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Hyderabad Police implement 'Zero Delay' policy across commissionerates

Hyderabad: City Police Commissioner V C Sajjanar on Wednesday said police should not be restricted by jurisdictional boundaries in crime control and stressed strict implementation of the 'Zero Delay' policy for immediate response to crimes. Speaking at a coordination meeting of the Hyderabad, Cyberabad and Rachakonda police commissionerates at the TGCIC, he said the nearest police unit must act promptly, regardless of limits, to prevent criminals from exploiting delays. The three commissioners discussed joint surveillance on habitual offenders, intelligence sharing and coordinated traffic enforcement.

Vande Mataram, Ethiopian anthem both see land as Mother: PM Modi



GNS News Agency, Dec 17

Addis Ababa: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday drew parallels with 'Vande Mataram' and Ethiopia's national anthem (March Forward, Dear Mother Ethiopia) and said that both countries refer to their land as 'Mother', which reflects their shared perspective. Addressing the Joint Session of Ethiopia's Parliament, PM Modi said, 'With the call of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas, Sabka Prayaas', which means together with everyone's growth, trust and effort, our emotions with our motherland, also reflect our shared perspective,' he said.

Drawing parallels to India's national song 'Vande Mataram' and Ethiopia's national anthem, PM Modi said that both refer to 'our land as the Mother'. 'They inspire us to take pride in the heritage, culture, beauty and protect the motherland,' he added. The Prime Minister further said that science has traced some of the earliest footprints of our species in Ethiopia.

'When the world speaks of 'Lucy of Dinkinesh', they are not speaking only of fossils but of a beginning — that

belongs to all of us, whether we live in Addis Ababa or Ayodhya. In India, we say 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam', which means 'The world is one family'. It reminds us that beyond politics, borders and differences, we share a common origin. If our beginning was shared, then our destiny must also be shared,' he added. PM Modi received a warm welcome as he arrived to address the Joint Session of the Ethiopian Parliament. This is also the 18th Parliament in the world where the Prime Minister delivered his address. The Prime Minister said he feels 'very much at home' during his visit to Ethiopia and called it a 'moment of great privilege' to address the Parliament of the African nation.

'It is a moment of great privilege to stand before you today. It is wonderful to be here in Ethiopia, the land of lions. I feel very much at home because my home state, Gujarat in India, is also home to lions,' he said. 'I am honoured to be here in this temple of democracy, in the heart of the nation, with ancient wisdom and modern aspirations. I come to you with deep respect for your Parliament, your people and your democratic journey. On behalf of the 1.4 billion people of India, I bring greetings of friendship, goodwill and brotherhood,' he added. The Prime Minister again expressed gratitude for conferring him with Ethiopia's highest civilian honour, the 'Great Honour Nishan of Ethiopia'. 'I accept this award with folded hands, humility on behalf of the people of India,' he said. He said that Ethiopia is one of the oldest civilisations in human history. 'Here, history is alive in the mountains, valleys and in the hearts of the Ethiopian people,' he added. 'Today, Ethiopia stands tall because its roots are deep. To stand in Ethiopia is to stand where the past is honoured, the present is full of purpose, and the future is welcomed with an open heart. The blend of old and new — the balance between ancient wisdom and modern civilisation — this is the true strength of Ethiopia,' he further said, amid the loud cheers in the Parliament.

Speaker rejects BRS petitions against defected MLAs; party to move Supreme Court



GNS News Agency, Dec 17

Hyderabad: Telangana Assembly Speaker Gaddam Prasad Kumar on Wednesday rejected the disqualification petitions filed by the BRS against MLAs who defected to the Congress after being elected on the BRS symbol. The Speaker pronounced the verdict around 3.30 pm, citing lack of sufficient evidence to declare the MLAs as defectors, sources said. BRS leaders including petitioners and their lawyers are still awaiting to meet the Speaker at the State Legislative Assembly on his decision. Following Wednesday's decision, the BRS confirmed plans to challenge the Speaker's order in the Supreme Court.

In the first phase, the decision covered petitions against five MLAs — Tellam Venkat Rao, Bandla Krishnamohan Reddy, Prakash Goud, Gudem Mahipal Reddy and Arekapudi Gandhi. The ruling came a day before the expiry of the four-week deadline set by the Supreme Court, which had repeatedly censured the Speaker for delays and warned of contempt proceedings. The apex court had earlier fixed a three-month deadline ending October 21, which was not adhered to, leading to sharp observations against the

Speaker. The BRS had approached the Supreme Court alleging that no inquiry was conducted into the defection of 10 MLAs. Notices were issued to 10 MLAs, but only eight responded and denied to have joined the ruling Congress. Kadiam Srihari sought more time to respond, while Danam Nagender is yet to reply. The Supreme Court hearing on Thursday is expected to play key role in deciding their fate.

Speaker's ruling on defected MLAs a grave constitutional violation, says Harish Rao

"Save the Constitution" slogan stands exposed today with the Telangana Congress Speaker's ruling on defected MLAs. He further charged that while delivering grand lectures on constitutional morality in Delhi, the Congress and Rahul Gandhi shamelessly defied the same Constitution in Telangana. "This is the true face of the Congress party and Rahul Gandhi," Harish Rao added. Describing the Congress government's stance as limited to slogans while stomping on the Constitution in practice, he said the people were clearly observing this hypocritical stand of the Congress.

KTR calls Speaker's ruling on turncoat MLAs 'murder of democracy'

Hyderabad: Terming Assembly Speaker Gaddam Prasad Kumar's decision to dismiss disqualification petitions against five BRS MLAs a murder of democracy in broad daylight, Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) working president KT Rama Rao said the protection of the defectors despite their public admissions of switching for 'development' exemplified the Congress's attitude. He accused the Congress of delaying action on disqualification due to fear of by-elections, amid growing public backlash against Revanth Reddy's government, particularly evident during recent panchayat polls. Telangana Assembly Speaker Gaddam Prasad Kumar rejected the petitions filed by BRS, citing insufficient evidence to prove that the MLAs — Tellam Venkat Rao (Bhadrachalam), Bandla Krishna Mohan Reddy (Gadwal), T. Prakash Goud (Rajendranagar), Gudem Mahipal Reddy (Patancheru), and Arekapudi Gandhi (Serilingampally) — had formally joined the Congress.



GNS News Agency, Dec 17

Hyderabad: Stating that degradation of the constitutional institutions for political gains was something only the Congress government under Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy seems capable of doing, senior BRS leader and former Minister T Harish Rao said Rahul Gandhi's 'Save the Constitution' slogan has been thoroughly exposed with the Speaker's ruling regarding the defected MLAs. 'Speaker Gaddam Prasad Kumar, on Wednesday, dismissed the petitions filed by BRS against five MLAs, Tellam Venkat Rao, Bandla Krishnamohan Reddy, T Prakash Goud, Gudem Mahipal Reddy and Arekapudi Gandhi, citing insufficient evidence to prove they had formally defected to the Congress. The MLAs argued that they continued to affiliate with BRS technically, despite allegations of switching loyalties after the 2023 elections. Launching a scathing attack on the Congress government, Harish Rao called the decision a "grave constitutional violation". The provisions of the anti-defection laws clearly outlined in the Constitution were ignored. "By completely setting aside the anti-defection rules specified in the Constitution regarding MLAs who switched parties and ruling in favour of the ruling party, this is nothing but trampling the Constitution," he stated. Rahul Gandhi's

Hyderabad students shine in CLAT 2026 UG, PG top 100

Hyderabad: Six Hyderabad students, including an all-India rank of 61, figured in the top 100 ranks of the Common Law Admission Test (CLAT) 2026 UG results that were announced on Tuesday. Four boys and two girls were among the top 100 ranks in the CLAT UG this year. The highest mark secured in CLAT 2026 UG is 112.75.

Similarly, three students — two women and one man — from Hyderabad bagged ranks in the top 100 in the CLAT 2026 PG. The highest mark secured in CLAT 2026 PG is 104.25. While Parthiva Sushanth Obulasetti from Guntur secured an all-India 17th rank, Mihika Aggarwal from Hyderabad got an all-India rank of 61 in the CLAT UG. Both students are from Abhyas Law Prep here.

Constitutional morality goes for a toss in Telangana as Speaker dismisses disqualification pleas



GNS News Agency, Dec 17

Hyderabad: In a move that has sharpened accusations of constitutional hypocrisy against the Congress, Telangana Assembly Speaker Gaddam Prasad Kumar on Wednesday dismissed disqualification petitions filed by the BRS against MLAs who defected to the ruling party, citing technical grounds and lack of 'sufficient evidence'. The decision comes despite the Congress led by Rahul Gandhi repeatedly projecting itself as a defender of the sanctity of the Constitution, even as its handling of the defection issue had, from the outset, signalled a strategy of delay and reliance on procedural technicalities to wriggle out of an uncomfortable situation. The prolonged inaction by the Speaker had indicated that the ruling party would seek refuge in narrow interpretations rather than address the substance of the allegations. In a press release issued by State Legislature Secretary V Narasimha Charyulu, it was stated that the Speaker, acting as chairman of the tribunal on disqualification petitions, dismissed the pleas. The uploading of the detailed orders on the Assembly website, he said, was under process.

BRS leaders, including party whip KP Vivekananda and general secretary Soma Bharat Kumar, appeared before the Speaker along with advocates representing both the BRS and the defected MLAs. Following the verdict, the BRS announced that it would challenge the Speaker's order in court. Speaking to the media, Vivekananda termed the decision a 'brutal attack on democracy' and said the BRS would pursue all legal remedies to ensure that the turncoat MLAs were held accountable. After 10 MLAs defected to the Congress after being elected on the BRS symbol, the BRS had filed disqualification petitions before the Speaker. With no decision forthcoming for months, the party approached the High Court and subsequently the Supreme Court, seeking directions to compel the Speaker to act. Notices were issued to all 10 MLAs, but only eight responded, denying that they had joined the Congress. Kadiam Srihari sought more time to file his response, while Danam Nagender, who even contested on a Congress ticket in

between, is yet to submit his reply, with both these seen as Congress tactics to delay the entire process. In the first phase, the Speaker's ruling covered petitions against five MLAs, Tellam Venkat Rao, Bandla Krishnamohan Reddy, Prakash Goud, Gudem Mahipal Reddy and Arekapudi Gandhi. Significantly, the order was pronounced just a day before the expiry of the four-week deadline set by the Supreme Court, which had repeatedly pulled up the Speaker for delays and warned of possible contempt proceedings. The apex court had earlier fixed a three-month deadline ending October 21, which was ignored, prompting sharp observations. The BRS had argued before the court that no meaningful inquiry had been conducted into the defection of the 10 MLAs. While the Speaker is yet to decide on the remaining five cases, the Supreme Court hearing scheduled for Thursday is expected to have a bearing on the course ahead.

The Speaker's reasoning has drawn criticism as five MLAs were spared disqualification on the ground of 'insufficient evidence' despite the BRS placing extensive material on record. This included affidavits, photographs, public statements, social media posts and documented participation of the MLAs in Congress programmes over several months. Some of them have openly campaigned for Congress-backed candidates in the recently concluded gram panchayat elections. Yet, the Speaker held that they were still technically with the BRS, effectively brushing aside the material presented during the hearings. The rejection of the disqualification petitions has reignited debate over the erosion of parliamentary norms in the State. The timing of the verdict, delivered on the eve of the Supreme Court deadline, has been widely viewed as procedural compliance without substantive scrutiny, serving to shield the defectors.

Despite repeated admonitions from the Supreme Court and explicit warnings of contempt, the Speaker's inaction stretched for nearly a year before culminating in a last-minute order that protected the turncoat MLAs. The Congress' attempts to justify the defections by citing the BRS's past record have also come under scrutiny. Legal experts have pointed out that equating individual defections with legislative party mergers permitted under the Tenth Schedule reflects a selective and untenable reading of constitutional provisions. The contrast becomes sharper in the national context. In Haryana, the Congress demanded the immediate disqualification of its MLA who joined the BJP, calling it a moral imperative. In Telangana, the same party appears willing to bend institutional processes to suit political convenience. Beyond the legal battle, the political fallout is already visible. Defections have fuelled factionalism within the Congress, disrupted constituencies and affected governance. As the BRS prepares to return to the Supreme Court, a larger question looms over the State: if the Speaker functions as a shield for the executive, who safeguards the sanctity of the Assembly.

Mystery surrounds whereabouts of former CPI Maoist chief Ganapathy



GNS News Agency, Dec 17

Hyderabad: The whereabouts of legendary Maoist ideologue Ganapathy remain a closely guarded secret, even years after he stepped down from the leadership of the CPI (Maoist). Despite sustained intelligence efforts, security agencies have not been able to trace his location. Ganapathy, whose original name is Muppala Lakshma Rao, led the Indian revolutionary movement for over 25 years. He handed over the reins of the CPI (Maoist) to Baswaraj, also known as Namballa Kesava Rao, in February 2017. Baswaraj was later killed in an encounter with security forces in the Abujh Mad forests of south Chhattisgarh on May 21, 2025.

Ganapathy had become general secretary of the then CPI ML People's War in June 1992. Following its merger with the Maoist Communist Centre of India in 2004, the CPI (Maoist) was formed. Under his leadership, the movement expanded to nearly 157 districts (out of 600) across the country, with the unification of revolutionary groups considered his major contribution. After stepping down, Ganapathy's status and location were kept strictly confidential. Even the leadership transition was not disclosed for more than a year and was officially acknowledged only after media reports revealed the change.

A party document prepared after the CPI (Maoist) Central Committee meeting in February 2017 suggests that Ganapathy may have been moved out of active conflict zones due to health concerns. The document indicates that only a small inner circle of the party may remain in contact with him, possibly once or twice a year. The resolution on

party veterans stated that senior leaders should gradually be relieved of responsibilities based on physical and health conditions. It also said that if adequate security could not be ensured amid intensified counter-insurgency operations, veterans should be shifted to non-strategic areas, either rural or urban. According to the document, regional or state committees were tasked with coordinating their security and maintaining contact at least once every six months. It also noted that if political conditions improved, such veterans could be allowed to enter public life and contribute openly to the movement. The security of such 'veterans' should be taken care of by the Regional Bureaus or the State committees. In a situation where the party could not establish a contact with them in six months, the veterans should continue on their own till the party established the contact again. Based on this resolution, it is believed that Ganapathy may no longer be in traditional Maoist strongholds such as Bastar or Saranda forests and could be residing discreetly in an urban location.

Swearing-in of newly elected Sarpanches postponed to Dec 22

GNS News Agency, Dec 17

Hyderabad: The swearing-in ceremony of newly elected Sarpanches across Telangana has been postponed from December 20 to December 22 following representations from public representatives citing the absence of an auspicious muhurat.

According to officials, December 20 coincides with the new moon day, prompting elected representatives to request a change in the schedule for swearing-in. The

Panchayat Raj department accepted the request and rescheduled the appointment date accordingly. With the revised schedule, the first meeting of the respective gram panchayats where elections were recently held will now take place on December 22. Deputy Sarpanches will be elected on the same day. Panchayat Raj and Rural Development Director G Srikanth issued formal orders in this regard and instructed district and local authorities to make necessary arrangements to ensure smooth conduct of the swearing-in and inaugural meetings.

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

On Venezuela and U.S. aggression

In line with a series of hostile moves, the U.S. seized a Venezuelan oil tanker, Skipper, on December 10. Venezuela called it the latest example of Washington's "piracy, kidnapping, theft of private property, extrajudicial executions in international waters". The tanker was part of Venezuela's ongoing efforts to support Cuba through subsidised oil shipments, with proceeds from resale to China providing Havana crucial revenue. For decades, Venezuela has sent oil to Cuba at highly subsidised prices, with Cuba sending doctors and security professionals to Venezuela. The seizure represents a troubling escalation in U.S. policy toward Venezuela under President Nicolás Maduro. It is also clear that the U.S. Secretary of State, Marco Rubio, a major hawk on U.S. foreign policy towards Cuba, has sought to disrupt one of the island nation's economic lifelines. The overt moves to engineer regime change in Venezuela and other brazen acts mark a new low in U.S. foreign policy, recalling the interventionist era of its Monroe Doctrine in Latin America. Before the seizure of Skipper, the U.S. had also conducted strikes in Caribbean waters on boats that Washington alleged were used by drug traffickers. These attacks appear to constitute acts of war carried out without clear legislative authorisation. The Trump administration insists that the operations are part of its "war on drugs", but has not presented credible evidence to link Mr. Maduro to cartels or to drug trafficking networks. To be clear, Mr. Maduro is credibly accused of manipulating the results in the 2024 presidential elections and his government also bears substantial responsibility for Venezuela's crippling economic collapse. But, acknowledging its failures does nothing to justify the Trump administration's hostile approach.

Corporator Bannala Geetha Praveen Extends Birthday Greetings to Osmania Movement Leader Gadari Kishore



"KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, December 17 (Indian Chronicle):"Former BRS Party MLA of Tungathurthi constituency and prominent Osmania Movement leader celebrated his birthday on Tuesday. On this occasion, the Chilkanagar Division Corporator visited his residence at Kalyanapuri in Chilkanagar Division and conveyed her heartfelt birthday wishes. As part of the celebrations, Gadari Kishore was felicitated with a shawl, a large cake was cut, and firecrackers were burst in a festive atmosphere. Several leaders of the (BRS) participated in the programme. BRS leaders Eddula Kondal Reddy, Kokonda Jagan, Muddam Srinivas Yadav, Photo Balu, and others were present at the event.

MLA Lakshma Reddy Congratulates Newly Elected President Bandala Satyanarayana"

"Nacharam, Indian Chronicle, December 17, 2025: Uppal MLA Bandala Lakshma Reddy congratulated Bandala Satyanarayana on being elected as the new President of the Nacharam Ravindra Nagar Colony Welfare Association. He appreciated the confidence shown by the residents in electing a new leadership committed to the welfare of the colony. On Wednesday, representatives of Ravindra Nagar Colony met the MLA as a courtesy. During the meeting, the MLA felicitated Bandala Satyanarayana by draping a shawl and extended warm wishes to him. He also congratulated all the newly elected office-bearers of the welfare association and urged them to work collectively for the overall development of the colony, addressing civic issues and ensuring better facilities for residents. Speaking on the occasion, the MLA assured the association members of his continued support for developmental works and encouraged the new committee to coordinate closely with local authorities to resolve public grievances effectively. The programme witnessed the presence of several prominent leaders and residents, including K. Damodar Reddy, Mallesh Yadav, M. Damodar Reddy, Srisailam Yadav, Hanumanth Reddy, Venkateshwari, V. N. S. Sharma, Prashanth, along with BRS leader Saizen Shekhar and others, who extended their congratulations to the newly elected president and committee members.

Indian Equities Hit Record Highs as Inflation Tumbles and Valuations Reset: PL Asset Management



Hyderabad: PL Asset Management, the asset management division of PL Capital Group (Prabhudas Lilladher), in their recent report 'PMS Strategy Updates and Insights', cited that Indian equity markets scaled fresh all-time highs in November, decisively outperforming global peers as a powerful combination of record-low inflation, resilient domestic growth and normalized valuations improved the risk-reward profile for investors. While global markets remained uneven — pressured by weakness in technology stocks, a cooling AI-led rally and soft macro data from China — India stood out as a relative bright spot, supported by strong domestic fundamentals and steady liquidity conditions.

Headline inflation emerged as a key driver of sentiment during the month. Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation fell sharply to 0.25%, the lowest level on record and

well below the Reserve Bank of India's medium-term target of 4%. The sharp disinflation reinforced expectations of additional policy easing, providing meaningful support to equity valuations. Reflecting confidence in the domestic growth outlook, the RBI revised its FY26 GDP growth forecast upwards to 7.3%, while India posted 8.2% GDP growth in Q2FY26, reaffirming its status as the fastest-growing major economy globally. Domestic activity indicators remained supportive despite global headwinds. Manufacturing PMI moderated to 56.6 amid tariff-related export softness but continued to signal healthy expansion. GST collections remained robust at ₹1.70 lakh crore, underlining the strength of domestic demand, while strong festive consumption further cushioned growth. Importantly, India's current account deficit improved to 1.3% of GDP, helping maintain macro stability despite currency pressures and volatile global capital flows.

In contrast, global markets displayed growing signs of fatigue. The Nasdaq 100 declined during the month amid profit-taking in AI-linked stocks, while China and Hong Kong equities weakened on sluggish macro data and muted policy traction. Precious metals outperformed as investors sought safety, and crude oil prices softened ahead of expected rate cuts by the US Federal Reserve. Against this backdrop, India's relative stability, predictable policy environment and domestic flow resilience helped it extend its outperformance.

Signify to illuminate 100 Indo–Nepal border villages, enhancing safety and livelihoods



Hyderabad: In line with its #BrighterLivesBetterWorld vision, Signify, the world leader in lighting, announces the street LEDification of 100 villages along the Indo–Nepal border, in collaboration with Tarq Foundation. This transformative initiative is being undertaken under the guidance of Shri Rajnath Singh Ji, Hon'ble Defence Minister of India, whose vision for safer, empowered, and better-connected border communities anchors this effort.

Stretching across 1700 km, the Indo–Nepal border is home to resilient and vibrant communities whose daily lives often unfold against infrastructural and safety-related constraints. Limited street lighting has long impacted mobility, economic activity, and community safety after dusk. The

introduction of energy-efficient LED streetlights across these villages marks a significant step towards addressing these ground realities, creating safer evenings, supporting local livelihoods, and promoting stronger community networks.

Mr. Nikhil Gupta, Head of Marketing, Strategy, Govt. Affairs & CSR - Signify, Greater India said, "At Signify, we are in bringing the best of innovations to the communities across India, through our Har Gaon Roshan CSR initiative. Through this initiative, we aim to bring long-term safety, sustainability, and confidence to border communities. This partnership reflects our commitment to using light to positively impact lives in India, fostering sustainable growth and community empowerment." Building on this vision, the project has been designed to meet practical ground-level needs. Each village was identified based on community input, footfall patterns, and specific safety concerns. Manoviraj Singh, Founding Partner at Tarq Foundation, stated, "Real development starts by listening to the people it is meant to serve. Border communities have their own unique rhythms: evening markets, long walks home from school, and the daily movement of women whose sense of safety is directly shaped by how well-lit their surroundings are. This initiative responds to these lived realities. In these villages, light is not symbolic; it is practical, protective, and deeply empowering."

Airtel Payments Bank in Partnership with NPCI Bharat BillPay Limited Enables EV Wallet Recharges via Bharat Connect



Hyderabad Airtel Payments Bank in partnership with NPCI Bharat BillPay Limited has enabled EV Wallet Recharges via the Bharat Connect (BBPS) platform on Airtel Thanks app. Until now, electric vehicle owners were required to use the wallets that are provided by individual Charging Point Operators (CPOs) for charging payments. With the EV Recharge category, Airtel Payments Bank enables customers to top up their EV wallets directly through the Airtel Thanks App, making the process seamless, instant, and interoperable.

Customers simply need to log in to the app, select

"Recharge EV" under Pay Bills, enter their registered mobile number and recharge amount, confirm and pay securely via Bharat Connect enabled apps, and have the recharge reflected instantly in their wallet. The facility is available for all Airtel Thanks app users, ensuring convenience, security, and immediate access to funds for EV charging.

Ganesh Ananthanarayanan, Executive Director – Business Operations, Airtel Payments Bank, said, "At Airtel Payments Bank, we continue to pioneer digital-first solutions that enhance everyday customer experiences. With EV Wallet Recharges, we are supporting India's growing EV ecosystem while giving users a seamless, instant and secure way to recharge their wallets. This is one more step by us to drive innovation in digital banking."

Noopur Chaturvedi, CEO, NPCI Bharat BillPay Ltd., added, "We are delighted to partner with Airtel Payments Bank for the launch of EV Wallet Recharges that supports India's growing EV ecosystem. This category will play a crucial role in powering India's EV adoption by making payments interoperable and convenient across platforms. Together, we are enabling a future ready digital payments infrastructure for the green mobility revolution."

Hon'ble Union Home Minister Shri Amit Shah inaugurates Signify's Har Gaon Roshan CSR initiative in Chhattisgarh

Hyderabad: In line with its #BrighterLivesBetterWorld vision, Signify (Euronext: LIGHT), the world leader in lighting, announced the launch of its flagship Har Gaon Roshan CSR initiative in Chhattisgarh. The momentous inaugura-

Roshan initiative aids in strengthening rural infrastructure, enhances community safety, and stimulates local economic growth. Signify's expertise in sustainable lighting innovation, the Government of Chhattisgarh's rural development priorities, and Bharat Cares' deep community engagement form the foundation of this powerful collaboration, blending technology, governance, and grassroots action.

