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Musi River rejuvenation: MRDCL seeks 3D modelling even before DPR is ready

Hyderabad: Even before the Detailed Project Report (DPR) for the much-hyped River Musi Rejuvenation project is ready, the Musi Riverfront Development Corporation Limited (MRDCL) has begun roping in agencies for 3D modelling of structures on either side of the river banks. Hyderabad Local Events\As part of the exercise, MRDCL intends to map 3D images or models of existing structures on both sides of the river. The images or models will be prepared covering one kilometre from the centre of the river.

NIA names LeT, Pak handler, 5 others in Pahalgam attack chargesheet

New Delhi/Jammu, Dec 15

Almost eight months after the Pahalgam terror attack, in which 26 persons, mostly tourists, were killed by Pakistan-based terrorists, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Monday chargesheeted six accused in the case, along with the Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and its proxy outfit The Resistance Front (TRF) as single entity.



The chargesheet, which details Pakistan's conspiracy, the roles of the accused and supporting evidence, has charged the banned LeT and TRF for their role in planning, facilitating and executing the Pahalgam attack.

Pakistani handler Sajid Jatt has been named as an accused in the 1,597-page chargesheet filed before the NIA Special Court in Jammu. The NIA's chargesheet also names the three Pakistani terrorists killed by Indian security forces during Operation Mahadev at Dachigam in Srinagar in July, weeks after the deadly attack. The three have been identified as Faisal Jatt, alias Suleman Shah, Habeeb Tahir, alias Jibril, and Hamza Afghani.

The LeT/TRF, as well as the four abovementioned terrorists, have been charged under relevant provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023; the Arms Act, 1959; and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967. The NIA has also invoked penal provisions related to waging a war against India.

Through a meticulous scientific probe spanning

nearly eight months, the NIA traced the conspiracy to Pakistan, which has been unabatedly sponsoring terrorism against India, sources said.

Two accused -- Parvaiz Ahmad and Bashir Ahmad Jothad -- who were arrested by the NIA on June 22 for harbouring terrorists, have also been chargesheeted. During interrogation, the two disclosed the identities of the three armed terrorists involved in the attack and confirmed that they were Pakistani nationals affiliated with the proscribed LeT terror outfit.

In Jammu, special security arrangements were put in place when NIA officials reached the special court to file the chargesheet.

LeT commander Sajid Jatt, born in 1982 and a resident of Kasur in Pakistan, has been named as a handler in the chargesheet. He uses aliases, including Habibullah Malik, Saifullah and Usman Habib, and is accused of planning attacks on soldiers in the Poonch district of the Jammu division.

He has been involved in radicalising youths in Kashmir and recruiting them into militancy through his network. According to information available with The Tribune, he was a key handler of terrorists who carried out attacks on soldiers in Bhata Dhurian in Poonch.

Jatt is also alleged to be involved in the dropping of arms and ammunition through drones along the International Border and the Line of Control in the Jammu region. There are reports that he created a network of terrorists and was involved in the fideyean attack on the Army at Hyderpora in Srinagar in June 2013 and in the killing of the Station House Officer of Chadoora in Budgam in December 2013.

The Pahalgam attack had nearly brought India and Pakistan to the brink of war after India launched Operation Sindoor on May 7 against the neighbouring country. Indian forces bombed several terror camps across the border in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir in pre-dawn strikes, in which several terrorists were killed.

water and bowing to the Central government amounts to mortgaging the interests of the state's farmers. The Congress government's stance, it said, is a grave injustice to Telangana.

At a time when the interests of Telangana, particularly the people and farmers of Palamuru, Rangareddy and Nalgonda districts, are being harmed, none of the eight BJP MPs from the state are speaking up, the BRS party slammed. In fact, it is becoming increasingly clear that the BJP is undermining the interests of Telangana and its farmers, the party alleged.

To counter the injustice being done to Telangana by the Central BJP government on irrigation water and its policy of supporting Andhra Pradesh's exploitation of water resources, BRS leader K Chandrashekar Rao (KCR) believes that direct protests are the only option left for Telangana society, the party said.

Had the BRS government returned to power, water would have already been supplied through the Palamuru Lift Irrigation Project, and the interests of the people and farmers of Palamuru, Rangareddy and Nalgonda would have been protected, the party said.

However, the present Congress government is showing complete negligence towards the interests of the people of these districts and has failed to undertake even minimal work, resulting in severe losses to the farmers and people of the region, the BRS alleged.

said. The Minister further accused Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge of indulging in "shameful theatrics" by labelling the BJP as "gaddar" (traitors). Reddy alleged that Kharge's remarks were an attempt to divert attention from Rahul Gandhi's "treachery of working with foreign powers inimical to India." Targeting Priyanka Gandhi, Reddy criticised her for attacking individual members of the Election Commission, suggesting that such statements were aimed at intimidating constitutional authorities and undermining democratic institutions. Describing the rally as a "shameful display," Reddy likened the Congress leadership at Ram Lila Maidan to the "quintessential villain in the Ramayana, with each speaker representing one head." He reiterated that the people of India have seen through the Congress's "fake campaign" and stand firmly against its divisive politics.

BC organisations protest at Jantar Mantar seeking legal backing for 42% quota

Hyderabad: Demanding legal sanctity for 42 per cent reservations for Backward Classes in Telangana and inclusion of the quota in the Ninth Schedule, BC organisations staged a protest at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi on Monday. Cutting across party lines, MPs, MLAs and senior BC leaders from different States participated in the protest and demanded that the BC reservation Bill be passed in Parliament during the current session. The leaders stressed that the protests would continue and demonstrations would be intensified until their demands were considered and approved.

KCR to chair BRS LP, State executive meet on Dec 19

Hyderabad, Dec 15

A joint meeting of the BRS Legislative Party and the State Executive Committee, chaired by former Chief Minister and BRS president K Chandrashekar Rao, will be held at Telangana Bhavan on December 19 from 2 pm onwards.

The meeting will discuss the negligence of the current Congress government in continuing the irrigation projects undertaken by the BRS government over the past 10 years concerning Krishna and Godavari river waters, and the injustice being done to Telangana in this regard.

The note further stated that despite Andhra Pradesh plundering the Godavari and Krishna waters, the Congress government in Telangana has miserably failed to stop it. In this context, the party feels that another people's movement has become inevitable to protect the irrigation rights of Telangana farmers. A detailed discussion on the future course of a Telangana people's movement will be held in the broad-based meeting, the BRS said in its note issued on Sunday.

The note added that while the previous BRS government had allocated 91 TMC of water to the Palamuru-Rangareddy Lift Irrigation Project, it is unfortunate that the Congress government is now pleading with the Centre, stating that 45 TMC is sufficient. Even after two years, Telangana society cannot remain silent any longer over the Congress government's neglect of farmers' interests, the party said.

Accepting only 45 TMC of Krishna water for the Palamuru-Rangareddy Lift Irrigation Project is a grave injustice and a heinous act. Therefore, the BRS party will never compromise on protecting the irrigation water interests of Telangana farmers, the note said.



At this crucial juncture, several issues, including the party's organisational structure, will also be discussed in detail at the joint meeting on December 19. Key decisions will be taken on launching a public movement and the course of action to be followed.

The meeting will lay the foundation for launching a movement against Andhra Pradesh's exploitation of water resources, particularly with regard to the management of Telangana's irrigation projects, the Palamuru-Rangareddy Lift Irrigation Project, water allocation, and issues related to the Godavari and Krishna river waters, the BRS party said.



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Uttam has succumbed to Centre's pressure: BRS



Hyderabad, Dec 15

The BRS party alleged that Irrigation Minister N Uttam Kumar Reddy's decision to agree to 45 TMC of

Kishan dubs Cong's Vote Chori rally 'a flop show'

Hyderabad, Dec 15

Union Minister G Kishan Reddy on Sunday strongly criticised the Congress Party's rally at Ram Lila Maidan, Delhi, calling it a "complete failure" and a desperate attempt to cover up its repeated electoral setbacks. The rally, organised to protest alleged "Vote Chori" (vote theft), failed to draw significant public support, according to the Minister. Reddy remarked that the event mirrored Congress's performance in Parliament, where its leaders "ran away, afraid to face the BJP's response." He asserted that the people have "totally rejected" the party's claims and now believe that Rahul Gandhi, struggling to justify his leadership after nearly 100 electoral defeats, is using the "Vote Chori" narrative as a mere excuse. "These optics are just ways to keep his party cadre busy so that there is no revolt against his failures as a leader," Reddy

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

Political vacuum in poll-bound Bangladesh

As Bangladesh is headed for national elections in February after going through a tumultuous phase in its history, it is in the grip of a political vacuum with two major parties — Awami League and Bangladesh Nationalist Party — struggling to stay relevant at a time when Islamic extremist elements are gaining ground. The BNP is grappling with a leadership dilemma as its acting chairman, Tarique Rahman, son of ailing former Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, continues to be in self-imposed exile in London for nearly two decades now. His absence is bound to blunt the party's impact on voter confidence. On the other hand, the Awami League, which dominated Bangladesh politics for decades, is reeling from a serious credibility deficit, with its leader, Sheikh Hasina, being ousted from power following a mass upsurge spearheaded by students. She has been in self-exile in India ever since she fled her country in August last year. Last month, Bangladesh's International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) handed out a death sentence to her for crimes against humanity, while her party has been banned. The much-awaited election, however, lacks a level playing field with the interim government, headed by Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus, banning all activities of the Awami League under an anti-terrorism law. The elections will test the interim government's resolve to facilitate a much-needed, smooth democratic transition, a rarity in the country's turbulent history. What is more alarming is the rise of extremist elements which have been influencing the policy direction of the interim administration. The political vacuum has created fertile ground for Islamist parties, notably the Jamaat-Islami, to expand their influence.

Uppal Police Extend Financial Support to Sulochana's Family

“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, December 15 (Indian Chronicle):““CI (SHO) Bhaskar extended financial assistance to the family of Sulochana, who has been working on behalf of the GMR organization at the Uppal Police Station for the past several years.”Sulochana's



husband, Ravinder, passed away due to illness. Expressing deep condolences and praying for the peace of his departed soul, the Uppal Police personnel stood in solidarity with the bereaved family and provided support.“On behalf of the Uppal Police Station staff, CI Bhaskar handed over financial assistance of ₹1,00,000 (Rupees One Lakh) to Sulochana.“The programme was attended by Detective Inspector Ramalinga Reddy, Admin SI Madhava Reddy, SIs Vinay and Chada Samatha Reddy, ASI Venkat Reddy, and other police personnel.

Schools in K.B. Asifabad District Adjust Timings Due to Cold Weather

“Taj Khan, Kagaznagar, December 15 (Indian Chronicle):““In response to prevailing cold weather conditions, the District Collector and Magistrate of Kumuram Bheem Asifabad district, Sri Venkatesh Dhotre, IAS, has ordered a change in school timings across the district with immediate effect.“According to the official proceedings issued today (Rc.No.1618/SED/B5/SchoolTimings/2025), all government, LB/KGBV, model schools, and private management schools will now operate from 9:40 AM to 4:30 PM, instead of the earlier schedule of 9:00 AM to 4:15 PM.“The revision aims to ensure the safety and well-being of students amid dropping temperatures. The order follows representations from teachers' unions in the district and a report from the Indian Meteorological Department highlighting the cold wave conditions.“All Mandal Educational Officers and headmasters have been directed to implement the revised timings immediately and until further orders. Non-compliance will be viewed seriously, the order stated.“The directive applies to primary, upper primary, and high schools throughout the district.

105-Year-Old Woman Upholds the Spirit of Democracy

“Taj Khan, Kagaznagar, December 14 (Indian Chronicle):““A 105-year-old woman, Rasool Ittial, from Gorregutta village in Dahegaon mandal, set an inspiring example by exercising her franchise at the polling station. Despite her advanced age, she arrived with enthusiasm to cast her vote, motivating locals. Officials provided her with necessary assistance. Her commitment to voting serves as an inspiration to all.“In an era where voter apathy often plagues younger generations, Rasool Ittial's unwavering dedication stands as a powerful reminder of the sacred duty of democracy. At 105, she defied physical limitations to uphold her civic responsibility, proving that true patriotism knows no age. Her simple yet profound act reinforces the foundational principle that every vote counts in shaping the nation's future. Such stories of resilience and commitment not only inspire communities but also strengthen the democratic fabric, encouraging citizens of all ages to



participate actively in the electoral process and honour the hard-won right to vote.

Uppal Corporator Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy Participates in Christmas Celebrations



“Kishore Vaddepalli, Uppal, December 15 (Indian Chronicle):““UPPAL Corporator of , participated as the chief guest in the Christmas celebrations organised un-

der the auspices of the . She extended warm Christmas greetings to the Christian community.“Addressing the gathering, the corporator said that the teachings of Jesus Christ are relevant and worthy of practice in everyday life. She expressed hope that the festival of Christmas would usher peace and prosperity into every household.“Devotional hymns and carols sung by devotees in praise of Lord Jesus Christ enthralled the audience. On the occasion, pastors explained the significance of the birth of Jesus Christ and highlighted the spiritual message of Christmas.“Chairman Gone Philips, Presidents Ashok Rathi and Agrif, Salla Prabhakar Reddy, Vasanth Kumar, Jesidipalli Johan, Dendu Jacob, T. Chandrapal, Tenzonia, T. Rakesh, Devadas, Davidson, Raju, Ramesh, and others were among those who attended the programme.

Complaint Seeks Vigilance Probe Into Alleged Registration Irregularities at Kapra Sub-Registrar Office“

“NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, December 15, (INDIAN CHRONICLE):““A formal complaint has been submitted to the Commissioner and Inspector General, Registration and Stamps, Telangana, seeking a vigilance inquiry into alleged irregularities in property registrations handled by officials in Medchal-Malkajgiri district, including the Kapra Sub-Registrar Office. The complaint, filed by Botla Sailu, State President of the All India Hindustan Congress Party, alleges serious procedural violations, use of fabricated documents, and collusion between private parties and registration officials in connection with disputed land parcels in Dattatreya Nagar, Mallapur, under GHMC Kapra limits. According to the complaint, the dispute relates to Plot Nos. 60 and 61, measuring a total of 791 square yards in Survey No. 99. An FIR (No. 182/2025) was registered at Nacharam Police Station in 2025, alleging fabrication of documents linked to the said plots. The complainant states that individuals claiming legal heirship executed sale deeds on April 21, 2025, despite the land being under dispute. The complaint further notes that M/s KYR Constructions had earlier purchased the same plots through registered sale deeds in May 2024 and subsequently obtained a building permit from GHMC in January 2025. Construction reportedly began before the FIR was lodged. Following later transactions, a show-cause notice was issued by GHMC regarding revocation of the building permission, and the matter is presently sub judice before the Telangana High Court. It is alleged that subsequent sale deeds executed in 2025 misrepresented the nature of the property as open land, despite existing construction, leading to evasion of stamp duty. A notice demanding stamp duty arrears of Rs.7 lakh was reportedly issued, but only Rs.2.10 lakh was remitted. The complaint claims that the reduced payment was accepted without due process. The representation also alleges that an affidavit submitted by the executants, claimed to be legal heirs, was executed on a Rs.100 stamp paper later found to be fake. Verification with the District Registrar, Erragadda, reportedly confirmed that no licensed stamp vendor was registered under the number mentioned on the stamp paper. Despite the plots being listed in the Watch Prohibited Register due to the



ongoing dispute and FIR, the complaint alleges that registration officials unlawfully removed the properties from the prohibited list and permitted new registrations in December 2025 in favour of a construction firm. This, it is claimed, was done in deviation of Memo No. G2/257/2020 issued by the Registration and Stamps Department. The complaint names the District Registrar, Medchal-Malkajgiri, and the In-charge Sub-Registrar, Kapra, alleging dereliction of duty and administrative misconduct. It seeks an immediate vigilance inquiry, suspension of the officials concerned pending investigation, and corrective legal and administrative action to restore the integrity of the registration process. Copies of related FIRs, court petitions, disputed documents, and building permissions have been enclosed with the complaint.

Leaders Pay Floral Tributes to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel in Ramantapur



“KISHORE VADDEPALLI , December 15 (Indian Chronicle):““Leaders and party workers paid rich floral tributes to on his birth anniversary at the statue near the Ramantapur Homeopathy Hospital, under the leadership of Ramantapur Division President Vangala Santosh Gupta.Remembering Patel as a legendary freedom fighter who made unparalleled sacrifices during India's independence struggle, speakers recalled his decisive role in liberating the Hyderabad State and his outstanding services as India's first Deputy Prime Minister and a great statesman. Floral tributes were offered at the statue as a mark of respect to the Iron Man of India.The programme was attended by Habsiguda Division Corporator Kakkireni Chetana Harish, BJP senior leaders Thinderu Hanumantha Rao, Muthineni Jagadeesh, Thalla Balakrishna Goud, Vallapu Jagan Yadav, Vempati Srinivas, Darsanala Sudhakar, Shailender, Palugula Anjaiah Patel, Maheshwar Reddy, Upender Yadav, Thammali Ravi, Boddupalli Anand, Vempati Ram Raj, Murali, Suresh and others.Addressing the gathering, the leaders said Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was a visionary who guided the nation to move forward with unwavering determination and an iron will, without bowing to any circumstances when national interests were at stake. They



alleged that despite repeated attempts by previous governments to undermine his legacy, Patel's towering contribution to the nation's history continues to inspire generations.

Public Vaani voluntary organisation Submits Memorandum to DC Seeking Resolution of Civic Issues

“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, December 15 (Indian Chronicle):““Representatives of the Public Vaani voluntary organisation on Monday submitted a memorandum to the Deputy Commissioner during the Public Vaani programme, urging immediate resolution of pressing civic issues in the area.“The delegation informed officials that residents of Ramanthapur and Bhagyaith areas under the Uppal Circle of the are facing severe difficulties due to poor infrastructure. They demanded completion of the service road on the Ramanthapur side near , which has remained incomplete for a long time.“They also complained that unidentified vehicles are dumping soil indiscriminately during night hours near



the Bhagyaith Shilparamam area under HMDA jurisdiction and urged authorities to take strict action.“The representatives pointed out that the service road from KCR Nagar to Nagole Metro Station is in a dilapidated condition, filled with potholes, and that roads dug up for construction works were left unattended. They appealed for early completion of the works. At the TV Colony junction on the same service road, two trees located in the middle of the road were causing traffic issues; the delegation requested that the trees be carefully relocated and replanted elsewhere.“Further, they highlighted that roads excavated for underground drainage works have not been restored for a long time, causing inconvenience to thousands of vehicles daily. The road near Bhagyaith D-Mart is also in a severely damaged condition. In several localities of Ramanthapur, roads dug up by Water Board and GHMC officials for various works have been left unrepaired, with such spots numbering in the hundreds. They urged immediate repairs to prevent accidents and hardship to the public.“Public Vaani president Erram Srinivas, secretary Kosula Vijay Kumar, vice-presidents Goli Krishnayya, Ambabob Shiva Shankar Goud, and Siddha Goni Raju Goud participated in the programme.

Kumuram Bheem Asifabad District Declares Public Holiday for Gram Panchayat Elections

“Taj Khan, Kagaznagar, December 15 (Indian Chronicle):““The District Collector and District Election Authority of Kumuram Bheem Asifabad, Venkatesh Dhotre, IAS, has officially declared December 17, 2025 a public holiday across the district in connection with the second phase of the ordinary elections to Gram Panchayats scheduled for 2025.“According to the proceedings issued on December 13, 2025 (Proc. No. 311/K4.Pts/2025), the holiday applies to:“All government offices, local bodies, and government institutions.“All government and private educational institutions (a local holiday is declared on December 16 and December 17, 2025 for schools and colleges).“Public buildings, educational institution buildings, and other buildings to be used for election-related activities on polling day.“The order also grants special permission to bona fide voters who are Central Government employees to avail facilities to exercise their franchise. Such employees may arrive late, leave early, or take short absences on polling day without affecting their service conditions.“Additionally, managements of public and private undertakings, commercial, and industrial establishments have been requested to declare December 17, 2025, as a paid holiday to enable employees to cast their votes.“The elections in Kumuram Bheem Asifabad district are part of the second phase of Gram Panchayat polls notified by the Telangana State Election Commission, with polling dates set as December 11, 14, and 17, 2025 across the state. The district falls under the December 17 phase.“This measure aims to ensure maximum voter turnout and smooth conduct of the democratic process at the grassroots level.

Gaddam Ravikumar Extends Birthday Greetings to Madhuyashki Goud“

“KISHORE VADDEPALLI , Uppal, December 15 (Indian Chronicle):““On the occasion of the birthday of TPCC Campaign Committee Chairman and former MP , senior Congress leader from the Uppal constituency, former Youth Congress General Secretary and Yuva Kapunadu Vice President paid a courtesy visit and felicitated him, conveying heartfelt birthday wishes.“Speaking on the occasion, Gaddam Ravikumar wished Madhuyashki Goud good health, happiness, and a long life. He expressed hope that Madhuyashki Goud would continue to serve the people with greater dedication and that his guidance would always remain a source of inspiration.



