level. "This is not a state assembly election. This is a local election where local units have been asked to decide the candidature. There are some places where the Mahayuti is fighting elections together, at some places two parties are together while at some, no alliance has taken place. Decisions will be taken depending on the local situation. We can give the exact information about the alliances only by Tuesday." As far as the municipal corporation elections are concerned, there are different norms. "This is because municipal corporations have vast areas under their jurisdictions. Here too, wherever possible, alliances will be formed," said the Chief Minister.

The schedule for the elections to 246 municipal councils and 42 nagar panchayats in the state under the first phase of the multi-phase local body polls was announced by the Maharashtra State Election Commission (SEC) in the first week of November. The voting will be held on December 2, and the counting will be on December 3. Fadnavis also heavily criticised the Congress stating that the Grand Old Party's allegations of vote theft and poll irregularities made without submitting evidence to the Election Commission or courts will only lead to more electoral losses. "The Congress must reconnect with citizens and raise real public issues if it wants to revive its political prospects... If they do not improve their approach, I predict they will face the same defeat in the upcoming local elections," he said. The ruling Mahayuti alliance has already witnessed cracks with the BJP and the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) led by Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar allying, while keeping out Shiva Sena, led by Deputy CM Eknath Shinde. Like Fadnavis, Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar too held a meeting in Pune last week, asking party leaders to explore the possibility of a tie-up with other parties like the NCP (S-P), said party sources. Asked about the possible alliance with Sharad Pawar's party, NCP's Pune president Sunil Tingare said, "So far, we are exploring the possibility of finding candidates in all the wards. We are checking whether we have enough candidates. If not, then the BJP—our alliance partner at the state-level—might have some candidates." Tingare said though Ajit Pawar had spoken about exploring the pos-

sibility of alliance, there is no forward movement on this aspect. "We have not yet reached that stage yet. There is still time for civic elections... We will see how things unfold in the coming days," he said. Opposition NCP (SP) working president and LS MP Supriya Sule also said Sunday that the clear picture of alliance will be out only after the nominations end. "Our president Sharad Pawar has clarified that this is a local election and local units have been authorised to take a decision based on the local conditions. The fronts and alliances will be formed at that level. It is only on Tuesday morning that we can tell you how many seats the party is fighting," she said. In Pimpri-Chinchwad, the NCP voiced the same view. "We have not contacted leaders from Sharad Pawar's party. Neither have they. We have only heard about their leaders approaching our national chief who has also asked us to explore the possibility of a tie up with NCP (S-P)," said Yogesh Behl, president of NCP's Pimpri-Chinchwad unit. Behl however ruled out any alliance with BJP in Pimpri-Chinchwad. "We will certainly not have an alliance with BJP in Pimpri-Chinchwad," he said. The possibility of alliances between parties belonging to Mahayuti and Maha Vikas Aghadi emerged after the two NCP factions tied up to fight the civic body polls in Chandigarh and contest against the BJP under the leadership of Sharad Pawar. Similarly, in Konkan too, arch rivals Shiv Sena led by Eknath Shinde and Uddhav Thackeray's Sena UBT scorched the possibility of coming together for the local body election in Kankavli. All the parties have come together to take on Rane family and BJP in Kankavli. At a meeting held recently, Vaibhav Naik from Uddhav Sena and Rajan Teli of Shiv Sena were present where they decided to set up Shahar Vikas Aghadi. However, Uddhav Thackeray shot down the idea of an alliance with the Shinde-led Sena. In Dharavali district of Marathwada region, the Mahayuti is planning to contest unitedly. In Solapur, the BJP has decided to go solo against the mighty Mohite-Patil family, which has been controlling the Akulji municipal council without interruption. Dhairyasheel Mohite-Patil, a member of the family, is an NCP (SP) Lok Sabha MP from Madha seat. The ruling NCP too has decided to fight independently, making it a triangular fight.

Fake CBI officer, Skype calls, 187 transactions: How this Bengaluru woman techie lost Rs 31.83 crore to 'digital arrest' over 6 months

A 57-year-old IT professional from Bengaluru has allegedly lost Rs 31.83 crore to a 'digital arrest' fraud over six months, said to be the highest amount lost by a single victim in Karnataka to this kind of scam. The Bengaluru East Cyber Crime, Economic Offences and Narcotics (CEN) police filed an FIR based on her complaint on November 14.

According to the FIR, the woman received a call on September 15, 2024, from someone claiming to represent the DHL courier service. The caller informed her that a suspicious package addressed to her, containing three credit cards, four passports, and prohibited MDMA drugs, had been intercepted at their Andheri facility in Mumbai. A police officer said the woman initially refused to believe the caller and informed that she did not know about it. But then the caller allegedly suggested that her identity might have been compromised for cybercrime purposes, as her phone number was linked to the parcel. Before she could process this information, the call was seamlessly transferred to another man posing as a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) officer, said the police. While the woman attempted to inform her family members, the cyber fraudsters allegedly employed psychological manipulation tactics, warning her against contacting the local police or seeking legal counsel. They allegedly claimed that the criminals who had stolen her identity were actively surveilling her movements. The scammers escalated their intimidation by threatening to implicate her family members if she disclosed the situation to anyone, as per the complaint. A police officer men-

tioned that during this time, the woman's son's wedding was around the corner, and she felt trapped, leading her to comply with their demands. "There were updates every day, and I used to get scary messages and calls, and they wanted me to report all of these to them, and this created more fear for me. I was told that my laptop and phone were being monitored and I should not do anything unnecessary, and I was scared even to check out anything," the FIR quoted her as saying. The criminals allegedly placed her under what they termed "house arrest", forcing her to remain on a Skype video call with her camera constantly activated. A man identifying himself as CBI officer Pradeep Singh then allegedly assigned another man named Rahul Yadav to "monitor" her activities throughout the week while she worked from home. On September 23, 2024, Singh conducted a formal "interrogation" via Skype at a hotel, instructing her to declare all her assets to what he claimed was the Reserve Bank of India (RBI)'s Financial Intelligence Unit for verification purposes, she alleged in the complaint. According to the police, the woman liquidated her fixed deposits and savings, transferring Rs 31.83 crore across 187 separate transactions as directed by the fraudsters. They allegedly assured her the funds would be returned after "verification" by February 2025. To maintain the illusion of legitimacy, they allegedly gave her a "clearance certificate" on December 1, 2024, just days before her son's engagement ceremony. The 'digital arrest' continued until March 26 of this year, when the perpetrators allegedly ceased all communication suddenly, after providing various excuses for the delay in returning the funds.

North Korea says its longtime ceremonial head of state Kim Yong Nam has died



GNS News Agency, Dec 9

Kim Yong Nam, a quintessential North Korean bureaucrat whose lifelong loyalty to the ruling Kim dynasty allowed him to serve as the country's ceremonial head of state for two decades, has died, state media reported. The Korean Central News Agency said Kim Yong Nam, former president of the Presidium of North Korea's rubber-stamp Supreme People's Assembly, died on Monday of multiple organ failure at the age of 97. KCNA said that North Korean leader Kim Jong Un visited the bier of Kim Yong Nam to express deep condolences over his death. It said Kim Yong Nam's funeral was set for Thursday. Kim Yong Nam was not related to Kim Jong Un, the third generation of his family to rule North Korea. Kim Jong Un, grandson of state founder Kim Il Sung, took power upon his father Kim Jong Il's death in 2011 in the country's second hereditary power transfer.

Kim Yong Nam served as head of the Supreme People's Assembly from 1998 to April 2019. That post is North Korea's nominal head of state, though the true power was held by the Kim family that has ruled the North since its formal foundation in 1948. Kim Yong Nam, who was known for propaganda-filled speeches with a deep, booming voice at key state events, often appeared in state media greeting visiting foreign dignitaries on behalf of Kim Jong Un and his late father Kim Jong Il. In February 2018, he travelled to South Korea with Kim Jong Un's influential sister,

Kim Yo Jong, to attend the opening ceremony of the Pyeongchang Olympics as Pyongyang sought better ties with Seoul and Washington after years of heightened animosities on the Korean Peninsula. The trip made Kim Yong Nam the highest-level North Korean official to visit South Korea since Kim Jong Un sent a top military officer to attend the closing ceremony of the 2014 Asian Games in Incheon.

At the Pyeongchang opening ceremony, Kim Yong Nam and Kim Yo Jong sat within feet of then-US vice-president Mike Pence, though the two sides made no apparent contact. North Korea's temporary diplomatic openness peaked with the summits between Kim Jong Un and President Donald Trump in 2018 and 2019, but Kim Yong Nam did not attend them and his influence was seen as waning due to his age. In April 2019, he was replaced by Choe Ryong Hae, one of Kim Jong Un's close confidants who previously served as the top political officer of the North's 1.2 million-member military. Kim Yong Nam's career epitomised that of a successful North Korean bureaucrat. He joined the ruling Workers' Party shortly after the 1950-53 Korean War and survived major political purges through the 1970s. He was appointed to the powerful Politburo in 1978 and served 15 years as foreign minister, starting in 1983. During his tenure, the Berlin Wall fell and the Soviet Union disintegrated, leaving North Korea isolated. North Korea watchers also say Kim Yong Nam had an expertise in third-world diplomacy. He was a frequent participant in gatherings of nations that consider themselves independent from major power blocs, including the 2012 Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) summit in Iran. "I found Kim Yong Nam a puzzling figure. In greetings before business began, he was cordial and relaxed, but once at work, he relentlessly followed his script in a way that reminded of former Soviet foreign minister Andrei Gromyko," former Washington Post reporter Don Oberdoerfer wrote in his book, "The Two Koreas". In a testament to his loyalty to the ruling dynasty, Kim Yong Nam read an elegy to Kim Il Sung when he died in 1994. He also undertook the job of formally nominating Kim Jong Il to be chairman of the National Defence Commission after the son observed a three-year mourning period.

Tamil Nadu's 'encounters' with artificial rain-making over the last 50 years



Official rain-making experiment was successful immediately after a single flying into the clouds". Writing an editorial, The Hindu, on August 13, 1975, stated that "in his (Rao's) view, such instant evaluation is not possible and scientific tests must be carried out over a fairly long period before any verdict on the experiment can be pronounced. Yet the issue involved in the Madras [now Chennai] experiment relates primarily to giving relief to a water-starved place by some means or the other." A fortnight before the dismissal of his government in January 1976, the then Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi, explained to journalists about the failure of northeast monsoon in the composite districts of Madurai, Ramanathapuram, and Tirunelveli. The State government was contemplating approaching the American company for cloud seeding operations over the districts.

Again, in the early 1980s, the spell of drought hit the State, especially Madras and surrounding areas. This time, the regime was headed by M.G. Ramachandran with Chockalingam as the Chief Secretary. In July 1983, the operation was carried out by a four-member American team, led by Thomas Henderson. A "moderate rainfall" was recorded by Poondi. The experiments went on till October, at the completion of which the State government said the exercise had cost ₹26 lakh, according to a report of this newspaper on November 18, 1983. Eight months later, the government sanctioned ₹62 lakh for cloud-seeding operations [which began in July 1984] over the city's reservoirs. As the situation was grim, the authorities went to the extent of enlisting the services of the violin exponent Kunnakudi Vaidyanathan, who filled the air on the shores of Red Hills tank with the strains of Amritavarshini [a raga said to have been composed by Muthuswami Dikshitar], imploring the rain gods to respond. The State government's purchase of an aircraft in 1983 for the purpose came in for criticism of the Comptroller and Auditor General, whose report was tabled on the floor of the Assembly in November 1987. "The State Government not only did not adopt the usual tender procedure but also paid a price far in excess of the one suggested by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) which inspected the second-hand aircraft," reported this newspaper on November 10, 1987. Six years later, another report stated that "the aircraft remained idle for want of spares for sometime and had to be sent for mandatory overhauling at HAL at a cost of nearly ₹13 lakh and finally had to be disposed of." In 1993, when Chennai was in the grip of yet another spell of water shortage, the trials were done. But, by then, a consensus had emerged among the scientific community that no area got any more than 20% of rainfall over and above the normal. Ten years later, the then Chief Minister Jayalalithaa made an announcement but the authorities did not translate her decision into action in view of the absence of "conducive conditions." The addition of Krishna water and Veeranam tank as sources to Chennai water supply coupled with many seawater desalination plants has made the city's water supply position far better than what it was in the past, rendering cloud-seeding operations out of anyone's thought even as an option to tackle the shortage of drinking water.