Nikhil Gupta, Head of Marketing, Strategy, Government Affairs & CSR, Signify, Greater India, said, "Light is more than just illumination, it's an enabler of safety, opportunity, and social connection. Har Gaon Roshan in Chhattisgarh demonstrates how government, industry, and community can unite to drive inclusive progress. At Signify, we are committed to using the power of light to support inclusive development and contribute meaningfully to India's journey towards a Viksit Bharat, ensuring every village shines brighter. This partnership reflects the power of collective action in creating sustainable, long-term impact."

Bhomik Shah, Founder, Bharat Cares, said, "Chhattisgarh, with its rich natural resources and proud tribal heritage, stands at the cusp of meaningful change. Through our collaboration with Signify and the Government of Chhattisgarh under the Har Gaon Roshan initiative, we are enabling safer communities, supporting inclusive development, and strengthening harmony between people and nature."

Guided by the vision of the Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, this milestone mirrors India's ambition of Viksit Bharat, a developed, empowered nation. Har Gaon

was graced by the Hon'ble Union Home Minister of India, Shri Amit Shah, marking a powerful new chapter in rural transformation. Implemented in partnership with the Government of Chhattisgarh and Bharat Cares, this initiative will bring the glow of modern, energy-efficient LED streetlights to 70 villages across the Indravati Tiger Reserve area, paving the way for safer, more vibrant communities.

Guided by the vision of the Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, this milestone mirrors India's ambition of Viksit Bharat, a developed, empowered nation. Har Gaon

Board Engineer's visit to Bowenpally Secunderabad Cantonment.



December 17 (Indian Chronicle):"On the request of the former Vice President of the Cantonment Board, Jakkula Maheshwar Reddy, Board Engineer Rajeshwar inspected the colonies in Bowenpally, the first ward of the Cantonment Board, along with the former member of the Board, Maheshwar Reddy. He was asked to repair potholes on the roads, construct underground drainage, lay underground drainage lines and construct rain water channels. The engineer also told them that he would take the problems to the attention of the authorities and work hard to solve them. Gauri Anil, Vijay, Raju, Sandeep and others participated in the program.

Irumudi Pujas in Ayyappa Swamy Temple



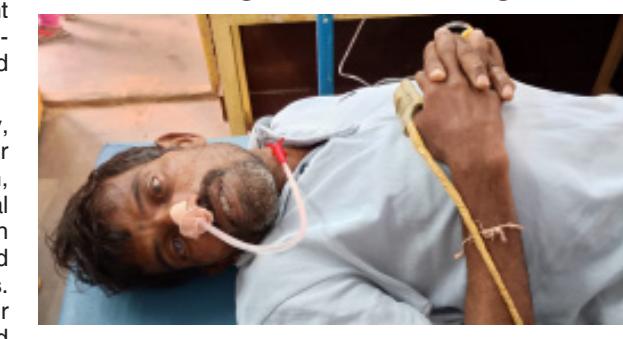
"Secunderabad Cantonment. December 17 (Indian Chronicle):"Ayyappa Swami dressed in Irumudi performed Irumudi Pujas in Boinapalli Ayyappa Swamy Temple. After ayyappa swamigis Sabarimala left for Ayyappa Swamy's darshan on Wednesday. Jampana Pratap, the former Vice President of the Cantonment Board attended the program as the Chief Guest and participated in the Irumudi Puja program and took the blessings of Lord Ayyappa. On this occasion, Jampana Pratap said that it is auspicious for Swami who have taken initiation during Mandal days to visit Ayyappa Swami in Sabarimala wearing Irumudi. In this program, Ajith, Srikanth, Komaraiah, Pawan, Shankar Swamulu, Shivraj, Sagar Srinivas, Suresh, Ravi and others participated.

Corporator Kakkireni Chetana Harish Participates in Ayyappa Swamy Maha Padi Puja



"KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, December 17 (Indian Chronicle):"Habsiguda Division Corporator Kakkireni Chetana Harish took part in the Ayyappa Swamy Maha Padi Puja held on Wednesday at the residence of senior Bharatiya Janata Party leaders and former councillors Thinderu Surekha and Hanumanth Rao in Habsiguda Division. On this occasion, the event organisers accorded a warm and grand felicitation to the corporator. The religious programme was conducted in a devotional atmosphere with active participation from devotees and party leaders. Prominent attendees included Nagesh Guruswamy, Thinderu Roshan, Thinderu Harsha, General Secretary Chelloju Ellachari, Soma Srinivas, Kothapalli Ramesh, Aravind, Konderu Sravanthi, along with BJP leaders, local residents, and others.

Sarpanch Candidate Attempts Suicide by Consuming Pesticide in Telangana Village



"Taj Khan, Kagaznagar, December 17 (Indian Chronicle):"Kagaznagar, December 17 – In a shocking incident amid local panchayat elections, Bommera Rajanna, a candidate contesting for the post of Sarpanch in Pedraspalli village from the BRS party, attempted suicide on Wednesday morning. According to sources, Rajanna consumed weedicide (gaddi mandu) in an apparent bid to end his life. Family members noticed him in distress and immediately rushed him to a private hospital in Kagaznagar town, where he is currently undergoing treatment. His condition is reported to be critical, prompting family members to prepare for transferring him to a better-equipped facility in either Mancherial or Karimnagar for advanced medical care."

42 Lakh CC Road Construction in Uppal

Suryanagar Colony: Works Inspected

Corporator RAJITHA PARAMESHWAR REEDY

KISHORE VADDEPALLI, UPPAL, December 17 (Indian Chronicle): "Development works are progressing at a rapid pace in the Uppal Division. Corporator Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy, along with Uppal Constituency Congress Party In-charge Parameshwar Reddy, has been closely monitoring the ongoing works from time to time. As part of this initiative, Corporator Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy conducted an extensive tour of Suryanagar Colony in Uppal. CC (cement concrete) road construction works worth 42 lakh are currently underway in the colony. The works were jointly inspected by DE Vinil Goud, AE Raj Kumar, HMWSSB Manager Satyanarayana, and local residents. Speaking on the occasion, Corporator Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy stated that underground drainage and additional CC road construction works will be taken up soon in Suryanagar Colony to further improve civic infrastructure. Several local leaders and residents, including A. S. Prasad, V. Venkateshwarlu, Krishna Reddy, Rajeshwari, Ushana, Mekala Ram Reddy, Shameerpet Hanumanth Reddy, Ramalakshmi, Thummala Devi Reddy,



Rathnam, Shankar, Shastri, Shameerpet Rakesh Reddy, Dikshit, Sanjeev Reddy, Lingampalli Ramakrishna, Bhim Sen, Kanchamidi Srinivas, Linga Reddy, Bodige Mallesh, and Venkatesh (DCM), participated in the inspection programme.

Workshop on Employment Opportunities at Vagdevi College



"Warangal, December 17 (Indian Chronicle): "A one-day workshop on awareness of Very Large Scale Integration (VLSI) technology and employment opportunities was organized on Wednesday at Vagdevi College of Engineering, located in Bollikunta, Warangal city. The program was jointly conducted by the MSME and ED Cell under the aegis of the ECE Department for the benefit of students. On

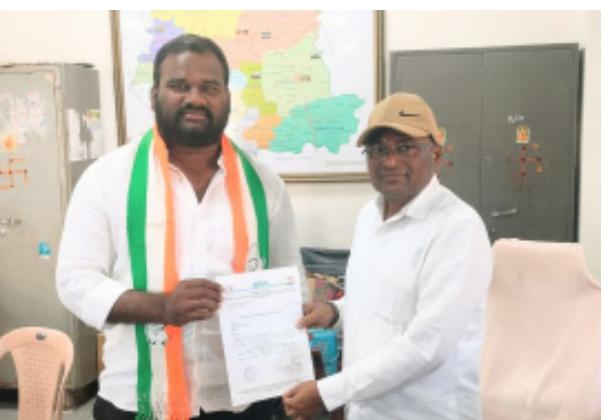
this occasion, resource person Chiluvula Kasturi provided students with insights into VLSI technology. It was explained that the VLSI job market offers promising opportunities for freshers who have a keen interest in semiconductor technology. By enhancing technical skills, undertaking practical projects, networking with industry experts, and preparing diligently for interviews, fresh graduates can successfully secure VLSI-related jobs. Employers seek candidates who not only possess strong technical expertise but also demonstrate adaptability, teamwork, problem-solving skills, and a genuine passion for technology. With the right approach and mindset, freshers can embark on a rewarding career journey in the dynamic world of VLSI, the speaker noted. The workshop was attended by ECE Head of the Department Dr. Sudheer Raja, ED Cell Co-ordinator B Santosh Kumar, along with faculty members.

Chukkalabodu Sarpanch Polls Turn into Political War Between Koram Kanakaiah and Bhukya Dal Singh Naik



"Yellandu, December 17 (Indian Chronicle): "Chukkalabodu Gram Panchayat is one among the 36 village panchayats in Tekulapalli mandal. In the previous term, Bhukya Ganga Bai, wife of present BRS leader Bhukya Dal Singh Naik, was unanimously elected as the Sarpanch from this panchayat. However, in the latest Sarpanch elections, Illandu constituency MLA Koram Kanakaiah declined to allot the party ticket to Bhukya Ganga Bai. Instead, he fielded his close associate Bhukya Sardar as the candidate. Following this development, acting on the directions of BRS Working President K. T. Rama Rao, MP Vaddiraju Ravichandra facilitated the re-entry of Bhukya Dal Singh Naik into the BRS party. Dal Singh Naik, in turn, fielded Banoth Rama as the BRS candidate from his camp. With this, the Chukkalabodu Gram Panchayat elections turned into a full-fledged political battle. MLA Koram Kanakaiah and BRS leader Bhukya Dal Singh Naik conducted intense election campaigns, each striving to ensure the victory of their respective candidates—Bhukya Sardar and Banoth Rama. As every single vote became crucial, campaigning in the village intensified significantly. It is widely discussed in the village that leaders of the ruling party allegedly attempted to influence voters by distributing 71,000 per voter, sarees to women, and liquor to men. Amidst these circumstances,

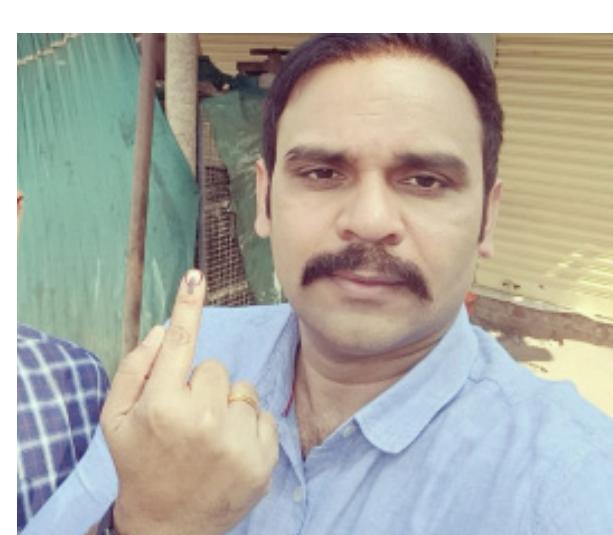
Action Sought Against Corporate Educational Institutions Violating Norms



NSUI Leader KISHORE BANDIRALA "KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, December 17 (Indian Chronicle): "NSUI leader KISHORE BANDIRALA has demanded strict action against corporate educational institutions that are allegedly violating government norms and regulations. He urged the authorities to adopt a tough stance

against such colleges operating in violation of the law. On Wednesday, Kishore Bandirala submitted a memorandum to the Medchal District Deputy Inspector of Education (DIEO) Kishan, seeking immediate intervention. Speaking on the occasion, he stated that education is a fundamental right of every citizen and alleged that several corporate colleges are commercializing education.

"He alleged that in the Uppal constituency—particularly in, and—corporate institutions such as Sri Chaitanya, Naraya and Vidyapeeth are collecting exorbitant fees running into lakhs of rupees from students. He further alleged that several colleges without proper permissions are mushrooming indiscriminately. He demanded that immediate action be taken against such institutions in accordance with the Education Act. Private corporate educational institutions, he said, are charging excessive fees in the name of various courses, and this exploitation of students and parents must be curbed. Kishore Bandirala also called upon education department officials to take action against junior colleges being run in hostels in violation of government rules. He urged district authorities to conduct strict inspections and initiate action against institutions that lack approvals and fail to comply with prescribed norms.



The Right To Tote Is A Diamond Weapon Given By The Constitution: FC Magistrate Durgam Ganesh

"Indian Chronicle" kumram bheem, Asifabad, District Reporte, Jade Srinivas, December, 17. "Durgam Ganesh, a resident of Chirrakunta village in Asifabad mandal, was working as a First Class Magistrate in Sultanabad and had come to his hometown to exercise his right to vote during the Gram Panchayat elections.

"Speaking on the occasion, he said that the right to vote is a golden weapon given to us by the Indian Constitution. He suggested that every citizen should exercise his right to vote and elect a good leader. The villagers praised him for setting an example in the village by coming to his hometown and voting despite being on duty.

A Judge Who Exercised His Right To Vote..

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Retired Employees Observe Pensioners' Day with Tributes to Legendary Fighter D.S. Nakara

Taj Khan, Kagaznagar, December 17 (Indian Chronicle): "Kagaznagar: Retired government employees today solemnly commemorated Pensioners' Day at the Retired Employees Association building, paying rich tributes to the pioneering pension rights crusader, late D.S. Nakara. The programme began with participants garlanding the portrait of the late D.S. Nakara and offering floral tributes in a dignified manner. Speaking on the occasion, Association President M. Jayadev Abraham highlighted the indelible contribution of the late Dharam Swaroop Nakara in ensuring that central and state government pensioners lead a peaceful life post-retirement. "His tireless efforts and relentless legal battle for pension rights remain etched in memory," he said. "Mr. Abraham also lauded Supreme Court Chief Justice Y.V. Chandrachud for his landmark judgment that declared: "Pension is not a bounty nor a gratuity or an act of charity. Pension is a right, and the government has a binding obligation to honour it." He described Justice Chandrachud as eternally memorable to every pensioner across the country. The President emphasised that the time has come for all retired employees to unitedly safeguard this hard-won right. Association Secretary M. Shiva Prasad, Rajendra Prasad, Ankaiah, Anwar Ahmed, K. Narasiah, Muralidhar Rao, K. Purushottam Kumar, B.



Narsaiah, Kishan Kumar, Ch. Ramayya, Murari, Narayan, Shivalingam, Saleem, V. Ramayya, Shankar, and several others participated in the event. M. Jayadev Abraham, President

ASP Chittaranjan Supervised The Survey For The Third Phase Of Gram Panchayat elections.



"Indian Chronicle" kumram bheem, Asifabad, District Reporte, Jade Srinivas, December, 17. "ASP Chittaranjan

supervised the third phase of Gram Panchayat elections on Wednesday. In the context of the third phase of Gram Panchayat elections, Asifabad ASP Chittaranjan visited the polling stations in Rebbena, Goleti of Rebbena mandal, Rajampet of Asifabad mandal, and Babapur village on Wednesday. Since 163 BNSS is in force, the staff was instructed to ensure that no one except voters comes within 100 meters of the polling stations. After the polling is over, during the counting of votes and the movement of ballot boxes, after the polling is over. Kagaznagar DSP Waheeduddin visited the election polling stations set up in government schools in Raspally, Bhatpalli, Bare Guda, Village No. 5, Kotha Sarasala and Islam villages in Kagaznagar division on Wednesday morning. He gave several instructions to the police personnel on duty. He said that tight security has been put in place to prevent any untoward incident.

Aakarapu Arun Patel Responds Swiftly to Basti Residents' Issues

KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, December 17 (Indian Chronicle): "Residents of East Srinivasapuram and Ram Shankar Nagar colonies in Venkat Reddy Nagar Division raised concerns over difficulties caused by ongoing open nala (drain) construction works. The locals brought the issue to the notice of Uppal Assembly Constituency Youth Congress President, stating that the increased height of the nala was causing inconvenience to residents. Responding immediately, Arun Patel, with the support of Uppal Constituency Congress Party In-charge, spoke to the concerned DE and AE officials. He instructed them to rectify the works without delay and ensure that the nala is constructed in alignment with the road level so that residents do not face hardship. He also emphasized completing the works at the earliest in the interest of public convenience. Additionally, residents of Ram Shankar Nagar informed Arun Patel that street lights in the colony have not been functioning for some time, leading to darkness and causing problems, especially for women and senior citizens.



Arun Patel immediately took up the matter with officials and directed them to replace the damaged lights with new ones. Colony residents including Anil, Jagadish, Madhu, Raviteja, L.V. Goud, Nagaraj (Professor), and others participated in the programme.

Deposit Not Received By 27 Candidates

"Indian Chronicle" kumram bheem, Asifabad, District Reporte, Jade Srinivas, December, 17. "Wankidi, In the recent panchayat elections held in the mandal, 28 candidates did not get their deposits. In the elections held on the 11th of this month, three out of the 28 panchayats in the mandal were unanimous, while one panchayat did not have a reserved candidate allocated for it. Out of these, 11 panchayats were won by BRS supporters, eight panchayats were won by Congress supporters, and eight independent candidates. Wankidi Sarpanch Chunarkar Satish, who had the highest BRS support in the mandal, won with a majority of 945. It is noteworthy that Selvatkari Pentu, who was fielded by the Congress party, got only 24 votes. Out of 88 sarpanch candidates in the mandal, 27 lost their deposits as they did not get 16.67 percent of the valid votes polled in their

panchayats. Notably, 141 people voted for NOTA in all the panchayats, while not a single person voted for NOTA in Velli, Sarandi, Tejapur and Goyegaon panchayats. Meanwhile, the candidate supported by the Congress in the panchayat elections was defeated. Selvatkari Pentu, who contested for the post of Sarpanch here, got only 24 votes. In Wankidi panchayat, 4,134 votes were cast out of 5,338 votes. If he gets 16.67 percent of the valid votes, or 650 votes, he will get the deposit. He lost the deposit by getting only 24 votes. Chunarkar Satish, supported by BRS, got 1,897 votes, while independent candidates Durgam Prashanth got 945 votes and Durgam Durgaji got 708 votes. The fact that the candidate supported by the ruling party got the least votes at the mandal center has become a matter of discussion."

Green Polling Stations Reflect Telangana's Cultural Heritage Amid Lush Natural Setting



Dist Add'l Collector (Local Bodies) Deepak Tiwari, "Taj Khan, Kagaznagar, December 17 (Indian Chronicle): "As part of the third phase of the Second General Panchayat Elections, Green Polling Stations symbolising Telangana's rich cultural heritage were established in Ankushapur and Kosini Gram Panchayats of the district, said District Additional Collector (Local Bodies) Deepak Tiwari. "On Wednesday, the District Additional Collector, along with Kagaznagar Sub-Collector Shraddha Shukla, visited the Green Polling Stations set up in Ankushapur and Kosini Gram Panchayats during the third phase of polling. Speaking on the occasion, he stated that the initiative to create polling stations reflecting Telangana's culture—featuring traditional decorations and earthen water pots—was highly commendable, as it encouraged voters to exercise their franchise in a culturally enriched and eco-friendly environment. "He informed that voter turnout stood at 88 per cent in Ankushapur Gram Panchayat and 81 per cent in Kosini Gram Panchayat. He further stated that following the completion of polling, the counting of votes would be taken up, after which the election of the Deputy Sarpanch would be conducted upon the declaration of results. "The District Additional Collector added that adequate security arrangements were made at all polling stations and that the election process across the district was progressing peacefully. He also congratulated the Mandal Parishad Development Officer and the entire team for their efforts in successfully setting up the Green Polling Stations. "Officials concerned and others were present during the programme." Issued by the Public Relations Department, Kumram Bheem Asifabad District

Hundi Counting Held at Sri Abhayanjaneya Swamy Temple



"KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, December 17 (Indian Chronicle):" "Hundi counting was conducted on Wednesday at the , located near NGRI in Habsiguda. Officials of the Endowments Department stated that the hundi collections for a period of approximately four months and 20 days amounted to ₹4,42,330. The counting was carried out under the supervision of Endowments Department Supervisor D. Ravi, in the presence of Temple

Executive Officer K. Venkanna and members of the Temple Trust Board. Among those present during the programme were Thummala Devi Reddy, Eega Anjaiah, Bikkumalla Anjaiah Gupta, G. Rajeshwari, A. Amareeshwari, B. Raghunath Reddy, Dharma Naik, G. Raghavendra, B. Lakshma Reddy, A. Anjaiah, along with temple priests Gambheerupuram Ravindra Sharma, Santosh Sharma, and Srikanth Sharma, and devotees.

Uppal MLA Meets CM's Special Secretary Seeking Funds for Development of Government Schools



leader Sai Jen Shekhar and BRS Party Kapra Division President Bairi Naveen Goud were present during the meeting.

"Every Vote Matters": BRS State Leader Dr. R. S. Praveen Kumar Casts His Ballot"



Praveen Kumar exercised his right to vote during the elections held in Kosni village of Kagaznagar Mandal on Wednesday. "Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Praveen Kumar highlighted the importance of the right to vote in a democratic system. He called upon every citizen to mandatorily exercise their franchise and thereby strengthen democracy. He expressed hope that the elections would be conducted in a transparent and peaceful manner. "Emphasising that village development and public welfare should be the primary objective, he urged voters to take responsible and informed decisions. Describing elections as a "festival of democracy," Dr. Praveen Kumar stated that every vote is valuable. "Local BRS party leaders, party workers, and villagers were present during the programme.

"Taj Khan Kagaznagar, December 17 (Indian Chronicle)" "BRS Party State General Secretary Dr. R. S. Praveen Kumar exercised his right to vote during the elections held in Kosni village of Kagaznagar Mandal on Wednesday. "Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Praveen Kumar highlighted the importance of the right to vote in a democratic system. He called upon every citizen to mandatorily exercise their franchise and thereby strengthen democracy. He expressed hope that the elections would be conducted in a transparent and peaceful manner. "Emphasising that village development and public welfare should be the primary objective, he urged voters to take responsible and informed decisions. Describing elections as a "festival of democracy," Dr. Praveen Kumar stated that every vote is valuable. "Local BRS party leaders, party workers, and villagers were present during the programme.



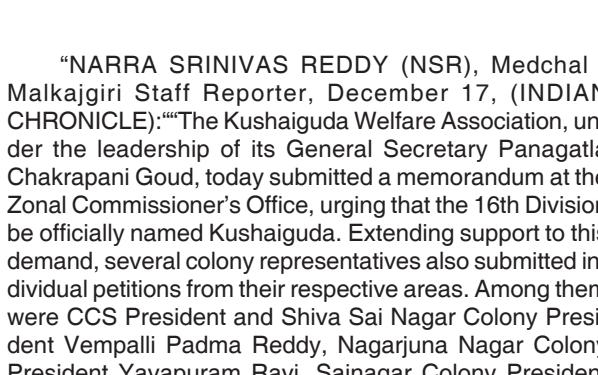
Secretary P. Ramachander Rao, representatives from various mandal units, and association members were present. "On the occasion, 30 retired employees were felicitated by the district association in appreciation of their service and contribution.

Pension Is a Statutory Right, Not an Act of Charity.

" P. S. A SHOKAN " KARIMNAGAR BUREAU." "Karimnagar, December 17: "Pension is not a form of charity but a legally and morally guaranteed right—an earned recompense for years of dedicated service, asserted Damera Mahender Reddy, District General Secretary of the State Government Retired Employees Association. "Addressing a gathering organized at the Pensioners' Bhavan on Wednesday to commemorate National Pensioners' Day, he categorically stated that no government possesses the authority to abolish pensions. He emphasized that pensions must be viewed as a mark of respect and dignity accorded by the State to its retired employees in recognition of their invaluable past services. "The programme was conducted under the presidency of district association president Mosa Anjaiah. Poreddy Srihari Reddy, State Vice President of the association, attended the event as the chief guest and underscored the need to safeguard pensioners' rights and welfare. "District Treasurer Narender, District Vice Presidents Racha Anand and Narender Reddy, District Secretary Tatkonda Anjaiah, Joint

"NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, December 17, (INDIAN CHRONICLE):" "The Kushaiguda Welfare Association, under the leadership of its General Secretary Panagatla Chakrapani Goud, today submitted a memorandum at the Zonal Commissioner's Office, urging that the 16th Division be officially named Kushaiguda. Extending support to this demand, several colony representatives also submitted individual petitions from their respective areas. Among them were CCS President and Shiva Sai Nagar Colony President Vempalli Padma Reddy, Nagarjuna Nagar Colony President Yavapuram Ravi, Sainagar Colony President Sara Vinod Mudiraj, Vaishnavi Enclave President Gampa Krishna, and former Indranagar Colony President Sara Anil Mudiraj. Members of the Kushaiguda Welfare Association, including Treasurer Chittula Kishore Goud, Joint Secretary Nalachervu Janardhan, Organising Secretary Pilla Raju Mudiraj, and others, participated in the programme and expressed their strong objection while registering their protest in support of the demand. Subsequently, the memorandums were also submitted at the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) Head Office in Hyderabad. The participants reiterated that naming the 16th Division as Kushaiguda would reflect the historical identity and sentiments of the local residents.