Drug Awareness Campaign Poster Launched by MEO RAMA RAO



“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, UPPAL, December 15 (INDIAN CHRONICLE) “A comprehensive Drug Awareness Campaign & Poster was formally launched on Monday under the leadership of VIJEDER REDDY, President of Uppal TRSMA. The campaign was inaugurated by Mandal Educational Officer with the aim of educating students and the community about the harmful effects of drug abuse and the importance of leading a healthy, disciplined life. Addressing the gathering, MEO Rama Rao Gaaru stated that drug addiction poses a serious threat to the future of students and society. He urged parents, teachers, and educational institutions to work collectively to guide children in the right direction and to

create a safe, drug-free environment in and around schools. He also requested private school managements to strictly follow all safety and security measures. “The campaign highlighted key messages such as “Say No to Drugs, Yes to Life”, focusing on preventive education, moral values, and awareness among youth. Teachers and school managements actively participated and pledged their support to spread awareness and closely monitor students’ well-being. “More than 150 school correspondents participated in the programme, making it a significant step towards building a drug-free society. “For news

ABVP Telangana University students' rally poster.. Higher Education Chairman Balakrishna Reddy

.. “Indian Chronicle OU December 15: ABVP Telangana University students' assembly poster was unveiled by Higher Education Chairman Balakrishna Reddy. “The poster of the Telangana University students' gathering to be held on the 22nd and 23rd of this month with 1,000 students was released by Higher Education Chairman Balakrishna Reddy on 6. “The event was attended by ABVP National Executive Member & State University Convener Jeevan, All India State University Co-Convener Kamal Suresh, Golconda District Convener Vikramaditya, Vibhag SFS Co-Convener Supraja Ga, Saifabad Town Vice Presidents Uday Kiran and Charan Sai Hottam as well as several ABVP activists participated.



Fourth Estate Is a Pillar of Democracy: Allam Narayana

Journalists played a crucial role in the Telangana movement



.. “NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, December 15, (INDIAN CHRONICLE) “The 67th birthday celebrations of Allam Narayana, the first Chairman of the Telangana Media Academy and State President of the Telangana Union of Working Journalists (TUWJ), were held in a grand manner on Saturday. The celebrations were organised under the leadership of Medchal-Malkajgiri district president Bomma Amarendra and Dommati Kiran Kumar Rao. A large number of journalists gathered at Allam Narayana's residence to participate in the event. Floral bouquets were presented, shawls were offered, and a cake was cut as part of the celebrations. Several prominent personalities attended the programme, including Ganta Chakrapani, honorary president of TUWJ and former MLA from Andole; Chanti Kranti Kiran; former MLC Goreti Venkanna; TUWJ general secretary Maruti Sagar; TENJU state general secretary Ramana Kumar; and Rangareddy district leaders led by Tirupati Naik. The dignitaries jointly cut the cake and felicitated Allam Narayana. Speaking on the occasion, Allam Narayana expressed gratitude to jour-

nalists for organising the celebrations and stated that he would continue to work tirelessly for the resolution of issues faced by journalists. He recalled that journalists played an unforgettable and active role in the Telangana statehood movement and acknowledged the contributions of Bomma Amarendra and Dommati Kiran Kumar Rao, who actively participated in the movement. During the programme, Allam Narayana also released copies of a daily newspaper. The event was attended by TENJU state general secretary Ramana Kumar, Greater Hyderabad president Yogi, Srinivas, Medchal district journalist leaders Dommati Kiran Kumar Rao, N. Nares, D. Srinivas, Raju, Krishna, Ramu, Parashuramulu, Nagendra Babu, Rehman, Shankar, Kishore, Majeed Khan, and several other journalists.

Ambassador of India to UNESCO Visits INCOIS, Hyderabad

“15th December, 2025 “Mr. Vishal V. Sharma, Ambassador & Permanent Representative of India to UNESCO, Paris, visited the Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS), an autonomous institute under the Ministry of Earth Sciences, Government of India, in Hyderabad. “During the visit, Ambassador Sharma inspected the SynOps Lab (Synergistic Ocean Observation and Prediction System), which provides tsunami early warning and ocean forecast services to India as well as to countries in the Indian Ocean and Pacific Island regions. He interacted with the officers of INCOIS, and a comprehensive presentation was made outlining the Centre's expanding mandate and key activities in ocean observation, forecasting, and disaster risk reduction. “Ambassador Sharma played a key role last month in coordinating the visit of Mr. Vidar Helgesen, Head of the IOC at UNESCO and former Foreign Minister of Norway, to INCOIS, reflecting India's growing engagement and leadership in the global ocean science sector. “India currently holds the position of Vice-Chair of the IOC-INDIO region. Ambassador Sharma also expressed support for the concept of a dedicated space satellite for IOC-INDIO region countries to



strengthen ocean observation capabilities and emphasized the need to train more young professionals in the field of ocean science. “Senior officials from INCOIS present during the visit included Dr. Balakrishnan Nair, Director, INCOIS; Dr. Pattabhi Ramarao, Chair, IOC-IOTMMS; and Dr. Sudhir Joseph, Group Director, among others.

Corporators Kakkireni Chethana Harish and Bandaru Srivani Venkata Rao Pay Floral Tributes to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel



“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, December 15 (Indian Chronicle): “On the occasion of the death anniversary of —the Iron Man of India, Bharat Ratna awardee, India's first Deputy Prime Minister, and a stalwart of national unity and integrity—grand floral tributes were paid at his statue on the Ramantapur main road. Habsiguda Corporator Kakkireni Chethana Harish and Ramantapur Corporator Bandaru Srivani Venkata Rao offered garlands and paid heartfelt respects, remembering Patel's immense contribution to the nation. “Speaking on the occasion, the corporators recalled Sardar Patel's unparalleled sacrifices and tireless service to the country. They highlighted his visionary leadership, courage, and determination in integrating more than 500 princely states into the Indian Union after Independence—an achievement

that remains historic and unforgettable. They prayed for the departed soul to rest in peace and lauded his pivotal role in nation-building. “The programme was attended by BJP leaders and workers, including former councillor Tinderu Hanumantha Rao; Habsiguda General Secretaries Chelloju Ellachari, Chintakindi Praveen, Gaddam Saikiran, Bandi Padma, Daram Venkatesh Gupta, Peasari Shankar, Puchhula Ashok, G. Haribabu, Nandikanti Siva, Gaddam Venkat Sai, Tummali Ravi, Thota Srinivas, Gurram Mahesh; Ramantapur Division President Santhosh Gupta; Thalla Balakrishna Goud, Mattineni Jagadeesh, Vallapu Jagan Yadav, MPTC Srinivas, Poreddy Maheshwar Reddy, Palugula Anjiah, Darshanala Sudhakar, Upender Anand, and others.

Extensive Campaign by BRS Leaders

“Yellandu, December 15 (Indian Chronicle): “As part of the Gram Panchayat elections, BRS leaders on Monday conducted an extensive campaign under the leadership of party founding member Dindigala Rajender. The campaign was held in the Gram Panchayat areas of Oddigudem, Tilak Nagar, Mamidigudem, and Mondithogu. “Addressing a series of public meetings organised during the campaign, Dindigala Rajender said that former Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao (KCR) was a visionary leader and development-oriented administrator who strengthened villages by upgrading small habitations into Gram Panchayats and ensuring the necessary resources for their development. “He appealed to the people to ensure the victory of BRS-backed candidates with a thumping majority in the upcoming Gram Panchayat elections. “The programme was attended by TBGKS Vice Presidents S. Ranganath and Jaffer, Town President Mohammed Jabbar, Town Vice President Abdul Nabi, and senior leaders Thotakuri Srikanth, Vanga Sunil, Hussein, Lalith Kumar Pasi, M.Tech Mahender, and Imran Pasha, among others



Makthal Shekhar Goud Re-elected as President of Sri Raghavendra Nagar Colony Welfare Association



“Nacharam, Indian Chronicle, December 15: “The Sri Raghavendra Nagar Colony Welfare Association, Nacharam, has unanimously constituted its new executive committee in a cordial and democratic manner. The election of the new body reflects the confidence and unity of the colony residents towards strengthening community leadership and ensuring continuous development of the locality. “In recognition of his selfless service and committed leadership towards the progress of the colony over the past 15 years, Makthal Shekhar Goud has been unanimously re-elected as the President of the Welfare Association for another term. His consistent efforts in addressing civic issues, improving infrastructure, and coordinating with government departments have earned him the trust and respect of the residents. “Addressing the gathering on the occasion, President Makthal Shekhar Goud expressed his sincere gratitude to the colony members for once again entrusting him with the responsibility of leadership. He assured that the association would continue to work transparently and inclusively, giving priority to sanitation, drinking water supply, roads, drainage, street lighting, safety, and welfare activities. He appealed to all

residents to actively participate in association activities and to work collectively for the holistic development of the colony. “Details of the Newly Elected Executive Committee: “President Makthal Shekhar Goud “Vice Presidents Katanguri Srinivas Reddy, N. Jogeshwara Rao, Lingam Yadav, “General Secretary Sangam Yadagiri, “Treasurer Koppoji Praveen Chary”, Joint Secretaries are Yavvaram Nares, Santosh, Vaikuntham”, Executive Members are Ganesh, Venu, Veeru”, Legal Advisor Shivanand, “Advisors are Raja Sharma, Baburao, Satyanarayana, Srisailam Yadav, Ravi Yadav, Mannadhaya, Jagannatham Goud “Several senior citizens, office bearers, and residents of the colony attended the programme and congratulated the newly elected committee members. They expressed confidence that under the leadership of Makthal Shekhar Goud, the Sri Raghavendra Nagar Colony Welfare Association will continue to play a proactive role in solving public issues and promoting unity, harmony, and sustainable development within the colony. “The programme concluded with the members extending their best wishes for the success of the new executive committee and reaffirming their support for the association's future initiatives.



In view of the third phase of elections, liquor shops must remain closed from December 15th to 5:00 PM on December 17th
Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Excise Officer (DPEO) Vishnumurthy

“(Mandava Srisailam... Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... December 15): Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Excise Officer (DPEO) Vishnumurthy announced that as part of the third phase of Gram Panchayat elections, liquor shops in Choutuppal, Narayanapuram, Addagudur, Mothkur, Gundala, and Motakondur mandals (excluding Choutuppal and Mothkur municipalities) will be closed and the sale of liquor completely prohibited from 5:00 PM on December 15, 2025, until the completion of the election process on December 17, 2025. The officer warned that legal action will be taken against anyone found selling liquor during this period.



Anantharam village Sarpanch Pallepati Nagarani Rajalingam congratulated by Bhongir MLA Kumbham Anil Kumar Reddy



“(Mandava Srisailam... Yadadri Bhongir District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... December 15):- Pallepati Nagarani Rajalingam, the Sarpanch candidate who won with a huge majority from the Congress party in Anantharam village of Bhongir mandal, along with ward members Macha Ramesh, Macha Vijayalakshmi, Balakrishna, Yerra Mamata, Shankar, Pabbala Swathi, and Narsimha, met MLA Kumbham Anil Kumar Reddy at his camp office. District Congress leaders Pakkir Kondal Reddy, Vithal Venkatesh, Yerra Mahesh, Manda Shiva, Pallepati Chinna Anjaiah, Pallepati Jahangir, Neerudu Shekhar, Pallepati Rambabu, Rajalingam, Macha Vasanth, and Bandirala Shivasai participated in this program.

Former Member of Parliament and TPCC Campaign Committee Chairman Madhu Yashki Goud's birthday celebrated grandly: Seva Dal State General Secretary Pittala Balraj



“(Mandava Srisailam... Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... December 15):- The birthday of former Member of Parliament and Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee Campaign Committee Chairman Madhu Yashki Goud was celebrated grandly at Babu Jagjivan Ram Chowrasta in the Yadadri Bhuvanagiri district center. On this occasion, under the leadership of Seva Dal Congress State General Secretary Pittala Balraj, a program was organized to distribute fruits to the elderly, disabled, and women. Speaking on this occasion, Seva Dal Congress State General Secretary Pittala Balraj said that Madhu Yashki Goud, as a Member of Parliament, undertook many movements against the united Andhra Pradesh for the achievement of a separate Telangana state. He raised the voice of Telangana in the Parliament in Delhi, highlighting how the backward and weaker sections in Telangana were suffering economically and politically in many ways. Madhu Yashki Goud directly participated in many struggles, and his role in achieving the Telangana state

Two phases of polling concluded peacefully... Officials should take initiative to ensure the third phase also proceeds peacefully: Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Collector Hanumantha Rao

“(Mandava Srisailam, Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau, Indian Chronicle, December 15): Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Collector Hanumantha Rao said that the first two phases of polling in the Gram Panchayat elections were conducted peacefully, and that all arrangements have been completed by the concerned officials in Choutuppal, Narayanapur, Addagudur, Mothkur, Gundala, and Motakondur mandals where the third phase of polling will be held. On Monday, the District Collector inspected the polling arrangements at the Mandal Praja Parishad office in Gundala mandal center, where the third phase of Gram Panchayat elections will be held. On this occasion, the District Election Officer and Collector checked whether all the necessary materials were present at the polling station according to the checklist. He instructed that all the required materials for each polling station should be prepared separately booth-wise. He said that the voter list details should be checked for accuracy. He instructed that the ballot papers should be checked and packed carefully. He specifically mentioned that the Swastik mark and the relevant Gram Panchayat stamps should be checked to ensure they are all present. He also instructed that all the ballot boxes should be checked to ensure they open easily. He directed the concerned officials to make all the necessary arrangements at the distribution center. He instructed the Stage 2 ROs to check the polling stations and ensure that the polling materials reach the distribution center by 8 AM tomorrow. They inquired about the location of the polling material distribution center. They stated that, unlike anywhere else in the state, the district administration, as per the State Election Commission's decision, has set up one polling location for each mandal, creating plastic-free, green model polling stations. They added that in the future, all



Gram Panchayats should become plastic-free. They emphasized the need to transform all villages into green villages, ensuring that there is no plastic anywhere, and mentioned that the polling stations have been set up as model centers using coconut fronds, banana leaves, and flower pots. They instructed that delicious and nutritious food should be provided to the staff on polling duty, and that all necessary facilities should be made available to them at the polling stations. They urged voters in the villages to exercise their right to vote and elect good people who will develop the village, stating that only then will the village prosper. They mentioned that due to voter awareness programs in the district, some women voters in Bommalararamam and Narayanapur mandals have become aware and have put up boards stating that they will not sell their votes for money or alcohol.”Assistant DRDO (Gundala Special Officer) Suresh and other concerned officials participated in this program.

The third phase of elections must be successfully completed with the coordinated efforts of the officials from various departments: District Election Officer and Collector Hanumantha Rao

“(Mandava Srisailam... Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... December 15): District Election Officer and Collector Hanumantha Rao said that the third phase of elections should be successfully completed with the coordinated efforts of officials from various departments. On Monday, the District Election Officer and Collector inspected the polling arrangements at the Mothkur Mandal Praja Parishad office, where the third phase of Gram Panchayat elections will be held. He instructed the Stage-2 Returning Officers on how to make arrangements at the polling centers and advised them to check all the polling materials at the center using a checklist. He provided guidance on the polling and counting process and ordered that the polling process be conducted meticulously, ensuring that there is no room for any errors.”He inquired about the location of the polling material distribution center and instructed that all facilities be provided to the polling staff. He emphasized that the polling officers should be provided with quality food and other amenities. The concerned officials participated in this program.



Revanth Reddy Accused of Neglecting Farmers While Favouring Corporate Film Industry



“(NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, December 15, (INDIAN CHRONICLE):-“Indrapala Bhavani, President of the Telangana Rythu Parirakshana Samithi (TRPS), criticised Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, alleging that the state government is neglecting farmers' welfare while prioritising the interests of the corporate film industry. She said that the Chief Minister was more focused on granting permissions for overnight hikes in movie ticket prices than on providing relief to farmers who suffered losses due to the recent Moda cyclone. Speaking at the weekly farmers' Annadanam (free meal distribution) programme held every Monday at the Medchal-Malkajgiri District Collectorate, Bhavani said the government's approach towards agriculture was disappointing. She pointed out that while special government orders were issued swiftly to benefit cinema owners and stars, no concrete steps were taken to support farmers affected by natural calamities. Bhavani demanded that the state government immediately enhance the Rythu Bharosa assistance to Rs.15,000, as promised before the elections. She said



the Congress had failed to fulfil its pre-poll assurance even months after coming to power. She also questioned the status of other election promises, including the enhancement of old-age pensions to Rs.4,000 and the assurance of providing Rs 2,500 financial assistance to women, and urged the government to implement these schemes without further delay once the election code ends. During the programme, Bhavani expressed gratitude to former Nagaram Municipality Chairman Koukula Chandra Reddy for extending support to the seventh phase of the Annadanam initiative organised under the TRPS banner. Addressing the gathering, TRPS General Secretary Indrapala Satyanarayana also thanked Chandra Reddy for his contribution and appealed to more donors to come forward to ensure the uninterrupted continuation of the farmers' meal programme. TRPS district vice-president Davath Arun Kumar, district youth wing president Ambala Vishnu, district treasurer Chikkudu Narasimha, and other members were present at the event.

JSW MG Motor India Bowenpally lunched of the all new MG Hector car



Secunderabad Cantonment. December 15 (Indian Chronicle):-“Jsw Mg moter on Monday announced the launch of the All-New MG Hector, marking a significant step forward in bold design, unrivalled comfort, pioneering technology and dynamic driving experience in the SUV segment at Automotive MG Showroom at bowenpally secunderabad, The All-New Hector features a striking exterior with a new front and rear bumper design, an all-new grille design, new alloy wheels, and offers two new colours - Celadon Blue and Pearl White. The interiors sport Dual Tone Ice Grey Theme in the 5-seater trim and Dual Tone Urban Tan for the 6 and 7-seater trims, creating a more premium and inviting cabin ambiance. The All-New MG Hector range comes at a starting price of INR 11.99 lakh (Ex-Showroom). who is Entering this new car Popular Hero Nikhil Siddharth will be chief guest and gust of honor from the senior officials from JSW MG Motor India, Sudhir Kataria, Head – IT, Abhinay Akula, ASM, and Neeraj Gurram, CEO, Automotive MG are Attended and launched a new car into the market. On this oction Anurag Mehrotra, Managing Director, JSW MG Motor India, said, The Hector was our maiden nameplate and quickly became synonymous with the MG brand, emerging as one of India's most loved SUVs with 1,50,000 customers since its debut. With the All-New MG Hector, we take this legacy a notch higher by enhancing its design,



comfort, and technology, offering an unmatched value proposition. We believe truly advanced mobility should not be an exclusive luxury reserved for the few. With this superior package, The All-New MG Hector will further democratize technology while setting a new benchmark for what a premium SUV can deliver. Mr. Rajiv Sanghvi, Executive Director, Automotive Manufacturers Private Limited, said, “We are delighted to introduce the all-new MG Hector, with its bold new Aura Hex grille, India's largest 14-inch portrait infotainment screen and advanced i-SWipe touch gesture controls, the new Hector elevates the premium SUV experience. We are confident that this launch will further excite customers and strengthen Automotive MG's position in the premium SUV segment. On this occasion, Nikhil Siddharth's new film teaser was shown, and the fans' joy was boundless, they clapped and took selfies with their favorite actor. “Hero Nikhil Siddharth made noise in Bowenpally on Monday. He was the chief guest to launch a new car specially made with all the features at the local MG Hector car showroom. On this occasion, when the local people of Bowenpally came to know about his visit to the local car showroom, they reached there in large numbers and tried to take selfies with him. He did not displease the local people at all and took selfies with everyone with great patience. He was accompanied by Rajeev Sanghvi, Executive Director of Automotive Man Manufacturers Private Limited, Managers D Sudarshan, Vadde Srinivas and others.

A Legacy of Life Beyond Loss: Peddapalli Family’s Noble Organ Donation Inspires Humanity



“P.SASHOKANKARIMNGAR BUREAU.”“In a moment of profound grief, the family of Budde Chandramauli, a resident of Peddapalli, transformed personal tragedy into an act of exceptional compassion by donating his organs, thereby giving new life and hope to others.”“Budde Chandramauli, a small trader by profession, was declared brain-dead following a severe illness. After receiving clear guidance and awareness from the Jeevan Daan medical team on the significance of organ donation, his bereaved family took the courageous and selfless decision to donate his liver and corneas.”“This magnanimous act resulted in two visually impaired individuals regaining their eyesight through corneal donation, while two critically ill patients received a new lease on life through liver transplanta-

tion—collectively restoring life and dignity to four individuals.”“This exemplary decision was made by his devoted wife Padmavathi, his sons and daughters-in-law Avinash and Srisma, Harish and Manisha, and his beloved grandchildren Sreyansh and Yasnasi, whose strength and humanitarian outlook stand as a beacon of inspiration to society.”“Special appreciation was extended to Bodakunti Nareesh, a close relative and resident of Odela, for his timely communication and active cooperation, which played a crucial role in facilitating the organ donation process.”“The Sadashaya Foundation representatives expressed their deep admiration and heartfelt gratitude to the family. Commendations were conveyed by National President Sravan Kumar, General Secretary Lingamurthy, Secretary Dr. Merugu Bhishmachari, Honorary President Ramakrishna Reddy, Chief Advisors Ramesh, Publicity Secretary Vasu, District Honorary President Lagishetty Chandramauli, along with Katham Mallesham, Merugu Sarangam, and Sarangam, who collectively applauded the family's extraordinary generosity and humane spirit.