Hyderabad Police expose iBomma piracy network; 21,000 films, Rs 3 crore seized

Hyderabad: Hyderabad Police on Monday revealed explosive details about the scale of digital piracy run by Ravi, the mastermind behind the illegal movie website iBomma, who allegedly uploaded nearly 21,000 films ranging from Hollywood's 1972 classic 'The Godfather' to the latest Tollywood release 'OG'.

Police Commissioner V.C. Sajjanar said Ravi not only operated the massive piracy network but simultaneously promoted online betting platforms, creating a dual criminal ecosystem.

"He set up 65 mirror websites. Our teams recovered nearly 21,000 movies from his hard disk. He earned close to ₹20 crore through piracy, and we've seized ₹3 crore from his accounts so far," he said. Given the multi-layered fraud and the huge flow of illegal funds, the Commissioner said the case will be escalated to CBI and Enforcement Directorate, as Ravi's operations include international links and a subscriber base of nearly 50 lakh users.

Abigail Spanberger elected Virginia Governor in historic first that boosts Democrats ahead of 2026



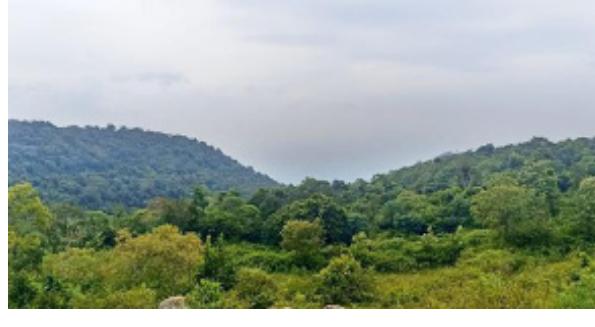
GNS News Agency, Dec 9

Democrat Abigail Spanberger won the Virginia governor's race on Tuesday defeating Republican Lt Gov Winsome Earle-Sears to give Democrats a key victory heading into the 2026 midterm elections and make history as the first-ever woman to lead the commonwealth. Ms. Spanberger's victory will flip partisan control of the Governor's office when the former Congresswoman and CIA case officer succeeds outgoing Republican governor Glenn Youngkin. She won with a campaign emphasising economic issues, a strategy that may serve as a model for other Democrats in next year's elections as they try to break President Donald Trump's and Republicans' hold on power in Washington and gain ground in statehouses. Throughout the campaign, Ms. Spanberger made carefully crafted economic arguments against Mr. Trump's policies, while she spent considerable sums on ads tying Earle-Sears to the president. She campaigned across the state, including in Republican-leaning areas. Yet she also emphasised her support for abortion rights in the last Southern state that has not enacted new restrictions or bans on the procedure, and she railed against Trump's Department of Government Efficiency, the U.S. government shutdown and their negative impact on a state with several hundred thousand federal employees. That approach helped corral Democrats' core supporters while attracting the kinds of swing voters who elected Youngkin four years ago. It also continued a historical trend for Virginia: Since Jimmy Carter won the White House in 1976, Virginia has backed a governor from the opposite party of every first-term president in the following year. This year is a special case, given the gap between Trump's terms. Republicans, meanwhile, must grapple again with a battleground loss by an arch-conservative from the president's party. Mr. Trump never campaigned for Earle-Sears, though he did give her his tepid support. Their uneasy alliance raises questions about the ideal Republican nominee for contested general elections and how the president's volatile standing with voters might affect GOP candidates next November. The midterm elections will settle Statehouse control in dozens of States and determine whether Republicans maintain majorities in Washington for the final years of Trump's presidency. Earle-Sears, 61, would

have become the first Black woman to be elected as a governor in the US. Spanberger balanced policy and biography. Ms. Spanberger, 46, ran on a pledge to protect Virginia's economy from the aggressive tactics of Trump's second administration, which has culled the civil service, levied tariffs and shepherded a reconciliation bill curtailing the state's already fragile health care system.

Accountant Sherry Kohan, 56, who cast her ballot at the Aurora Hills Library in Arlington, said she used to think of herself as a Republican but hasn't felt aligned with either party since Trump's first term. She said her vote for Spanberger was a vote against Trump. Stephanie Uhl, 38, who also said she voted for Spanberger, had the federal government shutdown on her mind when casting her ballot at the library in Arlington, just across the river from Washington. Ms. Uhl was working without pay for the Defense Department and though she said, "I can afford (it) just fine," she was bothered "that it affects so many other people." Spanberger's background also figured heavily into her victory. As a former CIA case officer, she noted her public service and national security credentials. And she pitched herself as the mother of daughters educated in Virginia's public schools and a Capitol Hill veteran who represented a swing district and worked across the aisle. The pitch helped the Democratic nominee withstand Earle-Sears' attacks on cultural issues, notably the Republican's assertion that Spanberger is an extremist on civil rights and health care for transgender people. Ms. Spanberger, who consistently argued that local school districts should decide whether transgender students can participate in competitive sports, cast her opponent as the candidate more out of step with the middle of the Virginia electorate. Her strategy echoed the approach Democrats used to flip U.S. House control in the 2018 midterms, halfway through Mr. Trump's first presidency. Ms. Spanberger was among several high-profile women who brought national security or military credentials to campaigns in battleground districts. Another of those women, Rep. Mikie Sherrill, was vying Tuesday to become New Jersey's Democratic governor. Together, they were held up as examples of successful mainstream Democrats at a time when the party's left flank has been ascendant, most notably Zohran Mamdani, a democratic socialist and the party's nominee in Tuesday's New York mayoral contest. In Congress, Spanberger was a quiet workhorse. When she first got to Washington, Ms. Spanberger concentrated on lower-profile issues: bringing broadband to rural areas, fighting drug trafficking and veterans' services. And she quickly established a reputation for working with colleagues across the political spectrum. In her new role, she will face tightening economic projections, rising utility costs and growing unemployment — in part because of the Trump administration's federal contraction. But she could have the advantage of a friendly Legislature if Democrats are able to maintain their majority in the House of Delegates. All 100 seats in that chamber were on the ballot Tuesday, as were other statewide offices, including lieutenant governor and attorney general.

India's forests hold the future



As India navigates the twin imperatives of economic growth and sustainable development, forests are once again finding their rightful place in the national climate conversation. The recent release of the revised blueprint for the Green India Mission (GIM) puts restoration at the forefront. The ambition is bold: restore 25 million hectares of degraded forest and non-forest land by 2030. This isn't just about greening land for its own sake. It directly ties to India's climate pledge to create an additional carbon sink of up to 3.39 billion tonnes of CO2 equivalent by the end of this decade. The big question is not just how much land India restores, but how it restores it. Quality question

A 2025 study by IIT Kharagpur, in collaboration with IIT Bombay and BITS Pilani, reported a 12% decline in photosynthetic efficiency of dense forests across India. The main cause? Rising temperatures and drying soil. Put simply, while India may be growing its forest cover, these forests are becoming less effective at absorbing carbon. This discovery challenges the old assumption that "more trees equal more carbon sinks" and instead highlights the need for restoration that enhances ecological resilience, not just canopy cover. The revised GIM is not starting from scratch. Between 2015 and 2021, the Mission supported afforestation across 11.22 million hectares, with ₹575 crore disbursed to 18 states. During this period, forest and tree cover increased from 24.16% in 2015 to 25.17% in 2023.

The new blueprint expands the lens, focusing on biodiversity-rich landscapes like the Aravalli Hills, Western Ghats, mangroves, and Himalayan catchments. It also aims to link efforts with other government programmes such as the National Agroforestry Policy, watershed initiatives, and the Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA). But as with most ambitious missions, the challenge lies in turning policy into practice. India's afforestation story has long wrestled with three stubborn gaps: community participation, ecological design, and financing. Nearly 200 million Indians depend on forests for daily survival. The Forest Rights Act (2006) legally empowers them to manage and protect their landscapes. Yet in practice, many plantation drives bypass these communities, ignoring their claims and consent. This erodes trust and undermines both legality and social legitimacy. However, there are bright spots. In Odisha, Joint Forest Management Committees are integrated into planning and revenue-sharing. In Chhattisgarh, forest departments are experimenting with biodiversity-sensitive plantations and reviving barren cattle shelters by planting mahua trees, aligning ecology with tribal livelihoods.

Going native For decades, afforestation has leaned heavily on monocultures of eucalyptus or acacia, which are fast-growing, yes, but ecologically damaging. They deplete groundwater, crowd out native biodiversity, and leave forests vulnerable to climate stress. The revised GIM promises a shift toward native, site-specific species, which is encouraging. However, the real test is whether local forest departments possess the necessary expertise and capacity to deliver. India already has training institutes in Uttarakhand, Coimbatore, and Byrnihat that could be har-

nessed to equip frontline staff with ecological know-how. Some States are leading the way. Tamil Nadu, for instance, has nearly doubled its mangrove cover in just three years, offering both carbon storage and coastal protection. Perhaps the biggest bottleneck is financing. The CAMPA fund now holds a staggering ₹95,000 crore, yet utilisation is inconsistent. Delhi, for example, spent only 23% of its approved funds between 2019 and 2024. GIM itself has had to make do with modest allocations, relying heavily on CAMPA. The way forward isn't just about more money, but about smarter use of it. The good news is that some States are experimenting with new financing tools. Himachal Pradesh has launched a biochar programme to generate carbon credits while reducing fire risks. Uttar Pradesh has planted over 39 crore saplings this year and is exploring how to connect village councils to carbon markets. Building blocks Despite the hurdles, India has the building blocks: strong legal frameworks, sizeable financing pools, institutional capacity, and promising local models. What's needed is alignment. Communities must be empowered to lead. Forest departments need the skills and incentives to prioritise ecological restoration over plantation targets. The central government can enhance accountability by implementing public dashboards that track survival rates, species mix, fund utilisation, and community participation. CAMPA could broaden its scope to cover participatory planning and adaptive management, rather than sticking narrowly to planting. Civil society and research institutions also have a role, from providing technical expertise to designing participatory monitoring tools. This shared effort is what can transform GIM from a government programme into a national movement. As India looks toward Viksit Bharat 2047, forests are not merely an environmental concern; they are the future capital. The path to restoring 25 million hectares is not easy, but if pursued with rigour, inclusion, and foresight, it could reshape how the world thinks about restoration. C.K. Mishra is a former secretary, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, and Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change; Suryapraba Sadasivan is Senior Vice President at Chase Advisors. Views expressed are personal.

ChatGPT Go 1-year free access rolls out in India

New Delhi: OpenAI's ChatGPT Go subscription service went live in India on Tuesday, offering one-year free access to users in India who sign up during the limited-time promotional period. The promotion is available now for redemption from the ChatGPT web or the Google Play store, and will be available to redeem next week from the Apple App store. ChatGPT Go is OpenAI's recently launched subscription tier that offers increased message limits, image generation, and file uploads for users in India, a market ChatGPT counts as its second-largest and among the fastest-growing. The year-long free promotion coincides with OpenAI's first DevDay Exchange event in Bengaluru on Tuesday. "Since initially launching ChatGPT Go in India a few months ago, the adoption and creativity we've seen from our users has been inspiring," said Nick Turley, Vice President and Head of ChatGPT at OpenAI. "Ahead of our first DevDay Exchange event in India, we're making ChatGPT Go freely available for a year to help more people across India easily access and benefit from advanced AI," Turley said. Existing ChatGPT Go subscribers in India are also eligible for the free 12-month access extension. "This promotion is a continuation of OpenAI's India first commitment and supports the India AI Mission, reinforcing the growing momentum around AI in India as the country prepares to host the AI Impact Summit next year."