Memorandum Submitted Seeking Naming of 16th Division as Kushaiguda



Dabba Network Accelerates PM-WANI Rollout, Fueling India's Billion-User Connectivity Ambition

Bengaluru, 16th December 2025: As India's digital adoption accelerates—fuelled by UPI payments, online learning, telehealth, and a growing digital economy—the need for robust, reliable, and inclusive internet access has become critical. Stepping up to this national priority is Dabba Network, a community-powered broadband marketplace that has emerged as one of the most successful implementers of the Indian Government's PM-WANI initiative, demonstrating scalable success. By combining decentralised, community-led deployment with a sustainable financial model, Dabba Network is turning the vision of universal, affordable internet into measurable reality on the ground, helping India get closer to the long-term vision of bringing over a billion people online.

Over the past year, Dabba Network has demonstrated rapid on-ground execution across underserved and high-demand regions, deploying 73,128 public Wi-Fi hotspots through local entrepreneurs and community partners. Its network now serves 243,609 daily users for payments, work, education, and entertainment, with 47,540 TB of bandwidth consumed, 426,900 active home passes, and 48,650 new connection requests. An engaged ecosystem of local providers has facilitated the sale of 23,601 hotspots, highlighting both commercial viability and strong community adoption.

Launched in 2020, PM-WANI (Prime Minister's Wi-Fi Access Network Interface) established open, interoperable digital rails designed to accelerate public Wi-Fi deployment and empower local entrepreneurs, small ISPs, hotspot providers, and community networks. While PM-WANI created the national blueprint, Dabba Network has spent the past eight years translating this architecture into a working, scalable model—particularly in areas where conventional telecom economics have historically kept last-mile broadband unviable.

Working closely with local cable operators (LCOs), hotspot owners, bandwidth suppliers, hardware manufacturers, and location partners, Dabba Network has enabled large-scale deployment of PM-WANI-compliant Wi-Fi infrastructure across underserved neighbourhoods. It has connected communities that remain excluded from traditional broadband due to high infrastructure costs, limited fibre penetration, and the challenges of legacy models.

Karam Lakshman, CEO and Founder of Dabba Network, said, "India's connectivity challenge is also its greatest opportunity. The demand for broadband is universal, but traditional deployment models don't economically fit the last mile. PM-WANI flips that script by empowering local entrepreneurs and community partners to build internet access where it's needed most. We are seeing the rise of a new, open broadband layer—one built for scale, affordability, and true inclusion. PM-WANI gave India a framework to unlock last-mile connectivity through community-led models, and our mission at Dabba Network is to push this vision forward by building an internet network that is inclusive, decentralised, and truly accessible to every Indian."

The company's traction reflects India's massive last-mile gap. Despite having over 800 million mobile broadband users, the country has only ~40 million fixed broadband connections, and penetration in low-income communities drops to as low as one connection per 100 people. Dabba Network's model fills this gap through community-run



hotspots, sachet-sized data packs starting at ₹1, and highly localised distribution.

Central to this progress is Dabba Network's decentralised DePIN marketplace, which uses blockchain transparency and Web2 simplicity to align incentives across all stakeholders. Its DBT token model rewards uptime, quality of service, and expansion, creating an open and economically aligned system that empowers communities to maintain and grow their own networks.

A key outcome of this system has been the empowerment of India's over 150,000 local cable operators (LCOs), many of whom have faced shrinking revenues over the years. Through simple onboarding, affordable hardware, and token-linked incentives, Dabba Network is helping LCOs become neighbourhood internet distributors, ensuring stable operations while distributing economic value at the grassroots level.

Shubhendu Sharma, COO and Founder, said, "PM-WANI reimagines last-mile connectivity by placing trust in communities and local providers. Dabba Network's journey shows how powerful that vision becomes when implemented with the right tools, incentives, and partnerships. Our scale—tens of thousands of hotspots, hundreds of thousands of daily users, and strong network demand—demonstrates that PM-WANI is not only viable but transformative. We are proud to be among the earliest companies to convert this national vision into operational success."

As India steers toward a future where every citizen can meaningfully participate in the digital economy, Dabba Network is proving that community-first, government-aligned innovation can deliver both scale and sustainability—and help realise the long-standing dream of bringing billions of Indians online.

About Dabba

Dabba Inc is a pioneer in building and operating low-cost public wifi networks in India. Founded in 2017, Dabba Inc has deployed thousands of hotspots across India at retail, residential and commercial locations serving users with super fast, super cheap internet.

Demand for data in India is roughly doubling every 18 months and Dabba is building a new data only network for a data hungry generation

Vision Beyond Life: A Noble Legacy of Compassion and Humanity.



"P. S. ASHOKAN" KARIMNAGAR BUREAU." "A solemn memorial meeting commemorating the life and extraordinary humanitarian service of eye donor Muddasani Rajayya was gracefully organised on 17 December 2025 at his residence in Odela by his bereaved family members, in association with the Sadashaya Foundation." "The programme was conducted under the able leadership of Kondra Venu, Mandal President of the Sadashaya Foundation, and witnessed the participation of eminent personalities committed to social service. Distinguished guests Bongoni Lingamurthy, Retired Mandal Education Officer and National General Secretary of the Foundation, and Dr. Merugu Bhishmachari addressed the gathering and sensitised the audience on the immense significance of eye donation, organ donation, and whole-body donation as transformative acts of altruism." "Highlighting the profound impact of the late Rajayya's noble decision, the speakers noted that his selfless eye donation restored vision to two visually impaired individuals, thereby illuminating lives even after his own. In recognition of this exemplary humanitarian gesture, mementoes were presented and heartfelt felicitations were extended to his family members—his wife Mondamma, and his sons and daughters-in-law Kumaraswamy & Ramadevi, Ramesh & Saritha, and Kranti & Sumalatha—for upholding and honouring his compassionate legacy." "Representatives of the Odela Mandal and senior functionaries of the Sadashaya

Foundation, including Kyatham Mallesham, Merugu Sarangam, Bongoni Srinivas, Lingareddy Teerthala Srinivas, National President Shrawan Kumar, General Secretary Lingamurthy, Honorary President Ramakrishna Reddy, Chief Advisor Ramesh, Publicity Secretary Vasu, and District Honorary President Lagisetti Chandramouli, collectively expressed their deep appreciation and gratitude to the family for their invaluable contribution to society." "The memorial gathering concluded on a note of reverence and inspiration, reaffirming that through the noble act of eye donation, Muddasani Rajayya continues to live on—bringing light, hope, and vision to humanity."

Appeal to Municipal Officials to Resolve Civic Issues



"Nacharam, Indian Chronicle, December 17: "Several leaders from Nacharam Division submitted a detailed representation to the Kapra Municipal officials, urging them to take immediate steps to resolve long-pending civic issues faced by residents of the division. The delegation, led by Congress Party Nacharam Division Working President Nutan Kanti Raju, met Executive Engineer (E.E.) Nagender and formally presented a memorandum highlighting key public concerns." "During the meeting, the leaders strongly appealed for the development of the SC cremation ground, stating that the lack of basic infrastructure was causing inconvenience and distress to the local community. They requested the authorities to initiate comprehensive development works at the earliest, including proper facilities and maintenance." "The delegation also drew the attention of the officials to serious electricity-related problems in the area.

They demanded the installation of new electricity poles, the relocation of outdated and improperly placed poles, and the laying of new electrical wiring to ensure safe and uninterrupted power supply to residents. The leaders emphasized that faulty wiring and old infrastructure were posing risks to public safety, especially during the rainy season." "Speaking on the occasion, Nutan Kanti Raju said that the visit to the municipal officials was made as per the directions of Uppal Constituency In-charge Mandamula Parameshwar Reddy, who had instructed that public issues be taken up with the concerned departments for early redressal. He urged the municipal authorities to respond positively and ensure that all the identified problems are resolved without delay." "The programme was attended by Goudalli Srinivas, Erpula Nursing Rao, Srinu, Erpula Narender, Erpula Nagaraju, along with several other local leaders and party workers."

President Murmu arrives in Hyderabad for Southern Sojourn

GNS News Agency, Dec 17

Hyderabad: President Droupadi Murmu, who arrived in Hyderabad on Wednesday as part of the annual winter Southern Sojourn, was received by Governor Jishnu Dev Varma and Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka at Hakimpet Air Force Station.

Satara, Maharashtra's literary cradle, prepares for 99th Akhil Bharatiya Marathi Sahitya Sammelan



GNS News Agency, Dec 17

Pavilion for 99th Akhil Bharatiya Marathi Sahitya Sammelan inaugurated by Sharanakumar Limba?e; organisers promise a writer-centric convention that honours Satara's status as a 'historical capital'. The preparations for the 99th Akhil Bharatiya Marathi Sahitya Sammelan, scheduled from January 1 to 4, in Satara, the historical capital of Maharashtra, started on December 16 with the dual inauguration of the main pavilion construction and the official website.

The event, held at the Chhatrapati Shahu Stadium, marked a significant step towards organising a convention that blends heritage with digital modernity. Eminent Saraswati Samman awardee, litterateur Sharanakumar Limba?e, performed the pavilion inauguration, asserting that "Society

trusts books, not weapons". He described the Sahitya Sammelan as a mirror, reflecting the literary and cultural face of society, and expressed confidence that the Satara convention would not only be successful but would also "preserve its distinctiveness". Prof Milind Joshi, president of the Akhil Bharatiya Marathi Sahitya Mahamandal, said this will be the first Sahitya Sammelan held in Satara after the Marathi language received the classical language status in 2024.

The official website, <https://www.abmsssatara.org>, was inaugurated by Shrimant Chhatrapati Shivendrasinhraje Bhowale at the Sammelan office in Janata Sahakari Bank. Working President Vinod Kulkarni said the intent is to make this a successful convention from a technological standpoint, ensuring "transparent administration". Treasurer Nandkumar Sawant highlighted the goal of providing comprehensive information to the Marathi community abroad and facilitating digital documentation. The new platform features Satara's rich literary tradition, including stalwarts like Yashwantrao Chavan, B C Mardhekar, Kavi Yashwant, and Principal Shivajirao Bhowale. The literary discussions will focus on contemporary works like Shahu Patole's 'Ann He Apur?a Brahma' and Amol Palekar's 'Alvaj Ek Smritibandha'. The programme will also include interviews with figures like Sahitya Akademi award winner Anuradha Patil and Loksatta editor Girish Kuber, alongside a felicitation of Laxman Gaikwad, winner of the Sahitya Akademi Award for his autobiography 'Uchalya'.

How an early outreach project that began in Pune is helping less-advantaged students get into top tech schools



GNS News Agency, Dec 17

For many students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, the path to engineering is often cut short not by a lack of ability but by a lack of access to quality teaching, mentoring, and resources. Over the last nine years, Cognizant Outreach's Project Dhyeya has been working to change that reality, creating a structured pathway that supports students from Class 8 through engineering education and into the workforce. The volunteer-led effort that began in Pune has since expanded to Hyderabad, Kolkata and Bhubaneswar, supporting more than 650 students across four cities. Speaking to The Indian Express, Abhijit Datar, Global Delivery Head, IoT and Engineering, Cognizant, who has been closely associated with the initiative, said, "Our programme focuses on early intervention, recognising that the most critical gaps in India's education system emerge well before college. There is a massive drop between Class 10 and Classes 11-12."

"A student scoring 90 per cent in Class 10 often falls to 70 per cent in Class 11, for example. That drop has nothing to do with intelligence. It's about preparedness," he added. Project Dhyeya identifies students as early as Class 8 through a raw aptitude-based entrance test that evaluates reasoning and problem-solving skills rather than academic exposure. In Pune alone, 700-1,000 students appear

for the test each year, of which 30 to 60 are selected. "We are not testing what students already know," Datar said. "We are testing how they think. Talent is evenly distributed. Opportunity is not." Once selected, students receive 10 to 15 hours of instruction every week, delivered through a combination of online learning and weekend sessions held at Cognizant offices.

The curriculum is aligned with national-level competitive examinations such as the National Means-Cum-Merit Scholarship (NMMS) scheme and the National Talent Search Examination (NTSE), and students are provided with laptops, books, digital access, and study material. The project also partners with reputed coaching institutions and covers the entire cost of preparation in classes 11 and 12. "From the time a student joins us in Class 8 until they complete engineering, money is never the reason they drop out," Datar said. "We take what I call academic guardianship. Students from Project Dhyeya have secured admissions into IIT Delhi, IIT Bombay, IIT Allahabad, College of Engineering, Pune (COEP), Vellore Institute of Technology (VIT), and the Pune Institute of Computer Technology (PICT), among others. More than 50 per cent of our current beneficiaries are girls," he added. Several students have gone on to secure internships and pre-placement offers at leading global organisations, including at Cognizant. "One student recently received an internship offer from Goldman Sachs, while another converted an internship at Barclays into an offer. These are not outliers anymore. When you invest early and consistently, outcomes start becoming predictable," Datar said. The initiative has a strong volunteer network involving over 250 Cognizant associates. In the long term, the project hopes to ensure that at least 10 per cent of hiring in technology and manufacturing companies comes from economically weaker sections and from among girls, according to Datar, who underlined that the programme is not about philanthropy. "It is capability-building. If you give students the right foundation, mentoring, and resources, they don't need sympathy. They just need opportunity," he said.

Four days after 'assault' on govt officials in Banaskantha village, no arrests yet

GNS News Agency, Dec 17

Four days after police and revenue officials of the Gujarat government were attacked allegedly by armed villagers, an uneasy calm had descended on Padaliya village. Around 1,000 tribals had gathered on an open ground when The Indian Express visited this village of Danta taluka in Banaskantha district, occupied largely by tribals. Many of the residents were not willing to talk about the incident in which over 40 officials were injured. Among those to visit the village on Tuesday were Congress MLA from Danta, Kanti Kharadi, and BJP leader Ladhubhai Parghi. Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) MLA Chaitar Vasava has said that he would also visit the village. Tension began on December 5 when forest officials went to Padaliya for a tree plantation exercise and were allegedly prevented by people belonging to a group that went by the name of 'AC Bharat Sarkar Sangathan'. According to a government release on Sunday, a mob stopped the tree plantation exercise on December 11, following which the range forest officer reported in writing



to the Danta Mamtadhar and Deputy Conservator of Forest. On December 13, when forest officials reached the spot along with police and Danta Mamtadhar for the plantation drive, a mob of around 500 people staged protests. The leaders of this mob allegedly instigated people and suddenly an "attack" was launched on the government officials with "stones",

Motuguda Polling Station Becomes A Venue For Guru-Disciple Gathering During Panchayat Elections"

"Indian Chronicle" kumram bheem, Asifabad, District Reporte, Jade Srinivas, December, 17. "During the ongoing Panchayat elections in Asifabad district, the Motuguda polling station was the scene of a heart-touching incident. This incident, reminiscent of the bond between a teacher and a disciple, provided special inspiration to the personnel on election duty. It is a special moment for Abdul Latif, who worked as a teacher at Z.PHS Bazaar Area School in Bellampalli town in 2001, to participate in election duties at the Motuguda polling station along with his then students who studied at the same school. Abdul Latif, who is currently working as a returning officer at the Motuguda polling station, was met by one of his students, S.I. Kamalakar (currently Asifabad Sun Inspector), and another student, Nagarjuna (currently Forest Beat Officer), during his duties. The fact that the teacher and student were performing their duties as part of public service at the same polling station impressed everyone. Guru Abdul Latif expressed his happiness over his students reaching high positions with discipline and working with him in fulfilling key responsibilities in public service. Locals opined that this incident once again proved that education is the foundation of life and that



the teachings of a teacher shape the future of the students. This incident stood as a perfect example of the teacher-disciple bond and became an inspirational moment for the personnel on election duty.

Eyeing political, religious and tribal connect, Congress to launch 2nd phase of 'Jan Akrosh Yatra' in Central Gujarat



GNS News Agency, Dec 17

After the first phase in North Gujarat, the Congress Tuesday announced the second phase of its 'Jan Akrosh Yatra' in Central Gujarat. The yatra will be flagged off on December 20 from Bhathiji Maharaj Temple in Fagvel Kheda district, where the then Chief Minister Narendra Modi launched his state-wide Gujarat Gaurav Yatra in 2002. The yatra will conclude on January 6 at Kamboi Dham in Dahod-Samadhi of Shri Govind Guru, a revered figure of tribals and freedom fighter, who passed away in October 1931.

In Jhalod taluka, Shri Govind Guru Dham memorial is a place of importance for the tribals. Born as Govind Giri Banjara, Shri Govind Guru was a social and religious leader as well as a freedom fighter. In March 2024, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi began the 55th day of the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra with a visit to the Kamboi Dham in Dahod.

Bhathiji Maharaj Temple that attracts a large number of devotees including Hindus and Muslims is dedicated to Bhathiji Maharaj, who according to folklore sacrificed his life to protect village's cows from attackers during his wedding. The Kshatriya Thakor community worships him as Kuldevata (family deity). Addressing a press conference at the Gujarat Pradesh Congress Committee headquarters Rajiv Gandhi Bhavan here, GPCC president Amit Chavda said the yatra will cover seven districts of Central Gujarat – Kheda, Anand, Vadodara, Chhota Udepur, Panchmahal, Mahisagar and Dahod (three municipalities, 55 talukas and 37 municipal areas). The problems of Central Gujarat will be raised and "corruption in the area" will be exposed dur-

ing the 1400-km yatra, Chavda said.

The first leg of Jan Akrosh Yatra held in North Gujarat between November 21 and December 3, covering a distance of 1300 km, has received widespread public support, the GPCC president said. "During the first leg of the yatra, the public has openly expressed their anger against corruption, mismanagement, discrimination and injustice that have become widespread during the three decades of BJP rule in Gujarat. The Pradesh Congress Committee had started the Jan Akrosh Yatra to give voice to the questions, pain and voices of the public," Chavda said.

Stating that the Akrosh Yatra is not an election march, but a fight for the rights of the people, Chavda said: "The government collects taxes, but does not listen to the voice of the people. Therefore, people from all sections of society should join this march to give a voice to the people. The Jan Akrosh Yatra is the voice of the people and in the coming days this voice will be reverberated in the entire Gujarat." Speaking on the occasion, Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Assembly Tushar Chaudhary said that the government is not carrying out recruitment despite lakhs of vacant posts in the government. "During the first phase of the yatra, the Congress demanded complete waiver of farmers' debt and raised shortage of fertilizers and seeds, illegal liquor and drug business and the need to give employment to the youth through regular recruitment. There is great public outrage against non-recruitment and exploitation of youth through fixed salaries, contracts and outsourcing, despite lakhs of vacant posts in the government," Chaudhary alleged.

To cover: 7 districts (Kheda, Anand, Vadodara, Chhota Udepur, Panchmahal, Mahisagar, Dahod), 3 municipal areas, 55 talukas and 37 municipal areas. Key programmes: Interaction with all sections of people including farmers, women, unemployed youth, small traders, farm laborers, and workers. People can raise their issues linked to roads, drinking water, irrigation, employment, land rights, and liquor rackets, says Congress Key issues: Issues of cattle breeders, "corruption" in dairy cooperatives, "injustice" to tribal communities, "corruption" in Nal se Jal and MGNREGA schemes, issues of milk producers, drinking water and irrigation problems, and corruption issues in municipal areas will be highlighted

12 years on, CBI court acquits Haryana judge, parents in wife's death case

GNS News Agency, Dec 17

An FIR was initially registered at the Civil Lines police station in Gurugram on the complaint of her brother, Pradeep Aggarwal. An FIR was initially registered at the Civil Lines police station in Gurugram on the complaint of her brother, Pradeep Aggarwal. More than 12 years after a 28-year-old woman, the wife of a Haryana judicial officer, was found dead with bullet injuries in Gurugram, a special CBI court in Panchkula on Tuesday acquitted her husband and his parents of charges of dowry death, criminal conspiracy and cruelty. The acquitted include the woman's husband Ravneet Garg, who was then posted as chief judicial magistrate, his father K K Garg, a retired sessions judge, and his mother Rachna Garg.

Additional district and sessions judge Rajeev Goyal, special judge for CBI cases, acquitted the three of offences under Sections 304B (dowry death), 120B (criminal conspiracy) and 498A (cruelty by husband or his relatives) of the Indian Penal Code. A detailed judgment is yet to be released. According to the prosecution, Geetanjali, a resident of Sector 8, Panchkula, was found dead on July 17, 2013, at the Gurugram police lines with multiple bullet injuries. A post-mortem examination reported three bullet injuries and a head injury. Her family alleged she had been harassed for dowry and murdered. An FIR was initially registered at the Civil Lines police station in Gurugram on the complaint of her brother, Pradeep Aggarwal. The investigation was later transferred to the Central Bureau of Investigation on the family's request. In September 2016, the CBI arrested Ravneet Garg, then posted as civil judge (senior division) in Kaithal, in connection with the case. He was subsequently granted bail. In December of the same year, the agency filed its chargesheet, alleging that Garg and his parents had caused Geetanjali's death for dowry. During the

trial, public prosecutor Amit Jindal argued that a licensed revolver belonging to Garg was found near the body and that a ballistic report indicated the bullets recovered from the victim had been fired from the same weapon. The prosecution also pointed to live cartridges recovered from Garg's residence and alleged dowry demands to support its case.

The defence, represented by Teriminder Singh, Manbir Rathee and Parmod Bali, countered that the accused had been falsely implicated and had no role in Geetanjali's death. They argued that while the CBI continued to investigate the case as one of murder and medical opinion also pointed in that direction, the agency changed the charge to dowry death under Section 304B at the time of filing the chargesheet. Senior counsel Teriminder Singh further submitted that evidence during trial showed Geetanjali had spoken to her parents on the day of the incident and had made no complaint against her husband, undermining allegations of dowry harassment and cruelty. After hearing the arguments and examining the evidence, the court acquitted all three accused. Ravneet Garg had been placed under suspension following his arrest in the case.

Mahatma Gandhiji was not a leader of a political party



ment Guarantee Scheme to ensure that people in rural areas had work every day, allowing them to work in their own villages. This scheme enabled people in villages, hamlets, and tribal settlements to work locally and earn a livelihood. However, the current Narendra Modi-led central government has introduced a resolution in Parliament to change the name of this scheme. Protesting this move, the round table meeting held in Yadadri Bhuvanagiri district headquarters resolved that the central government should refrain from removing the name of the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi, from the scheme. Similarly, they stated that if Mahatma Gandhi's name is removed, they will launch a phased movement from the village level to the national level, involving the Arya Vysya community, business leaders, senior citizens, and all-party political parties. Resolutions passed at the meeting included: Mahatma Gandhi is not a political party leader, but the Father of the Nation and a messenger of world peace; Mahatma Gandhi embodies the principles of peace and non-violence; submitting petitions to district collectors; organizing a movement at Gandhi statues with members of the Arya Vysya community, business leaders, senior citizens, and political party leaders at the state and national levels; a postcard campaign; and collecting signatures to be sent to the State Governor and the President. Prominent businessmen Diddikadi Narsing Rao, Kurella Janardhan, retired principal Somachandragupta, Vasavi Club president Bajjala Mahesh, prominent journalist Cholleti Govardhana Chari, Sevalal state secretary Pittala Balaraj, town president Dakuri Prakash, SFI district president Vanam Raju, Belde Anand, Market Committee director Ranga Krishna, MD Athar Hanumantharao, Bachu Nagender Gupta, BC Association district president Kotha Narasimhaswamy, retired employees Krishnareddy, Satyanarayana, and others participated in the program.

Rs 50,000 for Indian documents, three-month age gap between brothers: ED files supplementary chargesheet in migration racket case



GNS News Agency, Dec 17

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has filed the first supplementary chargesheet against Pakistan national Azad Hussain alias Azad Mallik alias Ahammed Hossain Azad, and his Indian accomplice Indubhusan Haldar alias Dulal in connection with a case pertaining to an alleged racket of illegally obtaining Indian documents for Bangladeshi nationals in West Bengal, officials said on Tuesday. The ED said in a statement that it filed a supplementary chargesheet in the case on December 11 before a special PMLA court in Kolkata and named Haldar and four others as accused. The special court located at Bichar Bhavan in Kolkata has issued notice upon the accused persons, the statement said.