Blind Children Fashion Show Inspires Hyderabad with Confidence, Compassion, and Inclusion

Hyderabad Rising Global Foundation, in collaboration with Devnar Foundation for the Blind, successfully hosted a Fundraising & Mega Distribution Program, culminating in a Blind Children Fashion Show & Ramp Walk on Sunday evening at Novotel, HITEX, Hyderabad. The emotionally uplifting event stood as a powerful celebration of confidence, dignity, and the limitless potential of blind and autistic children. The fashion show witnessed blind and autistic children walking the ramp with grace and confidence, drawing standing ovations from a packed audience of policymakers, social leaders, corporates, and celebrities. The event reinforced the message that disability is not a limitation but a different ability, when given the right support and platform. Speaking at the event, Founder Mr. Tushar Sawlani said, “Every child deserves dignity, opportunity, and a stage to shine. Tonight's ramp walk is not about fashion alone—it is about confidence, courage, and changing mindsets. We are deeply grateful for the overwhelming support from leaders, celebrities, and citizens who believe in this mission.”

Rising Global Foundation also acknowledged the support of over 100 renowned personalities, including



Dr. Usha Yanamandra (Katalyst Group), Dr. Preethi Adusumilli (Mrs. Telangana 2023 & Mrs. India 2024), Mr. Satish Reddy (Herbalife), Ms. K. Vandita (Century Renova Hospitals), Mr. P. Rama Krishna Rao (CAMP), Mr. Gayur Karnakar (Coca-Cola), Ms. Shally Palivela (Avaidens – Lab Grown Diamonds), Ms. Bavya Reddy (BBR Events), Mr. Sriram Agarwal (Jaydurga Furnishings), Ms. Vinisha Rao (Designer), Dr. Preethi (Xurious Salon – India Franchise Owner), Mr. V. Ravikumar (Jonty's Hub), Dr. Priyanka Gupta (Spash Wellness), along with many film personalities, leaders, and influencers.

‘Queen of Sahyadri’: Tigress successfully released in Maharashtra’s Chandoli National Park.



GNS News Agency, Dec 15

In a significant step towards strengthening the tiger population in the Sahyadri Tiger Reserve (STR), the Maharashtra Forest Department on Thursday released a tigress into the open forests of Chandoli National Park. With this, the number of tigers in the Sahyadri Tiger Reserve has now reached four, with three male tigers already present in the park. Forest Department officials said the tigress (T-20-S-2) was safely located in the Tadoba Tiger Reserve in Chandrapur last week for release into STR. "After arrival, the tigress underwent a carefully planned habituation, observation and acclimatisation phase in a pre-release enclosure, where her movement, behaviour, feeding pattern, response to natural elements, territorial marking, activity rhythm, prey interest and avoidance instincts were scientifically monitored. Expert veterinarians and wildlife biologists from the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) conducted daily behavioural assessments and declared her fit for full wild release," a press release said. The press release stated that the enclosure was opened at 4.30 pm on November 18 at a location in the Chandoli National Park in the Sangli region. But the tigress took time to come out, and she finally came out at around 8.15 am Thursday. The Forest Department made arrangements for her food for the two days. 'An important milestone' The tigress has now started marking her

territory from the enclosure, proving herself as "The Queen of Sahyadri," according to the press release. Tushar Chavan, Field Director, STR, said, "The tigress has shown excellent adaptive behaviour, natural activity patterns and ecological responses inside the pre-release enclosure. She is perfectly fit, healthy and ready to thrive in the wilderness of Chandoli National Park. Our teams, supported by WII scientists, are fully prepared for responsible and scientific post-release monitoring. This marks an important milestone in the Sahyadri tiger recovery programme, which is being executed with the highest conservation ethics and scientific precision." M S Reddy, Chief Wildlife Warden, Maharashtra, said, "This initiative reflects Maharashtra's scientific, systematic and long-term approach to wildlife conservation. With expert teams from STR and WII in place for continuous monitoring, this release strengthens our efforts to re-establish a healthy and viable tiger population in the Sahyadri landscape." Rohan Bhatte, honorary wildlife warden, who was a part of the initiative and witnessed the release of the tigress, said, "There are three male tigers in the STR. With the release of a tigress, we hope breeding will happen, and it will increase the tiger population in STR, which is required to strengthen biodiversity. The Forest Department team carried out the entire procedure scientifically and successfully." The press release said a radio collar has been attached to the tigress, and she will be monitored round-the-clock using satellite-based telemetry and VHF antenna tracking units to ensure her safety and smooth integration into the wild ecosystem. "Monitoring teams from STR, Chandoli National Park and WII are already deployed across strategic beats, vantage points, patrolling routes and water bodies," it added. According to officials, the key components for monitoring the tigress include satellite- and VHF-based real-time location tracking, field-patrol-based triangulation and direct sign verification, behavioural documentation (movement, resting sites, kill pattern, territory exploration), conflict-avoidance protocols with local communities, and veterinary response readiness.

‘Never saw such a situation in my bureaucratic career, need state govt’s unconditional support’

GNS News Agency, Dec 15

At loggerheads with the Himachal Pradesh government over the upcoming Panchayati Raj Institution (PRI) elections, scheduled in January 2026, State Election Commissioner Anil Kumar Khachi said he never witnessed "such a situation regarding Panchayat elections in his over three-decade-long bureaucratic career". In an interview with The Indian Express, Khachi, a 1986-batch former IAS officer of the Himachal cadre, sought the Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu-led Congress government's "unconditional support" to conduct the elections within the prescribed time frame. Before being appointed as the SEC in August 2021, Khachi served as the chief secretary from January 20, 2021, to August 2022 during the previous BJP government.

Q: How would you describe the current scenario: a communication gap, a crisis, or unwillingness on the part of the state government to conduct panchayat elections?

A: I won't call it a crisis. We never were in a crisis. Elections, whether parliamentary, Assembly, or panchayat, are a constitutional process. Nobody can create hurdles, obstruct or stop this process. That said, I believe the situation the State Election Commission is currently facing has never arisen in Himachal, at least to the best of my knowledge. At the same time, I reiterate we have not run out of time. We still have time to meet the constitutional deadline for holding panchayat elections. There might have been instances where elections in some panchayats or local bodies were halted due to litigation, but the entire process was never affected.

Q: The CM says the SEC must follow the Cabinet-approved delimitation decision, but two days ago, you issued a notification barring the delimitation process.

A: There are several matters which fall under the purview of the state government and many under the SEC, but one thing is clear: panchayat elections can only be conducted through the joint efforts of both institutions. Panchayat elections are a two-way process — neither the state government nor the SEC can do everything alone. I do not want to comment on the state government's decision, but the SEC needs their unconditional support. The SEC notification falls entirely within the ambit of the Constitution of India.

Q: Could you explain what you mean by the state government's unconditional support?

A: The SEC is almost ready to conduct elections, but we require some clarifications from the state government. First, the reservation roster. If we are to hold elections, we must have clarity on the reservation roster for panchayats, which falls under the government's purview. Ballot papers — an administrative matter — can be prepared very quickly. Second, if the government concludes that the disaster situation has subsided, it must withdraw the order restraining



Deputy Commissioners from undertaking election-related work. These are, in my view, the two main constraints currently holding back the conduct of elections. When I use the term "unconditional support," I am referring specifically to these two points. Other issues can be sorted out anytime.

Q: If the panchayat elections are delayed, will it reflect on you?

A: I have already made it clear that the SEC cannot conduct elections single-handedly. We need the state government's support, which is why I am seeking their unconditional support. The Governor of Himachal Pradesh is the constitutional head. As for the commission's preparedness, voter lists for 3,548 out of 3,577 gram panchayats and all 70 Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) have been completed. The remaining 29 gram panchayats, where the compilation work is underway, will have their final voter lists ready by December 1.

Q: Are you satisfied with the state government's response?

A: This is not about my personal satisfaction. Instead of asking me, you can look at the impression the SEC is getting from the government, based on the orders and notifications issued by this office.

Saurabh Parashar Saurabh Parashar is a journalist with The Indian Express, where he primarily covers developments in Himachal Pradesh. He has been associated with The Indian Express since 2017 and has earlier worked with The Times of India. He has 17 year + experience in the field of print journalism. An alumnus of Government College for Men, Sector 11, (Panjab University), Chandigarh, Saurabh holds a Diploma in Journalism from Bhartiya Vidya Bhawan, Chandigarh. He pursued his Master's in Mass Communication from Guru Jambheshwar University of Science & Technology, Hisar. In addition, he completed his law degree from Himachal Pradesh University (HPU), Shimla. ... Read More

Centre set to appoint UT cadre officer FCI Punjab region GM, despite Mann cautioning against move

GNS News Agency, Dec 15

Departing from the convention of appointing a Punjab cadre IAS officer as the general manager to the Food Corporation of India (FCI), Punjab region, the Centre is planning to appoint a UT cadre IAS officer to the post, even as Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann had in early November cautioned against such a move. The incumbent FCI GM, Punjab region, B Srinivasan, a 2011-batch Punjab cadre IAS officer, is set to retire on December 31. Before Srinivasan's retirement, the Centre wants to appoint a UT-cadre IAS officer posted in Delhi, his successor, sources told The Indian Express. On November 6, Mann sent a demi-official (DO) letter to Union Minister of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution & New and Renewable Energy Pralhad Joshi, cautioning, "This will create disharmony and doubts in the minds of farmers, arhtiyas, labourers and other stakeholders." "The CM's letter holds importance as Punjab procures foodgrains to the tune of Rs 1 lakh crore annually, and a Punjab cadre officer is well aware of the massive process taking place twice a year. The appointment of an inexperienced officer certainly means problems," a state government officer said on condition of anonymity.

The CM also reminded the Union minister of the 2020 farmer agitation against the three contentious farm laws, as he further stated: "It is a well-established convention that since the inception of the FCI, a Punjab cadre IAS officer has been appointed the General Manager of the FCI Punjab region, headquartered in Chandigarh. The rationale behind

this convention is the critical understanding of ground realities involved in procurement, storage and movement operations. Officers, who have served Punjab at various administrative levels, possess that valuable first-hand experience of these systems essential to effectively managing this highly sensitive and operationally significant post." In his letter, Mann said, "Punjab has always been the grain bowl of India, playing a pivotal role in ensuring the nation's food security. Being a predominantly agrarian state, Punjab's economy is deeply rooted in agriculture and foodgrain production. A substantial share of foodgrains procured for the central pool originates from Punjab; thus, the smooth functioning of procurement operations in the state is of critical national importance." The chief minister said that he understood the Centre did not approve an earlier three-officer panel proposed for the post. "A fresh panel has since been submitted, but to our surprise, it has been brought to my notice, though informally, that an IAS officer from another cadre is being considered for this position. I would like to respectfully submit that if such a thing happens, it will create doubts and disharmony in the minds of farmers, millers, arhtiyas, labourers and other stakeholders. Thus, considering the unique importance of Punjab's role in the food procurement system and the need for operational efficiency, it would be in the best interest of both the state and the nation that this key post continue to be held by an officer with prior experience in Punjab. This would not only ensure smoother coordination between the state government and the FCI,

Shimla DC files complaint against fraudster impersonating him on WhatsApp



GNS News Agency, Dec 15

Shimla Deputy Commissioner Anupam Kashyap on Wednesday filed a police complaint after he found out that online fraudsters were impersonating him using his name

and photograph on WhatsApp. The complaint was lodged with Shimla Superintendent of Police (SP) Sanjeev Gandhi. According to officials, the impersonator was operating through the mobile number showing Vietnam and had been contacting people posing as the Deputy Commissioner. The DC said such misuse could lead to miscommunication, harassment or financial fraud. In his written complaint, Kashyap stated that an unidentified person was "fraudulently using my name and photograph on WhatsApp," and urged the police to take immediate legal and technical action. He also requested the Cyber Cell to trace the person behind the impersonation. A screenshot of the fake WhatsApp profile and chat messages was attached as evidence. Terming the matter urgent, Kashyap said the misuse of the identity of a public office bearer could have serious consequences. Police said that they began a preliminary inquiry and are coordinating with cybercrime experts to identify the suspect.

BJP social media cell is targeting me because I curbed corruption: Sukhu

GNS News Agency, Dec 15

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu on Wednesday accused the BJP social media cell of targeting him because he took stringent action to curb corruption and ensured widows, orphans, women, labourers and farmers got their rights. Sukhu, who inaugurated and laid the foundation stones of 12 development projects worth Rs 383 crore in the Doon Assembly constituency in Solan district, attacked the previous BJP government for allegedly turning a blind eye to corruption. "The previous BJP government handed over 5,000 bighas of valuable land to industrial houses for just Rs 1.12 crore under customised packages, waiving stamp duty and offering electricity at Rs 3 per unit for five years, along with free water. As long as I am the chief minister, I will not allow the State's assets to be plundered," the CM said, addressing a public gathering. "The previous BJP government left behind a debt of Rs 75,000 crore and liabilities of Rs 10,000 crore for employees. For electoral gains, it opened various institutes in the last six months of its tenure without proper budgetary provisions and staff," the chief minister alleged. "The state government was safeguarding the interests of Himachal, and that's why we returned Rs 30 crore received from the Centre for the bulk drug park and decided to develop it on our own," he said. He also said that the government is going to make large-scale recruitment in various departments. Sukhu inaugurated the Rs 86-crore Baddi-Sai-Ramshehar road, tube wells worth Rs 15.78 crore in the Doon area, the Rs 10.64-crore Civil Hospital in Baddi and a Rs 3.15-crore Community Health Centre building in Barotiwala. The CM dedicated the newly opened government primary schools at Haripur Sandholi, Suraj Majra, Lubana and Chakkan to the public. Sukhu announced to



upgrade the Baddi Civil Hospital to a 100-bed facility, Rs 25 crore for constructing an SDM office and Rs 10 crore for a sports stadium. He said Baddi's facilities must keep pace with its growing population and announced that Baddi, Barotiwala and Chandni schools would follow the CBSE curriculum from the next academic session. The chief minister said the government was strengthening health services, initiating large-scale recruitment and providing relief to disaster-affected families. He distributed Rs 17.62 lakh among 18 disaster-hit families and Rs 17.03 lakh among 15 PMAY-G beneficiaries. Local MLA Chaudhary Ram Kumar said projects worth nearly Rs 400 crore dedicated by the chief minister would boost development in Doon. Sukhu also laid the foundation stones of a Rs 73.21-crore Quality and Reliable Power Supply Scheme in Baddi, a Rs 63.73-crore Baddi-Shitalpur-Jagatkhana road, a Rs 40-crore ISBT Baddi, a Rs 37.67-crore Mini Secretariat, a Rs 37.10-crore sewerage scheme for left-out areas in Baddi, and a Rs 5-crore Rajiv Gandhi Day Boarding School in Kalyanpur.

Telangana-Hyderabad Weather Forecast Today: Minimum temperature drops -4.5°C below normal in Hyderabad; cold wave to continue in state



GNS News Agency, Dec 15

Telangana-Hyderabad Weather Forecast Today: Bonfires are going to be more common in the nighttime in as cold wave conditions are likely to continue on Thursday, as per the India Meteorological Department (IMD). As per the latest bulletin by the IMD, cold wave conditions are likely to prevail over Telangana on November 20. On Wednesday,

day, the minimum temperature was markedly below normal (-5.1°C or less) at few places over Telangana. The state will see mostly dry weather throughout the week. Some places may see scattered rainfall from November 22 to 25. Hyderabad on Wednesday recorded a maximum temperature of 29.4 degrees Celsius which was -0.5 degrees lower than normal. However, the minimum temperature of 13.1 degrees Celsius was -4.5 degrees lower than the normal. IMD advisory for farmers Farmers in the state have been advised by the IMD to apply light and frequent irrigation to the standing crops in the evening to "protect the crops from low temperature stress or cold injuries". "Use mulching and cover vegetable nurseries and young fruit plants with straw / polythene sheets to maintain optimum soil temperature. Cover banana bunches with 6% perforated plastic bags for protection from low temperatures," the advisory read. In addition, the IMD has advised special care for livestock. Cattle must be kept inside sheds at night and dry bedding must be ensured to protect them from the cold. Artificial light should be installed in poultry sheds/coops to ensure warmth for chickens and ducks.

RSS volunteer murder case: 2 held; main accused, weapon still missing

GNS News Agency, Dec 15

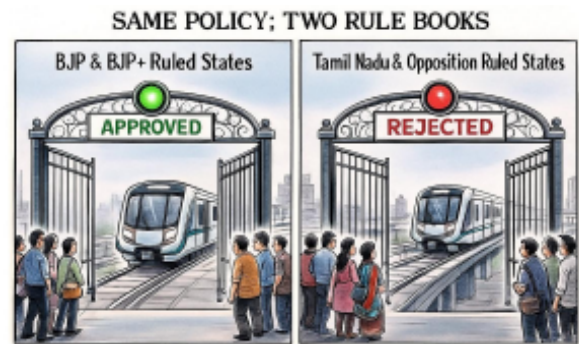
Police in Ferozepur Wednesday arrested two men for the murder of RSS volunteer Naveen Arora on November 15, even as the main accused and the weapon used in the crime are yet to be traced. Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Bhupinder Singh Sidhu, Wednesday, told the media, "The two arrested suspects — Kannav and Harsh, both residents of Basti Bhattian in Ferozepur — were part of a group that planned the murder during a gathering at Kannav's house on November 13." During the gathering, organised to celebrate Kannav's birthday, Kali, Badal, Harsh, Kannav and the fifth accomplice finalised the plan, the SSP said.

Police said the shooter was identified as Badal from CCTV footage, after which his family members picked up for questioning on Sunday. The SSP, however, has declined to disclose his accomplice's identity. On November 15, the group was allegedly divided into two teams — one comprising Harsh and Kannav, and the other team comprising Badal and his associate. Both the teams conducted a recce of Arora's daily routine from November 13 onwards. The SSP named Jatin Kali as the "main conspirator", adding that he had offered Rs 1 lakh to Badal and his accomplice to kill Arora. "Kali wanted Arora to be killed, but the motive is still unclear." Kali is from Ferozepur's Badh Jaimal Singh village. As per the information, the weapon used in the murder was procured from Uttar Pradesh but police are yet to recover it. Naveen's murder has rattled the region's trader community. Sarabjeet Singh Bath, BJP Ferozepur district president, told The Indian Express, "Those involved (the accused) come from poor families with no criminal history.



Even Kali has no previous police case. We fail to understand the motive or who instigated them. It shows the lawlessness in the state." "We will wait for a day to see the police's response," Bath said. On Wednesday, RSS volunteers and BJP leaders submitted memorandums to deputy commissioners across all Punjab's 22 districts, demanding immediate arrest of all the accused. Police are examining a claim by a lesser known Sher-E-Punjab Brigade, a terror-linked outfit which has asserted responsibility for the murder. However, investigators also believe the claim may have been made to mislead the probe. Efforts are underway to trace Kali, Badal and his accomplice, and recover the weapon, police said. Naveen Arora, son of senior RSS leader Baldev Raj Arora, ran a dupatta shop in the main bazaar. According to police, two motorcycle-borne assailants opened fire at him near the Baba Noor Shah Wali dargah, when he was walking home. One of the bullets struck him in the head, and he was rushed to a private hospital, where doctors declared him dead, police said.

Metro Rail projects ride into political row



The Union government's rejection of the Metro Rail projects for Coimbatore and Madurai has provided the ground for yet another fierce political battle between the ruling DMK-led front and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the ruling party at the Centre.Citing one of the norms stipulated in the 2017 Metro Rail Policy — that a city must have a population of at least 2 million to qualify for a mass transit system such as Metro Rail — the Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, in its November 14, 2025 communication to the Tamil Nadu government, referred to 2011 Census data showing Coimbatore's population at 1.58 million and Madurai's at 1.5 million as the basis for its decision. Returning detailed project reports for the two cities, the Ministry stated that "the Metro projects are cost-intensive and should be planned carefully for long-term sustainability." It suggested other cost-effective urban transport systems, including the Bus Rapid Transit System.