RJD's legacy in Bihar: Father, son, and the spectre of 'jungle raj'



Lalu Prasad was re-elected as the national president of the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) for the 13th consecutive time on June 24, 2025. No one else has held this post in the 28-year-old party. At 77 and battling persistent health issues, Mr. Lalu is no longer at the centre of active politics, but he remains the party's mascot, one who keeps both the RJD afloat and weighs it down in equal measure. On March 10, 1990, Mr. Lalu took oath as the 25th Chief Minister of Bihar — the first to be sworn in outside the Raj Bhavan in Patna. Though only 42 at the time, he had been in politics for more than a decade, winning four major elections: two terms in Parliament (1977 and 1989) and two in the Bihar Legislative Assembly (1980 and 1985). At the sprawling Gandhi Maidan in Patna, a hopeful crowd looked on as Mr. Lalu took the oath of office. In the initial months of his regime, the country watched with fascination as Mr. Lalu conducted surprise inspections at schools and offices, publicly rebuked bureaucrats, shared meals with the poor, directed traffic with a megaphone in hand, and held Cabinet meetings like a chaupal (village meetings held in a courtyard). He built for himself a constituency of the backward classes that had been inching towards power but remained far too fragmented to seize it. To many, he was a political Robin Hood, robbing the Swarna (upper castes) of their voice and lending it to the poor and marginalised. Deregulating Maithili as an official language was one such step as he viewed it as a "Sanskritised Brahminical tongue", even though it was the lingua franca of north Bihar. Mr. Lalu ended the existing political order, ostensibly to rebuild it along more egalitarian lines. And he did. Inequality, however, is endemic, a seemingly inescapable feature of human life, and thus, a new elite took the place of the old.

Bihar is no longer the State that Mr. Lalu once ruled, nor is he the same person, who sat in the Chief Minister's chair. Mr. Lalu follows a routine of 14 pills a day and shuttles between hospital and home. His health remains precarious since undergoing a kidney transplant in December 2022. The State, meanwhile, finds itself caught in a dichotomy of hyperpolitical awareness and years of economic neglect. Mr. Lalu may no longer be at the helm, but his shadow continues to loom over the State's political firmament. It has been two decades since Mr. Lalu's rule, directly and through his wife, Rabri Devi, ended in November 2005. An entire generation of voters has not seen either of them as Chief Minister, and yet stories of their alleged misrule endure. The State has witnessed four Assembly elections since then, but the charge against the RJD, of being the propagators of "jungle raj", remains unchanged. On January 18, 2025, anticipating Mr. Lalu's absence, his younger son, Tejashwi Yadav, was handed the baton of leadership. While Mr. Lalu remains the national president of the RJD, Mr. Tejashwi has been entrusted with powers equivalent to that of the party chief. This move merely formalised an arrangement that had already been in place. Mr. Tejashwi was already functioning as the de facto president of the party. How the term "jungle raj" originated? There are many accounts of how the term "jungle raj" originated. In one version that Mr. Lalu himself recounts in his autobiography *Gopalganj to Raisina: My Political Journey*, co-written with journalist Nalin Verma, he traces the phrase back to his first term in office when he went around "cleansing the vestiges of exploitation". One such symbol of the old order was the verdant Patna Golf Course, spread over nearly 200 acres along the leafy Bailey Road. The course was under the control of the Gymkhana Club, established in 1916 by the British, and was accessible to a limited number of "urban elite". However, land records showed that the land belonged to the State government. Mr. Lalu initiated a move for the government to take over the Golf Club and convert it into a safari park for the lions and tigers confined in the adjacent Patna Zoo. "I thought if the poor and hard-working people had no access to the Golf Club, why should the limited number of members of the elite have it? It was better to link it to the zoo so that at least the animals could roam around freely." There was an immediate backlash. "They blasted me for resorting to dictatorship, and they said I had brought in jungle raj in Bihar." The Golf Club remains as Mr. Lalu did not go ahead with the decision.

The other, and perhaps the more popular, version of the story is that the term was first used by the Patna High Court in August 1997. In the 1995 Assembly election, the Janata Dal won 164 seats in the 324-member Bihar Assembly, securing a majority of its own. The electorate had united under the slogan "Vote Lalu ka, raj humara" (Vote for Lalu, and the rule will be ours). This marked the first time any incumbent Chief Minister had secured a second consecutive term since the interminable tenure of Shri Krishna Sinha, who died in office in January 1961. Between Mr. Sinha and Mr. Lalu, Bihar saw 23 Chief Ministers and five spells of President's Rule. None of those Chief Ministers completed a full term, with their tenures ranging from just four days to three-and-a-half years. In a fragmented Janata Dal, Mr. Lalu outstripped all other leaders. Thus, his elevation on January 29, 1996, to the post of national president of the Janata Dal did not take anyone by surprise. However, what was not so obvious was the beginning of his downfall, which nearly coincided with his coronation. While he exulted in his new role, back home in Patna, investigations into allegations of excess fund withdrawals from various branches of the government's Animal Husbandry Department had begun. In June 1997, Bihar Governor A.R. Kidwai granted permission to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to charge the Chief Minister. The knives were out for him in the Janata Dal and the chorus seeking his resignation as national president grew louder. Instead of stepping down, Mr. Lalu split the party. The election for the post of party president was due in July and Sharad Yadav decided to contest against him. Mr. Lalu tried to convince Mr. Sharad Yadav to stand down, even offering to resign from the Chief Minister's post if he was allowed to retain the post of party president. That was not to be. Consequently, Mr. Lalu walked out with 18 of the party's 22 Lok Sabha members and six Rajya Sabha members to form his own party, the RJD. However, he was eventually forced to resign as Chief Minister, and he put his wife, Rabri Devi, in his place. Just a few days into Ms. Rabri's tenure, the Patna High Court, while hearing a contempt petition regarding poor civic conditions in the State capital, observed that there was no State government worth the name and "jungle raj" prevailed in Bihar.

From opposing dynasty to nurturing one

Mr. Lalu Prasad's initiation into politics was rooted in opposition to the dynastic rule of the Congress, and yet he went on to establish a dynasty of his own. He has nine children — seven daughters and two sons. For the family, politics has often been personal. Mr. Lalu was in jail when his first child — his eldest daughter — was born on May 22, 1975. He was booked under the Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA), a notorious legislation aimed at suppressing dissent. It was passed in Parliament in 1971 and repealed in 1977. On the suggestion of Jayaprakash Narayan, Mr. Lalu named his daughter Misa, after the law under which he was imprisoned.

Barring a few slips, the family has not had any public showdown over control of the party, though underlying tensions remain. Mr. Tejashwi Yadav was not even six months old when his father became Chief Minister. The transition from being known as Mr. Lalu Prasad's son to establishing his own political identity took time. Politics was not his first career choice. He started as a cricketer after dropping out of Class 10. A middle-order batsman with a good cover drive, Mr. Tejashwi was part of Delhi's Under-19 cricket team around the same time as Virat Kohli. He also played one season for Jharkhand in the Ranji Trophy. Later, he was picked by the Delhi Daredevils (now Delhi Capitals) in the Indian Premier League, where he remained on the reserve bench for four seasons, from 2008 to 2012. Mr. Lalu chose Mr. Tejashwi over his elder brother, the maverick Tej Pratap Yadav, as his political heir. Mr. Tejashwi made his first public address during the 2010 Assembly election, when he accompanied his father on the campaign trail. It was finally in 2012 that he gave up cricket and decided to concentrate fully on politics. When Mr. Lalu was arrested in September 2013, Mr. Tejashwi was already at the helm of party affairs. However, the RJD was not yet ready to anoint him as heir. Ram Kripal Yadav, a key aide of Mr. Lalu, was among those deeply unhappy with Mr. Tejashwi's elevation. "Tejashwi is very involved in party affairs. But he will be made a leading face of the party only in the long term," he told reporters at the time, dismissing Mr. Tejashwi's elevation outright. A year later, Mr. Ram Kripal Yadav switched over to the BJP after Mr. Lalu chose his daughter Ms. Misa Bharti over him as the candidate for the Patliputra Lok Sabha seat. In 2014, Mr. Tejashwi was not yet 25 and could not contest the Lok Sabha election. Staying out of the electoral fray proved to be a blessing in disguise. The RJD suffered a rout, winning only four of the 40 Lok Sabha seats in Bihar. Ms. Rabri Devi lost from Saran and Ms. Misa from Patliputra. He contested his first election in 2015 from the Raghupur Assembly constituency, defeating the BJP's Satish Kumar, who had won against his mother in 2010. With the RJD winning 81 seats, 11 more than the JD(U) in the Assembly election, it marked a resounding victory for Mr. Lalu, who had spent years in the political wilderness. Soon after, Mr. Tejashwi was promoted to the position of Deputy Chief Minister of Bihar.

Mr. Lalu's older son, Mr. Tej Pratap Yadav, has often hit the headlines for the wrong reasons. From videos of him slapping and pushing party workers on stage or openly humiliating senior leaders who have worked with his father, his behaviour has often drawn criticism. Both the family and the party had largely tolerated him and ignored his antics. During his two stints as Deputy Chief Minister, Mr. Tejashwi was often seen touching his elder brother's feet at public meetings, a reassuring gesture meant to indicate that the family hierarchy remained intact. The patience of the Yadav clan finally ran out in May 2025 after a post appeared on Mr. Tej Pratap's Facebook account showing him with a woman. The caption suggested that they had been in a relationship for 12 years. This came even as his divorce proceedings with Aishwarya Rai, granddaughter of former Bihar Chief Minister Daroga Prasad Rai, were still ongoing. Mr. Lalu announced his expulsion from the party for six years.

"Ignoring moral values in personal life weakens our collective struggle for social justice. The activities, public conduct, and irresponsible behaviour of the eldest son are not in accordance with our family values and traditions," he said while making the announcement.