The ED probe, launched on an FIR registered against Hussain, revealed the accused was living in India under the assumed identity of Azad Mallik and in connivance with Haldar, was fraudulently obtaining Indian identity documents for illegal Bangladeshi immigrants in lieu of money. Subsequently, Hussain was arrested on April 15 while Haldar was arrested on October 13. Both are currently in judicial custody. According to officials, ED conducted searches at premises linked with Hussain and seized incriminating documents and records, showing he procured multiple Indian identity documents such as Aadhaar card, PAN card, and

passport using forged information with the help of his accomplices. He is also accused of operating a hawala network to facilitate illegal cross-border remittances between India and Bangladesh, collecting payments in cash and UPI, before transferring equivalent amounts to Bangladesh using platforms like bKash.

Hussain referred Bangladeshi clients to Haldar and the duo would charge Rs 50,000 each for making Indian documents, including passports, and processed 300-400 such applications of illegal Bangladeshi in India, ED officials said. The ED said there were 29 passport applications in which Haldar had submitted copies of ITR and some applications contained "several discrepancies beyond imagination", underlining the fact that Indian IDs were issued for the Bangladeshi using "fabricated" documents. In one instance, according to the agency, two brothers had furnished their dates of birth in the passport application form as 1st January 1988 and 1st April 1988, respectively – a gap of only three months, which is biologically impossible. "In another instance, two brothers have dates of birth as 24.10.1975 and 24.05.1976 respectively, a gap of only seven months, which is again dubious," the ED said in a statement.

The agency also found that a local Full Fledged Money Changer (FFMC) permitted Hussain to operate the forex counter despite being aware of his non-Indian identity. Hussain used to sell forex in public without any supporting documents for a commission, the ED said. For maintaining the documentation as per the RBI guidelines, they used to show fake, bogus sales in the name of several individual entities by using their documents without their knowledge and consent, ED said. Large sums of money, exceeding Rs 80 crore, were deposited into the company's bank accounts under the guise of foreign currency sales to multiple customers, ED said, adding the probe has revealed that these transactions involved forged documents, fake cash memos, and unauthorised use of individual identities of numerous customers.

CM Sukhu leads Anti-Chitta walkathon, says will wipe out network



GNS News Agency, Dec 17

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu on Tuesday led an Anti-Chitta Awareness Walkathon in Hamirpur, which witnessed the participation of thousands of school and college students among citizens of the state. Commencing from Government Senior Secondary School (Boys) Hamirpur, the walkathon concluded at the Police Lines Dosarka Ground. Before the walkathon, the Chief Minister administered a solemn oath at the school ground, where the crowd pledged to eliminate chitta and other narcotics from the state. "Strict and decisive action is underway to uproot the 'chitta termite' from its very roots through the unyielding force of the law."

Addressing the gathering, the CM said Himachal Pradesh was engaged in a decisive battle against chitta. He emphasised that the state has launched a comprehensive and uncompromising offensive against this lethal drug. He also said drug traffickers, suppliers and those providing protection to these illicit networks were being systematically targeted. The state is using advanced technology besides a strengthened intelligence framework and stringent legal provisions to dismantle narcotics cartels. Reiterating his government's resolve, the CM said the administration was committed to wipe out the chitta traf-

fickers' networks. He underscored that this campaign was not merely a law enforcement initiative but a people's mass movement to protect the core identity and social fabric of Himachal Pradesh. Sukhu outlined a holistic strategy to combat the chitta mafia with a special focus on rehabilitation and support for victims of drug abuse. The administration is establishing new de-addiction centres across the state. The state is also forming a dedicated 'Drug De-addiction, Prevention and Rehabilitation Board' to coordinate efforts in treatment, prevention and community outreach. The CM emphasised that youths trapped in drug addiction are being rehabilitated and brought back into the mainstream of society.

Sukhu also announced rewards ranging from Rs 10,000 to Rs 10 lakh to those providing information about chitta suppliers. He also assured that the identities of informers would be kept confidential with complete protection guaranteed by the government. Sukhu also said the administration held meetings of Drug De-addiction Committees in 234 panchayats and urban local bodies, most affected by drugs. These meetings focused on strengthening public participation and marking detailed discussions. During the walkathon, the CM interacted with children and explained how chitta poses a serious threat to the health and the society. He encouraged students to spread awareness about the fatal effects of drugs and narcotics. Students and citizens carried placards and raised slogans against chitta. Technical Education Minister Rajesh Dharmani, Political Advisor to the Chief Minister Sunil Sharma Bittu, MLAs Suresh Kumar and Captain Ranjit Singh, Chairman APMC Ajay Sharma, Chief Secretary Sanjay Gupta, Director General of Police Ashok Tiwari, Convener and Advisor of the De-addiction, Prevention and Rehabilitation Board Naresh Thakur, Co-Convenor Sanjay Bhardwaj, Congress leaders Pushpender Verma and Subhash Datwalia, representatives of various organisations and other dignitaries were present on the occasion.

Third phase of election process completed in Yadadri Bhuvanagiri district..“92.56 percent polling recorded:



- Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Collector Hanumantha Rao ("Mandava Srisailam... Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... December 17) - District Election Officer and Collector Hanumantha Rao stated that the third phase of the election process in the district has been completed peacefully in the context of the 2nd general panchayat elections. He said that 92.56 percent polling was recorded during the third phase of elections held in the district on Wednesday. He stated that comprehensive measures were taken to ensure that the panchayat elections in the district were conducted smoothly. He said that micro-observers, flying squads, Mandal Parishad Development Officers, Panchayat Secretaries, police personnel, and polling officers performed their duties efficiently and in coordination during the third phase of the election process. He stated that transparent elections were conducted without any difficulties. In the wake of the completion of the first, second, and third phases of the Gram Panchayat elections, he stated that the winning candidates and their representatives should not hold victory rallies, public meetings, or processions. He added that even though the Gram Panchayat elections have been completed in three phases, the Model Code of Conduct will remain in effect until the Election Commis-

sion issues further guidelines. He warned that action will be taken against those who violate the rules and regulations.

Appeal for Adequate Opportunities in Nominated Posts“TPCC SC Cell Convener H. R. Mohan”

"Nacharam, Indian Chronicle, December 17: "A delegation led by TPCC SC Cell Convener H. R. Mohan met Koppula Raju, the SC, ST, OBC, and Minority All India Coordinator In-charge, to seek greater representation and opportunities for SC leaders in the upcoming filling of nominated posts in Telangana. The delegation emphasized that leaders from marginalized communities should be given fair consideration in key positions to ensure social justice and inclusive governance. During the courtesy meeting, the delegation specifically requested that deserving SC leaders be considered for important positions, including the Chairman of the SC Commission and the Chairman posts in various municipal corporations across the state. They highlighted that these posts should reflect the spirit of equitable representation, providing a platform for SC, ST, OBC, and minority leaders to contribute effectively to governance and public service. As a gesture of respect and recognition, the delegation presented a memento to Koppula Raju. Speaking on the occasion, H. R. Mohan stated that Koppula Raju assured full cooperation and extended his commitment to support the inclusion of SC leaders in the nomination process. Mohan also emphasized that the TPCC SC Cell would continue to monitor the process to ensure transparency and fairness in the selection of nominated posts."

‘Nobody will be spared’: BMC issues notice to metro contractor J Kumar Infraprojects for flouting pollution norms; MMRDA defends



GNS News Agency, Dec 17

AMID THE city grappling with air pollution woes, Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation has issued a fresh show cause to J Kumar Infraprojects—the third in three years—for violating the air pollution mitigation guidelines on multiple accounts at the Metro Line 2B website spanning over 2.5 km in Bandra Kurla Complex. The project managed by Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA) is being executed by J Kumar Infraprojects—the contractor appointed by MMRDA. Records accessed by The Indian Express show that this is the third time that the M/S J Kumar has been served a show cause notice including a stop work notice in 2023 over non-compliance. According to the BMC notice, a copy of which is with The Indian Express, the contractor failed to adhere to norms on 18 of the 20 accounts that were applicable to the project. BMC has a 28-point guideline that was issued in October 2023 to regulate pollution at construction sites. The latest notice was served to J Kumar RMC plant operated by J Kumar Infraprojects on December 11, 2025 for failing to adhere to mitigation measures at the Metro worksite's RMC plant.

The show cause notice was served after site inspection by the BMC's H(East) ward's air pollution mitigation squad on December 4, wherein the squad observed an array of violations—from lack of metal/tin sheets to absence of air pollution monitoring records and lack of valid PUC certificates for their transport vehicles among others. Noting the violations, BMC first issued an 'Inspection Report' to the contractor on the same day and asked them to comply with the stipulated norms. However, as BMC in its sub-

sequent visits noted that most of the applicable guidelines were not being adhered to, it then issued a "show cause" notice to J Kumar's RMC plant site on December 11. "Such non-compliance amounts to a violation of the prescribed Air Pollution Mitigation Guidelines and poses a serious threat to environmental safety and public health," said the BMC in its show cause notice, stating that a stop work notice will be issued against the project works in the absence of a satisfactory explanation. BMC additional municipal commissioner, Avinash Dhakne said, "Nobody will be spared, whether it is a government or private agency. We have issued strict instructions that whoever is polluting should be booked. Today as well, I convened a meeting with some ward officials where I directed them to strictly issue notices wherever there is a discrepancy." Emails sent to J Kumar Infraprojects did not elicit any response.

A senior officer with MMRDA, requesting anonymity said, "Our records show that PM 2.5 and PM 10 limits at the project site are satisfactory and within the stipulated norms. We are not contributing to air pollution as 90 percent of the work on the Metro project sites have already been completed. Currently, most of the pollution is being contributed to by private development projects. Therefore, instead of blaming the Metro work site, the BMC should focus on such sites which are actually contributing to air pollution as well as implement the mitigation measures." With this third notice to M/S J Kumar for this project site in three years, BMC had served a stop work notice to J Kumar Infraprojects in November 2023 for failing to adhere to the mitigation measures at the BKC work site and then again issued a show cause notice to M/S J Kumar's casting yard site on December 23, 2024 wherein the civic body had flagged the absence of adherence to the civic norms for mitigation of air pollution. The show cause notice at the BKC worksite has come at a time when the BKC commercial hub has been grappling with deteriorating air quality. Records from the MPCB showed that the monitoring station at Bandra Kurla Complex has recorded consistently poor AQI since early November this year, when unseasonal rainfall activity receded. Between November 6 and Tuesday (December 16), the BKC station logged 'moderate' AQI over 100 on all days with the worst air quality was observed on December 4 when the AQI level plummeted to the poor category at 232.

UP acts tough against fake fertiliser sale, CM calls for invoking NSA



GNS News Agency, Dec 17

In a meeting with the Agriculture Minister and department officials, the CM said that accountability should be fixed, and the guilty will face action irrespective of their position if the government receives any information about irregularities. He further said the activities of field-level officers will be monitored, and an open vigilance inquiry will be conducted if collusion or negligence is found at any level. In another meeting, he directed the ministers of key departments to conduct monthly reviews of works in order to achieve the goal of making Uttar Pradesh a \$1 trillion economy. During a meeting with Cabinet ministers and top officers of key departments, the CM also instructed that the Chief Secretary conduct fortnightly reviews, additional chief secretaries, principal secretaries and heads of departments weekly reviews for the same. Taking stock of the status of budget allocations and expenditure of various departments for the financial year 2025-26, he emphasised quality review of "identified points" and timely completion of all works, along with time-bound disposal of files by officials concerned. The Chief Minister was informed that UP's gross state domestic product (GSDP) stood at Rs 29.78 lakh crore and that the state's contribution to the national economy in 2024-25 increased to 9 percent, up from 8.6 percent in 2022-23. It was also stated that 93 percent of the GSDP target has already been achieved and efforts are underway to reach the target of Rs 42 lakh crore. Adityanath instructed that real-time data of departmental works be uploaded promptly and the data collection process be expedited further. The ministers and officers were asked to maintain continuous coordination with Central government officials to ensure the timely receipt of the central share and the budget allocations be spent on time.

The Planning Department should establish a robust mechanism to collect data from all departments on a weekly basis, he said.

"UP contributes 21 percent of the country's total foodgrain production. Ensuring foodgrain and nutritional security while increasing farmers' income through an effective agricultural strategy is the government's objective. The state's agricultural growth rate remains above 13 percent and work on seed parks and the UP Agri-Edge project should be expedited," he said. The CM added that road safety is the government's top priority and concrete efforts should be made to reduce road accidents in view of fog.

The Transport Department should hold a comprehensive review meeting, rationalise registration fees for commercial vehicles and enhance quality bus services for convenient public travel, he said. He further said that Uttar Pradesh has witnessed a record influx of tourists in recent years. By June this year, around 125 crore tourists visited the state, it was informed. Claiming that Garhmukteshwar was a major pilgrimage centre in western Uttar Pradesh, he ordered upgrade of facilities for devotees and tourists there. He also called for effective implementation of the homestay policy, promotion of the hotel industry and developing tourist destination plans. District-wise targets will be set under the Chief Minister's Mass Marriage Scheme, he said, adding that the setting up of digital libraries at the gram panchayat level be expedited and high-quality computers be provided. The CM was informed that in the power sector, reduction in electricity theft and technical losses has improved the performance of state power corporations. In the industrial sector, the addition of 7,000 new factories under the ASI framework has accelerated economic activity in private and semi-private companies, it was said. Increased registration of companies and factories under MCA has further strengthened industrial development, it was claimed. In the education sector, it was reported that salary adjustments for teachers and staff of government-aided schools have resulted in an additional increase of approximately Rs 0.60 lakh crore in the sector's GSVA. Adityanath said that the agriculture and cooperation ministers will review fertiliser availability and distribution on a daily basis while the Chief Minister's Office will directly monitor the situation in all districts. He directed the district magistrates, additional district magistrates and sub-divisional magistrates to conduct surprise inspections of fertiliser shops and cooperative societies.

Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Election Officer Hanmant Rao congratulated the staff for successfully conducting the Gram Panchayat elections in the district.“



"(Mandava Srisailam... Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... December 17):- On the occasion of the successful completion of the Gram Panchayat elections in three phases, the Election Officer and Collector Hanmant Rao extended his heartfelt congratulations to the election officers and staff. "He said that the discipline, commitment, and dedication shown by them in conducting the elections were commendable.

He stated that their services in upholding democratic values ??and conducting the elections in a peaceful atmosphere were invaluable, and expressed his hope that they would successfully carry out similar responsibilities in the future as well. He concluded by conveying his congratulations and best wishes to everyone once again.

Do we need large Army? future wars will be about air power and missiles: Prithviraj Chavan



GNS News Agency, Dec 17

Senior Congress leader Prithviraj Chavan on Tuesday (December 16, 2025) said India holds superiority over Pakistan in terms of the Army size, but Operation Sindoor clearly established future conflicts are going to be largely in domain of air power and missiles. "As far as the Army is concerned, we have a strength of 12 lakh to 15 lakh, while Pakistan has 5 lakh to 6 lakh personnel. But it [large size]

has no meaning because that kind of war [on ground] will not happen now," he argued. Talking to reporters in Pune, the former Union Minister questioned the need to have such a large Army.

"Now it is irrelevant how much Infantry you have as no one will allow you to do that kind of war, and we have seen that during Operation Sindoor, the military did not move even 1 km. The conflict during Operation Sindoor was largely an aerial engagement and missile war, and going forward, wars will take place in a similar manner," he insisted. "In this case, is there any need to keep an Army of 12 lakh? It is better to engage them in some other work. Though we have an economy that is ten times bigger than Pakistan's, there is parity now [as far as the Army is concerned]," Mr. Chavan maintained. Henceforth, there will be no "hot war" where tanks of both the countries will confront each other, the Congress leader noted. "During Kargil [in 1999], then-U.S. President Bill Clinton called to stop the war. This time [U.S. President Donald] Trump said 'stop the war' and it [Operation Sindoor] was stopped and we did not do anything," he claimed.

Philippines says no evidence of terrorist training linked to suspects' trip

GNS News Agency, Dec 17

The Philippines said on Wednesday (December 17, 2025) there was no evidence that the country was being used for terrorist training, a day after it was revealed the men behind Australia's Bondi Beach mass shooting had spent November on a southern island known for Islamist insurrections. "[President Ferdinand Marcos] strongly rejects the sweeping statement and the misleading characterisation of the Philippines as the ISIS training hotspot," presidential spokeswoman Claire Castro said at a press briefing. "No evidence has been presented to support claims that the country was used for terrorist training," she added, reading from a National Security Council statement.

"There is no validated report or confirmation that individuals involved in the Bondi Beach incident received any form of training in the Philippines. "On Tuesday, the country's immigration office confirmed that Sajid Akram and his son Naveed, who killed 15 people and wounded dozens of others at a Hanukkah celebration on Sydney's Bondi Beach, entered the country on November 1 headed for the southern province of Davao. The island of Mindanao, where Davao is located, has a long history of Islamist insurrections against central government rule. Australian authorities are investigating whether the two men met with extremists during the trip. The Philippine military, however, said on Wednesday that armed Muslim groups still operating on Mindanao had been largely degraded in the years since the siege of Marawi. The five-month battle for the city that pitted government forces against pro-Islamic State Maute and Abu Sayyaf militants claimed more than 1,000 lives and dis-



placed hundreds of thousands of people. "We have not recorded any major terrorist operations or training activities... since the beginning of 2024," Philippine military spokeswoman Colonel Francel Padilla said at a morning press briefing. "They are fragmented, and they have no leadership," she added of the insurgent groups. Colonel Xerxes Trinidad told reporters the father-and-son duo's November trip to the Philippines would not have provided adequate time for significant training. "Training cannot be acquired in just 30 days... especially if you are to undergo marksmanship [training]," he said. But Rommel Banlaoi, a Manila-based security analyst, told AFP that while many insurgent groups were "on the run", they were far from eradicated. "There are still many active training camps in [central] Mindanao. Those did not disappear," he told AFP, adding even weakened insurgent movements maintained connections "locally and globally online".

Australian police charge alleged killer with terrorism, 15 murder counts



GNS News Agency, Dec 17

Police charged alleged Bondi killer Naveed Akram with terrorism, 15 counts of murder and a litany of other crimes on Wednesday (December 17, 2025) as grief-stricken mourners buried the first of 15 people slain in the attack. Sajid Akram and his son Naveed are accused of opening fire on a Jewish festival at the famed surf beach on Sunday evening, killing 15 people in a shooting spree inspired by the Islamic State group. Naveed was charged with 15 counts of murder on Wednesday (December 17, 2025) after waking from a coma, as well as committing a "terrorist act" and planting a bomb with intent to harm. "Police will allege in court the man engaged in conduct that caused death, serious injury and endangered life to advance a religious cause and cause fear in the community," New South Wales state police said in a statement. "Early indications point to a terrorist attack inspired by ISIS, a listed terrorist organization in Australia."

Father Sajid, 50, was killed at the scene in a shootout with police. Naveed, 24, was also shot and remained in hospital under police guard. Authorities said the attack was designed to sow panic among the nation's Jews. Australian police are investigating whether the pair met with Islamist extremists during a visit to the Philippines weeks before the shooting. The Philippines said on Wednesday there was no evidence that the country was being used for "terrorist training". Outpouring of grief. Mourners collapsed in grief as they held the first funerals for those slain in the attack. Rabbi Eli Schlanger was the first laid to rest, drawing masses of black-clad mourners who spilled out of the Chabad of Bondi Synagogue in Sydney's east. Two young women howled with sorrow as they flung themselves on the father-of-five's casket that was draped with a black velvet cloth bearing the Star of David. "You're my son, my friend and confidant," father-in-law Yehoram Ulman, choking back tears, told the funeral. "To think I will go a day without you, it doesn't seem possible." The 41-year-old was a popular figure known to many around town as the "rabbi of Bondi". He served as a chaplain in prisons and hospitals, according to the Hasidic Chabad movement. Weeping men fell into each other's arms as their legs buckled under the weight of their anguish. "This loss is massive for the entire Jewish nation, but for our community here, and for Chabad of Bondi, the loss is unspeakable," rabbi Levi Wolff told the funeral. Squads of police patrolled the streets outside the Bondi synagogue, marshalling the large crowds gathered for the service. Those unable to cram inside huddled together on the street to watch on their cellphones. "My heart goes out to the community today and every day," Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said. "But today particularly will be a difficult day with the first funerals underway." Mourners later crammed into a suburban chapel for the funeral of rabbi Yaakov Levitan. Levitan was a father of four renowned for his charitable work, the Chabad movement said.

Among the other victims were a 10-year-old girl, two Holocaust survivors, and a married couple shot and killed as they tried to thwart the attack. Questions are mounting over whether authorities could have acted earlier to foil the gunmen. Naveed Akram, reportedly an unemployed bricklayer, came to the attention of Australia's intelligence agency in 2019. But he was not considered to be an imminent threat at the time and largely fell off the radar. Australian heroes? Recently surfaced dashcam footage shows married couple Boris and Sofia Gurman trying to thwart the attack in its early stages.

Retired mechanic Boris Gurman, 69, knocks one attacker to the ground as he tries to rip away his long-barrelled gun. He briefly wrests control of Sajid Akram's weapon as his wife Sofia Gurman, 61, dashes towards him in support. The assailant reportedly managed to get another gun, and the couple was shot and killed. "While nothing can lessen the pain of losing Boris and Sofia, we feel an overwhelming sense of pride in their bravery and selflessness," the Gurman family said in a statement.

Australia's leaders have agreed to toughen laws that allowed Sajid Akram to own six guns. Mass shootings have been rare in Australia since a lone gunman killed 35 people in the tourist town of Port Arthur in 1996. That attack sparked a world-leading crackdown that included a gun buyback scheme and limits on semi-automatic weapons. However, Australia has documented a steady rise in privately owned firearms in recent years. The attack has also revived allegations that Australia is dragging its feet in the fight against antisemitism. "I demand that Western governments do what is necessary to fight antisemitism and provide the required safety and security for Jewish communities worldwide," Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said in a video address on Tuesday. "They would do well to heed our warnings," he added. "I demand action - now."

Bondi shooting: Philippines says no evidence of terrorist training linked to suspects' trip

The Philippines said on Wednesday (December 17, 2025) there was no evidence that the country was being used for terrorist training, a day after it was revealed the men behind Australia's Bondi Beach mass shooting had spent November on a southern island known for Islamist insurrections. "[President Ferdinand Marcos] strongly rejects the sweeping statement and the misleading characterisation of the Philippines as the ISIS training hotspot," presidential spokeswoman Claire Castro said at a press briefing. "No evidence has been presented to support claims that the country was used for terrorist training," she added, reading from a National Security Council statement. "There is no validated report or confirmation that individuals involved in the Bondi Beach incident received any form of training in the Philippines. "On Tuesday, the country's immigration office confirmed that Sajid Akram and his son Naveed, who killed 15 people and wounded dozens of others at a Hanukkah celebration on Sydney's Bondi Beach, entered the country on November 1 headed for the southern province of Davao. The island of Mindanao, where Davao is located, has a long history of Islamist insurrections against central government rule.

MIT professor fatally shot at home: Homicide investigation underway as no suspects caught yet



GNS News Agency, Dec 17

A professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology was fatally shot at his home near Boston, and authorities said Tuesday they had launched a homicide investigation. Nuno F.G. Loureiro, a 47-year-old professor of physics, nuclear science and engineering, was shot Monday (December 15) night at his home in Brookline, Massachusetts. He died at a local hospital on Tuesday (December 16). The Norfolk District Attorney's Office said in a statement. The Prosecutor's office said no suspects had been taken into custody as of Tuesday (December 17) afternoon, and that its investigation was ongoing.

Loureiro, who joined MIT in 2016, had been named last year to lead MIT's Plasma Science and Fusion Centre, where he hoped to advance clean energy technology. The centre, one of MIT's largest labs, had more than 250 people

working across seven buildings when he took the helm. Loureiro was from Portugal, where he did his undergraduate studies before earning a doctorate in London, according to MIT. He was a researcher at an institute for nuclear fusion in Lisbon before joining MIT, it said. "He shone a bright light as a mentor, friend, teacher, colleague and leader, and was universally admired for his articulate, compassionate manner," Dennis Whyte, an engineering professor who previously led MIT's Plasma Science and Fusion Centre, told a campus publication.