The State government had followed the Union Ministry's guidelines while commissioning feasibility studies for the Mass Rapid Transit System in Coimbatore, Madurai, and three other tier-II cities in Tamil Nadu. Detailed project reports were eventually prepared by Chennai Metro Rail Limited for Madurai and Coimbatore and sent to the Centre, with a recommendation that the project cost be met under a 50:50 equity sharing basis. While completely elevated, two corridors have been proposed for nearly 35 kilometre in the case of Coimbatore; the other city is to have an elevated corridor of 26.5 km and an underground corridor of 5.5 km. Each project was estimated to cost around ₹11,000 crore. When the communication became public on November 18, 2025, it triggered loud protests from the ruling

party and its allies. It was left to the BJP and its ally, Tamil Maanila Congress (Moopanar), to defend the move of the Union government, which was said to have come after 21 months. Late evening on Tuesday (November 18, 2025), the DMK's information technology wing, on X, complained of the Centre's discrimination against Tamil Nadu vis-à-vis a couple of cities in north India, for which the approval had been given in the past despite "not fulfilling" the norm of a 2-million population.Senior BJP leader and legislator of Coimbatore (south), Vanathi Srinivasan, rejected the charge of bias against the State and contended that under the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance's reign at the Centre, the State had "received ₹1.5 lakh crore in rail funds, hardly the sign of any anti-Tamil Nadu agenda." She added that the State could resubmit the project proposal, "using urban agglomeration data , or give special justification — just as Agra Metro was approved for tourism. Similar precedents exist for Bhopal and Patna." The TMC(M)'s chief and former Union Minister G.K. Vasan expressed hope that the projects would take off in the future.On Wednesday morning (November 19, 2025), Chief Minister M.K. Stalin, in a post on X, accused the BJP-led government of using "flimsy grounds" to deny the Metro Rail projects for the "Temple City" Madurai and "South India's Manchester" Coimbatore. The BJP's ally in the State, the AIADMK, known for its strong base in Coimbatore and other western districts of the State, chose not to join the debate directly. However, its general secretary Edappadi K. Palaniswami, in a representation submitted to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who was coincidentally in Coimbatore on Wednesday (November 19, 2025) to attend a farmers' meet, appealed to the Centre to expedite the implementation of the Metro Rail projects. The AIADMK's IT wing reposted a statement issued by the BJP's State unit. The national party had explained that the Centre had "returned" the metro proposals, asking for basic clarifications. A similar process was followed for metro extension projects in Bengaluru, in addition to Agra and Patna, the BJP added.Even though the DMK and BJP find fault with each other over the present fate of the project proposals, they, however, sound optimistic about making the projects a reality. It remains to be seen how they are going to accomplish it, but what is certain is that the Coimbatore and Madurai Metro Rail projects will get featured in election manifestos of all major parties when Tamil Nadu goes to the polls in April–May.

China's Master Teacher model vs. India's B.Ed.: Why teacher quality depends on better support systems



Most education systems in Asia look the same on the surface. They are all about high-stakes exams and intense competition. But a closer look reveals a huge difference in how they create and support their teachers.China and India, the two biggest countries, show this contrast perfectly. China has built a system where expert teachers train their peers. It is a "practice-first" model. These expert teachers are called ming shi, or "Master Teachers."India has a different story. It faces a deep "quality crisis" in how it trains its teachers. The main pathway is through a university degree, the Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.). This model is heavy on theory but often fails in practice. Now, India is launching a huge new National Education Policy (NEP), which includes new ways to train and mentor its teachers.This brings up a big question. As India struggles with its B.Ed. programs, can it learn from the structure of China's "Master Teacher" system?China's model is a case study. It shows that a great teaching force needs a strong support system. It needs a good "middle-tier" that helps teachers grow after they start their jobs.An internal support systemChina's ming shi system is not some ancient tradition. It is a modern government policy. It creates a formal career path for excellent teachers.It is a clever policy. It gives top teachers a high-status career path that does not require them to quit teaching and become administrators. It also turns these expert teachers into a national resource, a team that can train thousands of others.How do they do it? They use something called a "Master Teacher Studio," or gongzuofang. This is not a physical building. It is a small group, a professional learning club. A Master Teacher leads this group and recruits several "disciple" teachers from nearby schools.

The work in this "studio" is 100% practical. They watch each other's classes, give feedback, and work together to plan better lessons. They research real problems that they face in their own classrooms. This is a formal "mentor-disciple" relationship, and the studio is judged by one thing: did the teachers in the group get better? This creates a powerful drive for real improvement.India's system is different and also crisis-ridden. The pre-service training, the B.Ed. degree, was described as being in a state of "disrepair" by the

2012 Justice Verma Commission, which found many colleges were mere "shops."The 2021 UNESCO "No Teacher, No Class" report for India estimated a deficit of over 11 lakh teachers. Government data from 2023-24 reflects this, showing a national teacher vacancy rate of 15.17%.Teacher vacancies are not the biggest problem. Quality is a big concern.

According to UDISE+ (2024-25) data, about 92-93% of India's secondary teachers are "trained," meaning they hold a B.Ed. or equivalent. Yet, the NITI Aayog's School Education Quality Index (SEQI) reveals a massive gap in "Learning Outcomes" across states (e.g., Kerala at 76.6% vs. Uttar Pradesh at 36.4%). This is the core paradox: teachers are qualified on paper but ill-equipped in practice. The B.Ed. teaches theory, but when new graduates face the "shock" of a real classroom, they often fall back on the same rote-learning methods they were taught to avoid.India's training system is failing because its support structure is weak. China's system works because its "middle-tier" is strong, respected, and run by practitioners.Supporting continuous teacher developmentBut there is an important structural experiment in India. The Delhi government's "Mentor Teacher" program offers a powerful blueprint for how such a system could be designed. Launched in 2016, the program took a cohort of 200 expert, practicing teachers and made them "mentors." Each mentor was tasked with supporting 5-6 schools. This created a "whole system of peer support" designed to be practical. The key takeaway is its design: it replaced a top-down, bureaucratic inspection model with a practitioner-led, peer-mentoring model. It provides a field-tested Indian answer to the "theory-practice gap."And this brings us back to India's new education policy (NEP). The NEP wants to create its own "Master Teachers." It also has the new 4-Year Integrated Teacher Education Program (ITEP), which has already begun its rollout in an initial 57 institutions to replace the B.Ed. The ITEP may be a good start. But the Chinese model shows us that you do not graduate as a master. You become one through years of practice and good mentoring. The path forward is to connect the dots. The new National Mission for Mentoring (NMM), which has a formal implementation "Bluebook" published by the NCTE, should take over the old, broken infrastructure. We should stop the top-down, theory-based workshops. Instead, we should put practitioners in charge, using the Delhi "Mentor Teacher" design as the blueprint. When the new ITEP students go to schools for their internships, they should be assigned as "apprentices" to these certified Master Teachers. China's system shows us the power of an "apprentice" model. India's own Delhi experiment shows us a plausible design. By smartly combining its new policies with this proven, practical structure, India can finally fix its teacher quality crisis and build a generation of masters.

tions and termed them "exemplary". It encouraged other companies to adopt similar self-regulation.To strengthen compliance, CCPA issued an Advisory on 5 June 2025, instructing all e-commerce platforms and online service providers to conduct a mandatory self-audit within three months to detect and eliminate dark patterns.The advisory emphasised transparency, explicit consent, clear disclosures, and non-manipulative design.The CCPA strongly urges all other e-commerce platforms, marketplace entities, service providers, and app developers to follow the example set by these companies.Through the National Consumer Helpline (NCH), social media campaigns, informative videos, and outreach programmes, consumers have been educated about identifying dark patterns and reporting them," the Ministry said. "Such complaints are being systematically addressed, and enforcement action is being contemplated wherever necessary," it added.The CCPA has reaffirmed that it is maintaining a close watch on potential violations and will not hesitate to act against errant platforms.

The myth of the ‘normal’: what does your lab report really mean?



When the U.S. wrestler and actor Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson was in his prime, his Body Mass Index (BMI) was around 33 kg/m², technically 'obese' by World Health Organization (WHO) standards. Yet no one watching him could call him unhealthy. This paradox is one glimpse of how numbers alone can't be used to define good human health.For many years, the WHO has used universal BMI cut-offs: over 25 kg/m² for 'overweight' and 30 kg/m² for 'obesity'. But research in Asian populations has revealed that even at lower BMI levels, people developed diabetes and heart disease more often. Recognising these ethnic differences in fat distribution, the WHO revised the 'normal' upper limit for many Asian countries to 23 kg/m². Thus, 'normal' health is not fixed or global but a shifting statistical boundary shaped by population data and biological diversity.

The reference rangeEvery lab report for continuous variables includes a reference range, which is often mistaken to be the normal range. Laboratories use the term 'reference' because the range is statistical, not absolute. This means it's derived from the test results of a large number of individuals. When these values are plotted on a graph, they form a bell-shaped curve, with most results clustering near the average and fewer at the extremes. The reference interval is the central 95% of this distribution, meaning 95 out of 100 healthy people fall within it, while 5% lie outside it. This is why falling outside the reference range doesn't always indicate disease — nor does falling within guarantee good health. It's only a guide, rather than a definitive boundary of normalcy.

Diagnosing disease would be simple if health and illness were cleanly separated, the way India and Sri Lanka are separated by the Park Strait. But biology resembles the Tamil Nadu-Kerala border: fluid and gradual, without a clear point where Tamil-speaking people end and Malayalam-speaking people begin. In the border villages, both languages mingle and one shades into the other. Similarly, no single value separates health from disease with precision.Consider diabetes: when the fasting blood glucose levels of thousands of people are plotted on a graph, the healthy and the diabetic curves merge smoothly. The diagnostic cut-off of 126 mg/dl wasn't a mathematical discovery but a practical compromise; there's no fixed line beyond which a person suddenly becomes diabetic. Clinicians draw a line only for practical purposes, and assume that beyond that limit, the risk of complications such as diabetic retinopathy rise sharply.Put another way, all such medical boundaries balance the two concepts of sensitivity and specificity. A lower threshold would detect all true cases but falsely label many healthy ones, increasing the number of false positives; vice versa for a higher threshold. No test in medicine is 100% sensitive and 100% specific at the same time. Since no test is perfectly accurate, the chosen cut-off reflects medical judgment shaped by a disease's severity, prevalence, and social consequences. For serious yet treatable conditions, clinicians prefer caution and accept more false posi-

Between Apple's iPhone 17 series, Samsung Galaxy S25, and Google's Pixel 10 Pro, which one wins the WiFi battle?

In the crowded arena of flagship smartphones, networking performance has quietly become a major battleground. According to new data from Ookla, that compares networking performances of iPhone 17 series and other flagship Android devices, including Pixel 10 Pro, shows just how far networks, silicon and software integration matter. The bottomline is: Apple's strategy of bringing networking hardware in-house is beginning to pay off.At the heart of the iPhone 17 family's performance leap lies the new in-house networking chip, the N1. Previously, Apple's handsets used connectivity chips supplied by Broadcom where Wi-Fi, Bluetooth and other radio functions were outsourced.

With the N1, Apple has made a strategic shift, bringing Wi-Fi 7, Bluetooth 6 and Thread radio support onto a single die under its own control. [On paper the N1 is capped at 160 MHz channel width (while other devices offer up to 320 MHz) but the real-world data tells a more nuanced story.]Ookla's crowdsourced Speedtest Intelligence data shows that the iPhone 17 series has achieved a global median download speed of 329.56 Mbps, while the Pixel 10 Pro-series managed 335.33 Mbps, giving Google's device a narrow edge in median download throughput.However, when one looks at the chip's capabilities in challenging conditions (think for instance, dense residential areas), the iPhone 17 family recorded 56.08 Mbps compared to the Pixel's 53.25 Mbps, suggesting Apple's networking chip boosts resilience in tougher environments.

How does the N1 chip translate into stronger connectivity? The key lies in integration. The N1 unites Wi-Fi 7 (though limited to 160 MHz), Bluetooth 6 and Thread into a single platform, enabling Apple to optimise hardware and software together rather than relying on third-party modules.This shift away from Broadcom means Apple can reduce supply-chain reliance, tune its radios to its own devices ecosystem and deliver more consistent performance across environments. Moreover, while the N1 lacks support for full 320 MHz channels, Apple appears to have focused on improving the "floor" of performance by lifting slower speeds more strongly rather than chasing maximums that few users currently experience. That, to put it crudely, translates to clearer WhatsApp calls on a poor network.Practically, the iPhone 17 series tends to hold up better under challenging network conditions, crowded Wi-Fi networks, weaker signal zones or congested bands. The Pixel 10 Pro, on the other hand, edges it at the median in more ideal conditions. For instance, per the Ookla report, in North America, where 6 GHz Wi-Fi and Wi-Fi 7 adoption are relatively higher, the iPhone 17 series posted a median download of 416.14 Mbps and a 90th-percentile download of 976.39 Mbps — both among the highest in the dataset. This is significant given the N1's theoretical limitations in channel width.

And beyond the head-to-head with the Pixel 10 Pro, the iPhone 17 also performed well against leading Android

tives; for mild or stigmatising ones, they raise the bar to avoid overdiagnosis. Every cut-off in medicine is thus a negotiation and, for that reason, they must be regularly revisited.Mathematics of normalcy

Not all biological measures vary equally. Sodium and potassium can vary within very tight limits because even small deviations from this range can disrupt muscle or nerve function. On the other hand, cholesterol and liver enzymes can vary across a wider range of values: their smaller changes reflect only incidental changes, such as the person's water intake on that day. Hormones are even more dynamic, fluctuating with time of day, age, sex, stress, and nutrition. Interpreting the corresponding numbers on a lab report thus demands more than just numeracy. To do so, a health worker must understand when the sample was collected, how it was tested, and what the patient's clinical picture reveals (or has already revealed).

Every reference range is also determined using a particular mathematical process, and understanding this process can allow health workers to make more informed decisions. Among other things, the distribution of the values of a medical variable is assumed to follow the "68-95-99.7" rule. For instance, if health workers collect blood samples from a number of people and find that the average value is 70 and the standard deviation is 10, the rule says that about 68% of samples score 60-80, about 95% score 50-90, and about 99.7% score 40-100. In other words, the rule helps to visualise how 'spread out' the possible values are and how rare it is for a value to fall far from the mean.The catch here is that not all biological data are symmetrical, that is, fall with equal probability on either side of the mean. For instance, most hormone-related readings are low while a few are extremely high. In such cases, labs select values from the third or the 97th percentiles. For this, they need at least 120 health samples, otherwise their tests won't be reliable.

When we call something "normal," we rarely ask, "normal for whom?"

Laboratory reference ranges are not universal truths but reflect the populations they study. Some parameters, like height, vary widely across gender and ethnicity. A Scandinavian and a South Indian may differ greatly yet both be healthy. People's nutritional and metabolic needs change with age, gender, race, and even occupation. 'Normal' haemoglobin or lipid related values depend on genetics, diet, and the environment. Men have higher red blood cell counts; Africans have lower white cell counts; and Himalayan populations have more haemoglobin. On the other hand, physiological constants such as heart rate or kidney filtration vary little worldwide.As a result, medical interpretation in India demands that we recognise these differences rather than borrow benchmarks wholesale from the West. Unfortunately, for many common laboratory parameters, including haemoglobin, no large, authoritative Indian reference studies exist. As a result, we risk both over diagnosing and underdiagnosing disease.The reference ranges are not natural: they are statistical constructs that people put together by testing others in particular circumstances, with particular assumptions. At the bottom of every lab report is a line written keeping this fact in mind: "Please correlate with clinical findings." To correlate clinically means to bring a number back into the world of people, that is, to listen to a patient's story, examine them, and interpret the number in their full context.For example, a high BMI may signal overweight or, on the positive side, increased muscle mass, which is often the case with athletes. Similarly a borderline thyroid reading may reflect an illness or it could be a normal physiological variation. Ultimately, health workers must go in with a measure of humility that focuses as much on the term "range" as on "reference".



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flagship phones, including the Samsung Galaxy S25 family. The Galaxy S25, equipped with Qualcomm's FastConnect 7900 Wi-Fi silicon, did not lead any major metric, but registered the lowest latency in several regions, indicating strong responsiveness.When it comes to upload speeds, Xiaomi's 15T Pro, powered by MediaTek's Wi-Fi silicon leads in many regions and provides low latency and strong responsiveness.So which device "wins"? It depends on your priorities. If you care about raw median throughput under typical conditions, the Pixel 10 Pro slightly outpaces the iPhone 17 series. If your concern is consistent performance across worse networks, like dense living environments or multi-device Wi-Fi hotspots, then the iPhone 17 with Apple's N1 chip appears to have the upper hand.Apple's strategy of migrating away from Broadcom-sourced wireless chips and building the N1 in-house is bearing fruit. The company may not be chasing the absolute theoretical best link speeds right now, but its optimization shows up in everyday real-world performance.As broader adoption of Wi-Fi 7, 6 GHz band devices and 320 MHz channels rolls out globally, the competitive landscape may shift again, but for now, Apple's twin goals of integration and consistency are translating into a tangible networking advantage.The Pixel 10 Pro still puts up compelling numbers, but the iPhone 17 series may just offer a steadier connectivity experience in the less-ideal real world.

Remembering Batukeshwar Dutt, the forgotten comrade of Bhagat Singh



On April 8, 1929, the Hindustan Times in Delhi rushed out a special evening edition, while The Statesman in Calcutta cabled its story to London to evade colonial censorship. That afternoon, two young men had thrown harmless bombs into the Central Assembly Hall, now Parliament, raising slogans of Inquilab Zindabad (Long Live the Revolution) and Samrajyavad ka Nash Ho (Down with Imperialism). They scattered red pamphlets titled ‘To Make the Deaf Hear’. Reporters caught the words, and newspapers across India and abroad carried dramatic headlines. One international paper proclaimed: “Reds Storm the Assembly!” The two young men were Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt. Both were arrested, tried, and convicted. While Bhagat Singh went on to become one of the most iconic figures of the Indian freedom struggle, his comrade Dutt gradually faded from public memory, remembered only occasionally, and rarely honoured with the dignity he deserved. A revolutionary’s journey

Batukeshwar Dutt was born on November 18, 1910, in the Burdwan district of Bengal. Convicted in the Delhi Assembly Bomb Case on June 12, 1929, he spent nine years in prisons across India — Multan, Jhelum, Trichinopoly, Salem, and even the Andamans. In each jail he resorted to hunger strikes, twice fasting for over a month, demanding humane treatment for political prisoners. When Bhagat Singh, Rajguru, and Sukhdev were executed in Lahore on March 23, 1931, Dutt was languishing in the Salem jail. That night he dreamt of Singh in chains, a vision that haunted him. Released in 1938, Dutt was rearrested during the Quit India movement of 1942 and spent another four years in jail. After his release, he married Anjali, a school teacher, and settled in Patna with their daughter Bharti, who later became a Professor of Economics at Patna College. But life after independence offered little stability. The Bihar government allotted him a coal depot, but it proved financially unviable. President Rajendra Prasad intervened, urging the State to extend due consideration to him. The gesture resulted only in a token nomination to the Bihar Legislative Council — for the remainder of an existing member’s six-month term. Despite such neglect, Dutt remained respected by many political leaders. His health, however, declined in the mid-1960s. Afflicted with bone cancer, he was admitted to AIIMS, New Delhi, where he endured eight months of suffering. Leading orthopaedist Dr. Vig told his comrades that treatment could only ensure a “painless death”. Plans to send him abroad were abandoned after the Indian High Commission in London reported that Delhi offered care equal to Europe’s. Dutt passed away on July 20, 1965. Honouring his last wish, he was cremated at Hussainiwalla in Punjab, alongside Bhagat Singh, Rajguru, and Sukhdev. The site, which remained in Pakistan until

1965, had only recently come under Indian control for the construction of a memorial to the martyrs.

Neglect and recognitionFor a brief moment after his death, the nation honoured Dutt. His funeral procession was massive, attended by the President, Prime Minister, central ministers, the Lok Sabha Speaker, and the Punjab Chief Minister. The funeral drew vast numbers of people along the streets. Yet today, few remember that the farewell accorded to him rivalled those of the most revered leaders of his time. Ironically, the Parliament building where he and Bhagat Singh had staged their act of defiance still does not display their portraits. In contrast, the portrait of V. D. Savarkar, once an accused in Gandhi’s assassination case (though later acquitted), hangs prominently opposite Gandhi’s. In 2014, MPs including Dharamvir Gandhi and Sitaram Yechury protested this omission, but the demand to include Bhagat Singh — and by extension Dutt — was ignored.