The 2020 Bihar Assembly election was the first time that Mr. Tejashwi led the campaign independently, though Mr. Lalu made significant decisions, picking candidates and negotiating with allies. Mr. Tejashwi was the face of the party. He ran a blistering campaign, sprinting from one election rally to the next. He addressed 247 rallies and four roadshows, the highest by any leader during that election. The party rallied behind him with the slogan "Tejashwi tai hai" (Tejashwi is confirmed). Even Mr. Lalu's photographs were removed from the campaign posters to distance the party from the criticism of "jungle raj", the central theme of Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's counter-campaign. These changes, however, did not blunt the BJP's campaign. Prime Minister Narendra Modi referred to Mr. Tejashwi as the "jungle raj ka yuvraj" (the crown prince of jungle raj) at rallies he addressed in the State. The RJD leadership chose not to respond and engage with the narrative. As the State heads into polls, the RJD will once again have to confront the ghosts of "jungle raj" afresh. A relatively young party, the RJD has had three stints in government — one full term between 2000 and 2005, when with 124 seats, it was the leading partner in the government and Ms. Rabri Devi was the Chief Minister, and two short stints in alliance with the JD(U) (November 2015-July 2017 and August 2022-January 2024). Barring the 2010 blip, when it won just 22 seats in the Assembly, the RJD has largely managed to hold its ground. In the last two Assembly elections, the RJD emerged as the single largest party, winning 81 seats in 2015 and 75 in 2020. On both occasions, it came within striking distance of victory but stumbled before the finishing line. This can be attributed to the RJD's identity of primarily being a Muslim-Yadav party, a perception partially of Mr. Lalu's own making and partially the result of the circumstances. Riding on the Mandal-Mandir wave, Mr. Lalu Prasad's rise to power coincided with the Mandal-Mandir wave. The Muslim minority, disillusioned with the Narasimha Rao government's failure to save the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya, found itself adrift. In Bihar, they gravitated towards Mr. Lalu, especially after he stalled BJP president L.K. Advani's Rath Yatra. The Janata Dal, which already drew support from the Other Backward Classes — broadly classified as Mandal communities — became a formidable force with the addition of the minority support. Mr. Lalu's politics is summed up by a slogan attributed to him — "Bhurabha hatao", with "Bhurabha" being a shorthand for Bhumihars, Rajputs, Brahmins, and Lalas (Kayasthas). In his autobiography, Mr. Lalu rejects the slogan, claiming it to be a figment of a reporter's imagination. "One Day I woke up to a report in a Hindi newspaper which quoted me as saying 'Bhurabha saaf karo'... It added that I had systematically worked to demolish them financially, socially and politically. I was shocked at the damning report... Though I loved lacching my speeches with earthy phrases, I had no contempt for any caste in even the remotest corner of my heart and there was no question of my having ever given a clarion call to wipe out the upper castes in Bihar. I vehemently rejected the motivated news report."

Supreme Court seeks CAQM affidavit on pre-emptive measures to tackle pollution



The Supreme Court on Monday (November 3, 2025) directed the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) to file an affidavit detailing the steps it has taken so far to prevent air pollution in Delhi-NCR from deteriorating further. A bench comprising Chief Justice B.R. Gavai and Justice K. Vinod Chandran, which was hearing the M.C. Mehta case, said that the authorities must act proactively and not wait for pollution levels to reach a "severe" stage. Senior advocate Aparajita Singh, who is assisting the bench as an amicus curiae, flagged media reports indicating that several air quality monitoring stations in Delhi were not functioning during the Diwali period. "There are newspapers after newspapers saying that monitoring stations are non-functional. If the monitoring stations are not even functioning, we don't even know when to implement GRAP (graded response action plan)... Out of 37 monitoring stations, only nine were functioning continuously on the day of

Diwali," she said. The amicus urged the bench to ensure that CAQM submits clear data and an action plan. She said the earlier orders mandated pre-emptive measures, rather than reactive steps, once pollution worsened.

"The CAQM is required to place on record an affidavit as to what steps are proposed to be taken to prevent the pollution from turning severe," the Bench said in its order. The counsel for the CAQM said that the Central Pollution Control Board is responsible for monitoring data. However, Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati assured the bench that the agencies concerned will file the required report. On October 15, the CJL-led bench permitted the sale and bursting of green firecrackers in Delhi-NCR during Diwali with conditions aimed at balancing tradition with environmental and health concerns. The court had made it clear that use of green crackers will be confined to specific hours on Diwali and a day before. The sale of green crackers were permitted from October 18 to 20. It had also made clear that the relaxation was only on a "test case basis and it shall be only for the period specified". Significantly, the bench had said, "The Central Pollution Control Board, in consultation with the State Pollution Control Boards and their respective regional offices within the districts coming under the NCR, shall monitor the air quality index in their respective jurisdictions starting from October 14, till October 25 and file a report before this court, specifying the air quality of each day indicated hereinabove..." Along with such monitoring, the Regional Offices of the State Pollution Control Boards shall also take samples of sand and water from sites with more density of use for analysis," the bench had said.

Is posture how kangaroos can speed up without burning more energy?



Most animals spend more energy as they move faster. Shorter periods of contact between the foot and the ground require muscles to generate force more quickly, driving up the metabolic cost. Kangaroos and their relatives (macropods) are exceptions to this rule, however. Classic treadmill studies have shown that red kangaroos and tammar wallabies can hop faster with only a slight increase in oxygen demand, puzzling biomechanics researchers.

Past studies have pointed to their ankle extensor muscle-tendon units, which can store and return elastic energy like springs, but that alone couldn't explain why large macropods don't incur energy costs that other similar quadrupeds do. Attempts to crack the mystery using stride timing or breathing coordination fell short as well as didn't distinguish small from large macropods. A new study by researchers from Australia, the UK, and the US, reported in *eLife*, may have finally found the answer. The researchers focused on posture, i.e. the combination of joint angles a kangaroo adopts when its foot is on the ground. They found that posture actively modulated the leverage at the ankle and could raise the amount of elastic energy returned as

the kangaroo moves faster. If this model is validated, it would mean kangaroos can meet higher mechanical demands without their muscles performing extra work, thus delinking speed from metabolic cost.

The researchers recorded 3D motion and ground forces from 16 red and eastern grey kangaroos hopping at 2-4.5 m/s on force plates. Then they built a scaled musculoskeletal model on a computer to model the joint kinematics, joint rotations, effective mechanical advantage, ankle work, and Achilles tendon stress. As they hopped faster, the team found that kangaroos bent their legs more when they slowed down, with the ankle bending upward more and the toes pressing down harder. The Achilles tendon was pulled harder, like stretching a thicker rubber band. Ground forces and the twisting force at the ankle also rose. This geometry allowed the tendon to store more energy when the foot first landed, and return it as the animal pushed off. Importantly, even though both the 'soaking up' part upon landing and the 'push off' part got bigger at higher speeds, they balance out over each hop. As a result, the ankle's total work per hop stayed roughly constant. Instead, the tendon was doing more of the job, and the muscles didn't have to burn much extra energy. On the flip side, because kangaroos run their tendons hard, the study warned that there wouldn't be much of a safety margin before something could fail. This in turn meant the biomechanics of the kangaroos' hop could limit how big they could get and how sharply they can turn. The researchers also wrote in their paper that "future work should examine a broader range of body sizes", could assess "tendon stress at fast speeds" — perhaps "with a different experimental or modelling approach... as kangaroos in enclosures seem unwilling to hop faster over force plates — and also 'understand how posture and muscles throughout the whole body contribute to kangaroo energetics'.

Why India needs to include the typhoid conjugate vaccine in its universal immunisation programme



years ranged from 576 to 1,173 cases with higher numbers in poorer urban areas, compared to rural areas. However, extensive labor migration between urban and rural areas allows easy and frequent transport of the pathogen. Geostatistical modeling using these findings and national health survey data estimates 4.5 million cases annually with 8,930 deaths. This clearly shows that India contributes to half the global burden of typhoid fever. If no action is taken, projections estimate 4.6 crore cases and 89,300 deaths annually in almost all age groups in urban areas, and in young adults in rural areas. Diagnostic gaps Typhoid can mimic dengue, scrub typhus, malaria, COVID-19 and other febrile conditions. Hence, besides good clinical acumen, robust and accessible diagnostic support is important. The recommended test to detect the pathogen is a blood culture, but this is not easily available everywhere. Facilities to perform reliable antimicrobial susceptibility testing are also lacking. WIDAL, an unreliable blood antibody test, is still around and is extensively misused. Unregulated irrational therapy of febrile illnesses complicates the picture.

Antibiotic resistance

From the 1950s onwards, the bacteria has shown increasing resistance to common antibiotics. Treatment of typhoid fever now is usually with azithromycin and ceftriaxone. However, ceftriaxone resistance and reduced response to azithromycin has been found as recently as in 2021-2024. These drugs are commonly abused both in rural and urban India. With the presence of extensively drug-resistant (XDR) typhoid strains already in Pakistan, the threat is imminent in India. Rising drug resistance means lesser options to treat the illness and also increase in treatment costs.

Sub-optimal sanitation Despite progress under the Swachh Bharat Mission and Jal Jeevan Mission, issues related to safe water persist. While access to water is steadily increasing, water quality remains questionable. Only 6% of urban households across 302 districts have safe water supply. In rural areas, the situation is worse. Periodic environmental surveillance is also limited and unsatisfactory. Vaccines and prevention The typhoid vaccine, says Sebin Abraham, a paediatrician at Christian Medical College, Vellore, could be rolled out at least initially in known high-burden areas of India. "Introducing the typhoid vaccine doesn't mean that one can sit back and take no other action. Environmental and disease surveillance, WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) measures, improving diagnostics including resistance mapping, regulation of prescriptions, and post-vaccination efficacy studies should all take place as well. The vaccination is an additional measure. Typhoid is a high-burden illness that has been around for decades, and should be a top priority."

India recommends AI firms to pay creator royalties at govt panel-set rates



as a centralised facilitator that streamlines collection of royalties for use of copyrighted content for training of AI Systems, under a mandatory blanket license. Only organisations can be its members, and only one member per class of work would be allowed. The report notes that since some unorganised sectors have no registered copyright societies or Collective Management Organisations (CMOs), CRCAT may not have membership from such sectors, but its base can be expanded over time to cover unorganised sectors.

How will royalty rates be determined?

Royalty rate will be determined by a committee formed by the Central Government, consisting of senior government officers, senior legal experts, financial or economic experts, and technical experts with expertise in emerging technologies. It will also include a member from CRCAT and a representative of AI Developers. The panel will set royalty rates based on input from stakeholders, market data, and economic analyses; ensure that rates are fair, predictable, and transparent, and review and adjust rates every 3 years, to reflect technological and market developments. Notably, the rates set by the rate setting committee may be challenged before the court and would be subject to judicial review. At this point, the report notes that "flat rates" seem to be the most appropriate model, and the committee can set a certain percentage of the gross global revenue (excluding taxes) earned by an AI Developer from the commercialisation of the AI System trained on copyrighted content. The report noted that government departments have established mechanisms to manage pricing and tariff matters in key sectors. For instance, it said, the Ministry of Railways reviews and proposes revisions to passenger fares and freight charges. The Department of Food & Public Distribution determines the Central Issue Prices (CIP) for essential food grains like rice, wheat etc. under the Public Distribution System (PDS). The Department of Fertilisers sets the Nutrient Based Subsidy (NBS) rates for phosphatic and potassic fertilisers.

Will the rates apply retrospectively?

AI companies have already ingested in their training systems copyright protected works from several creators. Due to this, the committee has recommended that the obligation to pay royalties on the basis of revenue percentage-based rates set by the government shall apply retroactively. In other words, AI Developers who have already trained their AI Systems on copyrighted protected content and are earning revenues by commercialising such AI Systems would be obliged to pay the prescribed royalties. Many AI Developers have built AI Systems which are commercially successful and generating huge revenues. In order to ensure fairness and accountability, such AI Developers must be required to pay royalties to copyright owners for past usage of their works. This is not a punitive measure, but a corrective mechanism to help create a balance in the creative ecosystem," it said.

How will royalties be divided among copyright holders?

AI companies will be required to submit a declaration to the CRCAT containing a 'Sufficiently Detailed Summary' of the datasets they have used to train their models, as part of their transparency obligations. This declaration would include information including the category of data (text, images, music, etc.) used, source of data (social media platforms, hard copy/electronic publications, online libraries, public datasets, proprietary datasets etc.), and the nature of data. The total royalty amount would then be apportioned proportionally by the CRCAT among different classes of works, based on the proportion of their usage in AI training. This should reflect the relative extent to which each class of work was used in training the AI System, ensuring that categories of works more heavily utilised (for example, audiovisual content or music or literary publications) receive a correspondingly appropriate share of the royalty pool. In cases where an AI Developer is sued for failing to offer the fixed royalties for the utilisation of copyrighted content, and the AI Developer denies training its AI System on any third-party content, the initial burden of proof to establish compliance would be on the AI Developer. The law would work on the presumption that the claim of the content owner is valid (subject to the usual requirement to demonstrate a *prima facie* case) until proved otherwise by the AI Developer.