The homicide investigation in Brookline comes as police in Providence, Rhode Island, about 50 miles away, continue to search for the gunman who killed two students and injured nine others at Brown University on Saturday. A 22-year-old student at Boston University who lives near Loureiro's apartment in Brookline told The Boston Globe she heard three loud noises Monday evening and feared it was gunfire. "I had never heard anything so loud, so I assumed they were gunshots," Liv Schachner was quoted as saying. "It's difficult to grasp. It just seems like it keeps happening." Some of Loureiro's students visited his home, an apartment in a three-story brick building, Tuesday afternoon to pay their respects, the Globe reported. The U.S. Ambassador to Portugal, John J. Arrijo, expressed his condolences in an online post that honoured him for his leadership and contributions to science. "It's not hyperbole to say MIT is where you go to find solutions to humanity's biggest problems," Loureiro said when he was named to lead the plasma science lab last year. "Fusion energy will change the course of human history."

21-million-year-old sea cow species discovered in Qatar's 'Dugong Cemetery'



Imagine being on a sandy, vast stretch of nothingness, and you are welcomed by hundreds of bones scattered across the sand. This is precisely what a group of geologists, surveying the Al Maszhabiya region, in a desert of southwestern Qatar, some 50 years ago, witnessed. At the time, they assumed that it was yet another desert fossil discovery of ancient reptiles. Years later, in the early 2000s, a new group of scientists from the Smithsonian Institution and Qatar Museums decided to re-examine the region and the bones to resolve this mystery fully. "The area was called 'dugong cemetery' among the members of our authority," recalls Ferhan Sakal, an archaeologist and head of excavation and site management at Qatar Museums. "But at the time, we had no idea just how rich and vast the bonebed actually was." Bone In Frame: Fossilised dugong bones in sabkha in southwest Qatar (photo: Wikimedia Commons)

This new examination revealed that this vast site is actually a 21-million-year-old bonebed, filled with the remains of sea cows, sharks, barracuda-like fish, prehistoric dolphins, and sea turtles. More than 170 fossil-rich spots were identified, making it one of the richest marine fossil deposits in the world. Some experts even compared it to Chile's famous Whale Hill, where dozens of whale skeletons were found. Recently, a new finding from the region, published in the journal PeerJ, has surfaced. A new species of sea cow, named *Salwasiren qatarenensis*, has been discovered. It is named after Qatar. The animal looks a lot like the dugongs, which still live just 10 miles away today. There are a few differences, though: this sea cow was smaller, had a

straighter snout, shorter tusks, and still had hind-limb bones, which modern sea cows have lost over millions of years. The mix of fossils found at Al Maszhabiya indicates that this desert was once a shallow sea teeming with life. The rocks preserve a long history of environmental change over millions of years — information that scientists believe can help predict how today's marine ecosystems may respond to warming waters, rising salinity, and pollution. Today, the Arabian Gulf hosts the world's largest herd of dugongs, but their future is uncertain because their seagrass habitats are under threat. Researchers think ancient *Salwasiren* played the same role in the ecosystem that dugongs play now — grazing on seagrass and helping keep the marine environment healthy.

MIT professor fatally shot at his home; police launch homicide investigation



Brookline: A professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology was fatally shot at his home near Boston, and authorities said Tuesday they had launched a homicide investigation. Nuno F.G. Loureiro, a 47-year-old professor of physics, nuclear science and engineering, was shot Monday night at his home in Brookline, Massachusetts. He died at a local hospital on Tuesday, the Norfolk District Attorney's Office said in a statement.

The prosecutor's office said no suspects had been taken into custody as of Tuesday afternoon, and that its investigation was ongoing. Loureiro, who joined MIT in 2016, had been named last year to lead MIT's Plasma Science and Fusion Centre, where he hoped to advance clean energy technology. The centre, one of MIT's largest labs, had more than 250 people working across seven buildings, had

he took the helm. Loureiro was from Portugal, where he did his undergraduate studies before earning a doctorate in London, according to MIT. He was a researcher at an institute for nuclear fusion in Lisbon before joining MIT, it said. "He shone a bright light as a mentor, friend, teacher, colleague and leader, and was universally admired for his articulate, compassionate manner," Dennis Whyte, an engineering professor who previously led MIT's Plasma Science and Fusion Centre, told a campus publication.

The homicide investigation in Brookline comes as police in Providence, Rhode Island, about 50 miles away, continue to search for the gunman who killed two students and injured nine others at Brown University on Saturday. A 22-year-old student at Boston University who lives near Loureiro's apartment in Brookline told The Boston Globe she heard three loud noises Monday evening and feared it was gunfire. "I had never heard anything so loud, so I assumed they were gunshots," Liv Schachner was quoted as saying. "It's difficult to grasp. It just seems like it keeps happening." Some of Loureiro's students visited his home, an apartment in a three-story brick building, Tuesday afternoon to pay their respects, the Globe reported. The US ambassador to Portugal, John J. Arrijo, expressed his condolences in an online post that honoured him for his leadership and contributions to science. "It's not hyperbole to say MIT is where you go to find solutions to humanity's biggest problems," Loureiro said when he was named to lead the plasma science lab last year. "Fusion energy will change the course of human history."

U.S. threatens retaliation over 'unreasonable' EU tech regulations

The United States threatened countermeasures against the EU on Tuesday (December 16, 2025) over the bloc's efforts to tax American firms, pointing to major European companies as potential targets. But the European Union swiftly vowed to keep enforcing its tech regulations "without discrimination." In a social media post, the U.S. Trade Representative's (USTR) office criticized the EU and certain member states for their "continuing course of discriminatory and harassing lawsuits, taxes, fines, and directives" against American service providers. It warned that if the bloc and its members pressed on with moves deemed to deter the competitiveness of U.S. companies, Washington "will have no choice but to begin using every tool at its disposal to counter these unreasonable measures." The post also signaled that key European businesses could be targeted in response, listing Accenture, DHL, Mistral, Siemens and Spotify among others. "Should responsive measures be necessary, U.S. law permits the assessment of fees or restrictions on foreign services, among other actions," the USTR said. It added that Washington would take a similar approach to other countries that pursue an "EU-style strategy in this area." Thomas Regnier, a spokesman for the European Commission, however responded that "as we have made clear many times, our rules apply equally and

fairly to all companies operating in the EU." "We will continue to enforce our rules fairly, and without discrimination," he said. The U.S. statement also sparked pushback from Luther Lowe, head of public policy at startup accelerator Y Combinator. Mr. Lowe called the move "a disappointing betrayal of 'little tech,'" adding that the EU's Digital Markets Act helps unlock market share for U.S. firms. President Donald Trump has previously lashed out at the European bloc over its regulation of U.S. tech firms, and the USTR's statement marks a further attempt to put pressure on Brussels. Mr. Trump threatened retaliatory tariffs in September after the bloc slapped Google with a \$3.47 billion antitrust fine. Earlier this month, the U.S. leader also criticized a "nasty" \$140 million fine by the EU against tech tycoon Elon Musk's X social network. He warned that "Europe has to be very careful." Tensions will likely continue to simmer, with Google, Microsoft and Amazon recently facing further scrutiny by authorities in Brussels. On Tuesday, the USTR post argued that American companies have provided "substantial free services" to EU citizens and "reliable enterprise services" to companies. It also said that EU service providers, in turn, had been able to "operate freely" in the United States. Mr. Trump's pushback against countries that he says are targeting U.S. tech firms has prompted some changes elsewhere.

The Messi odyssey: of hard-earned memories and clicks



That, in essence, was Lionel Messi's GOAT India Tour, a whirlwind that delivered all the adulation the Argentine icon deserved, along with a measure of chaos he could have done without. Kolkata, where football borders on religion, was the tour's natural starting point. Mumbai and New Delhi, with their blend of glamour and power, were equally inevitable. The fourth and final stop, however, remained open, triggering a quiet contest among several States eager to host the world's most recognisable footballer.

While Messi's visit to India had been billed and advertised as a private event, there is no event in the country, especially one this high profile, that goes by without one, if not all, of the three industries having a hand in it: politics, films, and cricket. And it is one part of that Venn diagram that ended up clinching Hyderabad's spot on the tour.

"We had competition from Gujarat and Rajasthan. Even Karnataka was trying. Some states were trying very, very hard to take him," Parvathi Reddy, Chief Patron and advisor for the Hyderabad leg of the GOAT Tour, told *The Hindu*. "However, I had a trump card, and that was (Telangana Chief Minister) Revanth Reddy. Coincidentally, you know, he plays the sport and is passionate about it as well. Why not bring that in on the table?" If anticipation surrounded Messi's arrival in Hyderabad, so did anxiety, largely because of what had unfolded earlier in Kolkata. The scenes there, widely documented by national and international media, prompted alarm bells in the City of Pearls. Security was tightened, protocols revisited, and nerves stretched. When Messi landed in Hyderabad alongside Inter Miami teammates Luis Suárez and Rodrigo De Paul, there was little spectacle. Any concerns about the trio's mood after Kolkata, however, dissipated quickly. "When we were in the car on our way from the stadium, I was telling De Paul that I have a son who is his age and is just as naughty as him. Then he began to joke about his age; he said he was 30 and was trying to play the fool. The other guys immediately chimed in and caught his lie. They were pulling each other's leg with age; they were adding two years to each other's ages and laughing about it. The vibe was very good."

"I think Hyderabad made them relax; we gave them the comfort for them to be themselves. It was not overwhelming for them, in spite of what happened in Kolkata. They landed with some fear, understandably, maybe thinking, 'What is going to happen?' But we didn't invade their personal spaces. Messi was mobbed in the City of Joy, not by the masses but by bureaucrats, all wanting a piece of the legendary pie. Fans could barely spot their idol, and the hallowed turf of the Salt Lake Stadium, for once, left all fans, irrespective of their club or national allegiances, equally betrayed and seething with anger.

"I did have a conversation with Messi when they all landed, and we were in the car. The first thing I told them and the whole team was that everything in Hyderabad was in control. We also told them we will not have anybody on the field at the stadium. Only the children and four photographers, no one else to mob them," she said. Further proof of their ease came as soon as they reached Falaknuma Palace. "There was this band playing as soon as we entered Falaknuma. The hotel arranged it, it is a regular thing they do. Bouquets were given, and then they had these dancers dancing to some music. I saw De Paul shake a leg and I was like 'okay, let's move a little bit.' He's such a wonderful character! They were all very chilled out." Recouping investment Messi's time in Hyderabad began with a meet-and-greet session at the Falaknuma Palace. The private event, for which tickets were sold to the crème de la crème of society for ₹10 lakh each, generated a lot of debate online. Parvathi, however, vehemently defended the model. "In theatres, why do we have 500 rupee tickets and then cheaper ones? Why do you segregate? It's as simple as that. Why do you have a business class ticket and a normal economy class ticket? Why don't you question that? In the end, you have to generate money to

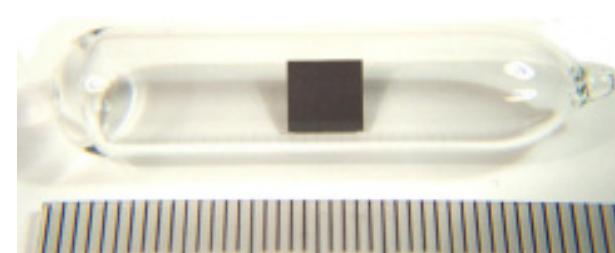
have an event like this and also make it 'normal' for regular people who wouldn't otherwise fly to Argentina or the US or somewhere to see Messi." The demand ultimately fell short of expectations. "We had 100 slots that we wanted to sell, but we barely sold 20 to 25. People were hardly willing to spend that kind of money. Meaning, they're still not mentally prepared, even the ones who can afford it. The response to that event was definitely very, very minimal," she said. "Sponsors got to take a picture for free. Some we had sent as a courtesy, especially to people who have helped us put it together. There were some that were purchased and there were some that went to sponsors as a deliverable. So all of these categories of people were there."

The players moved along, insulated from these logistical elements. Their mood also got a boost when they could switch back to a more familiar tongue – Spanish – during a brief chat with Congress leader Rahul Gandhi. "Rahul ji, Revanth Reddy, myself, Messi, Suarez, De Paul, all of us were there and had a chat for a few minutes around the courtyard garden. He (Rahul) had a conversation with them in Spanish, and they felt very comfortable with that." Wants, and hard lines The tour then moved to Uppal, where a section of the cricket stadium had been converted into a makeshift football pitch. Images of Messi, Suarez, and De Paul casually striking footballs into the stands soon flooded social media – a rare moment of ease amid a relentless schedule.

They spent less than an hour at the venue, but left behind memories that fans will carry for a lifetime. With Mumbai and Delhi still to come, the rest was the priority, though not before dinner. "The players asked for grilled chicken and fish. De Paul told me that he loves eating sweet potatoes and requested me to ensure he gets that." There was one unanimous instruction, however. "They didn't want spice. The line 'We don't want spice,' was said about 10 times." Officially, Messi's Hyderabad visit ended that night. For fans, it didn't. "I saw a kid who had come from Mumbai. He wanted to see Messi, and at around 11:30 p.m. or so, when I was leaving the hotel, he asked me, 'Aunty, will he not come out?' I said no, he's retired for the night. The next morning, I saw him waiting in the courtyard again." And he was not the only kid at the hotel who was eager to get a brush with greatness, pushing Parvathi to improvise. "There were a lot of children in Falaknuma who wanted a picture. I knew it would be chaotic; there were at least 20 to 30 children. Since individual pictures were not possible, I made them sit together, in three levels."

"One standing, one kneeling, and one sitting down. And I told them to leave space for three people in the center. One of Messi's personal security was unsure if a picture would happen. But I fought back and said it will happen." Then Messi walked out, and then all three of them went straight to the children and took a picture. They saw those kids beautifully in three levels, and I didn't have to tell them anything. They just walked straight to them and took a picture. I felt very good that I could give that picture for free to 20 children who I thought would go home happy." While Hyderabad delivered the hospitality India prides itself on, Parvathi was left with a few personal regrets. "My entire team couldn't get a picture with them, nor did anyone from Hyderabad Talkies (the company managing the event)," she said, adding, "But when you host something, you have to be very responsible. Our focus was fully on that, and in the end, we couldn't get a picture with the team." "In fact, I spent a lot of time with them in the car, and I do not have a single selfie with all three of them. I still cannot believe I forgot that! Thankfully, De Paul was kind enough to suggest I take one with him when we were in the stadium." While she couldn't get her family to also have a picture with the three players, she is glad to have gotten their autographs for her daughter-in-law. "My daughter-in-law is pregnant, and we didn't want to take her to public spaces. And because there was so much happening, you can't steal their time for yourself. Unfortunately, she couldn't get a picture with Messi, but we managed to get her his autograph, that too on her handbag! So she's very happy about it." "When I told Messi that my daughter-in-law wants his signature on her bag, he paused and then asked me if I was sure. I told him that the memory that he will give her will be priceless." In a tour dominated by flash and fanfare, and beyond the stadiums and cameras, it was the human connections that left the deepest marks. The small gestures and the fleeting smiles were a reminder that Messi is more than a footballer; he's a moment-maker. For Hyderabad, and for the fans lucky enough to witness it, it was less about chaos and more about character. Messi's boots may have left the city, but his footprint is now permanent.

Counting electrons reveals thorium's nuclear tick in a solid clock



Scientists have found a way to detect thorium-229's nuclear 'tick' in a solid, opening a path to miniaturised nuclear clocks

Atomic clocks keep time by counting the 'ticks' of electrons moving between two energy levels. Physicists have long wanted to count a nuclear tick instead. A nucleus is more shielded than an atom's outer electrons, so its energy levels are expected to be less sensitive to disturbances. The main candidate for a nuclear clock is thorium-229 (229Th). Its nucleus has an unusual excited state that's only about 8.4 electron-volts (eV) above the ground state: low enough for a vacuum-ultraviolet (VUV) laser light to excite it directly.

A practical problem has been detecting that excitation in solids. The most direct method is to look for the VUV photon emitted when the nucleus relaxes. But in many materials the thorium nucleus relaxes mainly by internal conversion: instead of emitting a photon, it transfers its energy to an electron in the host material, which may get kicked out.

Researchers from Germany, the UK, and the US recently reported a workaround by treating internal conversion itself as a signal. They used a laser-based method and 229Th in thorium dioxide, whose energy gap is about 6 eV, below the 8.4 eV nuclear energy. The idea was to excite thorium nuclei with VUV laser pulses, then count the electrons that escape when excited nuclei decay. When the VUV pulse hits a surface, it produces a burst of ordinary photoelectrons that can overwhelm an electron detector. So the researchers used timed electric fields to suppress this burst, then extracted the delayed electrons associated with nuclear decay. They also used electric fields to guide electrons from the target to a detector. The scan revealed a clear resonance at 2,020,407.5 GHz, consistent with previous studies. The team also inferred an internal conversion lifetime of 12.3 μs for their sample, implying the corresponding clock would be off by one second only every 15.8 billion years.

The study's success has profound implications. In a commentary accompanying the paper, independent re-

searchers from Texas A&M University wrote that the work "extends the available toolbox of materials for realising stable, high-precision nuclear clocks as well as sensors that can probe the nuclear environment of different materials." The findings also pave the way for substantial miniaturisation because a nuclear clock using this design can be monitored by measuring the current of the emitted electrons, rather than the complex techniques used today.

Controversies and eventful episodes after the death of Tamil poet Subramania Bharati



Subramania Bharati (1882-1921), whose birth anniversary was celebrated on December 11, belongs to the category of literary figures who achieved greater fame posthumously. Though he died quite young, Bharati had, by then, spent over 15 highly creative years. This coincided with a crucial phase in the history of the nationalist movement – from the period of appealing, through petitions, to the British rulers' sense of justice, to that of the freedom struggle beginning to blossom into a mass movement under the helm of Mahatma Gandhi. Bharati's body of work covered every genre in prose and verse, mostly in Tamil. In the field of prose poetry, he drew inspiration from Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941). Like the great figure from Bengal, Bharati was a versatile personality – a poet, a writer, a journalist, a distinguished musicologist, a polyglot, a strong advocate of women's rights, and a patriot. Having joined the freedom struggle during the pre-Gandhi era, Bharati regarded Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1856-1920) as his political mentor. He continues to be remembered for his contribution to the renaissance of Tamil literature.

Seven years after his demise, his works came in for adverse attention from the authorities. The seizure of books of his songs *Swadesa Geethangal* (National Songs), published by Harihara Sharma in Chennai in 1922, came to the fore when *The Hindu*, in its editorial published on September 25, 1928, mentioned that the move had caused "widespread surprise and dissatisfaction." The seizure was a sequel to the order issued by the Madras government on September 11, 1928 [coincidentally, the death anniversary of the songs' author]. Noting that "the action was taken solely at the initiative of the Burma Government [a part of the British empire then] and that the Government of Madras had no responsibility in the matter," the newspaper stated that "it is anomalous that while the Government of Madras, in whose jurisdiction the books have been in circulation for a long time and in great demand because of the patriotic fervour characterising the poems, did not think it necessary to scent sedition in them, they should nevertheless have had to assist in the seizure" ordered by another government. What made matters worse for the local government was the announcement made by Education Minister S. Muthiah Mudaliar, at a school function in Tirunelveli district earlier, that he would have Bharati's songs included in the school curriculum, according to Mr. President, Sir, a collection of parliamentary speeches of Congress leader S. Satyamurti, which was curated by veteran Marxist P. Ramamurti and published in 1988.

In fact, prominent Congress leader C. Rajagopalachari (C.R. or Rajaji), in a response published on October 1, 1928, to the editorial, stated that "if the Education Minister made up his mind that Bharati's songs are good poetry, and that it would be absurd to treat them as seditious literature, he could tell his Government that no magisterial or police assistance should be given in Madras to effectuate the Burma Government's stupid declaration." A week later, Satyamurti moved an adjournment motion in the Legislative Council against the seizure. A representative of the government, M. Krishnan Nair, who dealt with the subject of law, wondered whether the motion could be taken up for discussion as the Madras High Court had to consider whether "these songs are seditious or not."

Yet, the Council's president, C.V.S. Narasimha Raju, allowed the discussion, a perusal of the proceedings of the House for the day reveals [as available on the digital repository of the Tamil Nadu Assembly <https://tnlasdigital.tn.gov.in>]. During the debate, members of the Council sang portions of the proscribed songs in the course of their speeches; Nair told the House that his government did not know the reason behind the action of Myanmar, this newspaper reported on October 11, 1928. A photograph taken at the opening ceremony of the Bharathi Memorial at Ettaiapuram, the birthplace of Subramania Bharati. C. Rajagopalachari is addressing the gathering. Also seen are Somayajulu, the Secretary of the Reception Committee, Raja of Ettaiapuram, the Chairman of the Reception Committee, and Kalki. A photograph taken at the opening ceremony of the Bharathi Memorial at Ettaiapuram, the birthplace of Subramania Bharati. C. Rajagopalachari is addressing the gathering. Also seen are Somayajulu, the Secretary of the Reception Committee, Raja of Ettaiapuram, the Chairman of the Reception Committee, and Kalki | Photo Credit: The Hindu Archives

When Satyamurti wanted to know about an order of the Government of India, which directed the Madras government to resort to the seizure, Nair refused to divulge details, as the order was "confidential." However, the Council was apparently not satisfied with the government's position, which was reflected in its decision: the motion was adopted as 76 members voted in favour and 18 against. The Hindu stated that "the result was received with loud cries of 'Vande Mataram.'" In January 1929, both governments of Burma and Madras took back their orders. The 'Mahakavi' controversy About six years later, another controversy surrounding Bharati arose when leading Tamil journalist-writer "Kalki" R. Krishnamurthi and founder-editor of *Manikodi*, Tamil's avant garde journal of the 1930s, V. Ramaswamy, known as "Va. Ra.," were involved in an intense debate whether Bharati could be called a "Mahakavi" or not.

What should not be glossed over is that "Kalki" was a known associate of C.R., who came in for criticism in February 1919 that he did not properly introduce Bharati to Mahatma Gandhi during their meeting in Chennai. Prominent Tamil writer-critic, Ashokamitran, in his essay on "Kalki," writes that in the outlook of Rajaji, artists like Bharati were neither essential nor required preservation. In 1934-35, "Kalki" questioned Va. Ra.'s assessment of Bharati as Mahakavi. Amshan Kumar, who did a documentary on many

Tamil literary greats, including Bharati, points out that "Va. Ra launched a diatribe on Kalki, which was published in *Swadesamitran* in November 1935. Kalki's rebuttal to Va. Ra, reiterating his stand on Bharati, was published in *Swadesamitran* on December 7, 1935." Thiruppur Krishnan, writer and editor of the Tamil periodical *Amudhasurabhi*, says that other writers of the *Manikodi* era such as "Chitti" P.G. Sundararajan and Ku.Pa.Ra (K.P. Rajagopalan) joined Va. Ra. in defence of Bharati. Eventually, "Kalki" changed his stand, recounts veteran Tamil littérateur Indira Parthasarathy. The statue of Subramania Bharati at the entrance of Bharati Illam in Triplicane, Chennai | Photo Credit: S.R. Raghunathan

The statue of Subramania Bharati at the entrance of Bharati Illam in Triplicane, Chennai | Photo Credit: S.R. Raghunathan

With the change of heart towards Bharati, "Kalki," in no time, began a campaign for the construction of a memorial in Ettayapuram, now in Thoothukudi district. A news item published by this newspaper on May 17, 1945 states: "Over Rs. 42,000 was collected in less than three months and the money is deposited in the Indo-Commercial Bank, Ltd. Out of this, Rs. 10,000 has been set apart and placed in fixed deposit account and arrangements have been made with the management of the Indo-Commercial Bank for the interest accruing from this Rs. 10,000 to be paid every quarter as life pension to Chellamal Bharathi, wife of the late poet." The report adds that "the Raja of Ettayapuram has generously given a plot of land on which the memorial will be constructed." Talking of the receipt of donations from the public, Mr. Krishnan recalls that "Kalki" had, at one stage, issued a statement that no more money was required as adequate funds had been received. On June 3, 1945, C.R. laid the foundation stone "amidst shouts of 'Mahatma Gandhiji ki Jai' and 'Rajaji ki Jai,'" reported *The Hindu* next day. In stark contrast to the poor attendance at Bharati's funeral, "thousands of people" from various parts of the State witnessed the ceremony, the paper stated, adding that "Gandhi sent a message in his own handwriting in Tamil wishing the function all success." The function began with the singing of Bharati songs by his family members and Carnatic musician D.K. Pattammal.