The story of this neglect was first documented by Chaman Lal Azad, a fellow revolutionary who later became a journalist. While caring for Dutt at AIIMS, Chaman Lal Azad wrote a series of articles in the Urdu daily Pratap. These were later compiled as Bhagat Singh aur Dutt ki Amar Kahani (1966), one of the most authentic, if scattered, accounts of the revolutionary movement. The book contains Bhagat Singh’s letters, court statements, and postcards — some published for the first time — along with Gandhi’s letter to Dutt and rare photographs of him with Nehru and Indira Gandhi in 1963. The book also records Dutt’s conversations about fellow revolutionaries. In it, he spoke of Hari Kishan Talwar, who was hanged in 1931 for shooting Punjab’s Lieutenant Governor, and of his comrade Ehsan Ilahi, who migrated to Pakistan, became a musician, and died penniless despite Chaman Lal Azad’s attempts to help him. Dutt also disapproved of films made on Bhagat Singh in the 1950s, which he and other comrades protested against. Only Manoj Kumar’s Shaheed in 1965 won their approval, with the actor personally consulting Dutt. Equally touching are accounts of his bond with Bhagat Singh’s family. Mata Vidyawati, Bhagat Singh’s mother, spent long periods with Dutt in his final days. She even sold a Hindi epic poem on Bhagat Singh, gifted to her by poet Sri Krishan Saral, to raise funds for Dutt’s treatment. Revolutionary comrades such as Shiv Verma, Sadashiv Malkapurkar, and Jatin Das’s brother Kiran Das remained constantly by his side. Leaders including Home Minister Gulzari Lal Nanda, Defence Minister Y. B. Chavan, Jagjivan Ram, Swaran Singh, and Dr. Sushila Nayyar also visited him in hospital, though such respect was rarely extended while he was alive and struggling. Ode to the forgotten soldierChaman Lal Azad used his book to underline Bhagat Singh’s intellectual legacy — his ability to rise above religion and envision socialism as the foundation of India’s future. Dutt himself remarked that Singh was far-sighted, always with a book in hand, reading wherever he went. Despite having a shared vision of India’s future, history has not treated Dutt kindly. He remains absent from memorials, textbooks, and the national consciousness. While newer works such as Justice Anil Verma’s Bhagat Singh ke Sahyogi: Batukeshwar Dutt and Bhairav Lal Das’s Vipul Batukeshwar Dutt (both post-2007) have attempted to reclaim his place, Chaman Lal Azad’s earlier book, rich with first-hand memories, is nearly lost. Its Hindi translation, commissioned years ago by the Government’s Publications Division, still lies unpublished due to copyright hurdles.

Attribution science: the tricky task of linking climate disasters to emitters

On November 12, Delhi’s air became distinctly unbreathable. A thick blanket of smog enveloped the capital, which recorded an average Air Quality Index (AQI) of over 400, and the pollution was categorised as “severe”. On November 9, Delhiites, aware of the possible respiratory ailments this relapsing crisis could lead to, protested at India Gate. Many were detained. Meanwhile in April, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) and the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, Pune, released a three-decade long study that established that rainwater, in several parts of the country, was becoming increasingly “acidic.”

In August, there was another environmental disaster, this time in the Himalayas: flash floods inundated Uttarkashi, washing away people and buildings, reportedly caused by a glacial lake burst. While it was small in scale, it was reminiscent of the 2013 Kedarnath tragedy, when over 6,000 people died after an avalanched ruptured the banks of the Chorabari Lake, causing it to burst and release 262 million litres of water within minutes. This was the worst environmental disaster in the country after the 2006 tsunami. But can we authoritatively attribute these environmental catastrophes to human-induced climate change? Put another way, while the irrefutable fact is the earth has warmed by more than 1°C since pre-industrial times thanks to human-generated greenhouse gases and there are local events that result in local environmental disasters as well, how sure we can be that climate change made a cloudburst or a cyclone more likely? This is where climate attribution science comes in. This field is concerned with estimating how the probability of events or their intensity, duration or frequency are altered by climate change.

“Models try to create a world where climate change didn’t happen and look at the real world where events happened,” earth system scientist Raghu Murtugudde explained. “Models are imperfect, and depending on which of these changes you try to estimate, you can get different answers. An event may have occurred naturally but attribution may say its intensity was made stronger or that its probability was increased and so on,” he told The Hindu. In general the attribution of heat waves is more accurate than the attribution of extreme rain events. J. Srinivasan, honorary professor at the Divecha Centre for Climate Change, said, “When a major heat wave strikes Europe or Asia, scientists try to estimate the contribution of increase in carbon dioxide to that particular heat wave. Their attribution will be accurate if the model is good at simulating the past heat waves in that region,” Prof. Srinivasan said. For instance, acid rain in Visakhapatnam has been associated with fossil fuel emissions from a power plant and a shipping yard, among other activities in the vicinity. Delhi’s extreme pollution has been linked to the city’s many vehicles spewing carbon dioxide and, seasonally, to crop residue burning in neighbouring States (which release organic aerosols), the unchecked use of firecrackers during Diwali, and particular wind patterns.

Identifying point sourcesEarlier this year, researchers at Utah State University reported studying the 2013 Kedarnath floods and finding through attribution analysis that northern India has received increasingly large amounts of rain in June since the late 1980s due to more greenhouse gases and aerosols in the atmosphere. There are two forms

of emission attribution, Amit Garg, professor at the Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad, who specialises in energy, climate change, and sustainable development issues, told The Hindu. “Point sources of emissions mean large sources at one location such as power plants, steel plants and cement plants, while non-point are dispersed sources such as cars and rice fields.” A 2007 study published in Environmental Monitoring and Assessment investigated the chemical composition of precipitation over Jharkhand’s Dhanbad, the “coal city of India”. The rain water samples were found to have an average pH of 5.37, “indicating acidic to alkaline nature of rainwater.” This is how researchers tracked down the “point source” of emissions responsible. Coal mining in Jharia, Dhanbad, emits methane, carbon dioxide, sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, and “dust particles in the atmosphere ... [that] act as centres for catalysing chemical reactions, leading to the formation of secondary pollutants such as smog and acid rain,” according to a 2025 paper in International Journal of Scientific Research in Science and Technology. For instance chemical transport modelling can now track plumes and satellites can monitor emissions, and “the increase in model resolution has improved the accuracy of attribution,” says Prof. Srinivasan. “If the number of heat waves or floods increase in the simulation with increasing carbon dioxide, we can use statistics to estimate the probability that the increase in floods or heat waves was caused by an increase in carbon dioxide.” Satellite observations are showing that cyclones are intensifying rapidly on account of high sea-surface temperatures, he added: “With global warming, the water vapour in the atmosphere increases. Weather forecasts from IMD have become more accurate and so deaths from cyclones have reduced dramatically.” But when there isn’t enough data, “researchers run models for the planet’s climate without increasing greenhouse gas emissions and other anthropogenic forcings. Where there is sufficient data, they use trends in the data to compare conditions today with a period from the past in which human effects on the planet were relatively minimal,” Prof. Murtugudde wrote in The Hindu in May 2024. One climate attribution model that needs to be better fine tuned is per-capita entitlements, according to Prof. Garg: “Climate change attribution would require per-capita entitlements for greenhouse-gas emissions and equivalent climate risk coverage across populations in all countries and generations for equity and justice.” Attribution also could, in theory, translate into a way to fix responsibility, especially for rich and developed countries: as Prof. Garg said, “They should ideally commit to pay for the losses imposed on developing countries and the poor all over the world due to as unbridled GHG emissions growth since 1850s.” India’s contribution to the global increase in cumulative CO2 emissions (since 1850) is less than 6%, Prof. Srinivasan said. “So what we do in the next 10 years is not as relevant as what we plan to do during the next 50 years. India has made good progress in solar and wind power plants. In the case of batteries the availability of materials may be a bottleneck.” One paper published in Nature in April 2025 went a step further and asked: “Will it ever be possible to sue anyone for damaging the climate?” Because, the paper said, “the scientific and legal implications of an ‘end-to-end’ attribution that links fossil fuel producers to specific damages from warming” are now available.

Decoding the NDA’s landslide win in Bihar



Many factors contribute to the landslide victory of a political party or an alliance. This holds true for the recent victory of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in Bihar as well. The victory conveys two messages — that there was an overall approval of the work done by the incumbent NDA government under Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, and of the voters’ continued faith in the promises made by the NDA during its campaign. The results also point to the vital role of women voters in Indian elections. Not only did women voters turn out to vote in much larger numbers in 2025 as compared to all the previous elections, but they also seemed to have voted decisively in favour of the NDA, giving the alliance a significant lead. The results

These results are a major setback for the Mahagatbandhan (MGB). But despite a rout in terms of seats, the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) emerged as the single largest party in terms of votes polled. RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav led the campaign from the front. He managed to consolidate his core voters — mainly Yadavs and Muslims — but failed to attract voters from other communities. Prashant Kishor’s Jan Suraj Party (JSP) party polled just over 3% of the votes. However, one should credit Mr. Kishor for leading the campaign on the issue of job opportunities for residents in Bihar, rather than on the issue of migration of labour to industries outside Bihar. This message later resonated in the campaigns of other parties. The JSP appeared to attract large crowds and generated significant buzz. This created the popular perception that Bihar was heading for a three-cornered contest. However, the contest was essentially a bipolar one, as was the case in previous elections. The NDA won 202 seats and polled 46.6% of the votes, while the MGB managed to win 35 seats with 37.7% of the votes. This is the second best performance of the NDA; in the 2010 Assembly elections, it won 206 seats. Together, the two alliances polled roughly 85% of the vote, with other parties receiving a much smaller share compared to earlier elections. A large number of voters made up their mind about which party to vote for during the last few days of the campaign. Evidence from a survey suggests that 42% were late deciders, choosing who to vote for one or two days before voting or on the day of voting. Most of these late deciders voted either for the NDA (47%) or for the MGB (36%), while the JSP (3%) was not seen as a party that was likely to win or play a role in government formation. Success of the NDA campaign

The NDA’s strategy of pitching its election campaign on large, State-level issues rather than on local issues seems to have helped it in a big way. The NDA campaigned on the need for a double engine sarkaar (Nitish-Modi government) for faster development of the State. About half of the voters in Bihar believed it was necessary for the party in

Why COPD is no longer just a smoker’s disease



To be physically active in an area with severe pollution is worse than to be physically inactive. Although, in principle, people perform physical activities (such as running, cycling, yoga, etc.) to decrease the risk of cardiovascular diseases, exercising in a location with a high AQI (air quality index) appears to be harmful to the lungs. During deep-breathing exercises,

Until recently, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) was a common diagnosis for persons who’d spent their lives smoking, since tobacco smoke is the biggest contributor to the condition. However, of late, COPD cases among non-smokers have been on the rise, leading to a recalibration of how we understand respiratory disease risks to our lungs. Environmental and genetic factors are affecting an increasing number of individuals who have never smoked a single cigarette, but who are experiencing shortness of breath, chronic cough, wheezing and throat issues. It’s in the air

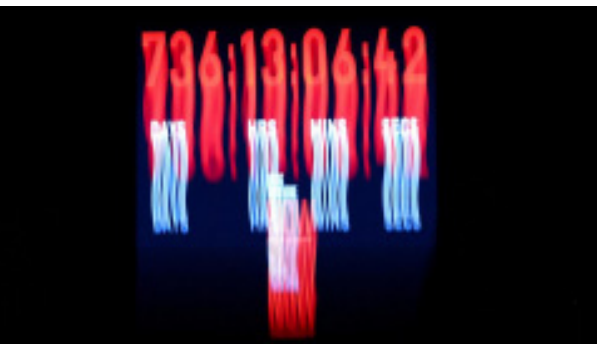
To be physically active in an area with severe pollution is worse than to be physically inactive. Although, in principle, people perform physical activities (such as running, cycling, yoga, etc.) to decrease the risk of cardiovascular diseases, exercising in a location with a high AQI (air quality index) appears to be harmful to the lungs. During deep-breathing exercises, the inspiratory flow rate significantly increases to maximise the intake of fresh air and oxygen. As a result, fine particulate matter (PM 2.5) and toxins that may be found in polluted air, is inhaled, causing stress to the distal air sacs of the lungs (alveoli). Over a period of time, chronic inflammation and oxidative stress in the lungs from these factors lead to irreversible lung disease, and an increased risk of cardiovascular problems in an otherwise

power at the Centre to also be in power in the State, while a little over one-third (37%) did not agree with this view. The NDA conveyed the message that this election was not about electing an MLA or Chief Minister, but to ensure that Bihar moves ahead on the path of development. It also warned the voters that if the MGB won, it could result in a return to ‘Jungle Raj’ — a reference to the poor law-and-order situation between 1990 and 2005 during Lalu Prasad and Rabri Devi’s leadership. This message seems to have appealed to a large segment of voters, especially women, who faced major challenges on account of the poor law-and-order situation.

Countering anti-incumbencyOne major reason why the NDA government was able to overcome anti-incumbency was the high level of voter satisfaction with both the State and Central governments. Data show that nearly three-fourths of voters expressed satisfaction with the performance of both, creating a favourable environment for the NDA’s campaign. Voters also reported notable improvements across key public services and infrastructure. More than three-fourths of the respondents said that the availability of electricity had improved, and nearly seven of every 10 believed that the conditions of roads had improved. They also said that there were improvements in social sector services. More than six of every 10 voters felt that the condition of government schools had improved, and a similar share reported better access to drinking water. A little over half (54%) believed that government hospitals were functioning better, while nearly half the respondents (48%) perceived an improvement in law and order. Crucially, more than three out of every five voters said they wanted to give the Janata Dal (United) or JD(U)-led NDA government another chance in Bihar. The welfare schemes specifically targeting women also seem to have helped the NDA in mobilising women voters in bigger numbers in 2025 as compared to previous elections. Women had supported Mr. Kumar in earlier elections as well, due to his policy of sharab bandi (alcohol prohibition), policy of giving cycles and school uniforms to schoolgirls, and the Jeevika Didi scheme. Initial evidence suggests that women voters seem to have played an important role in NDA’s victory. The MGB was unable to generate confidence among voters of its ability to provide better governance if elected. It also appeared much weaker than the NDA in mobilising support. While in the NDA, alliance partners drew voters from different castes and communities, the MGB largely reinforced support within its existing base and failed to bring in additional voters. Within the NDA, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) attracted a large chunk of upper caste voters, the JD(U) brought in Kurmi votes, Upendra Kushwaha’s Rashtriya Lok Samta Party (RLSP) was instrumental in securing Koeri votes, and both the Hindustan Awaam Morcha and the Lok Jan Shakti Party (R) attracted a large segment of Dalit votes. It is important to note that the core base of the MGB was much smaller than that of the NDA. The alliance partners in the MGB — mainly the RJD, Congress, Vikassheel Insaan Party, and the Left parties — more or less have the same core support base, which includes Yadavs, Muslims, and poorer segment of voters. While the alliance of these parties helped in consolidating the core supporters of the MGB, it appeared unable to attract non-committed voters. Evidence suggests that over seven of every 10 (70%) of Yadavs and Muslims voted for the MGB in this election. But the alliance failed to win over voters of other communities.

healthy non-smoker. Our homes, considered a sanctuary, can be a reservoir of lung irritants. In many parts of the world, particularly developing regions, the use of biomass fuels (wood, coal, crop residue and also fuel made out of cow dung) for cooking and heating in poorly ventilated spaces is a leading cause of COPD, especially among non-smoking women. But the threat is also present in subtler, everyday items. Products such as mosquito coils, insect sprays, air fresheners, scented candles and the like, release fine particulate matter and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) that irritate the airway lining. Furthermore, fumes from outdated gas appliances, old furnaces, and certain strong household cleaning products can linger, causing chronic, low-level inflammation that steadily chips away at lung function. Genetic predispositionsMost non-smoking COPD cases result from factors, genetically or early in life, that one can identify and define well before they cause problems during adulthood. Alpha-1 antitrypsin deficiency most commonly causes undiagnosed COPD. The deficiency exists as a hereditary condition. In this condition, the liver does not produce enough of the protein AAT. This protein protects the lungs from destruction with naturally-occurring enzymes. This deficiency results in the gradual destruction of lung tissue, causing structural changes associated with COPD and leading to emphysema, which often presents in patients during their 30s or 40s. Childhood asthma that is not well controlled can also cause structural airway changes. These changes may continue into adulthood. This may cause COPD that occurs early. The airway calibre may be altered, relative to lung size. This is known as dysanapsis. Healthy non-smokers then have little “breathing reserve” and are more likely to develop obstructive lung disease with increasing age or small environmental exposures. These airway disorders are obstructive. Another important cause is infections such as tuberculosis that can heal but leave behind significant lung damage, leading to COPD-like clinical conditions. The risks are real: adopting proactive strategies focused on minimising lung stress and maximising efficiency however, can offer crucial support. Apart from quitting smoking and avoiding second-hand smoke—the single most impactful action that can be taken—individuals should focus on environmental control and lifestyle adjustments. This includes actively improving indoor air quality, ensuring excellent ventilation, and dusting/vacuuming regularly to remove indoor pollutants. Maintaining good posture is also a simple yet powerful ‘trick’, as sitting or standing tall provides the lungs with maximum space to fully expand. Practicing good nutrition and hydration is also generally known to support the body through natural detoxification and cleansing. Dietary support mainly detoxifies against oxidative stress and inflammation. Consuming antioxidant-rich foods that are high in vitamin C such as berries and citrus fruits and anti-inflammatory spices such as turmeric and ginger can help. Diets rich in omega-3 fatty acids such as fatty fish or walnuts, in addition to food that packs dietary fibre might help improve lung function by promoting general health in people who are already suffering from COPD. Controlled coughing may assist lung clearance: this special technique of coughing helps clear mucus. Steam therapy may assist in lung clearance as it loosens the mucus. Lastly, maintaining hydration is vital, as sufficient water intake keeps the protective mucus lining thin and easier for the body to expel, thereby supporting long-term respiratory health.

What to know as Israel and Gaza await the release of hostages, prisoners, aid — and Trump’s visit



GNS News Agency, Dec 15

Anticipation built across Israel, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank on Sunday (October 12, 2025) as the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas held before a critical day for all sides and the region.Preparations appeared underway for the freeing of the 48 hostages — both alive and dead — still in Gaza, and for the release of hundreds of Palestinian prisoners. More ramped-up aid was being readied for Gaza, much in ruins after two years of war that began when Hamas-led militants attacked Israel on October 7, 2023 killing some 1,200 people and taking about 250 hostage. In Israel's ensuing offensive, more than 67,600 Palestinians were killed in Gaza, according to Gaza's Health Ministry.

Sunday (October 12, 2025) was day 737 since the hostages were taken — a number many Israelis have updated daily on strips of adhesive tape worn in national commemoration.Israel said on Sunday (October 12, 2025) that it expects the 20 living hostages to be released together on Monday. They were then to be handed to the International Committee of the Red Cross and to the Israeli military, which planned to take them to the Reim military base in southern Israel to be reunited with their families.Israel then planned to take the hostages to centres around Israel but asked the Red Cross to have ambulances ready in case a shortage needs immediate care after more than two years in captivity.

It appeared unlikely that the remains of up to 28 others will be returned at the same time. Medical experts and advocates say that it would be crucial to begin the healing process for many families, and for society at large, but one ceasefire document contains stipulations for remains that aren't returned within 72 hours.As part of the ceasefire deal, Israel is to release around 2,000 Palestinians. Among them are some 1,700 people that troops seized from Gaza during the war and have held without charge since.

Madagascar President to make speech after soldiers turned against government in apparent coup

GNS News Agency, Dec 15

Madagascar President Andry Rajoelina was due to make a speech on national television on Monday (October 13, 2025) after an elite military unit turned against the government in an apparent coup in the Indian Ocean nation and called for Rajoelina to step down.Mr. Rajoelina's office said that his speech would be broadcast on state television and radio at 7 p.m. local time (1600 GMT), but didn't say if the President was still in Madagascar amid reports he had fled following weeks of deadly anti-government protests.Those protests, which were initially led by youth groups, reached a turning point on Saturday when soldiers from the elite CAPSAT military unit accompanied demonstrators to a square in the capital, Antananarivo, and called for Rajoelina and several government ministers to leave office.

The unit, which helped Mr. Rajoelina first come to power as transitional leader in a military-backed coup in 2009, said that it had taken charge of all the armed forces in Madagascar.Protesters march alongside a Madagascar military vehicle during a nationwide youth-led protest over frequent power outages and water shortages, in Antananarivo, Madagascar.

Protesters march alongside a Madagascar military vehicle during a nationwide youth-led protest over frequent power outages and water shortages, in Antananarivo, Madagascar, on October 13, 2025. | Photo Credit: ReutersMr. Rajoelina's office said on Sunday that "an attempt to seize power illegally and by force" was underway in the nation of 31 million off the east coast of Africa. Rajoelina's current whereabouts are unknown, and a spokesperson for the President didn't respond to phone calls and messages.Mr. Rajoelina hasn't identified who was behind the attempted coup, but the CAPSAT military unit appeared to be in a position of authority and on Sunday appointed a general as the new head of Madagascar's armed forces, which was accepted by the Minister of Defence.A commander of CAPSAT, Col. Michael Randrianirina, said that his soldiers had exchanged gunfire with security forces who were attempting to quell weekend protests, and one of his soldiers was killed. But there was no major fighting on the streets, and soldiers riding on armoured vehicles and waving Madagascar flags were cheered by people in Antananarivo.Mr. Randrianirina said that the army had "responded to the people's calls," but denied there was a coup. Speaking at the country's military headquarters on Sunday, he told reporters that it was up to the Madagascan people to decide what happens next, and if Mr. Rajoelina leaves power and a new election is held.