What model of compensation has the DPIIT-led committee recommended?

While rejecting direct, voluntary content licensing models, the committee has recommended a "hybrid model," under which a mandatory blanket license with a statutory remuneration right for the creators and copyright holders would be established for the use of all lawfully accessed copyright-protected works in the training of AI Systems. The report states that lawful access by AI companies of copyrighted works will be a prerequisite, meaning that AI Developers would not be allowed to rely on the mandatory license to bypass existing or future technological protection measures or to gain unauthorised access to works behind paywalls without making the necessary payment. A new umbrella industry body, called the Copyright Royalties Collective for AI Training (CRCAT), will have to be set up by rightsholders and be designated by the Central Government under the Copyright Act, 1957. The CRCAT would serve

Warning bell: In 60% of routes it operates, IndiGo has monopoly

The crisis at IndiGo that led to scores of flights being cancelled daily since early last week threw the country's entire aviation ecosystem out of gear. The reason for that outsized impact is IndiGo's sheer dominance of India's aviation sector: the carrier accounted for six out of every 10 Indian passengers travelling by air on domestic sectors and it is, for all intended purposes, too big to fail.

The true extent of IndiGo's stranglehold over India's domestic aviation market goes well beyond its nearly 65 per cent domestic market share by passenger volumes and the mantle of the country's largest airline. While India's aviation sector is effectively a duopoly — with the Air India group having a market share of 26.5 per cent as of October — a bulk of IndiGo's routes are monopoly routes, where only the blue tails of the airline fly. Although the Air India group is a distant second to IndiGo, the two have a combined domestic market share of over 90 per cent, making the airline sector the top sector in India in terms of market concentration.

In all, Indian airlines fly around 1,200 domestic routes, of which IndiGo has over 950 routes in operation. Notably though, nearly 600 — or 63 per cent — of these are monopoly routes, and about 200 (21 per cent) are duopoly routes where IndiGo has just one competitor, as per data analysed by aviation analyst and former network planner Ameya Joshi. Now, routes under the government's regional connectivity scheme (RCS) are monopoly by design in most cases, but the leader there is government-owned regional carrier Alliance Air; IndiGo's monopoly routes are not really linked to the RCS. IndiGo's monopoly on a significant number of routes and the duopoly in India's airline sector is not by design, and much of it can be attributed to the failure of other domestic airlines to compete effectively, and even survive. Many have gone under over the past couple of decades — Go First and Jet Airways being the biggest examples over the past few years. To that extent, it can be argued that the presence of a dominant airline means that many routes, which would otherwise shut down, are in operation. And until this crisis broke, IndiGo had established benchmarks for operational efficiency and an unblemished safety record in India's otherwise chequered aviation scene.

While the airline is now limping back to stable and normal operations in a step-by-step manner, largely due to temporary exemptions that the sector regulator seemed forced to grant given the scale of the disruption, the past one week

has underscored the risks of high market concentration in the sector. The import of the situation is not lost on the country's civil aviation establishment. Speaking in Parliament on Monday, Civil Aviation Minister K Rammohan Naidu said that given the high growth in air travel demand in India, the country needs five big airlines. Even beyond aviation, for India, where a growing number of sectors — like telecom, cement, steel, private ports, private sector airports, and specific segments within the larger e-commerce space — have seen an increase in market concentration over the past few years, the IndiGo crisis is a wake-up call on the perils of monopolies and duopolies. Experts point out that while large, strong and stable companies are desirable in every sector for efficiency, stability and competitiveness, it gets problematic if their share of the market expands to such an extent that it smothers other players and creates a high entry barrier.

"Monopolies may be bad at a country level, but they do wonders at route level in the case of aviation. Had it not been for IndiGo, so many routes would not have been operationalised in India, forcing passengers to take one-stop flights. IndiGo's presence against multiple other (airline) failures has given the airline its monopoly status and is not by design. In such a monopoly and duopoly situation, there should be greater penalties in place so that such industries know the responsibility that comes along with a large duopoly," Joshi said. A senior government official said market dominance is not the real problem, it is abuse of dominance. And that some sectors are natural monopolies, given the nature of those sectors. That may ring true, but increasing concentration does end up deterring other potential competitors from entering the sector since they perceive policies to be favouring some players over others. And when this dominance is reinforced by the inorganic route such as acquisitions, concerns emanate over the inevitability of other businesses eventually being gobbled up by the dominant players, another senior government official handling a key infrastructure sector told *Notwithstanding* the reasons for this high market concentration, such a skewed market share ratio in any industry is concerning, according to experts and some senior government officials. Being a customer-facing industry, the impact is far more immediate and easy to spot in the airline sector than various other sectors in the business-to-business (B2B) domain. High market concentration problems include systemic risk if the dominant players falter.

'Agar main khaayi toh mummy ki khushi ke liye': Smriti Mandhana reveals she no longer craves sugar; expert explains why this happens



Kanikka Malhotra, a consultant dietitian and diabetes educator, tells [indianexpress.com](#), "When one's sugar craving slowly dissipates, it represents neuroplasticity in the brain's reward circuits. Over time, however, repeated sugar exposure desensitises dopamine receptors, resulting in less sugar feeling rewarding. As intake diminishes, these receptors resensitise, so the brain will no longer seek sugar for reward or stimulation." At the same time, Malhotra notes that the gut microbiome transforms, favouring fibre- and complex-carb-fed bacteria and calming hunger for simple sugars. This rewiring is why long-term sugar reduction feels easier with time.

Balancing emotional eating without slipping back into unhealthy sugar dependence it's natural to reach for food when we're stressed or need connection, Malhotra says, but emotional eating can be controlled by recognising triggers and replacing the habits. So, rather than reaching for the sugar, replace it with mindful rituals: sipping tea, sharing a non-sugar treat (fruit or nuts) or a family activity that promotes connection. "Constructing a toolkit of healthy coping strategies—walking, journaling, talking, etc.—addresses emotional needs without sugar. The trick is to substitute for the role of sugar (comfort, connection) with better sources," suggests Malhotra.

Is it healthier to altogether avoid sugar once cravings reduce?

Once cravings reduce, occasional, intentional sweets can be part of a sustainable, healthy relationship with food. Malhotra highlights that complete avoidance may lead to "feelings of deprivation and increase the risk of rebound bingeing." Mindful, planned indulgences—such as a small piece of dark chocolate or a traditional Indian sweet like jaggery, gud channa/dates/kishmish/prunes—support psychological flexibility and prevent restrictive eating patterns. "The focus should be on frequency, portion, and context, not elimination. Sustainable health is about balance, not perfection," concludes the expert.

China's first 'pet cat' was this ferocious feline



The Chinese have a global reputation for being certified cat lovers. The South Asian country not only houses these felines but places them on a pedestal in its culture. Any trip to China is incomplete without visiting monuments, statues and temples dedicated to different kinds of cats. But did you know the modern cats were not the first 'pet cats' in China? As per a new study published in *Cell Genomics*, ancient China had wild leopards roaming around freely near human settlements and were, in fact, the Chinese's first human companions. A team of researchers from Peking University analysed mitochondrial DNA from 22 cat bones found at seven archaeological sites across China. These bones dated from 5,400 years ago in the Neolithic era to the 20th century. Upon analysis, this fascinating history of pet cats was revealed. Bone samples that dated before A.D. 200 belonged to leopard cats (*Prionailurus bengalensis*), small wild cats native to China with leopard-

like spots and striped tails. These cats lived near farms from 5,400 to 1,900 years ago, hunting rodents that raided grain stores.

cat China's beloved house cats arrived only around A.D. 730 — thousands of years after leopard cats had already formed a commensal bond with farmers (photo: [wikimedia](#)). Biologist Kathryn Lord from the University of Massachusetts Chan Medical School describe them as "exploiters." While Lord was not a part of the core research team, she stands firm on her analysis. The scientist has theorised that people likely tolerated these leopards as natural pest controllers in a "commensal" relationship—no harm, mutual benefit?

The contemporary house cats (*Felis catus*) in China came into the picture much later. Descendants of the African wildcat (*Felis lybica*), these cats first appeared around A.D. 730 during the Tang Dynasty (618–907). Their DNA linked back to the Middle East, suggesting traders brought them along the Silk Road. These cats had short fur and white markings—85% of Tang-era paintings showed white cats or those with white patches, matching the genetics? A Han Dynasty bowl from 168 B.C. even depicts a spotted cat with a long tail, confirming leopard cats hung around then. Some scientists believe that the original leopard cats disappeared from sites after the Han Dynasty, most likely due to wars, economic collapse, and a drop in the rodent population. When farms boomed again, house cats had already replaced them. Naturally, being more tame, the civilisation accepted them with open arms.

'So the proper way of storing it is...': Dentist explains why your toothbrush cover is a 'hell no', shares safer ways to store it and prevent bacterial overgrowth

Most people rarely think about what happens to their toothbrush after they finish brushing, assuming a quick rinse is enough. But how you store it may have a bigger impact on your health than you realise. In a recent video, dentist Dr Miles Madison warned against some surprisingly common habits. He said, "The way you're storing your toothbrush could be damaging your health. If you rinse your toothbrush after brushing, tap it dry and let it air dry, that's good."

He pointed out that many people unknowingly create the perfect breeding ground for bacteria. As he explained, "If you brush your teeth, rinse your toothbrush and then put it in a drawer or in a cabinet, that's bad. And if you brush your teeth and put a toothbrush cover on your toothbrush and let it dry like that, that's a 'hell no.' You see, your toothbrush has a lot of bacteria that you just removed from your teeth (sic)." To prevent this, he emphasised the importance of proper drying. His advice was clear: "So the proper way of storing it is you want to rinse off your toothpaste and whatever's left, tap it dry and then let it air dry. This way, the moisture will dry off your toothbrush, and it won't cause an overgrowth of bacteria on your toothbrush." But he also cautioned against enclosed storage, explaining, "Now if you put your toothbrush in a drawer or in a cabinet and worse yet cover it with something, it becomes like an incubator for bacteria. So the next time you use it, you're using all of that dirty mould, bacteria and yucky stuff that's growing on your toothbrush back in your mouth."

But what types of microorganisms commonly grow on improperly stored toothbrushes?

Dr Niyati Arora, BDS, MDS, a prosthodontist at Krown Hub Dental, tells [indianexpress.com](#), "The species that can commonly grow on them are oral bacteria like *Staphylococcus* and *Lactobacillus* species. Skin bacteria such as *staphylococci*, *Pseudomonas* species, *Klebsiella*, and *E. coli* are common. Also, fungi like *Candida* species grow very fast in such an environment."

Since most of the oral bacteria are already present in the mouth, Dr Arora says, contaminated brushes can basically reseed the area and increase their number manifold, thus increasing the chances of initiating and progressing tooth decay, gingivitis, periodontitis, which affect the gum health, making them further inflamed and oral thrush or can-



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didiasis. "Chances of opportunistic infections such as pneumonia, sepsis or wound infections can increase if organisms like *Pseudomonas*, *Klebsiella* gain access to the bloodstream or lungs. Enterobacteri, which are found in abundance on brushes kept or stored near toilets, can cause stomach infections like diarrhoea and are also responsible for UTI," says the expert.

Living in humid environments or shared bathrooms? Steps to ensure your toothbrush dries properly and stays hygienic it's always better to keep the brush in an open place with good air circulation. "The air circulation in the bathroom can be improved by keeping the exhaust on for some time or opening a window," notes Dr Arora. She suggests keeping the brush as far from the toilet and sink as possible. In a shared bathroom, Dr Arora says, try to ensure the heads of the brushes don't touch each other to reduce the risk of cross-contamination from one brush to the other. "You can disinfect the brush head by dipping it in an anti-microbial mouthwash for a few seconds. In case you are travelling, always try to pack the brush once it's scorched. Replace the toothbrush every 3-4 months or if you notice that the bristles are frayed, discoloured, or worn, as worn bristles retain more moisture and microbes," concludes the expert.