In about two-and-a-half years, the memorial was ready and the inauguration drew a larger crowd than what the foundation stone-laying event did. In the words of this newspaper, "the Bharathi Festival here commenced this evening [of October 12, 1947], literally, with a burst of song. From three this afternoon, it was almost non-stop music, closing with the climax of Srimathi M.S. Subbulakshmi's melodious singing [which went on till 8 p.m.]" The music concerts did not end with M.S. but went on till late in the night. Dandapani Desikar was another leading musician who participated in the festival. "A vast pandal specially put up to seat 30,000 was packed to capacity, while nearly double that number stood outside listening," wrote *The Hindu* on October 13, 1947. Among those present were the then Chief Minister Omandur P. Ramaswami Reddiar, Tamil Nadu Congress Committee (TNCC) chief K. Kamaraj, industrialist M.A. Muthiah Chettiar, and connoisseur of the arts T.K. Chidambaranatha Mudaliar. On the second day (October 13), Rajaji, who was the then Governor of West Bengal, declared open the memorial, built at a cost of ₹50,000. Ramaswami Reddiar unveiled Bharati's bust. Lavishing praise on the literary figure, C.R. said: "...he was the common and cherished possession of all Tamilians and not the exclusive possession of any one of them," this paper reported on October 15, 1947.

According to one school of scholars of the contemporary history of Tamil Nadu, Communist leader P. Jivanandam had, on the occasion, mooted the idea of the government purchasing the copyrights of Bharati's works and making the works available in public domain. However, what *The Hindu* stated in its report was that "like Gandhi's literature, Bharathi literature too should be [regarded as] a national possession and not [that of] any individuals." The Mahakavi Bharathiar Memorial Museum cum Research Centre on Easwaran Koil Street, in Puducherry | Photo Credit: S.S. Kumar Nevertheless, the demand grew louder subsequently and on March 12, 1949, the then Education Minister T.S. Avinashilingam Chettiar informed the Assembly about the government having secured all the rights for reproduction of Bharati's works, apart from the government obtaining the manuscripts of the poet to be preserved in a "befitting manner" at the Government Museum. A day earlier, Ramaswami Reddiar announced after talks with A.V. Meyappa Chettiar, one of the pioneers of Tamil cinema, that the latter had agreed to transfer to the government the rights vested in him of reproducing Bharati's songs, poems, other compositions and works, in Tamil and English, by sound reproducing or broadcasting devices. The government provided ₹15,000 to the poet's brother C. Viswanatha Aiyar for having agreed to give away the rights in regard to printing and publication. In April 1955 came the announcement of the government for having released the copyright to the public. Two years later, the then Chief Minister Kamaraj launched an edition of Bharati's works, running into 600 pages, at a price of ₹1.5 per copy. Vai Govindan, the publisher ("Sakthi Karyalayam"), informed the gathering on the occasion that "out of 15,000 copies printed, advance orders had already been received for 10,000," this newspaper reported on April 15, 1957. Puducherry and Chennai saw the establishment of memorials in the 1970s and 1990s for Bharati at the sites where he resided for a considerable period. As observed by C.R., in 1945 when he laid the foundation stone for the Ettayapuram memorial, Bharati had "a wide vision and generous outlook of things," qualities of which every individual should attempt to possess.

Four out of 19 films awaiting Centre's clearance granted permission for screening

The movies granted permission for screening are *Beef*, *Eagles of The Republic*, *Heart of The Wolf*, *Yes*, and *Once Upon A Time In Gaza*, the sources said. *Beef* follows Lati, a young woman from the outskirts of Barcelona, who turns to freestyle rap to confront grief, prejudice, and gender barriers after her father's death, sources said.

The remaining 15 films awaiting clearance include Sergei Eisenstein's 100-year-old classic *Battleship Potemkin* and several films related to the Palestine conflict. Sources said *Battleship Potemkin* is one of cinema's most influential works, dramatising the 1905 mutiny aboard the battleship *Potemkin*, where sailors rebelled against brutal officers and provision of maggots-infested food, turning their struggle into a symbol of collective resistance.

Denial of clearance to Sergei Eisenstein's film was termed as "laughable" by Congress MP Shashi Tharoor in a post on X.

Pharmacogenomics: reading genes to tailor prescriptions for individuals



gene before administering chemotherapy drugs like 5-fluorouracil can prevent severe, life-threatening toxicity.

Flowchart illustrates the pathway from genetic testing through clinical decision support systems to tailored drug prescriptions, emphasizing the integration of genomics into healthcare workflows. Flowchart illustrates the pathway from genetic testing through clinical decision support systems to tailored drug prescriptions, emphasizing the integration of genomics into healthcare workflows. The economic case for pharmacogenomics lies in balancing the upfront cost of genetic testing with long-term savings achieved through fewer adverse events and improved therapeutic outcomes. Over the past decade, genetic testing costs have fallen dramatically i.e. from thousands of dollars to roughly \$200-500 for comprehensive panels today. Yet the true value of pharmacogenomics extends far beyond the price. Economic analyses consistently show that genetic-guided prescription is cost effective for several drug-gene pairs, particularly in chronic disease where patients require long-term medication management. To assess this value, experts use a framework that considers several factors, such as severity and cost of side-effects, the frequency of genetic variants in the population, the availability of alternative drugs, and range of medications influenced by variations. For example, screening for HLA-B*57:01 before prescribing Abacavir, or for HLA-B*15:02 before Carbamazepine, helps in the prevention of potentially adverse reactions such as fatal Stevens-Johnson syndrome, making these test unequivocally cost-effective. The economic benefits compound when considering pre-emptive or panel-based testing strategies, where a single genetic test can provide guidance for dozens of medications throughout a patient's lifetime. Such approaches transform pharmacogenomics from a one-time diagnostic expense into a long-term investment in safer and more efficient healthcare. However, the cost-effectiveness of pharmacogenomic testing varies significantly across different clinical settings. In acute, short-term conditions with limited treatment duration, routine testing may not be justified. But in chronic diseases that involve multiple medication trials such as depression, cardiovascular disorders, or chronic pain, the economic case is much stronger. Increasingly, healthcare systems recognise that preventing even one serious adverse drug reaction often offsets the cost of testing multiple patients.

Implementation challengesDespite compelling scientific evidence, pharmacogenomics still faces substantial barriers towards widespread clinical adoption. A 2023 scoping review identified knowledge gaps among healthcare providers as the primary obstacle. Most physicians and pharmacists receive minimal pharmacogenomic education in training, leaving them ill-equipped to order, interpret, and apply genetic test results. Beyond education, infrastructure limitations compound this challenge; many electronic health record systems lack adequate decision-support tools to integrate pharmacogenomic data into prescribing workflows.

Without such digital assistance, clinicians often struggle to act on genetic information in real time. Reimbursement uncertainty creates additional hesitation. While some health systems and insurers cover pharmacogenomic testing for specific indications, coverage remains inconsistent across payers and jurisdictions. Meanwhile, regulatory pathways continue to evolve: over 100 Food and Drug Administration (FDA) drug labels now contain pharmacogenomic information, yet the clinical implications of these labels vary as some offer actionable recommendations while others are merely informative statements. Finally, cultural and institutional resistance should not be underestimated. Changing prescribing practices requires not just evidence but also trusted implementation frameworks, local champions, and administrative support. Encouragingly, when implemented, these programmes demonstrate that systematic approaches addressing education, infrastructure, and workflow integration can successfully overcome these barriers. The path forwardThe future of pharmacogenomics lies in pre-emptive testing strategies, where genetic information is obtained before a medication is needed and remains available throughout a patient's healthcare journey. Several health systems now offer pre-emptive pharmacogenomic panels to high-risk populations, integrating results into electronic health records to trigger alerts when relevant medications are prescribed. As whole-genome sequencing becomes increasingly affordable, pharmacogenomic information may become a routine component of preventive medicine. Ultimately, pharmacogenomics represents a fundamental shift in how we think about drug therapy from treating populations to treating individuals, from reactive care to proactive prevention, from trial-and-error to precision medication. The prescription, quite literally, is written in our genes: we are now learning how to read it.

The translation of pharmacogenomics from the laboratory to the clinic, has begun to deliver measurable gains across diverse areas of medicine. A clear example is Warfarin, a widely prescribed blood thinner with a notoriously narrow therapeutic window. Genetic variants in the CYP2C9 and VKORC1 genes account for approximately 50% of the variation in Warfarin dose requirements. Patients carrying certain variants may need only one-third of the standard dose to achieve therapeutic effect. Pharmacogenomic-guided dosing algorithms that incorporate these genetic markers have demonstrated improving outcomes, reducing adverse bleeding risks and helping patients reach therapeutic levels faster than traditional trial and error dosing methods. In cardiovascular medicine, Clopidogrel, a cornerstone antiplatelet drug used after heart attacks and stenting, provides another compelling example. The drug requires activation by the CYP2C19 enzyme. Patients with loss-of-function CYP2C19 variants, particularly CYP2C19*2 (found in 25-30% of the population), exhibit reduced drug activation and significantly higher risks of cardiovascular events including stent thrombosis. Reflecting this evidence, the 2022 Clinical Pharmacogenetics Implementation Consortium (CPIC) guidelines now recommend alternative antiplatelet agents for CYP2C19 poor metabolizers undergoing percutaneous coronary intervention. Beyond cardiology, psychiatry has also emerged as a fertile ground for pharmacogenomic implementation. Many antidepressants and antipsychotics are extensively metabolised by CYP2D6 and CYP2C19. The genetic variants in these enzymes can profoundly influence drug levels and side effects. Pre-emptive pharmacogenomic testing in psychiatric patients has demonstrated reduced adverse drug reactions, improved symptom control, and decreased healthcare costs. Oncology, too, is advancing rapidly under the pharmacogenomics lens. Testing for variants in the DPYD

Integrated Child Development Services programme: A 50-year lifeline

At an anganwadi near Baiyappanahalli in Bengaluru, around 20 children, most of whom are between three and six years old, are busy playing, making merry, and having fun. He doesn't seem to care much about the lunch at his anganwadi. But his friend, Nitthu (who likes to be referred to as Dhanamma because 'that's what her dad calls her') interjects. "You will fall sick if you eat ice cream. I like Anna sambar (rice and sambar)," she says. "So, do you come to anganwadi for Anna sambar?" I ask her. "I come here to study," she surprises me, and goes on to recite the English alphabet. At another nearby anganwadi, 5-year-old Oviya approaches sheepishly with her notebook. True to her name, she seems to have an inclination for art. The book is filled with pencil drawings, most of them outlines of her own palm filled in with drawings of flowers and other filigree. A million kids, a million hues. Anganwadis, the first step for many Indian children to nutritious meal, education and socialisation, have been operating for 50 years now, catering to all such hues. A child is like a seedWhen the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) programme was inaugurated 50 years ago by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, T. Narasipur in Mysuru was one of the first places in India where the pilot programme was launched. The programme has come a long way since and seen remarkable progress in the southern State where anganwadi workers have played key role in shaping generations. "Think of a seed that would one day grow into a healthy tree, a beautiful ecosystem in itself, nourishing everything around it. But if the seed itself goes bad, then what a huge loss that is. Every child is like a seed, and ICDS is the nourishment that would protect it from decaying," says S. Varalakshmi, general secretary of the All India Federation of Anganwadi Workers and Helpless (AIFAWH) and general secretary, CITU.

A national programmeICDS is the world's largest community-based programme for early childhood development.

The Gambhir coaching era—caught in a spin web



For every visiting side bar none, India has loomed as the Final Frontier — as the eloquent Steve Waugh put it — for a long time. Even when they ruled the world with an iron fist, most teams with the exception of West Indies, irrepressible and unmatched, found India impossible to conquer. Nations went years, sometimes even decades, without so much as sniffing a victory on Indian soil, beaten as much in the mind before they even set foot on these shores as on the park, where India's cricketers made the most of gremmings in the opposition camp, their own familiarity with demanding conditions and their unquestioned skills to cut a swathe through all comers. A dominance that started in the early 1990s when, under Mohammad Azharuddin and spearheaded by Anil Kumble, India brooked no stopping spilled over to the next two decades. There were occasional blips, as there are bound to be — series losses to South Africa in 2000, Australia in 2004 and England in 2012 — but they were so few and far between that when they did transpire, they registered remarkably highly on the shock scale.

England's come-from-behind 2-1 triumph in 2012 was a wake-up call of sorts, though it must be remembered that under Alastair Cook, the visitors had a formidable all-round unit. The captain himself, Jonathan Trott, the prickly but inimitable Kevin Pietersen, the classy Ian Bell and Joe Root, on his first tour with the senior side, constituted a terrific batting line-up, while James Anderson produced telling bursts of reverse swing to admirably support spin twins Graeme Swann and Monty Panesar. India themselves were in the early stages of transition, having lost Rahul Dravid and V.V.S. Laxman to Test cricket just a few months previously. Sachin Tendulkar was still around, as were Virender Sehwag and Gautam Gambhir and Mahendra Singh Dhoni, tasked with overseeing the process of taking India into the future, but Cheteshwar Pujara and Virat Kohli were still relatively new and Ravindra Jadeja made his debut only in the final Test of that series, in Rajkot. India were ripe for the taking then, and England didn't disappoint, riding on the magnificence of Pietersen and the quality of Swann and Panesar to overturn a 0-1 deficit with style and panache. That was in December 2012; no one knew that it would take 143 months for someone else to reprise the heroics of England and humble India in their backyard.

Kiwis take wingsThat privilege went to New Zealand, unassuming and unfancied, last November. Tom Latham's men arrived low on confidence after being beaten 2-0 in successive Tests in Galle just weeks previously. Between the Sri Lanka defeat and the first of three Tests against India in Bengaluru, there was a captaincy switch with Tom Latham replacing Tim Southee. Worse, their best batter of all time, Kane Williamson, would not be starting the series — as it panned out, he didn't play any of the three Tests — and they had the weight of history pressing down on them. New Zealand's last victory on India soil had come in November 1988, under John Wright, who later was to become India's first overseas coach. Inspired by off-spinner John Bracewell's eight-wicket match haul, they surged to a 136-run win at the Wankhede Stadium in Bombay (as it was then called). When they landed in India in October last year, ambitious as they are, they would have hoped for one victory, at the most. In the end, they landed three successive sucker punches on the trot, the last two on turners in Pune and Mumbai, even though the hosts had the services of Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli and R. Ashwin, all now retired from the five-day game.

That was in Gambhir's second Test series in charge — the first was a 2-0 drubbing of Bangladesh at home; now into his fourth such assignment at home alone, he has overseen a 4-4 win-loss record in our land. India have gone from invincible to vulnerable, forcing the smart alecks to totomtom that they are a better travelling side than in their own patch, a wisecrack hard to dismiss given that they have lost as many matches in India in the last 13 months as they did in the preceding 11 and a half years.

Contrasting fortunesGambhir's got a stellar record as white-ball coach; under his tutelage, India clinched the 50-over Champions Trophy and the T20 Asia Cup, both in Dubai, in March and September respectively, apart from giving an excellent account of themselves in bilateral skirmishes too. Despite the radical shake-ups, including an insistence on a

left-right combination at the middle at most stages of a white-ball innings, he has managed to build exponentially on the gains accrued under the Rohit-Dravid management as preparations for the defence of the T20 World Cup take firm root. But when it comes to Test cricket, India in the Gambhir era have been terribly undercooked. Their win-loss record in 18 Tests from September 2024, when the former India opener kicked off his stint in the red-ball format against Bangladesh in Chennai and Kanpur, is a modest 7-9, with two losses. Like Pujara mentioned the other day, transition can no longer be used as an excuse, not after having secured a 2-2 draw in England in the summer when India amassed 12 centuries in five Tests. As callous and dismissive as it might sound, Rohit and Kohli were hardly missed in England with Shubman Gill relishing his elevation to the captaincy with four centuries, K.L. Rahul and Yashasvi Jaiswal hitting twin hundreds at the top of the tree, Rishabh Pant weighing in with centuries in both innings in Leeds, and Ravindra Jadeja and Washington Sundar filling their boots while securing a stirring draw in Manchester. Honours secured in England, India got down to business in earnest against West Indies last month, with comprehensive victories in Ahmedabad and Delhi. The first, within three days, was on a good cricket track that helped the seamers on day one and then played like a true Indian surface, with consistent turn and bounce, aided by a red-soil base. The second had to be earned the hard way, on a placid, unresponsive deck at the Arun Jaitley Stadium that went to sleep at some stage on day three and never woke up.

India had to stretch every sinew to make inroads into the West Indian batting, the all-round quality of their bowling carrying the day. As laboured as that victory was, it suggested that India had decided to make a clean break and veer away from the Bunsen burners that singed them badly against New Zealand. After all, the temptation to torture the Caribbeans on raging turners would have been massive; by shunning that urge and sticking to the old-school mode of approach, the message was they had learnt from the Kiwi misadventure and wouldn't go down that path again. But within four weeks of the Delhi Test came the Eden debacle against South Africa, the defending World Test Champions all right, but whose last Test win in India had come in 2010. Kolkata threw up a shocker, a pitch of such unpredictable bounce that at various stages, it bordered on the dangerous. The highest team tally in the match was 189, no one apart from Temba Bavuma made a half-century and India were shot out for 93 whilst chasing 124 in the fourth innings, none of which did any of the characters involved in this drama proud. After the 30-run debacle, Gambhir fronted up and told the media that it was 'exactly' the kind of track the team management had requested. Maybe he didn't want to throw the curator under the bus because no one would have asked for a surface where the top would come off on day two, nor would any curator wilfully lay out a brown carpet fading and fraying at the edges this early in the piece. But while Gambhir might have sprung to Sujan Mukherjee's defence — much like batting coach Sitanshu Kotak made a spirited defence of his under-fire head coach on Thursday afternoon — the underlying message was the insistence on playing on a turner in the conviction that its spin bowling, and batting against spin, continue to be India's greatest strengths. The former proclamation might still be true but the latter most certainly not, so maybe it's time for Gambhir to put the 'we want turners' line to bed and concentrate on making the most of the massive resources under his command through other means. Maybe he should take a leaf out of the book of his three immediate predecessors, Dravid, Ravi Shastri and Anil Kumble, during whose coaching tenure India hardly played on a square turner. Pune in 2017 and Indore in 2023, both against Australia, were aberrations, while the pitch didn't have more than a fringe part to play in the losses to England in Chennai in 2021 and Hyderabad last year. India backed themselves to make big runs on true surfaces, and even if the opposition did likewise in their first innings, knew they had the depth and class in both pace and spin to craft victories. Batters' travails Their record in that period is evidence enough that their belief wasn't based on a wing and a prayer. Many of India's batters of this vintage don't — maybe they can't — trust their defence enough and therefore are unwilling/unable to bat out time. A half-dozen scoreless deliveries are enough to send them into a tizzy, which means a false stroke is never far away. Use of the feet to come down the track or go deep in the crease to manoeuvre the ball have gone out of circulation, and several of the batters might be privately cursing their fate at being 'exposed' on tracks ranging from the tricky to the diabolical. After the second Test against South Africa from Saturday, India don't play a WTC Test till August next year, and their next home assignment is only in January 2027. If they aspire to be in the WTC final that summer, Gambhir needs to see the writing on the wall and dispense with his fatal attraction towards spin. After all, you

US sanctions Indian entities, individuals involved in Iranian petroleum & petroleum products sales

New York/Washington: The Trump administration has sanctioned entities and individuals from India involved in sales of Iran's petroleum and petroleum products, saying the funds from this trade support Tehran's regional terrorist proxies and procure weapons systems that are a "direct threat" to the US. The Departments of State and Treasury sanctioned shipping networks responsible for funding the Iranian regime's "malign activities" through illicit oil sales, as well as an airline and its affiliates that arm and supply Iran-backed terrorist groups.

Among those added to the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control Specially Designated Nationals List are Indian nationals Zair Husain Iqbal Husain Sayed, Zulfikar Hussain Rizvi Sayed, Maharashtra-based RN Ship Management Private Limited and Pune-based TR6 Petro India LLP. The State Department is designating 17 entities, individuals, and vessels in several countries, including, but not limited to India, Panama, and the Seychelles, involved in Iran's petroleum and petroleum products sales, the administration said. Concurrently, the Department of the Treasury is designating 41 entities, individuals, vessels, and aircraft, intensifying its efforts against Iran's petroleum and petrochemical exports and disrupting financial streams and commercial operations that support Iran's malign activities.

The funds generated by this oil trade are used to support Iran's regional terrorist proxies and procure weapons systems that pose a direct threat to US forces and American allies, the State Department said Thursday. The administration said TR6 Petro is an India-based petroleum products trader, which between October 2024 and June 2025, imported over USD 8 million worth of Iranian-origin bitumen from multiple companies. It is being designated for knowl-



ingly engaging in a significant transaction for the purchase, acquisition, sale, transport, or marketing of petroleum or petroleum products from Iran, the State Department said. The Iranian regime continues to fuel conflict in the Middle East to fund its destabilising activities, the State Department said. This behaviour enables Iran to fund its nuclear escalations, support terrorist groups, and disrupt the flow of trade and freedom of navigation in waterways that are crucial to global prosperity and economic growth. The United States will continue to act against the network of maritime service providers, dark fleet operators, and petroleum products traders involved in the transport of Iranian crude oil and petroleum products, it said. The State Department said the US will continue to act in support of National Security Presidential Memorandum 2 (NSPM-2), which directs the imposition of maximum pressure on the Iranian regime to deny it access to resources needed to sustain its destabilising activities."

Govt introduces N-power bill in Parliament, permits private participation, limits supplier liability



The government on Monday introduced a new Bill in the Lok Sabha called the Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India (SHANTI) Bill, 2025, which will allow private participation in India's highly restricted nuclear power sector. The new Bill will replace the existing Atomic Energy Act, 1962 and the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act, 2010.

The government said the new Bill is a key step towards achieving India's target of 100 gigawatts of nuclear power capacity by 2047, as it seeks to "harness the full potential of India's nuclear energy and indigenous resources through active involvement of both the public and private sectors." Accelerated growth of Artificial Intelligence, high-performance computing, quantum technologies, indigenous semiconductor fabrication and large-scale data-driven research requires stable, reliable, abundant, clean and round-the-clock power supply, which can be ensured through expanded deployment of nuclear energy and necessitating a new legal framework promoting research and innovation in private-sector," the short title of the Bill read. A key change in the new Bill is removal of an earlier provision under 'right of recourse' which had allowed nuclear plant operators to seek compensation from suppliers in the event of a nuclear accident caused by defective equipment, sub-standard services or acts of suppliers or their employees. This provision was repeatedly flagged by foreign nuclear equipment vendors as a deterrent to investing in India's nuclear sector as it exposes them to long-term and uncertain liability risks in the event of a nuclear accident. Under the new Bill, both public and private companies, as well as their joint ventures, will be allowed to set up nuclear power plants, trans-

portation or storage of nuclear fuel, and import or export nuclear fuel, technology, equipment and minerals required for nuclear power generation. However, all entities involved in nuclear energy production will be required to obtain safety authorisation from the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board. The Bill makes "safety authorisation" mandatory for the manufacture, possession, use, transport, import, export or disposal of radioactive substances and radiation-generating equipment, as well as for establishing, operating or decommissioning radiation facilities.

Meanwhile, the Bill retains certain exclusive Central government control over critical and sensitive activities. These include enrichment and isotopic separation of radioactive substances, management and reprocessing of spent fuel and high-level radioactive waste, production and upgradation of heavy water, among others. The Bill also provides for the creation of new institutional arrangements, including an Atomic Energy Redressal Advisory Council, designation of Claims Commissioners, and a Nuclear Damage Claims Commission for cases involving severe nuclear damage, with the Appellate Tribunal for Electricity acting as the appellate authority. Further, it empowers the Central government to establish a Nuclear Liability Fund for the purpose of meeting its liability in case of a nuclear incident. On the liability front, the Bill specifies graded liability caps for nuclear power operators based on their size of installation. Operators of reactors with thermal power above 3,600 MWe will have a liability limit of Rs 3,000 crore. Reactors with thermal power above 1,500 MWe and up to 3,600 MWe will carry a cap of Rs 1,500 crore, while those above 750 MWe and up to 1,500 MWe will be liable up to Rs 750 crore. For reactors above 150 MWe and up to 750 MWe range, the liability limit is set at Rs 300 crore. Smaller reactors with thermal power up to 150 MWe, fuel cycle facilities other than spent fuel reprocessing plants, and transportation of nuclear materials will have a liability cap of Rs 100 crore. India enacted The Atomic Energy Act, 1962 after repealing the Atomic Energy Act, 1948. Since then, the Act has been amended four times, with the latest amendment being in 2015. However, the sector was confined to the Central government. In 2010, the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act, 2010 was enacted to provide for civil liability for nuclear damage and prompt compensation to the victims of a nuclear incident through a no-fault liability regime.