Gen Z protest in MadagascarThe U.S. Embassy in Madagascar advised American citizens to shelter in place because of a "highly volatile and unpredictable" situation. The African Union urged all parties, "both civilian and military, to exercise calm and restraint." Madagascar has been shaken by three weeks of the most significant unrest in years. The protests erupted on Sept. 25 over water and electricity outages and were led by a group calling itself "Gen Z Madagascar." The United Nations says the demonstrations left at least 22 people dead and dozens injured. The government has disputed this number.Protesters hang a banner featuring a Malagasy version of the logo of the popular Japanese manga One Piece, a symbol adopted by Gen Z protest movements worldwide, during a nationwide youth-led demonstration over frequent power outages and water shortages, in front of the City Hall in Antananarivo, Madagascar, October 13, 2025. | Photo Credit: ReutersThe demonstrations snowballed into larger

Also among those being released are some 250 Palestinians serving prison sentences.Many are members of Hamas and the Fatah faction who were imprisoned over shootings, bombings or other attacks that killed or attempted to kill Israelis, as well as others convicted on lesser charges. They'll return to the West Bank or Gaza or be sent into exile. It is unclear who will be among the prisoners released back into Gaza, and whether any will be deported.

Humanitarian organisations said they're preparing to surge aid into the Gaza Strip, especially food that's been in short supply in many areas.That includes some 400 trucks from Egypt on Sunday that will have to undergo Israeli inspection before being allowed into the strip. The Israeli defence body in charge of humanitarian aid in Gaza said around 600 trucks of aid per day will be entering soon, as stipulated in the ceasefire agreement.The world's leading authority on food crises said in August that the Gaza Strip's largest city was gripped by a famine that was likely to spread across the territory without a ceasefire and an end to restrictions on humanitarian aid.The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification said famine was devastating Gaza City — home to hundreds of thousands of people. That famine was expected to spread south to the cities of Deir al-Balah and Khan Younis by around now if the situation did not change.The larger task of rebuilding Gaza is daunting, as much of it is in rubble and most of its two million residents displaced.Mr. Trump, who pushed to clinch the ceasefire deal, is scheduled to arrive in Israel on Monday morning.A giant U.S. flag enveloped a building in Jerusalem's City Hall complex, and U.S. and Israeli flags were projected onto the Old City's walls on Saturday night.The White House schedule has Trump meeting with families of hostages and speaking at the Knesset, Israel's parliament, before travelling to Egypt for a "peace summit" attended by regional and international leaders later on Monday. From there, he was slated to return to the White House, arriving overnight Tuesday.The ceasefire and release of hostages is the first step in the proposed peace plan. Competing demands remain on the next steps, casting uncertainty on whether the conflict is indeed over.Israel wants Hamas to disarm, and Hamas wants Israel to pull its troops out of all of Gaza. The future of Gaza's government, which has been in Hamas' hands for two decades, also remains to be worked out.Gaza's Health Ministry doesn't differentiate between civilians and combatants but says around half the 67,600 deaths were women and children. The ministry is part of the Hamas-run government, and the U.N. and many independent experts consider its figures to be the most reliable estimate of wartime casualties.



dissatisfaction with the government and the leadership of Rajoelina, and protesters have brought up a range of issues, including poverty and the cost of living, access to tertiary education, and alleged corruption and embezzlement of public funds by government officials, their families and associates.Civic groups and trade unions have also joined the protests, which resulted in nighttime curfews being enforced in Antananarivo and other major cities. Curfews were still in effect in Antananarivo and the northern port city of Antsiranana.The Gen Z protesters who inspired the uprising have mobilised over the internet and say they were inspired by other protests that toppled governments in Nepal and Sri Lanka.Madagascar has had several leaders removed in coups and has a history of political crises since it gained independence from France in 1960. The 51-year-old Rajoelina first came to prominence as the leader of a transitional government following a 2009 coup that forced then-President Marc Ravalomanana to flee the country and lose power. Rajoelina was elected president in 2018 and reelected in 2023 in a vote boycotted by opposition parties.

Knesset protest by left wing members briefly interrupts Trump speech

U.S. President Donald Trump's address to the Israeli Parliament was briefly interrupted on Monday (October 13, 2025) as two left-wing lawmakers were expelled."That was very efficient," Mr. Trump quipped as the MPs were swiftly removed.The U.S. President had paused as a Knesset staff member audibly ordered the expulsion of lawmaker Ofer Cassif following an apparent protest.

During the session, in which Mr. Trump was otherwise warmly received and given multiple standing ovations, Mr. Cassif had brandished a sign.A photo in his post showed a piece of paper emblazoned: "Recognise Palestine!"This is the banner I waved in front of Trump at the Knesset and was subsequently removed from the plenum," Mr. Cassif posted."We didn't come to disturb, but to demand justice. True peace that will save both peoples of this land from destruction will only come with the end of the occupation and apartheid and the establishment of a Palestinian state alongside Israel", he wrote. They kicked me out of the Knesset just for raising the simplest demand, one that the whole international community agrees on:Another leftist, Ayman Odeh, leader of Cassif's Hadash alliance, was also seen brandishing a page of paper and being removed."They kicked me out of the Knesset just for raising the simplest demand, one that the whole international community agrees on: Recognize the State of Palestine! Recognize the simple truth", Ayman Odeh wrote on X.

A nation pauses: Ukraine’s daily moment of remembrance endures through intensified Russian attacks



GNS News Agency, Dec 15

Each morning at 9 o'clock, Kyiv stops for a minute. Traffic lights turn red, and the steady beat of a metronome on loudspeakers signals 60 seconds of reflection. Cars idle in the middle of the street as drivers step out and stand with heads bowed.Across Ukraine — in cafes, gyms, schools, on television and even on the front lines — people pause to remember those killed in Russia's full-scale invasion.Near a growing outdoor memorial at Kyiv's Maidan Square, four friends gathered with cardboard signs that read, "Stop. Honour." Around them, flags, photos and candles for fallen service members formed a dense mosaic of grief and pride.The four are connected by Iryna Tsybukh, a 25-year-old combat medic killed by a landmine in Eastern Ukraine last year. Her death sparked a national outpouring of grief and added momentum to the daily remembrance initiative.

As India plans to upgrade its embassy in Kabul, staffers of the former Afghan government in Delhi fear for their future



At the heart of the controversy over the Taliban Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi's exclusion of women from his first press conference is a deeper tussle between the Taliban regime in Kabul, which calls itself the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, and the former, democratically elected Afghan government, which refers to itself as the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, and is still recognised by India, over the control of the Afghanistan Embassy compound in New Delhi. The Afghan diplomatic staff remaining at Delhi see the press conferences, which they claim the Indian Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) encouraged, as an attempt to grab control of the embassy. They now say they fear for their lives and the safety of their families. The MEA has consistently rejected any role, saying it had "no involvement in the press interaction" held by Mr. Muttaqi.

After outrage from journalist groups over his first press conference in Delhi last Friday (October 10, 2025), Mr. Muttaqi held a second one, inviting journalists without any gender restriction on Sunday (October 12). Even as the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan's red, green and black flag flew on the tall flagpole in front of the embassy, the Taliban delegation used the occasion of the press meets to bring in their own black and white flags to the embassy, to use as a backdrop, and on the table in front.Russia, China, Pakistan, and some Gulf and Central Asian countries have accepted the Emirate flag at their Afghan embassies, but none of the Western and East Asian countries that host the embassies of the former government have done so thus far.

"We waged jihad under this flag. We fought with the flag and won with the flag, and that's the reason we have this flag here today," Mr. Muttaqi said in response to a question from The Hindu on Sunday (October 12). When asked how much of the embassy they controlled, given the Republic flag outside, "100%," the Minister replied, claiming all 5,00,00 Afghan government employees and mission staff worldwide now work for the Islamic Emirate. However, the Charge d' Affaires (CDA) of the Afghanistan Embassy in Delhi, Mohammad Ibrahimkhil, who was present at the press conference, said the claim was "completely false".The Hindu spoke to a number of the Afghan staff at the embassy, and former Ambassadors and diplomats who had served in Delhi previously. They, too, contested the Taliban's claims.

"This is a lie. Until the Indian government doesn't recognise the Taliban government, this embassy is with the Republic, and our flag is flying on Shantipath (where the Afghan embassy is situated in New Delhi). When India

"Memory is not about death," said Kateryna Datsenko, a friend of the fallen medic and co-founder of Vshanyu, a civic group that promotes the daily observance. "It's about life — what people loved, valued and thought about. Someone might have loved gardening, someone else a favourite poem. This is the kind of memory we try to preserve."The 9 a.m. ritual began in 2022, weeks after the invasion started, as a presidential decree from Volodymyr Zelenskyy. It has since evolved into a shared national practice.Public demonstrations of solidarity continue even as Russian missile and drone attacks have intensified in recent weeks, striking power facilities and cities across the country. Despite the escalation, Ukrainians still gather each morning to honor those lost in the war.Ihor Reva, deputy head of Kyiv's military administration, said the ritual fulfils a deep social and personal need."This war has a price, and that price is terrible — human lives," Mr. Reva said. "You disconnect from everyday thoughts and simply devote that minute to remembrance. That's what I'd call it — a mindful keeping of time."City officials have recently synchronised Kyiv's traffic lights to turn red at 9 a.m., ensuring the capital joins the nationwide pause. "Better late than never," Mr. Reva said. "We definitely won't stop there."For activist and campaign supporter Daria Kolomic, the moment feels both collective and personal."Every day we wake up — sometimes barely sleeping because of attacks — but every morning at 9 a.m. we gather to remember why we're still here, and for whom we need to be thankful," Ms. Kolomic said. "You're not alone in this grief. There's energy between us in that moment."

recognises them, we will respectfully leave, and hand the MEA the keys to the embassy. Then it is for the MEA to decide whether India will fly the Emirate flag of the Taliban here," one of the staffers, who unsuccessfully tried to stop the Taliban delegation from putting up its flags on both occasions, said.

One of the staff members said they had earlier pleaded with the MEA that Mr. Muttaqi's press conference be held at the five star hotel in Delhi where the Acting Afghanistan Minister and his delegation were being hosted by the Indian government. "We were told that not allowing Mr. Muttaqi to hold the press conference inside the embassy would mean that we were taking a stand against India. We then agreed to it, as we respect the Indian government, and they had promised to protect us earlier," another staffer said. None of the Afghan embassy staff members agreed to be identified as they said their families in Afghanistan could be targeted.

This isn't first time that Afghan embassy staffers have 'defended' the premises. In May 2023, the staff locked the embassy gates and refused to allow Qadir Shah, an Afghan carrying an appointment letter from the Taliban Ministry of Foreign Affairs, into the premises, and he abandoned the attempt to take over as the CDA.With India now agreeing to upgrade its technical mission to an embassy in Kabul, and Mr. Muttaqi's announcement that India will now accept the Emirate's diplomats, the staff members said they would be powerless to resist any further takeover, and fear losing their jobs, and their safety if they were forced to return to Afghanistan.

The MEA did not respond to a series of questions posed by The Hindu on the situation at the embassy, and at what level India and the Acting Government of Afghanistan would exchange diplomats following the agreement announced by External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar. In response to a question in Parliament in December 2023, then Minister of State for External Affairs V. Muraleedharan had specifically referred to the "the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in New Delhi and the Consulates of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in Mumbai and Hyderabad [that] continue to function in India".

"Some Afghan diplomats have left India since they obtained residency in third countries. However, the remaining Afghan diplomats based in India have taken over the responsibility for the continued diplomatic functioning of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan," Mr. Muraleedharan had said, responding to a statement issued by the last serving Ambassador, Farid Mamundzay, who resigned the position and declared the embassy had been shut down "due to the lack of support" from the MEA, accusing New Delhi of softening its position towards the Taliban. However, after meetings with MEA officials, the embassy was kept open for consular services for the approximately 15,000 Afghans living in India, with a skeletal staff run jointly by the Consul Generals in Mumbai and Hyderabad, who are "aligned" with the Emirate government. The embassy in Delhi is the last bastion for those still pledging allegiance to the Afghan Republic, and the staffers said they fear that the MEA's latest decisions to strengthen cooperation with the regime in Kabul, which has only been recognised by Russia so far, will cast

Israel says Hamas hands over first seven hostages to Red Cross as part of Gaza ceasefire

Deir al-Balah: Hamas released seven hostages into the custody of the Red Cross on Monday, the first to be released as part of a breakthrough ceasefire after two years of war between Israel and Hamas in the devastated Gaza Strip. There was no immediate information on their condition.Hamas has said 20 living hostages will be exchanged for over 1,900 Palestinian prisoners held by Israel. Families and friends of hostages broke out into wild cheers as Israeli television channels announced that the hostages were in the hands of the Red Cross.Tens of thousands of Israelis were watching the transfers at public screenings across the country, with a major event being held in Tel Aviv. Palestinians awaited the release of hundreds of prisoners held by Israel.US President Donald Trump was arriving in the region along with other leaders to discuss the US-proposed deal and postwar plans. A surge of humanitarian aid was expected into famine-stricken Gaza, where hundreds of thousands of people have been left homeless.While major questions remain about the future of Hamas and Gaza, the exchange of hostages and prisoners marked a key step toward ending the deadliest war ever between Israel and the militant group.Hamas released a list early Monday morning of the 20 living hostages it will free as part of the ceasefire, and a list of over 1,900 Palestinian prisoners it said will be released by Israeli authorities. The

hostages' return caps a painful chapter for Israel. Since they were captured in the October 2023 Hamas attack that ignited the war, newscasts have marked their days in captivity and Israelis have worn yellow pins and ribbons in solidarity.ens of thousands have joined their families in weekly demonstrations calling for their release. As the war dragged on, demonstrators accused Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of dragging his feet for political purposes, even as he accused Hamas of intransigence.Last week, under heavy international pressure and increasing isolation for Israel, the bitter enemies agreed to the ceasefire. With the hostages' release, the sense of urgency around the war for many Israelis will be effectively over.The living hostages will be handed to the International Committee of the Red Cross and then to the Israeli military, which will take them to the Reim military base to be reunited with families. It is unlikely that the remains of up to 28 other hostages will be returned at the same time.An international task force will work to locate deceased hostages who are not returned within 72 hours, said Gal Hirsch, Israel's coordinator for the hostages and the missing. The timing has not been announced for the release of Palestinian prisoners. They include 250 people serving life sentences for convictions in attacks on Israelis, in addition to 1,700 seized from Gaza during the war and held without charge.

IndiGo to engage US-based aviation expert John Illson for root cause analysis of its network-wide flight disruptions



Following the recent widespread disruption in its flight operations, the country's largest airline IndiGo has decided to engage an external expert to conduct an independent review and assessment of the disruption and the factors that contributed to it. The airline's board has approved the appointment of Chief Aviation Advisors LLC, led by veteran aviation expert captain John Illson, the carrier announced Friday. The chairman of the airline's board Vikram Singh Mehta on Wednesday had announced that the board will involve an external technical expert to work with the management and help determine the root causes and ensure corrective action, "so that this level of disruption never occurs again". Apart from IndiGo's own root cause analysis, a government-ordered investigation by an inquiry panel constituted by sector regulator Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) is already underway. The panel was constituted last Friday (December 5), the peak of the disruption with over 1,600 IndiGo flights cancelled in a single day, and was given 15 days to submit its report. Catch all the latest updates around IndiGo flight cancellations, refunds, investigation, and DGCA action here.

"Captain Illson brings more than four decades of aviation experience across the FAA (US Federal Aviation Administration), ICAO (International Civil Aviation Organization), IATA (International Air Transport Association) and major global carriers. With an illustrious track record in global air transport, he brings extensive expertise in global aviation strategy, customized consulting, safety leadership, setting international standards, and new aircraft technologies," IndiGo said, adding that the decision follows the recommendation of the board-constituted Crisis Management Group (CMG). According to Illson's LinkedIn profile, the former airline captain earlier served as a senior advisor to American aviation regulator FAA on development of strategies to enhance the FAA's safety oversight systems. Previously, he worked in senior positions in the domain of aviation safety at various organisations and corporations, including a stint as the chief of the Operational Safety Air Navigation Bureau at United Nations' aviation body ICAO.

"As part of its assessment, the CMG advised commissioning an independent expert review in the matter. With the Board's approval now in place, the review will begin at the earliest, and the independent expert reviewer will submit a comprehensive report to the Board upon completion," said an IndiGo spokesperson. The airline did not elaborate for how long its root cause analysis will go on for. In his video statement on Wednesday, while announcing that the airline's board will engage an independent expert for root cause analysis, Mehta had denied allegations that the crisis was

engineered and that the airline tried to influence the government over the revised Flight Duty Time Limitation (FDTL) rules. Mehta, a former long-time chairman of the Shell Group of Companies in India, also said that claims that the airline's board was not engaged on the FDTL issue are "not correct".

Some aviation sector experts and former bureaucrats had questioned the effectiveness of the airline's high-profile board and whether it did enough in the months leading up to a massive operational crisis that brought the country's aviation system to its knees. While Mehta mentioned that the board was involved and had received the necessary information about the new crew rest rules from the airline's management, he did not say whether the board was aware that IndiGo was underprepared for the new rules and whether it made any intervention in the run-up to the rollout of the second phase of the FDTL norms from November 1. Apologising for the disruption that impacted tens of thousands of passengers, Mehta said that while he had been urged to make a statement on the issue, he chose to wait because the airline's board felt that its first duty was to support IndiGo CEO Pieter Elbers and his team, restore operations, and help passengers who were affected. With the airline's operations now stabilised, Mehta said that he felt it was the right time for him to speak.

On questions raised on the airline's board, Mehta said, "There has also been a claim that the board was not engaged. This is not correct. The board has been closely involved with this matter for many months. Both the board and the (board's) risk management committee have received relevant information from the management on the implementation of the rules." The network-wide disruption faced by IndiGo was primarily due to the carrier's inadequate preparation for the second phase of the new crew rest and duty norms that took effect on November 1. IndiGo was short on crew against what the new norms required, and in combination with a few other factors, this led to widespread disruption in the airline's operations, leading to thousands of flight cancellations since the middle of last week. The new FDTL rules stipulate more rest for pilots and rationalization of their flying duties—particularly late night operations—in a bid to better manage pilot fatigue, which is a key risk to aviation safety. These new norms, which were stipulated in January last year were delayed in their implementation, and took effect in two phases—from July 1 and November 1—with the second phase rollout hitting IndiGo considerably. The new norms meant that airlines either had to have more pilots to maintain their schedule, or shrink the schedule in line with the new requirements. IndiGo, however, was caught unprepared. In review meetings, IndiGo also accepted that the disruptions "have arisen primarily from misjudgement and planning gaps in implementing" the second phase of new FDTL rules, with the airline saying that the actual crew requirement for the new rules exceeded what it had anticipated, as per the DGCA. Given the scale of the disruption, the DGCA last week granted IndiGo a temporary one-time exemption from some night operations-related changes in the new FDTL norms for its Airbus A320 pilots. The temporary rollback, which will be in place till February 10, helped IndiGo to get its act together and stabilise operations. The DGCA also granted a few other temporary relaxations to IndiGo in a bid to ensure that flight operations remain stable.

Nadella and Fadnavis launch MahaCrimeOS AI to fast-track cybercrime investigations; Fadnavis announces \$1 billion investment by Brookfield to set up GCC in Maharashtra



Microsoft Chairman and CEO Satya Nadella together with Maharashtra chief minister Devendra Fadnavis, unveiled MahaCrimeOS AI – the country's first AI-powered platform to fast-track cybercrime investigations. The platform designed to augment officers with AI tools that help them to resolve cases faster and more efficiently, combining human expertise with responsible innovation, has been developed by CyberEye, a partner independent software vendor (ISV) of Microsoft, with the Maharashtra Government's Special Purpose Vehicle MARVEL, and Microsoft India Development Center (IDC). It is built on Microsoft Azure OpenAI Service and Microsoft Foundry.

While Nadella showcased a video illustrating how MahaCrime AI OS helped deliver justice to a cybercrime victim in Nagpur, CM Fadnavis, while addressing the media, said, "Our collaboration with Microsoft began with solving complex cybercrime challenges, but its potential is far greater." MahaCrimeOS AI was launched on Friday, currently, it is live in 23 police stations across Nagpur, and it is proposed to be rolled out to all 1,100 police stations across the state. Making another key investment announcement, Fadnavis on Friday said that the global asset management company, Brookfield, will build a Global Capacity Centre (GCC) in Maharashtra with an investment of over \$1 billion. The GCC will span across two million square feet and is expected to be Asia's largest facility, the Chief Minister said. "It will provide direct employment to 15,000 people and create 30,000 jobs indirectly," Fadnavis told reporters.

Besides, the state government is also in discussions with logistics firm FedEx to set up a GCC between Mumbai and Pune. "The Navi Mumbai International Airport has opened up avenues for logistics, and they (FedEx) want to leverage it. We had a discussion with them," he said. Nadella and Fadnavis also discussed the future of digital safety and AI-driven governance in the state. "There were discussions on expanding the AI copilot platform to other sectors such as health, education, agriculture, delivery of services. We will also collaborate with Microsoft in making Maharashtra as the AI hub of the country," the chief minister said. He also requested Microsoft, which recently committed \$17.5

billion investment for India, to consider investing in Maharashtra, as it offers a vast talent pool. Earlier this week, Microsoft announced to invest \$17.5 billion in India – its largest in Asia – over four years (CY 2026 to 2029) to advance the country's cloud and artificial intelligence (AI) infrastructure, skilling and ongoing operations.