Individuals over team: How India's Junior hockey World Cup hopes ended tamely and brutally exposed frailties



GNS News Agency, Dec 9

In his post-match analysis after the 5-1 win against India at the FIH Junior World Cup in Chennai on Sunday, German coach Mirko Stenzel was full of praise for his side's defence throughout the night and the intensity in the first quarter, more than the attacking unit that pumped in the five goals. But one line of his post-match analysis stood out: "To beat the individual-skilled players from India the way we did is incredibly hard." It was evidently meant as a compliment to India's style of hockey, but it also gave a glimpse into why Germany were able to thwart the hosts' attacking forays on the night effectively. Just by blocking of passing lines and staying within their structures, Germany barely allowed India to have any attacking joy.

When the scoreline reads 1-5 in favour of the opposition, it's easy to think that the defence had a nightmare outing – and to an extent, that was true as PR Sreejesh said later that the silly mistakes proved costly. But India's problems were compounded by the fact that the errors started from the top of the pitch and trickled down. At the Under-21 level, the consensus is that performances and development matter more than actual results, so the hope for this Indian junior hockey team would be that the heavy defeat at Mayor Radhakrishnan Stadium was just a steep learning curve. However, the underlying performance exposed potentially bigger concerns for a bunch of players who would hope to go on and have significant careers with the senior team. India's midfield and defensive frailties were brutally exposed by Germany's high intensity early on, as they had as many as five attacking circle entries in the first 8 minutes. But here's a look at how India's attacking connections, or lack thereof, let them down just in the first half when Germany effectively killed the match.

Q1, 1st min: Right from the pushback, when trying to switch possession from defence to offence, Ankit Pal hit a simple square pass from the left flank straight into a German player's stick under no defensive pressure, it led to a counterattack and a shot on goal.

Amit Pasi equals record for highest score by T20 debutant, MP pip Maharashtra to enter Super League

GNS News Agency, Dec 9

Baroda wicketkeeper batter Amit Pasi equalled the record for the highest score made by a T20 debutant, making 114 off 55 balls in the 2025-26 Syed Mushtaq Ali T20 trophy match against Services at the Gymkhana Ground in Hyderabad on Monday. He made the same score as Pakistan's Bilal Asif, who ransacked 114 off 48 balls for Sialkot Stallions against Abbottabad Falcons in a Super8 T20 Cup match in Faisalabad in 2015. Opening the batting with Shashwat Rawat, Pasi raced to his half-century in 24 balls and his hundred in 44 balls. Pasi hit 10 fours and nine sixes in his innings. However, only one four and a six came on the on-side as he used the arc from long off to thirdman to make full use of the off side boundaries. Amit Pasi registers the highest individual score on debut in #SMAT history with 111?4?55 for Baroda against Services in Hyderabad. He also becomes just the third batter to score a century on debut in the tournament. ??He put on 75 runs for the fourth wicket with Vishnu Solanki as Baroda reached 220 for 5 in their 20 overs. In reply, the Services' opening pair of Kuwar Pathak and Ravi Chauhan made 51 runs apiece at the top of the order, but Services were in need of an explosive knock to build on the foundation set by the pair, once both fell by the 13th over. That performance eluded them and led by Raj Limbani's 3/37, Baroda clinched the match by 13 runs. Brief Scores: Baroda 220/5 in 20 overs (Pasi 114, Pania 28 not out; Abhishek 3/33) beat Services 207/8 in 20 overs (Pathak 51, Chauhan 51; Limbani 3/37). Jammu & Kashmir defeated Madhya Pradesh (MP) by 13 runs, yet the Rajat Patidar-led side pipped Maharashtra on net run-rate to qualify for the Super League stage of the tournament. Chasing 151 runs for victory, MP found themselves in the doldrums at 86/5 in the 14th over with Patidar back in the dugout after making two runs off five balls. The onus was now on former Kolkata Knight Riders all-rounder Venkatesh Iyer to take them home, but he fell in the last over with his side needing 19 runs for a win and that proved to be the final nail in the coffin. Brief Scores: J&K 150/9 in 20 overs (Nabi 32, Samad 27; Tripuresh 3/32) beat Madhya Pradesh 137 all out in 20 overs (Gawali 32, Iyer 23; Nabi 3/19). Tripura stunned Karnataka in a super over in Ahmedabad on Monday. Chasing 198 runs for a win, Tripura tied the scores at the end of their 20 overs, thanks mainly to a late assault from captain Manishankar Murasingh, who made 69 off 35 balls.

Murasingh walked out to bat again in the super over with Sridam Paul, but it was the latter who made the bigger contribution with 16 off four balls to set Karnataka 23 runs for victory. In reply, Karnataka were dented early as the inform R Smaran fell for a first-ball duck to Murasingh, and despite Abhinav Manohar and Macneil Noronha striking boundaries, they fell short by four runs. Brief Scores: Karnataka 197/6 in 20 overs (Sharath 44, Macneil 34; Murasingh 2/30) tied with Karnataka 197/8 in 20 overs (Murasingh 69, Vihari 36; Hegde 2/31). Super Over: Tripura 22/0 in one over (Paul 16 not out) beat Karnataka 18/1 in one over. Pacer Mohammed Shami had a fine outing with the ball, claiming 4/30 in four overs, but could not prevent Bengal from going down by 24 runs to Haryana at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium in Hyderabad on Monday. Put into bat by Bengal captain Abhimanyu Easwaran, Haryana made 191/9 in 20 overs, with Nishant Sindhu top scoring with 48 off 31 balls. He was supported by captain Ankit Kumar, who made 46 off 30 balls to take their side to a competitive score. Shami accounted for the wickets of Yashvardhan Dalal, S P Kumar, Ashish Siwach and A R Rana late in the innings, removing Kumar and Siwach in the 18th over and Dalal and Rana in the 20th over of the innings. In reply, a lot of Bengal's hopes hinged on Karan Lal and Easwaran, but their dismissals to Ishant Bhardwaj

Q1, 5th min: Manmeet Singh, who will perhaps finish the tournament as India's most impressive outfield player for his overall work rate at both ends of the pitch, had the ball high up the field down the left flank but held on to it too long and was dispossessed easily by the German press.

Q2, 18th min: Manmeet released Rosan Kujur on the right flank as India had a rare chance to counterattack but the midfielder, after dribbling at pace into the final third, tamely lost possession before even attempting a pass as two defenders covered him.

Q2, 24th min: India were able to create a rare offensive turnover when Ingalemba won the ball back in midfield and quickly released Manmeet down the center but the midfielder was not on the same page as forward Dilraj Singh, as the through ball into the circle went so far away from the latter's reach. Manmeet gestured to Dilraj that he wanted to make the run but even if he had, he was nowhere near it.

Q2, 29th min: Gurjot Singh was found by Ankit down the right channel, but the forward's attempted through ball between two defenders was far away from Sourabh Kushwaha as the two players exchanged stares – not for the first time, Indian players were not on the same page. While this is not a complete list, the larger point is that India's individuality brought them down, and there were hardly give-and-go quick passing moves in the first 30 minutes that put the German defence under any pressure. Jasper Ditzer, in fact, had no real save to make until the third quarter, while India's first of two Penalty Corners came only in Q4, which brought about their only goal. If the junior team is hoping to play a style similar to the senior team's identity so that the transition could be easier, there wasn't enough evidence for it. Craig Fulton's mantra is defend to win, but he also insists on solid structures and quick passing moves, but Sreejesh's junior team didn't show enough of that tactical nous. Before the tournament, Sreejesh gave a peek into his coaching philosophy: "When teams want to attack us, we may try the Korean or Indian style of hockey, where we just stay back and go for it on the counterattack. Sometimes teams love to play zonal, so we try to play man-to-man against them and vice versa. It depends on the team that we are playing against. But definitely, we are Indians, so we do have that flavor of skills, of running with the ball. I entertain that; we don't want to forget our culture or way of playing, but in a useful way, rather than just using it wildly." It's fair to say that consistent link-up play was missing, not just against Germany, but as Sreejesh repeatedly pointed out during the tournament, on other nights too, when flowing passing moves were less frequent than individual dribbles. When the dust settles on this defeat, it's perhaps the critical issue that Indian hockey, as a whole, would need to address.

Shubman Gill urged to 'cement his place' in South Africa T20I series: 'We believe in all-format players'



GNS News Agency, Dec 9

Gill's performances have generally seen a significant uptick this year, especially since he was made Test captain after Rohit Sharma's retirement from the format. (PTI Photo) Gill's performances have generally seen a significant uptick this year, especially since he was made Test captain after Rohit Sharma's retirement from the format. (PTI Photo)

Shubman Gill returns to the field in Indian colours when their five-match T20I series against South Africa begins on Tuesday. Gill had been injured on the first day of the Test series against South Africa, which led to him missing the rest of the ODI series as well. Gill is vice captain to Suryakumar Yadav in T20Is and is seen as the future captain, having already taken up those roles in ODIs and Tests. Former India all-rounder Irfan Pathan feels that he should now cement his place at the top of the order over the course

of the next five games, especially considering how close this series is to the 2026 T20 World Cup. "Shubman Gill should cement his place at the top of the order in T20 cricket," Pathan said on Star Sports. "We believe in all-format players. We have seen how well he plays in the IPL. Now, he has a chance to cement his place in India's T20 International side. There is a little pressure, but he is a good player. I hope he performs well in this five-match T20I series against South Africa. He is coming back from a small injury. He will get a lot of opportunities across five matches on good pitches. The pitches will have pace and bounce, like in Dharamshala, and he will love batting on them."

Gill's inclusion as an opener in the T20I squad has been seen as more due to his status as a leader of the side than his performances, considering the likes of Sanju Samson and Yashasvi Jaiswal all boast much higher strike rates consistently than him. At the same time, though, Gill's performances have generally seen a significant uptick this year, especially since he was made Test captain after Rohit Sharma's retirement from the format. Pathan also feels that a crucial element in India's chances to defend their T20 World Cup title will be who can be a finisher for India along with Hardik Pandya lower down the order. "I would like to see who plays the role of a finisher with Hardik Pandya, and how they do it. This is a very big aspect. If we have to defend the World Cup, which is in India, it is crucial that our lower-middle order batters stay in form. Along with Hardik, the other batters become very important. Axar Patel can do that, Jitesh Sharma is there, Rinku Singh can also come in. But we have to see who will complement Hardik down the order. My eyes will be on that," he added.

'It's a big wicket for us': Aiden Markram on Abhishek Sharma ahead of 1st India vs South Africa T20I match at Cuttack

GNS News Agency, Dec 9

South Africa T20I skipper Aiden Markram lauded former Sunrisers Hyderabad teammate Abhishek Sharma, singling him out as one of the big wickets ahead of the 1st T20I match against India in Cuttack. The Proteas are scheduled to take on India in 5 matches in the upcoming T20I series. "I've played with Abhi before at Sunrisers, a great guy and bats really well, so no doubt it's a big wicket for us. Whoever takes the new ball, that's a challenge to hopefully get him early. He is a match-winner and it's an important wicket for us," Markram said on Monday ahead of the first match at the Barabati Stadium

He also said that modern T20 batting is being driven by youngsters who see attacking intent as both entertainment and opportunity. "It's probably just the fearlessness — being given complete licence to take the game on from ball one. Some players you almost just want them to spread their wings and take the game on. If they come off, the team is in a really strong position. The game is moving in that direction," he said. "The younger guys coming through naturally are playing that way because that's entertainment but it's also opportunities for them to get into leagues and play T20 cricket for their country. They end up doing some re-

ally cool things," he added. South Africa, runners-up at last year's T20 World Cup, have since slipped in bilaterals, losing to West Indies, India, Australia and Pakistan. But Markram insisted the approach won't change. "No extra plans, I guess. It's T20 cricket, it's an entertaining format and that's the brand we want to play. We want guys to free themselves up, enjoy the game, let their best skills be on show. Tomorrow is the start of a new series. We haven't selected the final XI just yet, we need a few more discussions and then we'll come to that."