New GDP series to eliminate 'discrepancies' component; full back series by Feb 2027

In July-September, when the Indian economy grew by an unexpected 8.2 per cent in real terms, 'discrepancies' amounted to Rs 1.63 lakh crore, or 3.3 per cent of GDP. In July-September, when the Indian economy grew by an unexpected 8.2 per cent in real terms, 'discrepancies' amounted to Rs 1.63 lakh crore, or 3.3 per cent of GDP. India's statistics ministry, as part of the ongoing revision of the GDP data series, plans to do away with the contentious 'discrepancies' component that has, over the years, puzzled economists. In the second discussion paper on the methodological improvements in the compilation of GDP, released on Tuesday, the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) also said it plans to publish the GDP 'back series' with the new base year by February 2027.

"On launch of the new series of GDP estimates with the Base Year: 2022-23 on 27.02.2026 (February 27, 2026), it is planned to publish the back series of GDP estimates on the revised base year within one year," the MoSPI discussion paper said. The ministry has invited comments on the paper by January 7, 2026.

The statistics ministry calculates GDP using two methods – production or income approach and the expenditure approach. But due to different sources of data used for the two approaches and variations in coverage, valuation, and lags in recording of data, the final GDP numbers arrived at through the two approaches may not match. As such, the difference is shown as 'discrepancies' under the expenditure approach along with Government Final Consumption Expenditure, Private Final Consumption Expenditure, Gross Fixed Capital Formation, change in stock, valuables, and net exports. This is because the expenditure-side GDP is seen as being less accurate than its production -side counterpart. "The alternative is to remove the discrepancy by examining the data in the light of the many accounting constraints in the SNA (System of National Accounts), making the best judgement possible about where the errors are likely to have arisen and modifying the data accordingly," MoSPI's discussion paper said. When 'discrepancies' are positive, it means that the GDP calculated through the production approach – by adding the value added of the various sectors, such as manufacturing, services, and agriculture – is greater than the GDP arrived at by adding together the different types of expenditures. Similarly, when 'discrepancies' are negative, the expenditure-side GDP is more than that computed from the production side.

In July-September, when the Indian economy grew by an unexpected 8.2 per cent in real terms, 'discrepancies' amounted to Rs 1.63 lakh crore, or 3.3 per cent of



GDP. However, in nominal terms – or without adjusting for inflation – the 'discrepancies' figure was a negative Rs 2.46 lakh crore, or -2.9 per cent of GDP. "It's very good if discrepancies are done away with," said Kunal Kundu, India Economist at French investment bank Societe Generale. "Ideally, discrepancies should come down over time, from one revised estimate to the next. However, we have seen in the past that sometimes this figure has increased in magnitude. This makes it very difficult to understand what has been driving GDP growth." As part of the new GDP series – the first number under which will be released on February 27, 2026 for the October-December quarter – MoSPI plans to integrate the so-called supply and use tables with the compilation of annual accounts "to ensure that discrepancies are limited in the early estimates and finally eliminated when full set of data becomes available at the time of final estimates". Supply and use tables show how different goods and services are supplied by domestic industries and imports and how they are distributed between different intermediate or final uses, including exports. In this accounting framework, the total supply and use of each type of good and service must be balanced. Large 'discrepancies' – the July-September figure of 3.3 per cent of GDP in constant prices was the largest on an absolute basis since April-June 2022 – can also lead to significant revisions in GDP growth rates in the future. There have also been sizable swings in 'discrepancies' in recent years, especially after the coronavirus pandemic. For instance, in January-March 2023, 'discrepancies' stood at (-3) per cent of GDP. However, this changed to a positive 3.3 per cent of GDP in the subsequent quarter, April-June 2023. "While the elimination of discrepancies would be a good move, it is just one aspect; we need to be mindful of how difficult it is to calculate GDP. The current series has been hampered by several issues, including the use of survey data from more than a decade ago," Kundu of Societe Generale added.

Global trade getting weaponised through tariffs: Sitharaman

New Delhi: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Wednesday said global trade is increasingly "getting weaponised" through tariffs and other measures, and India will have to negotiate its way carefully. She said that the overall strength of the economy will give the country an added advantage. "Trade is getting weaponised through tariff, through many other measures and India will have to negotiate its way carefully in this, and not just take care of tariff but I think overall our economy strength is what is going to give us that additional advantage," Sitharaman said at Times Network's India Economic Conclave 2025. She said that globally it is now "very clear" that trade is not free and fair.

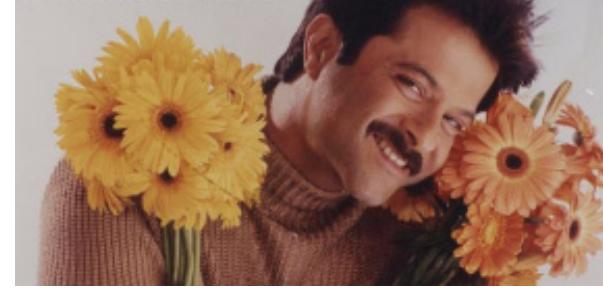
"India can be lectured saying you (India) are very inward-looking, you are a tariff king and so on. But tariff has been weaponised," she said adding India's intention was never to weaponise tariffs. India, she said, only safeguarded its domestic industries against flooding which happens from a "predator".

But the weaponisation of trade today is without criticism, the minister said, adding that some nations state that tariffs are not good and no one should take these measures



but "suddenly we have newer people coming up saying we'll come up with tariff barriers and there's no questioning. So that seems to be the new normal". These remarks are important as global trade has been disruptive due to the high tariffs imposed by the US. Mexico too has recently announced to impose high tariffs in countries with which they do not have free trade agreements.

'24 ghante kaam karke faayeda kya hai': Anil Kapoor on importance of taking breaks from work



All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy, and Anil Kapoor agrees. The Mr. India actor once said that a large number of people are obsessed with always working and hardly ever take a break. "24 ghante kaam karke faayeda kya hai. Hum log bholu gaye chill karna," (what's the point of working 24x7? We have forgotten how to chill), said Kapoor, adding that non-stop grind is consuming us. Citing an example of established personalities, the actor added: "Bade bade log bahut successful hue hain. Humse zyada achieve kiya. Hazar guna zyada achieve kiya. Jo kam bhi karte hain successful bhi hote hain, wo chil bhi karte hain relax bhi karte hain, holiday pe bhi jate hain." (Many people are successful who have achieved thousands of times more than we have. Such people also relax and go on holidays.)

Anil Kapoor believes that this inability to take a break from the grind is because we have made financial issues our entire personality: "Gareebi humari fitrat me hai...Human rag-rag mein hai insecurities aur gareebi". (Poverty runs in our veins and has become a part of our nature) Taking a cue from Anil Kapoor's confession in an interview with Republic World, we reached out to Mehzabin Dordi, a Clinical Psychologist at Sir HN Reliance Foundation Hospital, Mumbai, to understand how this 24/7 hustle culture affects people's mental, psychological, and emotional health. anil Kapoor Adding on to Kapoor's opinion, psychologists say that the human mind and body aren't built to be 'on' all the time (Photo: Instagram/Anil Kapoor) How dangerous is the 24/7 hustle culture

"In today's hustle culture, we've started wearing ex-haunt like a badge of honour," says Dordi, who further points out that being "busy" has become a measure of worth. However, the human mind and body, as the psychologist rightly points out, aren't built to be on all the time. When we forget how to pause, it starts taking a quiet toll. "Mentally, our attention span shrinks, our creativity dulls, and everything starts to feel like a chore. Psychologically, we move into survival mode; we are always alert, always chasing, rarely resting. The brain begins to interpret even small tasks as threats, which leads to irritability, anxiety, and emotional fatigue. Emotionally, the joy starts fading from things we used to love."

The psychologist tells indianexpress.com that people often describe it as "feeling flat" not sad necessarily, just disconnected. "That's the early sign of burnout. Over time, this chronic overdrive affects sleep, mood, even physical health, headaches, blood pressure, digestive issues, you

name it." Sadly, the effect spills onto the person's relationships as well. "When we're constantly preoccupied, we stop being emotionally available to the people we care about. Breaks and holidays aren't indulgences; they're essential resets that protect our mental health, creativity, and ability to connect with others."

How does the 'gareebi ki fitrat' settle in?

Just like Kapoor said, a person's financial background, and how they grew up around money, plays a very crucial role in determining their ability to take a break. "If you've grown up in a home where every rupee had to be stretched, the idea of 'taking time off' can feel unsafe or even irresponsible. There's often a subconscious voice saying, 'If I stop working, something bad will happen.' That fear doesn't magically disappear even when you're financially stable later in life," notes Dordi. This is described as "scarcity mindset, a deep-seated habit of focusing on what could go wrong, rather than what could go right. "Many people who've faced early financial struggles also tie their self-worth to productivity as if constant working equals safety or value. So even planning a small vacation can bring guilt, anxiety, or shame." The psychologist asserts that sometimes it's not just about money but also about emotions. "People may feel guilty for spending on themselves when family members are still struggling, or they might downplay self-care as 'luxury.' The truth is, rest doesn't make you ungrateful or lazy. It's a way of protecting the life you've worked so hard to build."

Any advice for people who find it challenging to take a break from work?

"For many of us, slowing down feels uncomfortable, even scary, because our minds are wired to equate movement with progress. But rest is not the opposite of productivity; it's part of it," explains Dordi, recommending following gentle, practical ways to begin: 1. Start small! You don't have to disappear for a week. Begin with short "micro-breaks" during your day, 10 minutes to stretch, walk, or step away from screens. Research shows even tiny breaks improve focus and prevent emotional exhaustion. 2. Create a shutdown ritual At the end of your workday, do something symbolic: close your laptop, put your phone away, or take a short walk. Your brain needs cues that say, "The workday is done." 3. Experiment with rest! If guilt or anxiety creeps in, think of rest as an experiment, not a luxury. Try a half-day off and observe how you feel emotionally, physically, and mentally. Most people come back clearer and calmer.

4. Reframe your beliefs When that inner critic says, "I don't deserve to rest," challenge it. Ask yourself: Would I say this to someone I care about? Rest doesn't make you less committed; it makes you more sustainable. 5. Plan recovery, not escape A break doesn't always have to mean travel or spending big. It can be a staycation, a digital detox weekend, or a slow morning at home. The goal is to detach from the grind mentally. 6. Address deeper roots If the idea of taking time off feels unsafe or triggers anxiety, it may help to explore it with a therapist. Sometimes, the issue isn't about time; it's about old fears around safety, identity, or control.

Doctor reveals essential item you must wear when travelling on flights

If you've ever felt your legs getting heavy or noticed swelling in your feet after a long flight, you're not alone. Sitting still for hours on a plane can mess with your circulation. That's where compression socks come in—they're not just for medical use anymore. More and more travellers are slipping them on to stay comfortable and avoid health issues. Dr Narander Singla, Lead Consultant – Internal Medicine at CK Birla Hospital, Delhi, explains it clearly: "Wearing compression socks during flights, especially long-haul journeys, can be highly beneficial for certain travellers. These special socks are made to gently squeeze your legs, helping your blood flow better and keeping your legs from feeling tired or swollen."

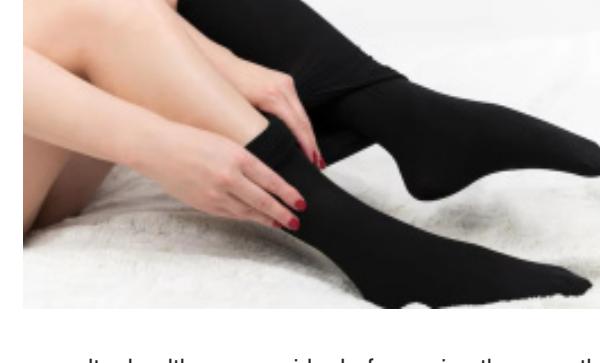
Why are compression socks good during flights?

One big reason to wear compression socks on flights is to lower the risk of Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT)—a condition where blood clots form in deep veins, usually in the legs, because of sitting too long. As Dr Singla puts it, "Compression socks help maintain proper blood flow, significantly lowering this risk." But that's not all. They also reduce swelling and keep your legs feeling lighter. "They also help prevent leg and foot swelling by limiting fluid accumulation," Dr Singla explains. "Additionally, compression socks can alleviate discomfort, reduce leg fatigue, and contribute to a more pleasant travel experience." Compression socks can help keep your legs comfortable and lower the risk of blood clots while flying (Source: Freepik)

Who should use them?

While many people can benefit from compression socks, some might need them more than others.

"This includes people at higher risk of DVT, such as those with a history of blood clots, recent surgery, cancer treatments, or who are taking estrogen," says Dr Singla. "Older adults and pregnant women may also benefit, as they often experience circulatory issues or discomfort during flights." If you have poor blood flow or certain medical conditions, it's best to talk to a doctor first. "Individuals with severe arterial disease or poor circulation should



consult a healthcare provider before using them, as they could potentially worsen these conditions," warns Dr Singla. Also, people with sensitive skin or existing skin problems should be careful—they might find the socks irritating.

Picking the right pair Not all compression socks are the same. The level of pressure matters, and so does how well they fit. "Moderate compression (15–20 mmHg) is sufficient," Dr Singla recommends for most flyers. You want them to be snug, not tight or uncomfortable. Make sure to follow sizing instructions carefully. "Knee-high socks are generally recommended, as thigh-high socks can roll down and create a harmful tourniquet effect," he adds. If you fly often or lead an active lifestyle, using compression socks regularly might help your legs feel less tired and reduce swelling. "Athletes may also find relief from muscle soreness and experience faster recovery when using them consistently," says Dr Singla. To get the most out of compression socks on a flight, it's also a good idea to stay hydrated and get up every couple of hours to stretch or walk. Small leg movements, like ankle rolls or calf raises, can help too. "Proper hydration helps prevent blood from thickening," says Dr Singla. "And movement is key to encouraging blood flow." So next time you pack your travel essentials, consider adding a pair of compression socks. They might make your journey a lot more comfortable and safer, too.

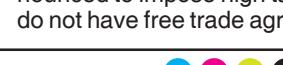
'People are most unsettled and unhinged in marriages...': Nimrat Kaur on choosing to remain single at 40+, psychologist weighs in

Being single in their 40s is a choice that many people still struggle to understand, especially women. Actor Nimrat Kaur, who has navigated the pressure to get married throughout her career, recently shared her perspective on why being single is not only acceptable but can sometimes be preferable to entering a fake marriage. Nimrat revealed that the taunts and questions about marriage began when she was in her late 20s. Speaking to News18 Showsha, she said, "I've dealt with marriage questions. Every girl deals with it. And until The Lunchbox happened, I didn't get that validation and recognition from my 'well-wishers' and people in my extended surroundings." She explained further, "My work and I were taken seriously because there was Irrfan in the project. Prior to that, they said that shaadi ka time aa gaya hai. Those marriage questions stopped after The Lunchbox. It took the film to convince them what I'm capable of. It made me deserving of their appreciation, finally."

But I understand that they're also suffering because of the conditioning, and you can't hold it against them." Nimrat questions the assumption that marriage is the only route for a woman to feel 'settled.' She recalled, "The moment there's a little hint that maybe your career isn't going the right way, you aren't making the right money, or you aren't where you're perceived you should be, you're told to get married and 'settle down'. As if I'm unsettled until I'm married!" Pointing out the prevalence of superficial marriages, she added, "I, in fact, feel like people are most unsettled and unhinged in marriages that are a front. That to me is more worrisome than a woman who, by virtue of her life, isn't married at this point in time. Just leave her be! It's mostly people who haven't been able to take their own decisions and make brave choices in their lives that impose their own conditioning on others whenever they see them breaking the mould a little bit."



but "suddenly we have newer people coming up saying we'll come up with tariff barriers and there's no questioning. So that seems to be the new normal". These remarks are important as global trade has been disruptive due to the high tariffs imposed by the US. Mexico too has recently announced to impose high tariffs in countries with which they do not have free trade agreements.



Why being at home feels like a vacation to D Gukesh, R Praggnanandhaa and Arjun Erigaisi



GNS News Agency, Dec 17

In a recent clip uploaded on its social media handles, FIDE asked some of the top chess players in the world a simple question: if they could pick one vacation spot for the rest of their lives, what would it be? Amidst the understandable replies like Greece, Bali, Havana, Switzerland, San Sebastian, Maldives and the Caribbean islands, the response from a trio of top Indian stars – D Gukesh, R Praggnanandhaa and Vaishali Rameshbabu – stands out. It's not a lack of imagination on the part of the Indians, nor are they reluctant travellers. On the contrary, so cramped are the jet-setting lives of India's top chess players that being at home for them has begun to feel like a luxury. "Nowadays going home feels like a vacation," world champion Gukesh told FIDE in the interview with a smile.

In just a three-month phase between August to October this year, Gukesh has flown from Spain (Granada Chess Open) to Poland (for an exhibition event against Jan Krystof Duda in Katowice) to the USA (for St Louis Rapid and Blitz in Missouri and then the Sinquefield Cup) to Uzbekistan (for FIDE Grand Swiss), to USA again (for Checkmate: USA vs India exhibition event in Arlington, Texas) to Greece (for the European Club Cup in Rhodes) to the US (for Clutch Chess: Champions Showdown event in St Louis) before playing in the FIDE World Cup in Goa. After a short break, he's in Mumbai playing at the Global Chess League (GCL) before he flies off to Qatar for the World Rapid and Blitz Championship, then returning to India to play at Kolkata's Tata Steel Chess India Rapid and Blitz, where each day players play multiple games just like in every other rapid and blitz tournament. (The Global Chess League, in contrast, is just one game a day, occasionally two, which gives players plenty of breathing space.) The year has also seen Gukesh make trips to the Netherlands for the Tata Steel Masters, Germany and France for Freestyle events, Romania for the Superbet Chess Classic, Norway for Norway Chess, and Croatia for the SuperUnited Rapid and Blitz.

India's other top players like Praggnanandhaa and Arjun Erigaisi are also racking up air miles as rapidly as Gukesh due to packed tournament calendars. Pragg, for example, played in events at a breakneck pace through the year as he was chasing a Candidates spot through the FIDE Circuit route. That took him to Wijk aan Zee, Prague, Paris,

Warsaw, Bucharest, Jermuk (Armenia), Tashkent, Zagreb, Las Vegas, Saint Louis, Samarkand (Uzbekistan), Sao Paulo and London. And then there were the World Cup and GCL for which he came to India. This calendar means that between late August and early October, the youngster played on three separate continents. Right after his exit from the World Cup last month, he was on a flight to play in the London Classic before coming to Mumbai and will play in the World Rapid and Blitz, Tata Steel Kolkata and Tata Steel Wijk aan Zee before competing at the Candidates tournament in Cyprus in March-April. "I've hardly been home this year. At the most, I get two weeks at home. To me, that's not really a break, because by the time you feel relaxed, another tournament is there and you have to start playing. I would like a much longer break," Pragg says.

"Even after winning the UzChess Cup in Tashkent (on June 28), I had to leave immediately. I'd played for seven hours on the final day, because it was a morning round. I played a classical game, then had to fight it out in the tie-breaks, then there was a closing ceremony. By the time I got to the room, I was dead. But I still had to pack immediately to fly out. But all this is part of what we do," he shrugs. His good friend Erigaisi would agree. After his defeat to Wei Yi in the quarters of the FIDE World Cup, he gave himself a break of 10 days at home before flying off to Jerusalem for a tournament and then to South Africa for the Freestyle Chess season finale. That done, he's flown to Mumbai to play in the GCL. Afterwards, just like Gukesh, Arjun and Pragg, he will be on a flight to Qatar for the World Rapid and Blitz, then off to Kolkata for the Tata Steel Chess tournament. "After the Jerusalem tournament ended, I had to fly the same night because there were some Freestyle Chess activities from the next day itself in South Africa," Erigaisi says, describing a 13-hour journey, involving a flight from Tel Aviv to Addis Ababa and from there to South Africa. After the Freestyle event, Erigaisi was on a flight to Mumbai the next day itself to play in the GCL. "But that flight had many chess players," he smiles.

Ask him how many days on average he plays in tournaments, and Erigaisi estimates just over half of the year. And that, he points out, is a lower workload from the phase between June 2021 and June 2022 when he was playing in tournaments for about 200 days. Ask him if there are ideas like 'workload management' in chess, just like in other sports, and he shrugs: "At least now that I'm still young, fatigue hasn't happened. It's also why we all realise that fitness is one of the important goals for us. It's one of the reasons why Magnus Carlsen is still so good at 35 and Vishy is doing so well at 56." Gukesh too shrugs off any talk of mental fatigue. When asked by FIDE at the World Cup why he had chosen to play in an exhibition event in the USA, that too in rapid and blitz, just before he had to play in a classical World Cup on the other side of the world, with issues like jet lag to contend with, he replied: "I was telling myself, if I don't push myself at this age, when am I going to push myself?"

Tilak Varma jumps to fourth in ICC T20I rankings as Varun Chakravarthy stays on top



GNS News Agency, Dec 17

Hyderabad: India's hard-hitting batter Tilak Varma has surged up two places to fourth in the ICC Men's T-20I Player Rankings even as spinner Varun Chakravarthy has consolidated his position at the top of the bowling rankings. Varma followed up his score of 26 in the opening match against South Africa in Cuttack with 62 in New Chandigarh and 26 not out in Dharamsala this past week to overtake Pakistan's Sahibzada Farhan and England's Jos Buttler in the list led by India's Abhishek Sharma. Varma's

best ranking is the second position that he reached in January this year. South Africa captain Aiden Markram's knock of 61 in a score of only 117 in the third match has taken him eight places up to 29th while Quinton de Kock's match-winning 90 in the second T20I has lifted him 14 places to 53rd position. The T20I bowling rankings see Chakravarthy, who bagged two wickets each in the two T20Is played this past week, adding 36 rating points to his tally, which has gone up to a career-best 818 points.

Seamers from both sides have moved up the charts. India's left-arm Arshdeep Singh, who was named Player of the Match for his haul of two for 13 in Dharamsala, is up four places to 16th while South Africa pacers Marco Jansen (up 14 places to 25th) and Lungi Ngidi (up 11 places to 44th) have also progressed. In the ICC Men's Test Player Rankings, Devon Conway's scores of 60 and 28 in Wellington helped his team to a nine-wicket win in the second match of their ICC World Test Championship series against the West Indies and lifted him seven places to 34th position among batters. Mitchell Hay made a fine debut, top-scoring with 61 as he started his Test career in joint-78th position while Jacob Duffy took five second-innings wickets for just 38 runs to move up 15 places to a career-best 48th position among bowlers.

'Dizzy, nausea': Why Steve Smith made a shock withdrawal on morning of Adelaide Test against England



GNS News Agency, Dec 17

Steve Smith withdrew from the third Test of the Ashes series against England on the morning of the opening day's play. Cricket Australia has confirmed Smith had been suffering from "nausea and dizziness" in the lead-up to his shock withdrawal from the Adelaide Test. The late withdrawal allowed Usman Khawaja a rare opportunity to play in the series, which he has grabbed with both hands, leading Australia on a tricky day's play thus far. Khawaja had started slowly and had reached 5 from 27 balls when Harry Brook dropped a regulation catch at second slip. From that moment on, Khawaja changed his intent, and started to hit more shots. Smith had even done his warm-ups at the Adelaide Oval, but had to leave the stadium after a chat with the coach Andrew McDonald. Smith had led Australia in the first two Tests, but luckily, for them, Pat Cummins had come back for this game to take over the leadership role.

Smith has been feeling unwell in the last few days. "Over the past few days he has been feeling unwell, with symptoms including nausea and dizziness," a Cricket Australia statement said. "He was assessed and monitored closely and was close to being available to play. However, given the persistence of symptoms, a decision was made not to proceed." He is being treated for a potential vestibular issue. This is something Steve has experienced intermittently in the past and is being managed accordingly. He is expected to be available for the Boxing Day Test in Melbourne.

Cummins shared his relief that Usman Khawaja was ready to take over at such a short notice. "Steve is feeling a little bit unwell the last couple of days," captain Pat Cummins said. He came and gave it a crack this morning but didn't think he was going to get up for this one so he's headed off home. But we're pretty lucky we have got someone like

Usman who can step right in." Smith's loss is a huge blow as Stuart Broad had spoken him as the thorn in England's flesh. "To win the series, we have to keep him (Smith's average) to under 50, don't we?" Broad said on the 'For the Love of Cricket' podcast, which he co-hosts alongside Jos Buttler. "He's gonna score a hundred, it's what he does. (If) he averages 40, that's at least 15 under his career average, so you're doing brilliantly. I think you have to get him early," he added. "If England aren't celebrating in his first 40 runs, it's going to be a long series." Obviously his technique has changed throughout, but I still can't sit here and go 'well this is how you get him out'. That's an unbelievable strength of his. He's incredibly difficult to bowl at. Sometimes you don't feel like you've bowled a bad ball and it still goes for four," he added.