US lawmakers move resolution to end 50% tariffs on India

Washington: A group of influential Democratic lawmakers have introduced a resolution in the US House of Representatives to terminate the 50 per cent tariff on imports from India, which they describe as illegal and economically damaging. Led by Indian American Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi, along with Congresswoman Deborah Ross and Congressman Marc Veasey, the resolution moves to terminate President Donald Trump's national emergency authorising tariffs of up to 50 per cent on imports from India, which they describe as illegal and economically damaging.

The initiative follows a bipartisan, Senate-passed measure to end tariffs imposed on Brazil and curb what lawmakers see as the president's misuse of emergency authorities to raise import duties. According to the sponsors, the resolution would terminate the national emergency that President Trump invoked under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) to impose sweeping tariffs on Indian products. It would also rescind the additional 25 per cent "secondary" duties that took effect on August 27, layered on top of earlier reciprocal tariffs. Together, those actions raised duties on many Indian-origin goods to as high as 50 per cent. "President Trump's irresponsible tariff strategy toward India is a counterproductive approach that weakens a critical partnership," Congressman Krishnamoorthi said. "Instead of advancing American interests or security, these duties disrupt supply chains, harm American workers, and drive up costs for consumers. Ending these damaging tariffs will allow the United States to engage with India to advance our shared economic and security needs," he said. Ross said the impact of the tariffs extends beyond Washington's trade policy debates and is being felt directly in states such as North Carolina, which has close commercial and community ties with India. "North Carolina's economy is deeply connected to India through trade, investment, and a vibrant Indian American community," she said. "Indian companies have invested over a billion dollars and created thousands of good-paying jobs in our state – especially in the Research Triangle's life sciences and technology sectors."

Mira Kapoor reveals how she and husband Shahid manage money as a couple: 'Had to learn how to budget the house'



How do Bollywood star couples manage their money? Do they bicker over a single penny, or does one partner keep track of all the bank accounts while the other spends to their heart's content? In a recent episode of Masoom Minawala's podcast, Mira Kapoor gave us a peek into her and husband Shahid's marriage, sharing how they handle finances and strike a balance in their relationship. "It's never been a topic of discussion as to my money or your money. When I got married, I was not working. It would have been very easy for Shahid to have said, 'You don't know anything, and you're not earning anything. I'll handle everything.' But no, it wasn't like that. I was running the house, and I had to learn to budget it. I needed to learn how to go month to month, keep a check on things, and I still do that. I have to give a lot of credit to him," she told Minawala.

Money is a sensitive topic, tied to security and stability from a young age. Without open conversations, we might not feel secure, leading to distrust and underperformance in the relationship. Aligning financial goals with your partner encourages this financial security. Mukesh Pandey, Director of Rupya Paisa, believes that for couples in a relationship, financial issues rarely stem from a lack of money but rather from a misunderstanding of how each person views money. "In India, it has been reported that by 2025, more than half of all households will be borrowing more money

than before. The average per household for all loaned money has risen 23% from 2023 to 2025; the amount owed by the average household is now about 4.8 lakhs per person," Pandey told indianexpress.com. He added that according to research by Rupya Paisa, almost 41% of couples globally who combine their financial resources engage in financial infidelity (e.g., lying or hiding their debts or purchases). How Shahid and Mira manage their money Mira reveals she is in charge of handling the household budget. (Source: Instagram/ @mira.kapoor)

Pandey says that couples who do not communicate openly about their finances, including income levels and debt, can often feel pressured, both as individuals and as a couple. According to him, financial health is most effectively achieved through honest conversations, combining financial resources, and realistic expectations regarding savings and investments. "Having regular monthly chats regarding financial situations, establishing savings and investment plans, disclosing credit and spending behaviour, and discussing upcoming expenses are not just additional benefits; these are fundamental aspects of couples' financial wellness," he shared, adding that when evident communication about finances occurs, couples can create stronger financial partnerships and improve trust between one another. Aarti Chawla, a Mumbai-based relationship psychotherapist and life coach, agreed with him, adding that it is critical to set boundaries on financial transactions and individual expenses to promote financial harmony and avoid daily conflicts over who is spending more. In a relationship, it is healthy to recognise that there is no absolute right or wrong, only different perspectives. Maturity involves finding a harmonious path and sometimes making compromises. And financial harmony isn't just about managing money; it's about aligning values, fostering trust, and working towards shared goals. "Open communication, understanding, and mutual respect create a solid foundation for a fulfilling and prosperous relationship," said Chawla.

From nightclubs to 'naam': How Gen Z is turning bhajan clubbing into India's hottest sober high



For years, India's Gen Z has carried a reputation shaped by stereotypes: a cohort dismissed as aloof, easily distracted, indulgent in nightlife, and Insta-validation. Popular imagination paints them as the "party generation" — more invested in EDM drops than any spiritual depth. But a startling cultural shift across cities is changing that narrative entirely. From Bengaluru to Mumbai and from Delhi to Pune, young people are filling darkened auditoriums and café-turned-concert halls — not for alcohol-fuelled raves, but for nights of collective chanting and ecstatic devotion. Music that once belonged to temples and grandparents' living rooms now reverberates through professional sound systems and stage lighting. The tracks may invoke Krishna, Shiva, or Rama, yet the vibe feels electric, contemporary, and unapologetically youthful. Smartphones are up — not for crazy selfies with drinks, but to capture a kind of high that leaves no hangover.

This emerging culture, popularly referred to as 'bhajan clubbing', reveals a deeper truth about Gen Z. Behind the ease of memes and their "too cool to care" image, there is a generation actively seeking belonging, grounding, and meaning. They are questioning the exhaustion of consumer-driven nightlife, the burnout caused by digital noise, and the emptiness of performative pleasure. And instead, they are crafting a fresh grammar of spirituality that is fluid, inclusive, playlist-driven, and unapologetically open. Event organisers report record turnouts; ticketed devotional nights are selling out as quickly as mid-tier EDM shows; Google searches for "modern kirtan" and "sober rave India" have surged; and curated bhakti events now travel city to city like mainstream concert tours. This isn't a fringe experiment — it's a youth-led cultural movement pushing India into a new devotional renaissance.

Bhakti, once bound by temples and timelines, is now being remixed by those born fully into the broadband era. They are transforming prayer into performance, ritual into rhythm, and spirituality into a social experience that resonates long after the music stops. Take a recent night in Hyderabad — one of many cities where this spiritual rave culture now thrives. In Hyderabad, for instance, the lights are low, the bass is thumping, and fifteen hundred-some things have their hands in the air, eyes half-closed, screaming in unison. If you walked in blindfolded, you'd swear it was a Sunburn after-party. Except there's no alcohol at the bar, only cutting chai and cold coffee, and the lyric bouncing off the walls is Shri Krishna Govind Hare Murari. Welcome to Bhajan Clubbing — the unlikely movement that has replaced vodka shots with vibhuti and EDM drops with dholak rhythms. Twenty-four-year-old Vaishnavi Kumar, a marketing executive from Pune, calls it her "clean rave". "My friends and I are done with hangovers," she says. "Here the high lasts longer, and I wake up remembering every minute of it." In Hyderabad, 28-year-old IT consultant Mahi Sharma felt the same electric surge when a hundred strangers linked arms and sang Rama Rama Ratte Ratey Biti Re Umariyya till 2 am. "I posted one Reel, and my DMs exploded with 'Where? When? Take me!'" she laughs. And Hyderabad is far from unique — the same chants now echo across India's metros, from Bengaluru to Mumbai and Delhi. Prachi and Raghav who started backstagesiblings Prachi & Raghav who started backstagesiblings, India's bhajan clubbing sensation.

These are not isolated stories. Over the past year, ticketed bhajan concerts have sold out faster than many mid-tier EDM gigs. Prachi and Raghav Agarwal — the sibling duo better known as BackstageSiblings — went from hosting a living-room baithak for 50 people to selling 1,500 paid tickets in Mumbai in under a year. Radhika Das, a London-based Kirtan artist and Bhakti Yoga teacher, drew 15,000 people in New Delhi. Even traditional bands report a spike:

Suresh Prajapat, first runner-up on India's Got Talent Season 8, says audiences now demand entire "spiritual sets" instead of the occasional high-energy bhajan slipped between Bollywood numbers. The numbers are startling. According to IMARC Group's report, India's spiritual and wellness market is already valued at \$58.5 billion and is growing at a rate of roughly 10–12% annually. Within this, the live devotional music segment has expanded significantly: organisers like EVA Live now routinely sell 5,000–15,000 tickets for single-city kirtan concerts, a scale that was previously unthinkable. Google Trends shows that searches for 'bhajan clubbing', 'modern kirtan', and 'sober rave India' have risen by 400–600% since early 2024. To understand Gen Z's attraction to sober devotional nights, we must shift from the dancefloor to the psyche — and the social forces shaping their lives. The science is remarkably clear. Dr Sobha Nair, a clinical psychologist, points to the neurophysiology of collective chanting. "Repetitive rhythmic vocalisation — what we do in bhajans and kirtans — down-regulates the sympathetic nervous system and lowers cortisol levels within minutes," she explains. Studies published in Frontiers in Psychology (2021) and the International Journal of Yoga (2023) confirm that group kirtan produces significant reductions in state anxiety, enhances oxytocin levels, and measurable heart-rate variability shifts toward parasympathetic dominance — the same "rest-and-digest" state achieved through mindfulness meditation or forest bathing, but faster and more socially bonded. In other words, a 45-minute 'Jai Sita Ram' loop gives you the physiological equivalent of a solid therapy session, except you are dancing with strangers who feel like family by the end.

Professor Anita Raju, who teaches postmodern religion, describes bhajan clubbing as a classic case of "deteritorialised spirituality". "For earlier generations, devotion was tied to geography (the village temple), time (Thursday evening aarti), and hierarchy (the pandit decides pace and volume)," she says. "Gen Z has unmoored bhakti from all three. They have moved it into cafés, banquet halls, and paid-ticket venues; they decide the playlist on the fly; and they treat the microphone like an open-mic rather than a sanctum." This is not secularisation; it is re-enchancement on new terms. The sacred is no longer inherited — it is curated, remixed, and shared on Reels. As Raghav Agarwal puts it, "Any song can be a bhajan if it brings you peace." Their sets seamlessly transition from Hey Shyam in a trap beat to an old Rafi classic back to Govind Bolo Hari Gopal Bolo, collapsing the binary between the devotional and the popular. Liquid devotion, where smartphone becomes new temple bell. Sociologists call this "liquid devotion" — borrowing Zygmunt Bauman's idea of liquid modernity — where identity, community, and even faith flow continuously rather than remain fixed in institutions. The smartphone becomes the new temple bell: one viral 15-second clip of 300 people jumping to Ram Ram Jai Raja Ram does more missionary work than a thousand pamphlets.

Yet the movement is careful not to entirely antagonise tradition. Venues still insist on vegetarian food and total alcohol bans — a non-negotiable clause that clubs happily accept because the footfall compensates for lost liquor revenue. Sheela, owner of a popular Mumbai nightlife space, says, "We used to make 70% of our money from the bar. Now, on bhajan nights, we make it from cover charges, and the crowd is three times bigger. Everybody wins." For Gen Z, the appeal is threefold: authenticity, community, and control. After growing up in a world of endless scrolling, dating-app burnout, and quarterly layoffs, many are exhausted by performative hedonism. A 2024 Deloitte Gen Z and Millennial Survey (India chapter) found that 67% of respondents now blend therapy with spiritual practices, while 41% actively seek "experiences that make me feel part of something bigger". Bhajan clubbing delivers exactly that — without the Sunday-morning regret. Prachi Agarwal remembers the exact moment she realised they were onto something bigger than a hobby. "We were investment bankers four months ago," she says, laughing. "We quit when we saw strangers crying and hugging each other after our sets. Money can wait; this feeling can't." As the clock edges past midnight in yet another dimly lit hall, the beat drops into the simplest of all mantras — "Hare Krishna Hare Rama". Phones are up, but not just for selfies; they're recording something they want to replay when anxiety hits at 3 am on a Tuesday. The crowd sways like one organism. Somewhere between the ancient and the algorithmic, between the temple and TikTok, India's youngest generation has built a sanctuary that smells of agarbatti and cold coffee.

‘Vice-captains have been dropped before’: Ex-India batter suggests to rest Shubman Gill for Sanju Samson, ‘there shouldn’t be double standards’



GNS News Agency, Dec 15

IND vs SA: Mohammed Kaif has suggested India to drop Shubman Gill for Sanju Samson. (BCCI)IND vs SA: Mohammed Kaif has suggested India to drop Shubman Gill for Sanju Samson. (BCCI)Former India batter Mohammed Kaif has suggested that the Indian team management must rest the struggling Shubman Gill in the ongoing South Africa T20I series, insisting that vice-captains of the side have been dropped before.Gill's return to the T20I set up, six months before the T20 World Cup 2026, co-incided with India dropping wicket-keeper Sanju Samson who smashed three centuries as an opener in 2024. The Punjab batter, however, has not lived up to the backing as yet and was dismissed twice within three deliveries in the ongoing South Africa T20I series.Kaif observed the mode of Gill's dismissals in the series and said that India would instead benefit from a naturally aggressive batter in Samson at the top, alongside Abhishek Sharma.

"Look at how he is getting out, caught at slip, stepping out and mistiming, trying aggressive strokes like Abhishek Sharma and getting caught. He has tried everything. I think the time has come to give him a break and try players who are proven. Sanju Samson is a top-quality player; he hasn't received enough chances. There should not be double standards. Even vice-captains have been dropped before. If it is in the team's interest to rest Gill and bring in someone else, there is nothing wrong with it," Kaif said on his YouTube channel.'Time has come for changes'

"But now it feels like the time has come for changes. You dropped players like Jaiswal, you kept Sanju Samson on the bench without giving him consistent chances, even though he scored heavily as an opener. He hit three centuries in five T20 innings, something no one in history has done. Some players get very few chances, while others get extended runs because you want to settle them in the team. That is clearly visible. But now, I think the pressure has increased so much that it is time for a change somewhere," he added.Kaif also observed that Gill's slump is also due to the overload of responsibilities across formats."I have said this before: Shubman Gill has received too many responsibilities at once. Test captaincy, ODI captaincy, T20 vice-captaincy no player can carry that much weight at once. It is simply not possible. Responsibilities should be given gradually.""IPL conditions are different; international cricket against South Africa, Pakistan, England, New Zealand is at a completely different level. I feel he has been given too much too soon. That is why he picked up that neck issue earlier. That was not really a neck issue; it was an accumulated workload taking a toll on the body. You cannot stay at your peak continuously," he added.

Gautam Gambhir, Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma don't need to be the best of friends for India to succeed

GNS News Agency, Dec 15

On the pages of Shane Warne's biography No Spin, there are lessons for Gautam Gambhir, Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma. There is also a reassuring message for those wishing for their cordial co-existence in India's ODI dressing room.A chapter on the GOAT spinner's frosty relationship with his captain Steve Waugh during Australia's all-conquering era, smashes an old myth about sporting teams and even work places. Apologies to the HR department, but the truth needs to be told—players, or employees, don't need to be the best of pals, or even interact socially, to succeed collectively.In their playing days, Waugh and Warne were men of contrasting lifestyles and beliefs, who didn't trust each other for most of their career. Though, that didn't come in their way of plotting many downfalls, all the while fooling the world into believing that Australian cricket was one loving family that lived in a happy home. They won games, drank beer together, cracked jokes, hugged each other and high-fived all the time. If Warne's book is to be believed the assumption needs to be edited to: They won games, drank beer. Period."I've always said you don't have to have your best mates with you on the field, but that when you cross the white line to represent Australia, you play as if every one of those ten guys is your best friend and — here is the key — you support them to the hilt. It's how a team has to work, otherwise the negative energy seeps in and breaks that unwritten bond," Warne writes in his book.

In the days ahead, India's ODI squad would need the same pro-vibe. The recent one-dayers – Australia away and South Africa at home – showed how Virat and Rohit can't be wished away. It is no secret that Gambhir, a coach not quite known to indulge stars, isn't expected to give them the preferential treatment they are used to.Virat and Gambhir also have a past, the present too isn't overly genial. There have been whispers that the fan army of the superstars have been making surgical strikes on the dressing room. It is also said that the trolling isn't all organic. To say mistrust has sneaked into the ODI dressing room isn't an exaggeration. The media has got busy building a narrative based on their interpretations of body language and lip-reading of players. Did Gambhir applaud Kohli's ton? Did they shake hands after the game? Did Rohit utter an obscenity while applauding Kohli's hundred? Was it him expressing the common inner angst of both of them against the coach? Actually, all these don't really matter.

Adults have differences but the wise ones show maturity to forge a working relationship. Not just Waugh, who he called a selfish cricketer just focused on keeping his Test average above 50; Warne, according to his book, had no great fondness for Adam Gilchrist too. Gilchrist might be universally acclaimed for his good conduct but he was 'goody two shoes' for Warne.This was something he let Gilchrist know. On the pitch, they were brothers. There was no coldness in Gilly's voice when he let out his trademark drawing, "Bowlinnnn Shane!" to acknowledge the spin wizard's trickery. Waugh and Gilchrist were never Warne's bosom buddies but across the 22 yards, they remained co-conspirators committed to the common cause.The dislike



wasn't just one-way, Waugh despised the way world cricket's 'googly guy' lived his life or what he ate. In turn, Waugh would taunt Warne on his diet, give him unsolicited advice on life and conduct. Not one to stay silent, Warne, according to the book, would say: "Mate — worry about yourself."Be it Waugh, Warne, Gilchrist, Pakistan's pace pair of Wasim Akram and Waqar Younis, they all fought but never carried their grudges to the field. Even the Beatles had spats and showdowns but they still weaved timeless music magic.

Waugh and Gilchrist were never Warne's bosom buddies but across the 22 yards, they remained co-conspirators committed to the common cause. Waugh and Gilchrist were never Warne's bosom buddies but across the 22 yards, they remained co-conspirators committed to the common cause. (FILE)Gambhir is a man of strong beliefs, he wants a disciplined dressing room with one power centre. Kohli and Rohit aren't used to being 'one of the boys', they are men with strong voices and exceptional records. The operative part of Warne's wisdom – "once you cross the white line ... you play as if every guy is your best friend."That's why the Aussie huddle, though it had men who couldn't stand each other, was the picture of sporting brotherhood. So much so that their Golden Yellow gave a happy hue and signified bonhomie. They seemed thick as thieves, the crack outfit, the Ocean's XI from Down Under.Gambhir, Kohli and Rohit too can coexist without being backslapping mates. Kohli and Gambhir can pass each other like two ships in the sea, or sit in the dressing room like strangers on a park bench.PS: Warne's book has an intriguing story from the 1999 tour of West Indies when he was dropped. Captain Waugh and coach Geoff Marsh didn't agree on the controversial call. So Aussie legend Allan Border, in the West Indies as a tourist, was called in. Here's what the hardened Aussies spoke before the tough call was taken.Border: "Jesus Christ, I back Warney every time ... We owe him ... think what he's done for Australian cricket. We need to show faith."Waugh: "I appreciate your thoughts, AB, but Warney's not playing. I'm going with my gut here. Sorry, guys."Warne's heart broke. That day Waugh lost just a friend but not his most-trusted lieutenant who got him wickets when he wanted. Three months later, in the 50-overs World Cup in England, Warne was Man of the Match in the semi-final and final.

New Zealand beats West Indies by 9 wickets in the 2nd test; lead series 1-0

Jacob Duffy took 5-38 as New Zealand's weakened attack bowled out the West Indies for 128 on the third day to set up a nine-wicket win in the second Test.New Zealand lead the three-match series 1-0 after the first Test was drawn. The third Test begins on Dec. 18.Duffy claimed his second five-wicket bag of the series as the West Indies were left with an overall lead of only 55 after trailing by 73 runs on the first innings.New Zealand reached 56-1 in only 10 overs, losing Tom Latham (9) along the way. Devon Conway was 28 not out at the end and Kane Williamson was 16, hitting a four off Anderson Phillip for the winning runs minutes before the schedule tea break.Pacer Michael Rae and wicketkeeper-batter Mitch Hay also made major contributions to New Zealand's win after being called up to make their Test debuts in an injury-hit team. Hay scored a match-high 61 in as New Zealand made 278 in its first innings in reply to the West Indies's 205. Rae took 3-66 in the first innings and 3-45 in the second, match figures of 6-106.New Zealand's bowling attack, already depleted by injuries to Matt Henry, Will O'Rourke and Nathan Smith and the absences of Kyle Jamieson and Ben Sears was further weakened when Blair Tickner suffered a dislocated left shoulder in a fielding mishap after taking 4-32 in the first innings. He was playing his first Test in two years.Pressure

again fell on Duffy, who bowled 19 overs in the West Indies first innings and 17.2 of the 46.2 overs bowled in the second innings. That came after he was called to bowl 43 overs in the second innings of the first Test and 60 overs in that match after injuries to Henry and Smith left New Zealand with only two fit pacers."I guess to lose (Tickner) like that ... he bowled great in the first innings and I thought the way the guys bowled today was awesome," Duffy said. "I thought it was a great team performance and we got the job done. Day three, how good?" The West Indies made 205 after being sent in Wednesday on a light green pitch at the Basin Reserve which provided pace, bounce and a little movement on all three days. Shai Hope top-scored with 47 and John Campbell made 44.Hay's maiden half century and Devon Conway's 60 helped New Zealand establish a significant first innings lead.The West Indies resumed at 32-2 Friday, still 41 runs behind after losing Campbell and nightwatchman Anderson Phillip late on the second day.New Zealand captured four wickets in the first session, including the wicket of Hope to take full command of the match. The West Indies' slump began when Brandon King (22) was run out in a mix-up with Kavem Hodge.Duffy claimed the vital wicket of Justin Greaves, whose monumental double century in the first Test earned the West Indies a draw after they were set 531 to win.