India vs South Africa T20Is: Sanju Samson or Jitesh Sharma, who will play?



for six and 11 runs respectively inside the Powerplay dented their chances of winning significantly. Writwick Chatterjee top-scored with 44, but found little to no support at the other end as Bengal ended their league phase in disappointment to finish sixth out of eight teams. Brief Scores: Haryana 191/9 in 20 overs (Sindhu 48; Shami 4/30) beat Bengal 167 all out in 20 overs (Chatterjee 44, Bhardwaj 2/18).

Tech Mahindra launches national chess league for speech and hearing-impaired children

GNS News Agency, Dec 9

HYDERABAD: Tech Mahindra Foundation, the CSR arm of Tech Mahindra, has launched a nationwide Chess League for children with impairment and hearing impairment to make chess accessible, inclusive, and aspirational for players at every level.

The winners from each city will receive a special opportunity to witness the thrilling Global Chess League (GCL) Finals live in Mumbai this December. Over 130 children have already registered for this initiative, which is part of the Foundation's ARISE+ disability program. The Chess League for children with speech and hearing impairments traveled across major Indian cities between November 24 and November 28. Students across three age groups—below 12, 12-18, and 18+—are participating in a single-day format designed to make competitive chess approachable for beginners, with 15-minute games played individually and without time increments. The company plans to introduce time increments and team formats at the national level as the program expands. The winners and runners-up will receive an opportunity to travel to Mumbai and witness the GCL live, along with meeting the chess players and champions. Winners in each category will also receive medals and certificates.

This initiative, undertaken by its philanthropic arm, is part of Tech Mahindra's broader investment in nurturing India's chess culture, talent, and accessibility. Earlier this year, the company announced that Season 3 of the Global Chess League (GCL), its flagship joint venture with FIDE, will take place from December 13 to 24, 2025, at Mumbai's iconic Royal Opera House. Peeyush Dubey, Chairperson, Tech Mahindra Global Chess League, said, through this league, they would aim to ensure that every child, regardless of ability, had the opportunity to experience competition, build confidence, and foster a sense of community. Chetan Kapoor, CEO, Tech Mahindra Foundation, said, "Our education and employability programs for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) have always focused on creating real opportunities through education, skilling, and sport."

Sanju Samson or Jitesh Sharma? This is the lingering question that India will look to find answers as they gear up for the final stretch of 10 T20Is ahead of the T20 World Cup beginning February 7. In what is otherwise a settled team, where anyone apart from the 15 picked for the series making the World Cup squad would come as a surprise, the only point of debate is around who among the two wicketkeepers would make the XI. It is a question that India would hope they find the answers soon and not leave it too far late, as depending on who gets the nod, the batting line-up would invariably go through a combination change.

Samson and Jitesh, vying for the wicketkeeper slot, might seem like a straightforward pick depending on form. But it is beyond that. Samson being a top-order batsman, offers totally a different dimension to this team. Since being a regular of this T20 outfit since July 2024, he has hit three centuries at the top and alongside Abhishek Sharma formed the most destructive opening combination at the top. Jitesh, older to Samson by a year, is a middle-order batsman who is known for his finishing skills, a role this team hasn't assigned to anyone, but clearly understands the value of it. While Samson seemed the first-choice wicketkeeper for the T20 World Cup, the inclusion of Shubman Gill from the Asia Cup onwards has changed the dynamics. Having started the Suryakumar-Gautam Gambhir tenure as an opener, he had made way for Samson, as India's priority lay on Tests. After a season-best IPL, Gill duly took the spot at the top with his childhood friend Abhishek, with Samson moved to the middle-order in the UAE and Australia before losing the spot to Jitesh by the end of the tour.

For a team that has gone about handing role clarity in the most commendable ways in T20s, the message to Samson seems clear too. That he would have to bat in the middle-order. "In terms of Sanju, yes, when he came into the circuit, he batted higher in the order. Other than the openers, I feel everyone has to be very flexible. He did really well when he opened the innings. But Shubman had played before him in the Sri Lanka series. So, he deserved to take that spot," Suryakumar said. Dwelling further, Suryakumar explained: "We gave Sanju opportunities. He was ready to bat at any number. Which is actually good to see a player being very flexible batting from 3 to 6 anywhere. So, both (Samson and Jitesh) are in the scheme of things. One can open, one can bat lower on the order. Both can do all the roles. So, it is an asset to our team and also a good headache to have." With Abhishek and Gill locked for the top-order, when and where India give opportunity to Samson to bat in the middle-order remains to be seen. In the Asia Cup held in the UAE, where it was hard to judge the performance of batsmen in the middle-order on two-paced surfaces, Samson clearly struggled for tempo. In the Syed Mushtaq Ali T20s last week, Samson batted at the top for Kerala, when he could have tested himself in the middle-order and thus denying the Indian team management any clues about his capabilities down the order. With Jitesh, there is no such confusion. Having played a key role in Royal Challengers Bengaluru's title triumph, Jitesh is a proven material when it comes to batting in the middle-order. At the net session on the eve of the match here in Cuttack, both Samson and Jitesh had an extensive net session, first in the nets near the boundary ropes and then in the practice pitch adjacent

to the strip to be used for the game. Both looked in good nick, sending the ball long into the stands occupied by thousands of fans. Having embraced a flexible batting line-up, with left-right combination being preferred, India want a fluid batting order, where entry points will be decided by match-ups. In that regard, Samson and Jitesh offer varying strengths with the former being one of the exceptional hitters of spinners. Jitesh isn't different, and brings in the sweeps, reverse-sweeps and the ramps into play which opens up vast spaces in the field. The last time India played South Africa last year, Samson had made two statement-making centuries that clearly defined the kind of cricket this team wanted to play. This series could well define who is higher in the pecking order.

Hyderabad Royals falter as Mumbai Smashers lift Pickleball League title

HYDERABAD: Mumbai Smashers charted a miracle run, going from sixth to champions with a win over Hyderabad Royals in the final of the Indian Pickleball League in Delhi — launched by The Times Group and recognised as India's only official pickleball league sanctioned by the Indian Pickleball Association under the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports. Mumbai capped their turnaround in front of Hon'ble Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Minority Affairs Mr. Kiren Rijiju, with a 5-1 win over Hyderabad late on Sunday at the K.D. Jadhav Indoor Hall. Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Vineet Jain, Managing Director, Times Group, said: "Pickleball has a special quality. It has the potential to become a mass participation sport. I want to thank all the team owners, players, referees, general managers, guests, and everybody behind the league. Today was the first serve and we have lots of plans." An All-Star match set the tone for the Grand Finale, a glittering exhibition featuring Mr. Jain, GPF President Javier Regalado, IPA President Suryaveer Singh Bhullar, DUPR CEO Tito Machado, international star Hercilio Cabieses, team owners, dignitaries, players, coaches, and commentators. Bollywood actor Harshvardhan Rane added to the spectacle as fans packed into the arena for the star-studded affair, watching keenly as Team Dink beat Team Volley 2-1.

Paul Thomas Anderson's One Battle After Another leads 2025 Golden Globe nominations



Paul Thomas Anderson's *One Battle After Another* scored a leading nine nominations to the 83rd Golden Globe Awards on Monday, adding to the Oscar favorite's momentum and handing Warner Bros. a victory amid Netflix's acquisition deal. In nominations announced Monday from Beverly Hills, California, *One Battle After Another* landed nominations for its cast — Leonardo DiCaprio, Teyana Taylor, Sean Penn and Chase Infini — along with nods for Anderson's screenplay and direction. It's competing in the Globes' category for comedy and musicals.

Close on its heels was Joachim Trier's *Sentimental Value*, a Norwegian family drama about a filmmaking family. The Neon release's eight nominations included nods for four of its actors: Stellan Skarsgård, Renate Reinsve, Elle Fanning and Inga Ibsdotter Lilleas. The Globe nominations, a tattered but persistent rite in Hollywood, are coming on the heels of the a potentially seismic shift in entertainment. On Friday, Netflix struck a deal to buy Warner Bros. Discovery for \$72 billion. If approved, the deal would reshape Hollywood and put one of its most storied movie studios in the hands of the streaming giant. Both companies are prominent in this year's awards season. Along with *One Battle After Another*, Warner Bros. has *Sinners*, Ryan Coogler's acclaimed vampire hit. It was nominated for seven awards by the Globes, including box office achievement, best actor for Michael B. Jordan and Coogler for best director.

Netflix's contenders include Noah Baumbach's *Jay Kelly* (which landed nods for George Clooney and Adam Sandler), Guillermo del Toro's *Frankenstein* (five nominations) and the streaming smash hit, *KPop Demon Hunters*. Arguably the most-watched movie of the year, the three nominations for *KPop Demon Hunters* included one for cinematic and box office achievement — an oddity for Netflix, which typically gives its films only small, limited theatrical

runs but found a No. 1 box office weekend in singalong screenings for the animated film. The two studios led all others in nominations across film and television on Monday. Netflix landed 35 nominations, boosted by its expansive film slate and television nominees like the British limited series *Adolescence* (five nominations). Warner Bros. had 31 nominations, including 15 from HBO Max for series such as *The White Lotus*, the lead TV nominee with six.

The proposed deal for Warner Bros. has stoked concern throughout the industry that Netflix might devote one of the most theatrical-focused studios to streaming. The leading trade group for exhibitors has called the deal "an unprecedented threat." On Sunday, President Donald Trump said the market share created by the merger "could be a problem," and Paramount said Monday it was mounting a hostile bid for Warner Bros. Yet the studio that triumphed on the movie side of the Globe nominations was Neon. The indie specialty film company has emerged as a dominant force in international releases, winning a string of Palme d'Or awards at the Cannes Film Festival. It earned 21 nominations Monday, including five of the six international film nominees.

That included four nominations for Jafar Panahi's *It Was Just an Accident*, the acclaimed Iranian revenge drama. Panahi has often been imprisoned, put under house arrest or prohibited from leaving Iran by the Islamic Republic regime. Earlier this month, while traveling outside of Iran with the film, he was sentenced to a year in prison and a new two-year travel ban. As the Golden Globes continue to transition out of their scandal-plagued past, there's one notable change this year. For the first time, the Globes are giving a best podcast trophy. The inaugural nominees are *Armchair Expert* With Dax Shepard, *Call Her Daddy*, *Good Hang* With Amy Poehler, *The Mel Robbins Podcast*, *SmartLess* and *NPR's Up First*. After a series of controversies for the Hollywood Foreign Press Association, the group that previously put on the ceremony, the Globes were sold in 2023 to Todd Boehly's Eldridge Industries and Dick Clark Productions, a part of Penske Media. A new, larger voting body of more than 300 people now vote on the awards, which moved from NBC to CBS on a shorter, less expensive deal. Nikki Glaser is returning as host to the January 11 Globes, airing on CBS and streaming on Paramount+. This past January, Glaser won good reviews for her first time emceeing the ceremony. Ratings were essentially unchanged, slightly dipping to 9.3 million viewers, according to Nielsen, from 9.4 million in 2024. Helen Mirren will receive the Cecil B. DeMille Award in a separate prime-time special airing Jan. 8. Sarah Jessica Parker will be honored with the Carol Burnett Award.

Sara Arjun calls Dhurandhar co-star Ranveer Singh 'limitless, fierce' in emotional post, actor replies, 'Rulaayegi kya?'