How much will cheapest Football World Cup tickets cost? After global fan backlash, FIFA reduces costs of some tickets



GNS News Agency, Dec 17

\$4,185. The World Cup in North America will be the first edition that features 48 teams — up from 32 — and is expected to earn FIFA at least \$10 billion in revenue while being the most expensive ever for fans. FIFA claims it has already received more than 20 million ticket requests in its latest sales phase.

FIFA's initial ticketing plans gave participating teams no tickets in the lowest-priced category. The standard allocation is 8 per cent of stadium capacity per team. This led to furore among fan groups. The cheapest prices ranged from \$140 to \$265 for group-stage games that did not involve co-hosts the United States, Canada and Mexico. The \$265 games involve Lionel Messi's Argentina, Portugal with Cristiano Ronaldo and well-supported teams like Brazil and England. This move is a rare climbdown by FIFA and its president Gianni Infantino. There has been a global outcry by fans from the time the ticket prices were announced. Infantino has also been criticized for his political alignment with Donald Trump after he gave the U.S. President a peace prize. The World Cup will have 16 host cities, and will be held in 11 NFL stadiums in the United States, plus two in Canada and three in Mexico. While FIFA has not outlined why it was changing its policy and introducing the cheap tickets, it did state that the lower prices are "designed to further support traveling fans following their national teams across the tournament." According to a report in the Associated Press, Football Supporters Europe group, which represents grassroots fan groups, said the limited price cut was "an appeasement tactic due to the global negative backlash." "This shows that FIFA's ticketing policy is not set in stone, was decided in a rush, and without proper consultation," the group said in a statement.

Why CSK spent heavily on youth and KKR on overseas performers

GNS News Agency, Dec 17

To put the IPL mini-auction in a nutshell, it was an afternoon where Kolkata Knight Riders and Chennai Super Kings, entering the table with a purse of Rs 64.30 crore and Rs 43.40 crore respectively, shook the room in Abu Dhabi. Among the top six buys on Tuesday evening, five came from their table. The prices told a story in itself. Top eight buys were Cameron Green (KKR, Rs 25.30 crore), Matheesa Pathirana (KKR, Rs 18 Cr), Kartik Sharma (CSK Rs 14.20 Cr), Prashant Veer (CSK Rs 14.20), Liam Livingstone (SRH, Rs 13 Cr), Mustafizur Rahman (KKR, Rs 9.20 Cr), Josh Inglis (LSG, 8.60 Cr), and Augib Nabi (DC, Rs 8.40 Cr). A mix of overseas players, who are far from proven consistent performers and uncapped Indians who are unknown commodity but franchises willing to take a gigantic leap of faith.

With the demand and supply mismatch being evident, Australia's Green broke the record for costliest overseas player, with KKR buying him for Rs 25.30 crore. Chennai, which has been a franchise that always banked on experience and proven names, chose a paradigm shift, investing in uncapped Indian players, headlined by 19-year-old Kartik and 20-year-old Prashant. At Rs 14.20 crore each, they are the most expensive uncapped players in IPL history. While all eyes were on KKR and CSK, the rest of the franchises, which came with the purpose of filling the holes, would now head back a happy bunch. The next IPL can't come any sooner.

The 64.50 crore in Kolkata made a huge difference for them. For a franchise that splurged Rs 24.75 crore for Mitchell Starc and Rs 23.75 crore on Venkatesh Iyer in the last two auctions, they once again went all out in pursuit of Green, who was lined up as a replacement for Andre Russell. It is a franchise that doesn't hesitate to spend a majority of its purse on starters and the trend continued. They didn't stop there, with their death bowling resources being weak, and an area to address, they set their eyes on Pathirana. Despite being injury-prone and struggling for form, KKR believe reuniting him with their mentor Dwayne Bravo could give him a fresh start. That Delhi, Lucknow Super Giants were also in the race for a bowler still finding his feet said how franchises were desperate to have a pacer with X-factor even keeping the coss in mind. At Rs 15.20 crore, the price did come as a surprise, but KKR did seem to have a back-up plan in place. For Plan B, they have the Bangladeshi seamer Mustafizur Rahman, who generated interest from CSK before they landed him for Rs 9.20 crore. Once the trio were in, they managed to fill their holes with Finn Allen, Rachin Ravindra, Tim Seifert and Rahul Tripathi at their base price.

CSK: Dad's Army to Gen Z Having finished rock bottom, CSK treaded a path they had never taken before. Hav-



ing assembled a trial session way earlier than the rest of the franchises, in September, they chose to press the reset button in their approach with their eyes firmly on uncapped domestic talent. The signs had come midway through last season when they invested in youth. This auction, they went further. After going for Green, they stopped pursuing Ravi Bishnoi when the bid touched Rs 6 crore. Once the uncapped players came up, they didn't keep the paddle down until they landed both their top targets, Veer and Kartik. An Indian spinner missing, Rahul Chahar was bought for Rs 5.20 crore before the likes of Akeal Hosein, Matthew Short, Matt Henry, Sarfaraz Khan, Zakary Foulkes and Aman Khan were grabbed at base price. "As the game has evolved, we might have been a little bit slow to evolve with it," CSK head coach Stephen Fleming admitted. "Sometimes you can hang on to theories and philosophies because of past success but we identified that we needed to shift and partly the work that we did last season halfway through has enabled us to continue that work done," he explained their new strategy. KKR and CSK going hard on their targets meant that the rest were able to land their targets with minimum fuss. Delhi Capitals, for instance, got Ben Duckett and David Miller, both at base price. Lucknow got lucky with Anrich Nortje and Wanindu Hasaranga, but their winning bid for Inglis, who could miss majority of the season, for Rs 8.60 Cr raised eyebrows. Defending champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru, having missed Venkatesh Iyer, bought him for Rs 7 Cr alongside left-arm uncapped pacer Magesh Yadav from Madhya Pradesh. Rajasthan Royals added Ravi Bishnoi for Rs 7.20 crore, while Sunrisers Hyderabad threw a surprise by landing Livingstone for Rs 13 crore. Punjab Kings needed back-ups and got it in the form of Ben Dwarshuis and Cooper Connolly. Even Mumbai Indians, which entered the auction with just Rs 2.75 crore, got Quinton de Kock and four uncapped players. It was a rare evening in Abu Dhabi, where all 10 franchises arrived with plans, executed them and returned all smiles.

Father earned Rs 12,000 as teacher; son Prashant Veer hopes to be perfect MS Dhoni student, picked for Rs 14.2 crore by CSK

A son of 'Shiksha Mitri' (Primary Teacher) who earned around Rs 12,000 per month, 20-year-old Prashant Veer was picked for Rs 14.20 crore by Chennai Super Kings (CSK) in Indian Premier League's mini-auction on Tuesday. Veer wasn't expecting too much, and like any uncapped player, he hoped someone in the auction room would merely raise the paddle for him. "I was just hoping that someone would raise their paddle, it took me some time to process that I have gone to CSK for 14 crores. Sapna lag raha tha sab, I told Rinku (Singh) bhai ke pinch karo ek baar. My family has not seen so much money in their life, this will change things for good. What I will do with the money, yeh sochney ka kaam gharwalon ka hai, mera nahi," he told The Indian Express. (It felt like a dream to be picked by CSK. I told Rinku to pinch me. My family will decide what to do with the money. God heard my prayers.)

Divine intervention or not, CSK needed to fill the gap left by Ravindra Jadeja, and Veer, a left handed batsman and left arm spinner, was almost a like for like replacement, as the franchise looks to rejuvenate its squad. "I always wanted to play for CSK especially under MS Dhoni. He too bats lower down the order like me, I had wished that whenever auction happens, I should go to CSK. Bhagwan ne lagta hai sun liya," Prashant added.

Prashant Veer with his family (Image via special arrangement) Prashant Veer with his family (Image via special arrangement) For a boy from a small village Shahjipur, 13 kilometers from Amethi, it was not an easy ride. He didn't take the traditional route of travelling to Lucknow or Kanpur. Instead, seven years ago, he decided to travel to Saharanpur to play his cricket. His childhood coach Rajiv Goyal recalls

how his student Rakshit Garg called him to inform that one boy was willing to come here and play cricket in Saharanpur.

"He must have been 15 years old, Prashant and Garg were in the same hostel in Mainpuri but cricket wasn't as competitive as he expected there," Goyal recalls. Garg asked Prashant to compare their hostel coaching. "Both landed in my academy. The way he was timing the ball, you can see there was something different in him. I took him to my old house where other players used to stay. Since then he's trained there," Goyal recalled. Cricket threw another challenge at him financially. Prashant's late grandfather Suryakumar Tripathi was taking care of Prashant's cricketing dream with his pension. His father was earning a mere 8,000 rupees from teaching then. "When his grandfather died, he said, sir ab mera cricket khatam. I told him you play here, I will manage whatever I can. And then we took help of Akram Saifi, who is chairman of Saharanpur District Cricket Association, he took care of him later on," Goyal said.

Despite clearing all selection trials, Prashant didn't see his name in Uttar Pradesh's Under 16 squad. He was desperate but his coach was clear that he needs to work harder. Prashant urged Goyal to try get him to play in Chandigarh. He got admission in a college in Jalandhar and continued to play junior cricket. Later, he was picked for UP's Under 19 team and since then he hasn't looked back. Prashant Veer with his coach Rajiv Goyal. (Image via Special Arrangement) Prashant Veer with his coach Rajiv Goyal. (Image via Special Arrangement) "My financial condition was not good but I got people who were ready to help me."

Akshaye Khanna performs vastu shanti puja at Alibaug home amid Dhurandhar's viral success.



has long stayed away from the spotlight, was recently seen performing a vastu shanti puja at his residence in Alibaug. A video shared by the priest who conducted the puja has since surfaced online. In the clip, Akshaye Khanna, dressed in a casual white shirt and blue denim, is seen participating in the rituals alongside three priests.

Priest Shivam Mhatre shared glimpses of the ceremony on Instagram, accompanied by a heartfelt caption. "I had the good fortune of performing a traditional and devotional puja at actor Akshaye Khanna's residence. His calm nature, simplicity, and positive energy made the experience truly special," he wrote. Praising the actor's craft, the priest added, "When it comes to class in acting, Akshaye Khanna stands apart. Through his powerful role in the historical film Chhaava, he once again captured the audience's attention. This was followed by his sharp and intense character in Dhurandhar, his restrained yet compelling performance in Drishyam 2, and his serious, realistic role in Section 375—each film reflecting a new peak in his acting journey." He further wrote, "With carefully chosen roles, meaningful cinema, and mature performances, Akshaye Khanna continues to hold a unique and respected place in the hearts of audiences." The video quickly went viral. The clip was also shared on Reddit, sparking several fan reactions. One user commented, "My man is chilling after delivering two 500+ crore blockbusters in a single year." Another wrote, "Bro acted in two of the biggest Hindi films of the time and went to Alibaug to chill." Others praised his script choices. "His script selection should be admired. Last year I watched Section 375 and wasn't expecting that twist. Loved the grey shade in his character," read one comment. Another fan wrote, "I aspire to be like this man—not performative, not attention-hungry. Just content, with quiet confidence that shows in his aura. Does his job with perfection and disappears. No overactive PR. Love him!"

Akshaye Khanna made his debut with the 1997 film Himalay Putra, produced by his father Vinod Khanna. While the film did not perform well at the box office, it brought him recognition. Since then, the actor has remained highly selective, sometimes staying away from films for years. Including Dhurandhar, Akshaye has appeared in just 48 films over nearly three decades. Speaking about his selective career choices, he once told Mid-Day, "For me, not working is the hardest part of being an actor. It is depression time. I'm the opposite of someone who looks forward to six months off. But destiny played its cards—I ended up taking forced breaks, not by choice. It's very hard when you aren't getting material you connect with." While it remains unclear whether Akshaye Khanna's character Rehman Dakait will return in Dhurandhar Part 2—scheduled for release on March 19—given that the character was killed in the first film, the actor is next set to appear in the Telugu film Mahakali, followed by Drishyam 3.

While Ranveer Singh—marking his return to form after Padmaavat and Gully Boy—celebrated the success with a humble note on Instagram, Akshaye Khanna, who

silenced every controversy surrounding it with staggering box-office numbers and brought viral fame to the talented Akshaye Khanna. Playing Rehman Dakait in the film, Akshaye's performance in the Fa9la song made him the national crush, landing him in memes. The film, which opened at Rs 28 crore, witnessed extraordinary footfalls in its second weekend. It earned Rs 32.5 crore on its second Friday, followed by Rs 53 crore on Saturday and Rs 58 crore on Sunday. The momentum continued into the weekdays, with the film collecting Rs 30 crore each on its second Monday and Tuesday, taking its total India net collection to Rs 411 crore. Such phenomenal second-week numbers have not been seen even in Hindi cinema's biggest blockbusters, including Dangal and Shah Rukh Khan's comeback films Jawan and Pathaan. All three films saw their daily collections dip below Rs 15 crore during the same phase (second week). Akshaye Khanna performs vastu shanti puja

While Ranveer Singh—marking his return to form after Padmaavat and Gully Boy—celebrated the success with a humble note on Instagram, Akshaye Khanna, who

'Akshaye Khanna is baap': Mukesh Chhabra reveals actor said yes to Dhurandhar immediately, calls him a man of his word



timeline. People are only talking about his entry and the way he has performed overall. And he had no idea it would become so big, because he is just too focused as a guy on his work." Talking further about the casting process, Chhabra revealed how it all came together. "We jotted down lots of names for his role and then we went about shortlisting, where we zeroed in on his name. Then he came for the narration, and he came alone, that was the beautiful part. And after it ended, he looked at me and I looked at him and he said, 'Loved it, maza aa gaya yaar' (I loved it, I really enjoyed it, man)." He added, "Aaj main padh leta hoon raat mein jaakar phir" (I'll read it tonight and get back to you). And he is not one of those guys who says 'aaj padh leta hoon' (I'll read it today) and then ghosts you. He is a man of his word. That's the best part about him, that he takes every single decision on his own." Another casting choice that has been drawing significant attention is Rakesh Bedi, who plays the politician Jameel Jamali in the film. Speaking about Rakesh Bedi's casting, Chhabra said, "Almost every producer, director, or actor I know is taking his number from me and congratulating him. Some are even planning to cast him, and I'm so happy for him. I think he completely reinvented himself in this film, especially in the way he performed. He actually added his own humor to the character; it was never in the script." He further explained, "I think he spoke to Aditya and said, 'I want to add another layer to this.' He's a great actor, when actors improvise, they always come up with new ideas. And Aditya is extremely collaborative. There's no barrier with him; you can communicate freely and really speak your heart out." Recalling his first conversation with Rakesh Bedi, Chhabra shared, "When I called Rakesh ji, I just told him, 'It's a very interesting character, you haven't done anything like this, please do it.' And he immediately responded, 'Beta, main trust karta hoon tujhe, let's do it' (Son, I trust you, let's do it)."

The release of Aditya Dhar's actioner Dhurandhar has set the internet abuzz, drawing widespread attention to the sheer brilliance of Akshaye Khanna, who plays the crime kingpin Rehman Dakait in the film. Across social media platforms, one can find reels praising his electrifying dance to the song FASLA, while timelines are flooded with tweets applauding the intensity he brings to the role. Renowned casting director Mukesh Chhabra, in an exclusive conversation with SCREEN, opened up about how Akshaye Khanna was cast in the film. Praising the actor, Chhabra said,

"He is baap! Now he has literally taken over the internet. The social media belongs to Akshaye Khanna since the time the film has released. Wherever you go, be it Facebook, Instagram, X, all you see is him on your

Agastya Nanda's Ikkis pushed to Jan 1 to dodge Dhurandhar wave, avoid clash with Avatar Fire and Ash



The makers of Ikkis have postponed the release of the Agastya Nanda-starrer. The film was earlier slated to hit theatres on December 25. However, amid the unstoppable box office wave of Dhurandhar, which shows no signs of slowing down, the makers have shifted Ikkis' release date to January 1, 2026.

Trade analyst Taran Adarsh shared the update on social media and pointed out how producer Dinesh V Jain and his banner Maddock Films have previously benefited from strategic release-date shifts. He noted that Maddock had moved earlier films like Hindi Medium and Chhaava to avoid clashes with big-ticket releases such as Baahubali 2 and Pushpa 2, decisions that ultimately proved profitable. He wrote, "DINESH VIJAN'S WISE MOVE - 'IKKIS' SHIFTS TO 1 JAN 2026... ?? 2017: #HindiMedium smartly shifted to a later date once #Baahubali2 locked its release. ?? 2024: #Chhaava avoided a direct clash with #Pushpa2 and moved to 2025. The postponement of #HindiMedium and #Chhaava worked to their advantage, with both eventually enjoying a clear run."

Taran further added that apart from the fear of being overshadowed by the Dhurandhar wave, Ikkis was also facing stiff competition from the Hollywood giant Avatar, which is scheduled to release in India on December 19. He

wrote, "#Dhurandhar is creating havoc at the box office and shows no signs of slowing down... Plus, #Avatar—the #Hollywood giant—will have an extensive release in #India this Friday [19 Dec 2025]. Neither film is likely to surrender screens or prime shows during the #Christmas week." As per the update, Ikkis will now enjoy a solo theatrical release on January 1, 2026. Taran also announced that the film's final trailer will be released on December 19. Ikkis is directed by Sriram Raghavan and is based on the life of Param Vir Chakra awardee Arun Khetarpal, a hero of the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971.

'It's good Hema Malini didn't attend Dharmendra's prayer meet': Manoj Desai recalls massive turnout, hundreds queuing up to meet Deols



for coming'. I stood for 45 minutes outside, waiting for my car because there was such a huge queue outside."

'Never saw a prayer meet like that of Dharmendra' Manoj shared that he hadn't seen a footfall so big at any other prayer meet of any artiste than what he witnessed at Dharmendra's. He said, "I have gone to so many prayer meets of so many artistes including Rajesh Khanna's, in which I was sitting next to Amitabh Bachchan. I had also gone to the prayer meet of Yash Chopra, but I had never seen a prayer meet like that of Dharamji's. It felt like the whole nation was there. There was no one who didn't want to come."

Manoj also commented on why Dharmendra's second wife and veteran actor Hema Malini organized a separate prayer meet for the actor in Mumbai and didn't attend the prayer meet that Sunny Deol and family arranged. "I was not surprised that Hemaji didn't turn up. Before any controversy or any such talk would have happened, she organised a separate prayer meet for him. It was good that she didn't come. Hema and Dharmendra ji were very close, but if somebody would have said something to her, the whole prayer meet would have been messed up. So, it was good that she organised a prayer meet separately." Hema Malini and Dharmendra's prayer meet Hema Malini with her daughter Esha and Ahana during the Dharmendra prayer meeting in New Delhi. Talking about Dharmendra and Hema's chemistry, he said, "I think he had maximum chemistry with Hemaji. However, he had chemistry with all his heroines, including Mumtaz and Meena Kumari." Dharmendra had four children with his first wife, Prakash Kaur—sons Sunny and Bobby Deol, and daughters Ajeeta and Vijeta Deol. He married Hema Malini in 1980 and they have two daughters together, Esha Deol and Ahana Deol. Dharmendra died in Mumbai on November 24 at the age of 89.

Radhika Apte says she wants to forget first film Vaah! Life Ho Toh Aisi!: 'Producers treated me horribly, didn't pay'



didn't put me up, didn't pay me. When my mother and I asked them to sign a contract, they said, 'Arey, even Urmila Matondkar didn't sign a contract. I don't know if she signed or not, but they treated us horribly. Mahesh Manjrekar was a great guy. That's why I like to forget my film because the production was awful! And I say it out loud," said Radhika in an edition of Creator X Creator on SCREEN, confessing that she doesn't like to admit to her first film. Radhika also recalled how she landed that supporting role in Vaah! Life Ho Toh Aisi!. "I was doing a play called Brain Surgeon. It was a good play. We won an award in a state competition. Mahesh Manjrekar was one of the judges. He called me after the play and said, 'I want to cast you,'" Radhika recounted. But of the three films Manjrekar was working on then as a director, he thought Radhika was too young to fit into the other two—the 2004 supernatural drama Rakht, starring Bipasha Basu, and the 2007 film Deha.

"Then I didn't do a film for a long time. I finished college, and then I went back to films after a long time. So, I don't really count that as one of the films I did. But yeah, it's been two decades," added Radhika. She went on to star in a Bengali movie and a couple of Marathi films before making her Hindi film debut with Ram Gopal Varma's 2010 political action thriller Raktak Charitra, which was also made in Telugu the same year. Radhika was most recently seen in Tisca Chopra's directorial debut Saali Mohabbat, which also stars Divyendu, Anurag Kashyap, and Sharat Saxena. She plays Smita, a homemaker who finds out her husband is having an affair with her sister. Backed by Manish Malhotra's Stage 5 Productions, the film is streaming on ZEE5.

Saroj Khan refused to choreograph Madhuri Dixit's 'Dhak Dhak', accepted on one condition: 'No one will question me'

The film industry often witnesses a duo of artists come together and make magic every single time they meet. That relationship can be between a director and actor, a composer and a singer, or even a choreographer and actor. One of the best examples of the latter is the relationship between actor Madhuri Dixit and late choreographer Saroj Khan. In a recent interview, Madhuri recalled working with the stalwart and shared some stories from their time together. The actor appeared on Radio Nasha's YouTube channel and was asked about some of the iconic songs from her career. Naturally the mention of Saroj ji kept coming, as Madhuri first told a story from the sets of Subhash Ghai's Ram Lakhan. She revealed that the famous song 'O Ram Ji' was completely different when picturised for the first time. Dixit said that there was a communication gap between Ghar and Saroj, but nothing too difficult for the latter to fix.

Recalling the story, Madhuri said, "I will in fact tell you a very funny story from the shooting of 'O Ram Ji'. So obviously Javed Akhtar had written the words for it, and Bappi Lahiri had composed it, but no one briefed Saroj ji about the song. She was made to listen to the song and was asked for the steps. Now my character was very innocent, and I was supposed to be complaining to the elder brother (Jackie Shroff) about his younger one (Anil Kapoor), but she made it into a total Bollywood number." She added, "Subash ji stopped her mid-performance and said, 'Esa character nahi hai ladki ka' (This is not how the girl is like). But the genius of Saroj ji is that within minutes she had come up with a new choreography, and then you saw what she did." The actor talked about the shooting of one of her most iconic songs, 'Ek Do Teen', from the N Chandra film Tezaab. Madhuri revealed that she initially didn't understand the meaning or reasoning behind the song and said, "The first time I heard 'Ek Do Teen', I didn't understand it. I thought they didn't have enough words, and that is why they have put numbers. But then I realised the meaning behind the song." She continued and said that Saroj ji wanted her to work extra hard in order to prepare for a proper Bollywood number. "Right as the shooting was about to start, Saroj ji told me, 'You have only done classical or semi-classical numbers. You haven't done something like this, so you

need to rehearse.' I agreed, and for 13 days straight I rehearsed with her. At one point she got annoyed with me and said, 'Tum ghar jao abhi' (You go home). But I stood there and said that I wasn't going before finishing my rehearsal." Madhuri added, "Because I was used to dancing on stage, performing for a camera was difficult. But that song helped me learn so much about this art and how to dance for the camera." Madhuri then talked about the Bappi Lahiri song Tamma Tamma from the film Thandhaar, directed by Raj N Sippy. She recalled the difficult steps for the song and said, "Shooting Tamma Tamma was incredibly tough. We had 4 people doing the same steps: me, Sanju, and two backup dancers. Now if anything went wrong, they had to reshoot it from the beginning. We had to do 40 retakes because Saroj ji refused to cut. She wanted it all in one shot. We finally got the shot, and we were relieved, but we were so tired. Our knees were busted up by the end." The Indra Kumar directorial, Beta, had the song 'Dhak Dhak' in it, performed by Udit Narayan and Anuradha Paudwal. The song is one of the most beloved from Madhuri's discography, and yet it almost didn't happen. Madhuri revealed that the song was a last-minute addition to the film and that Saroj ji worked everyone to the bone in order to shoot the song in the limited time. "Now, like many other songs in the past, 'Dhak Dhak' also came to us in the last moment. Indu Ji (Indra Kumar) was adamant that he had to have this song for the film. I told him that I had to go for an outdoor shoot in three days, and it wasn't possible. But he wouldn't budge, and I finally decided to pull double shifts in order to shoot the sequence," said Madhuri.