Fan group urges FIFA to halt World Cup ticket sales over ‘extortionate’ prices



GNS News Agency, Dec 15

Football Supporters Europe (FSE) has called on FIFA to immediately halt sales of national team allocations for next year's World Cup, accusing football's governing body of imposing "extortionate" ticket prices that risk shutting ordinary fans out of the tournament.In a statement on Thursday, the European fan umbrella group said prices for tickets allocated to Participating Member Associations (PMA) – typically distributed via official supporters' clubs or loyalty schemes – had reached "astronomical" levels.FIFA did not immediately respond to a request for comment.FSE said, based on price tables quietly circulated to national associations, a supporter following their team from the first group match through to the final via the PMA route would pay at least \$6,900, almost five times the equivalent cost at the 2022 World Cup in Qatar.'MONUMENTAL BETRAYAL'FSE said national team supporters were being asked to pay the full amount in early 2026 in order to secure the right to buy tickets all the way to the final.

Adding to fans' frustration, FSE said the lowest price category – Category 4 – would not be made available to the most loyal supporters through their associations, with FIFA reserving those tickets for general public sales and subjecting them to dynamic pricing.The group called that deci-

Praggnanandhaa on new events popping up in chess: ‘Difficult to adjust to each format sometimes, but happy there are new opportunities’

GNS News Agency, Dec 15

The landscape of chess will be altered in a year's time when the new Total Chess World Championship Tour comes into effect in 2027. The tour will end up crowning a fourth world champion—the FIDE World Combined Champion—which will be an addition to other world championships like the Classical World Champion, the World Rapid and the World Blitz Champion.India's R Praggnanandhaa, who recently secured his spot in the Candidates tournament via the FIDE Circuit route, says that he's happy that the sport is now giving players so many opportunities to play and become full-time professionals."I am happy to see that there are new opportunities for the players to play and since we have so many players, getting more opportunities for them to play is amazing, in that way it is great to see new tournaments coming up. In terms of format, there are constant shifts which are happening. I am not sure if it is a good thing or a bad thing, but as a player, I think it is sometimes difficult to adjust to each format," he was quoted as saying by PTI. "But it is also good that we have so many tournaments around, that players can participate in and they can make a living out of playing."

The introduction of the Total Chess World Championship Tour will mean that the chess calendar will be more packed than ever. Besides the Total Chess World Championship Tour, the sport already has two more 'tours': the



Freestyle Chess Grand Slam Tour, whose first edition wrapped up on Friday, and the Grand Chess Tour. Besides these events, there are plenty of standalone events like Norway Chess, Tata Steel Chess, Prague Masters and FIDE-organised events like Grand Swiss and World Cup.The Global Chess League, which will be held in India for the first time from Sunday onwards, is another event that is only in its third year.Ahead of the third edition of GCL in Mumbai, Pragg was in Dharavi as the chief guest at the Dharavi Chess Championship on Friday. Besides making the ceremonial first move in the chess tournament for school kids from Dharavi, Pragg also took on winners of the event in a simultaneous exhibition game.

Mohamed Salah included in Liverpool squad for Brighton match



Liverpool forward Mohamed Salah has been included in their squad for Saturday's Premier League match at home to Brighton & Hove Albion, British media have reported.Manager Arne Slot earlier said he had no reason to want Salah to leave Liverpool as the Dutchman prepared for a face-to-face meeting with the Egypt international on Friday.Slot moved to calm speculation over Salah's future after the 33-year-old's criticism of the club following last weekend's 3-3 draw at Leeds United.The Egyptian said he had been made a scapegoat for Liverpool's poor form and that his relationship with Slot had deteriorated.

His outburst sparked questions about Salah's future at the Merseyside outfit, who are languishing in 10th place with 23 points from 15 matches, a stark contrast to last year's title-winning campaign.Salah was left out of the team that travelled to Italy for their 1-0 Champions League victory over Inter Milan on Tuesday."I will have a conversation with Mo this morning, the outcome of that conversation determines how things will look tomorrow," Slot told reporters on Friday.When asked if he wanted Salah to stay at the club, Slot said: "I have no reasons to not want him to stay."Pressed on Salah's status, Slot declined to offer any guarantees."I think the next time I speak about Mo should be with him and not in here. You can keep on trying but there is not much more to say about it," he said."After the Sunderland game there were a lot of conversations between his representatives and ours, between him and me."The decision to leave Salah at home for the trip to Milan was a club decision, Slot said."I am always in contact with them (Sporting Director Richard Hughes and Chief Executive of Football Michael Edwards) but when it comes to the decision making of the lineup or the squad, they leave that open to me. That's not to say I don't talk to them. Mainly Richard, not Michael. The decision to play a player or have them in the squad is entirely up to me."There is a question mark

over Alexander Isak's status for Saturday with Slot saying the striker picked up a knock in the first half against Inter, and that he will be evaluated on Friday before they decide whether or not he can start.Slot is pleased with how Isak and Hugo Ekitike have linked up, saying their partnership will continue to improve.

"The more they play together, the more they will adapt to each other and the better they will cooperate," Slot said."I saw promising things from the both of them, it's only the second time they've played together. We will see more of them playing together in the future."Slot will have forward Federico Chiesa available on Saturday after he recovered from illness, while Wataru Endo and Cody Gakpo are expected to be out for a "few weeks".Salah, nicknamed "The Egyptian King," has endured a turbulent campaign following an extraordinary 2024-25 season.He is set to depart for the Africa Cup of Nations on Monday, leaving Liverpool to attempt to extend their four-game unbeaten run in all competitions while silencing the off-field turmoil.

India drop in WTC race as New Zealand secure nine-wicket win

Dubai: India on Friday slipped a rung to sixth position in the World Test Championship standings after New Zealand's comprehensive nine-wicket victory against the West Indies in Wellington propelled them to third place.

Runners-up in the first two WTC cycles, India were placed fifth after they were blanked 2-0 by South Africa at home last month, with New Zealand occupying sixth position. However, the table saw a major turnaround after the Kiwis' big win in the second Test at Basin Reserve on Friday.Former champions Australia continue to hold the top position with 100 percentage points (win-loss percentage), with South Africa in second place on 75 percentage points. Sri Lanka (66.67) and Pakistan (50) occupy the fourth and fifth positions respectively.

New Zealand have so far accumulated 66.67 percentage points, while India have a win-loss percentage of 48.15. India can drop further down to seventh if England stage a comeback against Australia in the Ashes. The Aussies lead the series 2-0 with three more matches to play.India's next assignment is against Sri Lanka in August next year. With the latest result, New Zealand have also boosted their prospects of a second appearance in the World Test Championship Final.

Amy Schumer announces ‘difficult decision’ of divorce with husband Chris Fischer after 7 years of marriage



After seven years of marriage, Amy Schumer and Chris Fischer are calling it quits. The 44-year-old announced the decision via a social media post, which was worded in a very nonchalant fashion. It seems that the couple have split on amicable terms and are planning to co-parent their 6-year-old son, Gene. Amy posted a picture with Chris, in which they are sitting on a subway. The caption read, “Blah blah blah, Chris and I have made the difficult decision to end our marriage after 7 years. We love each other very much and will continue to focus on raising our son. We would

appreciate people respecting our privacy at this time.” She continued the message, saying, “Blah blah blah, not because I dropped some lbs and thought I could bag a basket and not because he’s a hot James Beard award-winning chef who can still pull some hot tail. Amicable and all love and respect! Family forever.”

The post by the comedian received a lot of well-wishes and support, with celebrities like Sharon Stone, Olivia Munn, Sophia Bush, and Margo Price all lending their support. While most of them described their love through emojis, Bush had some friendly advice for the comedian. She wrote, “It’s so damn hard without having it be hard for the world to see... So when the world sees, I’ll just say be extra gentle with yourself. All love.” Amy and Chris got married in 2018. They welcomed their son the next year. The couple have been dealing with divorce rumours throughout the 7 years of their marriage, with the media constantly speculating about their relationship. In 2021, Chris surprised Amy with a cake on her birthday that read, “I am leaving you,” on the top. While that was a sarcastic message, a couple of other things added fuel to the fire. In 2023, the couple spent an entire summer apart from each other. Amy travelled through Europe with comedian Jerry Seinfeld and his wife. Just a couple of days before this announcement, Amy had posted a reel with Chris and their son. The caption read, “Whatever ends up happening with me and Chris has nothing to do with weight loss or autism. Fingers crossed we make it through.” The post has now been deleted.

Abhishek Bachchan ‘won’t tolerate manufactured rubbish’ about his family, calls divorce rumours with Aishwarya ‘malicious’

Being in the public eye means you’re always going to be scrutinised, and your life will be discussed at length. Actor Abhishek Bachchan is one of the people who knows this quite well and has often talked about his personal life being many tabloids’ punchline. In a recent interview, Abhishek addressed the rumours about his and Aishwarya Rai’s divorce and the actor was quick to shut down any such possibility. He even criticised those who often spread such rumours.

During an appearance on the Peeping Moon YouTube channel, Abhishek was asked about how he feels about the rumours. The actor revealed that he doesn’t pay a lot of attention to them and said, “I don’t know about the stories, and I don’t feel the need to address it. If you’re a celebrity, people will want to conjecture about everything, and any rubbish that they have written is false and not based on any fact whatsoever. It’s malicious and incorrect.”

He called out the naysayers for dissecting his relationship with his wife and said, “They have been doing this since before we got married. First, it was about when we would get married. Now we are married, so they are going to decide when we will get a divorce. It’s all rubbish. I know her truth, and she knows my truth. We always go back to a very happy and healthy family, and that’s all that matters.” The actor sternly added, “With all humility and respect to the media, I think they tend to get it wrong a lot of times. I have been brought up to believe that media is the



conscience of a nation; I have heard that in my house all the time. When I pick up a newspaper, I have to believe what they have written. I understand the pressure of the job, but if you’re just worried about breaking the news first and not ratifying it, then what do you really stand for?” Abhishek didn’t mince his words when talking about the media and said that if anyone published false reports about his family, they would have to answer to him. “At the end of the day, you need to understand that you’re writing about another human being. It’s somebody’s kid, mother, father, or wife. If you’re going to talk about my family, then you have to deal with me because that is off-limits. This may be a strong word, but I will not tolerate any manufactured rubbish about me or my family,” concluded Abhishek.

‘I was waiting for my death’: Shatrughan Sinha recalls a near-mugging experience in New York, got rescued by a fan of his Punjabi film



Recalling an incident from a visit to New York during a time when mugging was rampant, he shared that he had been invited for dinner at a friend’s place late at night. “I was staying at the Radisson Hotel in New York. After dinner, she suggested she would drop me back. It was the peak era of mugging in the city. It was around 1 am, and the area was completely deserted. She dropped me a little ahead of the Radisson Hotel and said,

Veteran actor Shatrughan Sinha has entertained generations for more than five decades. From being part of classics such as Kaala Patthar, Dostana, and Naseeb to becoming iconic for his famous dialogue, “Khamosh”, he has truly seen it all. While he made his mark primarily in Hindi cinema, he also explored regional films, including Punjabi cinema. One such film was the 1983 Punjabi hit *Putt Jattan De*, co-starring Dharmendra, which went on to gain significant popularity. In a recent conversation with Aaj Tak, Shatrughan Sinha revealed how *Putt Jattan De* unexpectedly came to his rescue during one of the most frightening moments of his life.

Recalling an incident from a visit to New York during a time when mugging was rampant, he shared that he had been invited for dinner at a friend’s place late at

night. “I was staying at the Radisson Hotel in New York. After dinner, she suggested she would drop me back. It was the peak era of mugging in the city. It was around 1 am, and the area was completely deserted. She dropped me a little ahead of the Radisson Hotel and said, ‘That’s the hotel, you can walk from here.’ I agreed. I got down, and I was carrying a shopping bag filled with items, basically everything that could attract a mugger. I was alone on the street, and there was complete silence.”

He went on to describe how panic set in soon after. “After my friend left, I realised it wasn’t the hotel. All the buildings there look the same, and I became extremely nervous. I genuinely felt that this could be the night something terrible would happen. I thought, ‘This could be the night I get killed.’ A black man was walking by, and I asked him which side the Radisson Hotel was on. He just said, ‘Get lost.’ It was around 2 am by then. Suddenly, a car started approaching while I stood there, almost waiting for my death on that dark street.” Shatrughan said the car stopped a short distance away, heightening his fear. “I thought, ‘This is it.

This is my end.’ The car reversed, and then I heard a voice from inside ask, ‘Putt Jattan De?’ The person then said, ‘Stop right there.’ What followed, he said, left a lasting impression. “The driver asked me, ‘What are you doing here? You could get killed. This is unbelievable.’ He used his radio, and soon about 20–25 cars arrived. They were all our people from Punjab, our Sikh brothers. They surrounded me from all sides and told me not to panic. They said, ‘This is a very dangerous area, but we recognised you.’ They then safely dropped me at my hotel.”

He added that when he offered them money in gratitude, they refused. “They said, ‘Not at all. You are our hero. You are *Putt Jattan De*.’ I never saw them again after that.” In the same conversation, Shatrughan also spoke about his deep bond with the late legendary actor Dharmendra, recalling how the veteran star was always there for him and personally encouraged him to take up *Putt Jattan De*. “We did many films together and were very close friends. If he was doing a film, it was almost necessary for me to be part of it. I always respected his word. In fact, he and his friend Baldev Khosa were making *Putt Jattan De*. It was a Punjabi film, and I did it at his insistence.” Indeed, Shatrughan Sinha and Dharmendra’s bond goes back several decades. One of his earliest films, *Pyar Hi Pyar*, starred Dharmendra in the lead, with him playing a small negative role. Even in recent times, the warmth between them remained evident. Last month, during Dharmendra’s health scare, Shatrughan Sinha promptly visited Hema Malini and the family.

Dhurandhar Box Office Collection Day 8: Ranveer Singh starrer to cross Uri’s lifetime collection, mints Rs 239 crore



Dhurandhar Box Office Collection Day 8: The Aditya Dhar directorial is currently sitting at the cusp of box office victory. The film will soon take over the lifetime collection of Dhar’s first film, *URI*, starring Vicky Kaushal and Yami Gautam. It will also become Ranveer Singh’s second-highest-grossing film, net collection considered, as it is right at the toes of Rohit Shetty’s *Simmba*. According to industry tracker Sacnilk, Dhurandhar’s India net collection has grown to Rs 239 crore. Right from its advance bookings, Dhurandhar looked strong coming into its theatrical run.

Darshan’s comeback film nosedives to single digits after a massive opening, earns Rs 13.5 cr

After his arrest in the Renukaswamy murder case, Darshan has returned to the screen with his film *The Devil*. The Devil box office collection day 2: The film has earned Rs 3.5 cr. The Devil box office collection day 2: Challenging Star Darshan’s return to the big screen with *The Devil*, following his controversial arrest in the high-profile Renukaswamy murder case, opened on a strong note at the box office. The film earned an impressive Rs 10 crore on its opening day. However, the momentum appears to have slowed significantly on Day 2. According to early estimates by industry tracker Sacnilk, *The Devil* collected only around Rs 3.5 crore on its second day, taking its total domestic net collection to approximately Rs 13.5 crore. This marks a sharp drop of nearly 65% from its opening-day earnings. While a decline was expected given that Day 2 was a working day, the magnitude of the drop, especially after such a strong opening, has raised concerns.

The film had approximately 1,200 shows and recorded an overall occupancy of 35.41% on Day 2. The day began with a modest 17.81% occupancy in morning shows, which rose to 29.03% in the afternoon. Occupancy improved further in the evening at 36.24% and peaked at 58.56% during night shows. Region-wise, Bengaluru led with the highest number of shows at 538, registering an occupancy of 33.25%. Mysuru followed with 70 shows and a significantly higher occupancy of 58%.

Despite its solid opening, *The Devil* is trailing behind Darshan’s previous release *Kaatera*. The period actioner had amassed Rs 18.85 crore by the end of its second day. Even *Kranti*, which had a middling run at the ticket window, performed marginally better, reaching a total of Rs 13.9 crore in two days. That said, *The Devil* is still ahead of the surprise Kannada hit *Mahavatar Narsimha*, which collected Rs 6.35 crore over its first two days. Unsurprisingly, it remains



way behind Rishabh Shetty’s *Kantara*: Chapter 1, which had crossed Rs 128.75 crore within just two days. Interestingly, *The Devil* has outperformed the original *Kantara*, which earned Rs 4.6 crore in its first two days back in 2022. However, it falls well short of Yash’s 2018 blockbuster *KGF: Chapter 1*, which had grossed Rs 23.2 crore in the same time frame. Apart from mixed word of mouth, the film’s slowdown can also be attributed to the simultaneous release of Balakrishna’s *Akhanda 2*, which reportedly opened to a massive Rs 22 crore, drawing audience attention away from *The Devil*. It now remains to be seen how Darshan’s film performs over the weekend and whether it can regain momentum and stabilize its box-office run.

Richa Chadha says ‘people displayed cruelty’ towards her during her vulnerable phase, betrayed her: ‘Mai bikau nahi hu’

Richa Chadha, who made her Bollywood debut with *Oye Lucky! Lucky Oye!* (2008), shot to fame with Anurag Kashyap’s *Gangs of Wasseypur* (2012), followed by *Fukrey* (2013) and its sequels in 2017 and 2023. For many fans, she remains synonymous with her popular character Bholi Punjabi. She further cemented her place as a powerhouse performer with acclaimed projects like *Masaan* and *Heeramandi*. But, after embracing motherhood and welcoming her daughter Zuni with her husband, actor Ali Fazal, Richa stepped away from the spotlight for nearly two years.

Now, as she returns to work, the actor has shared a deeply emotional note on Instagram, revealing that her hiatus was caused not only by pregnancy and postpartum recovery but also by “deep professional betrayals.” Richa Chadha posted a series of photos and videos featuring her daughter and loved ones who have stood by her over the years. The actor wrote, “On Sunday, I went back to work after nearly 2 years. As much as I would have liked to get back sooner, my body, my mind wasn’t ready at all. But other than these tangible issues, I have had to deal with deep professional betrayals from close quarters.” She continued, “I have learnt that in the industry, a rare few have ethics and courage. Most people operate from such deep-seated inferiority complexes and scarcity mentality that they never mean what they say. They’re never happy — like dementors, they suck all joy out of life.” In another note, Richa reflected on the treatment she received during her most vulnerable phase: “Those that have displayed cruelty towards me during my most vulnerable phase perhaps never received adequate love in their own lives. I forgive, but I NEVER forget. Please bear this in mind should you cross my path. You know who you are.” One of her posts included an image of Goddess Kali with the caption, “Are you scared? Good.”

Richa Chadha also shared a picture of the women who have supported her — Shabana Azmi, Dia Mirza, Divya Dutta, Urmila Matondkar, Konkona Sen Sharma, and Vidya Balan — thanking them for their unwavering presence. “If it takes a village to raise a child, it takes amazing support to help the mom — because Mommy doesn’t remember who she was before the baby was born. The mental recovery took longer than I hoped,” she wrote. She went on to reflect



on how social media has evolved, noting that Instagram — once a place for random, casual posts — has become a content-driven marketplace. “Everyone tells you to post more, create more ‘content,’ but I am not employed by SM. I have a life. And I have been so afraid to share the littlest snippet from it, lest I receive podcast invites to ‘talk about it,’ with cameras zooming in on every tear.” She added, “I miss the days when IG used to be a place where you uploaded photos of what you ate and other mundane things.” Critiquing the commodification of personal struggles online, Richa wrote: “

This end-stage necro-capitalism ensures that whenever someone talks about a topic, that’s it — that’s the niche that needs to be marketed! Why can’t you discuss an eating disorder without selling a diet? Why can’t you discuss postpartum depression without becoming the poster-child for it? Why can’t you be a body-positivity enthusiast without sharing a close-up of your stretch marks? We must pause to ask what the point of sharing is. Is it to help others feel less alone, or is it to get rich?”