Actor Sara Arjun, who plays Ranveer Singh's love interest in Aditya Dhar's latest spy thriller *Dhurandhar*, has shared a long emotional note for her co-star on social media. As the film continues to grow stronger at the box office, Sara praised Ranveer's acting skills and described him as "limitless, fierce, and fearless."

Taking to her Instagram handle, Sara wrote, "Dearest Ranveer. My words will never do justice to what I feel, but I'll try. They say a true actor is almost superhuman: limitless, fearless, fierce, and you are exactly that. While the world sees your brilliance, I had the privilege of seeing your empathy and generosity every single day. You never led with seniority, you led with sincerity. The most beautiful thing about you is your willingness to be that person for everyone, the one who lifts, who holds, who encourages, who protects, who brings light even on the hardest days. That is what an angel does." Sara's caption further read, "You are the rare kind who gets genuinely happy seeing others happy. You celebrated my big days with a joy that often felt even bigger than mine. What I will always hold closest is how you showed up for me. You paid attention, you were present, and you chose care without being asked. You offered support that went far beyond the work. Through you, I saw that true success walks hand in hand with humility."

Elaborating on how Ranveer Singh has set the bar high for her, Sara Arjun wrote, "You poured your soul into *Dhurandhar*. You lifted every scene, every emotion, and every person around you. You have set the bar impossibly high. I just know you are always going to be my favourite co-actor. It is an honour to be debuting with you." "Mere sher! Sab log mehroom ho gaye hain aapko dekh kar. I am so



proud of you, and so happy to see the world love you the way you deserve. Always praying and rooting for you. With gratitude for the artist you are and the human you choose to be," the note concluded. Ranveer Singh was quick to respond to her note. "Bus kar, pagli.. rulaegi! I enjoy this moment! The world is yours! Nothing can stop you! You are blessed! 35 when you win, I win," he wrote in the comments section of the post. Meanwhile, *Dhurandhar* continues to rule the box office. It has already crossed the Rs 100-crore mark nationwide within 3 days and has minted around Rs 140 crore worldwide. With its positive word-of-mouth, the movie is expected to become Ranveer Singh's highest grossing film.

Aamir Khan confirms his superhero film with Lokesh Kanagaraj is still on: 'We spoke last month and...'



During a recent interaction, actor Aamir Khan shut down rumours and confirmed that his film with Tamil director Lokesh Kanagaraj is still on.

There were several reports suggesting that Aamir Khan had stepped away from Tamil director Lokesh Kanagaraj's upcoming film. However, the actor has now shut down the speculation and confirmed his involvement in the much-talked-about project. In a recent interview, he revealed that discussions between the two are ongoing and that the narration will take place in Mumbai

soon. During a conversation with Sonal Kalra at an HT event Delhi, Aamir opened up about the highly-anticipated collaboration and said, "Lokesh and I are supposed to meet. Last month we spoke and he said he is coming to Mumbai at some point. We will go through the narration. As of now, it is on the cards." Aamir Khan was last seen in Lokesh Kanagaraj's *Coolie*, starring Rajnikant in the lead role. It was a standalone film and not a part of Lokesh Cinematic Universe (LCU). The actor's latest confirmation quashes reports claiming the project had been shelved after Aamir's cameo in *Coolie* received an average response. Lokesh is known for blockbusters like *Vikram*, *Leo*, *Master*, and *Kaithi*. His untitled action-superhero film with Aamir will mark his Bollywood debut.

Earlier, during a conversation with The Hollywood Reporter India, Lokesh had opened up about his experience of working with Aamir Khan and their upcoming project. The director said, "We actually did not want to let the world know that Aamir sir is a part of *Coolie*. That's why we shot with him somewhere else and didn't let any news come out. But there were speculations and talks. Then Aamir sir called me and said, 'Lokesh, I can't keep lying in front of the camera.' He added, 'I've been doing it from morning for my film (*Sitaare Zameen Par*). Can I just say it?' Hearing this, I was like, 'Please say it, sir. It's not a world secret. I'll talk to the production house.' So, I told Sun Pictures, let's release a poster featuring Aamir sir and let the news out. Films are made for people, you can't keep them tightly under wraps all the time."

Deepika Padukone and Ranveer Singh serve style at F1 Abu Dhabi Grand Prix.



Actors Ranveer Singh and Deepika Padukone recently turned heads at the 2025 Formula 1 Abu Dhabi Grand Prix, held at the Yas Marina Circuit. After the event, the duo shared photos showcasing their stylish outfits. Fan clubs also posted several pictures of the power couple watching the race from the stands. Deepika and Ranveer exuded charm at the Yas Marina Circuit. In the snaps, Deepika is seen in a brown leather jacket over a beige turtleneck dress. On the other hand, Ranveer donned a pastel-pink jacket and white tank top, paired with retro sunglasses.

Besides this, the Gully Boy actor also spent quality time with American actor-television host Terry Crews at the Abu Dhabi F1 Grand Prix. He took to his Instagram handle to post a goofy photo with Ranveer. While sharing the picture with him in a boxing pose, Terry congratulated him on his film *Dhurandhar*'s success and wrote in the caption, "Me and the great @ranveersingh at @abudhabigp!!! Congrats on *DHURANDHAR* #InAbuDhabi #Meltgolfclassic2025." On the professional front, Ranveer Singh is currently enjoying the success of his latest release, *Dhurandhar*. Directed by Aditya Dhar, the spy thriller has become the fastest Ranveer film to cross the Rs 100-crore mark. Deepika Padukone, meanwhile, is busy shooting for her upcoming film *King*, co-starring Shah Rukh Khan and his daughter Suhana Khan.

Hema Malini says she is 'slowly gathering up pieces' after Dharmendra's death; Bobby Deol calls him his 'hero'

Hema Malini has taken to social media to remember late actor and husband Dharmendra on his 90th birth anniversary. She shared unseen photos with the legendary star and also shared an emotional note about how she is "slowly gathering up the pieces and trying to reconstruct my life" after his death. Hema shared photos with Dharmendra and wrote, "Dharam ji. Happy birthday my dear heart?? More than two weeks have passed since you left me heartbroken, slowly gathering up the pieces and trying to reconstruct my life, knowing that you will always be with me in spirit. The joyful memories of our life together can never be erased and just reliving those moments bring me great solace and happiness."

She added, "I thank God for our lovely years together, for our two beautiful girls who reaffirm our love for each other and for all the beautiful, happy memories that will remain with me in my heart. ??On your birthday?? My prayers for God to grant you the wealth of peace and happiness that you richly deserve for your humility and goodness of heart and your love for humanity. Happy birthday dear love?? Our happy 'together' moments???" Dharmendra's son and actor Bobby Deol also got emotional on his birth anniversary and wrote a note for his father. He wrote, "Mere Pyaare Papa aur Hamare Pyaare Dhamaram, Aapki soch main yeh likh raha hoon." Bobby mentioned how Dharmendra held his hand through every tough time. He also mentioned how Dharmendra made the country proud and taught his kids the value of self-confidence. He wrote, "He-Man ho aap sab ke, Lekin bachpan se hi aap mere hero ho." He added, "Dil ho to aapke jaisa, Junoon ho to aapke jaisa, Pyaar karo to aapke jaisa, Insaan bano to aapke jaisa. Proud to be yours."

Dharmendra's grandson Karan Deol also paid tribute



and wrote, "Bade Papa I grew up watching you, how you carried yourself, how you treated people, how you stayed grounded no matter what life threw at you. Everything I try to be today... a calmer mind, a kinder heart, a stronger person... it all comes from you. Your hugs gave me warmth, that quiet reassurance. You made everything feel okay without even saying a word. I miss that more than I can explain. There will never be anyone like you, Bade Papa. Thank you for shaping me in ways I understood only when I grew up. Thank you for loving me the way only you could. I carry you with me every day. I love you. And I miss you, always. Happy Birthday!" Dharmendra passed away on November 24, a few days before his 90th birthday on December 8. Like Hema, Dharmendra's other family members – his elder son Sunny Deol and daughter Esha Deol – also remembered their father on his birth anniversary.

Sharmila Tagore: The 'liberal' CBFC head who found govt's directives 'absurd'; offered to resign because of Aamir Khan's film

Sharmila Tagore started her career in the movies when she was just a teenager and for decades, she continued to perform beautifully in front of the camera. But in the early 2000s, Tagore was assigned a new responsibility – to head the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC). Sharmila took office after Anupam Kher had just served for one year as the head, and as soon as she took office in 2004, Sharmila made it clear that she wasn't here to be the morality police, which was often expected from the CBFC head. In the years that followed, films like *Rang De Basanti*, *My Brother Nikhil*, *No One Killed Jessica*, *Omkara*, among others, experienced a fairly smooth release, and while Sharmila tried to make the CBFC into a 'certification body' during her time, it still ended up being the 'censor board' in later years. In 2025, The Indian Express has extensively reported on 'censorship raj', where no meeting has been held in six months.

Soon after Sharmila Tagore became the head, *Onir's My Brother Nikhil* released in theatres. This was the time when films with LGBTQ themes experienced a lot of resistance, more so because Section 377 was still in place. The release of the movie set a precedent for many films with similar themes, as just a few years before this, national protests had broken out over the release of *Deepa Mehta's Fire*. As films like *My Brother Nikhil* got showcased, even something like *Kya Kool Hai Hum*, which was an adult comedy, also got a chance to release in theatres. While the audience for these two kinds of films were completely opposite, Tagore was clear that CBFC was not here to dictate what people should watch, or like; they were here just to certify content and make it known if it was age-appropriate for people who were walking in.

Rang De Basanti, which was strongly against the establishment and would find it quite difficult to get clearance in the current political climate, was released during Sharmila Tagore's tenure, but here, she wasn't the one leading the charge to get it cleared, even though it starred her daughter, Soha Ali Khan. In fact, she screened the film for Pranab Mukherjee, who was the Defence Minister at the time, and said that she wanted to seek "expert opinion" before she gave it a go-ahead. The film was centered around the *MG-21* crashes, which led to a revolution in the real world.

But it was her support for *Omkara* that drew a lot of criticism. Starring Saif Ali Khan, who is also her son, the Vishal Bhardwaj directorial was criticised for using abusive language, and while the film was given an 'Adults Only' certificate, naysayers accused Sharmila of favouring the film as it starred her son. Years later, Pahlaj Nihalani, who was the CBFC head from 2015-2017, told *Times Now*, "'Omkara' was her son Saif Ali Khan's film. The board cleared it after being pressurised by her, which set the



trend and release of films like *Gangs of Wasseypur* happened." Sharmila stayed mum on the subject, but Saif defended her by saying, "She is a liberal, extremely intelligent and experienced chairperson. We should always have a censor chief like her, but too often, we will have someone less passionate about cinema and more political-minded." He added, "I cannot imagine my mother bending rules for her children; she is too fair."

But during *Omkara*'s release, Sharmila Tagore stated very clearly, in a chat with Karan Thapar, that the film was meant for 'adults' and not children, hence, the certificate. In fact, around the same time, she presented, and wanted to introduce age brackets while certification, which meant that films would be certified as per age groups of the audience. She told *The Hindu*, "I do not agree with a blanket U certificate for every film. This will also provide relief to filmmakers who are the most affected by the certification. In a country where voting age is 18 and drinking age 21, why have a blanket 'U' rating?" As we know now, this never happened!

Aamir Khan's *Ghajini* was one of the most hyped films of its time and was released with a U/A certificate. However, the audience objected on the same grounds as the film had excessively violent scenes which were not seen as appropriate for children. After the objection was raised, Sharmila agreed that this was a misstep on CBFC's part. She stated that she had not seen the film, and admitted that her board should have been more careful for a film like this. She told *Subhash K Jha* at the time,