


SSC hall tickets to carry QR codes from March 2026 in Telangana

Hyderabad: The School Education department is exploring the option of printing the Quick Response (QR) codes in hall tickets issued for the SSC Public Examinations, which are scheduled for March 2026.

The initiative is aimed at aiding the Class X students to navigate their respective examination centres with ease.



Bangladesh erupts after student leader's death; mob targets Indian mission

New Delhi Dec 19

Violent protests erupted across Bangladesh following the death of youth leader Sharif Osman Hadi, underscoring renewed instability in the neighbouring nation and amplifying concerns in New Delhi about rising anti-India sentiment and regional security implications.

The protests escalated into widespread unrest in Dhaka and other major cities after Hadi (32), a prominent student leader from the 2024 uprising that toppled former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and spokesperson for the Inquilab Mancha protest platform, succumbed to injuries in a Singapore hospital.

Hadi was shot at during his election campaign last week. His body was flown back to Dhaka on Friday evening, with his funeral scheduled for Saturday, even as tensions continued to simmer across the country.

While no major incidents were reported during the day, Thursday night saw violent mobs vandalise the already demolished structure at 32 Dhanmondi — the former residence of Bangladesh's founding father Sheikh Mujibur Rahman — and attack the offices of leading media organisations in the capital.

The offices of Prothom Alo and The Daily Star were torched in what is being described as one of the most serious assaults on the media in recent years. Journalists were trapped inside the buildings and later rescued by emergency services as fires raged and equipment was destroyed.

In the port city of Chittagong, protesters attempted to storm the Assistant High Commission of India, raising anti-India slogans, prompting heightened security measures. Police and paramilitary forces were deployed across the country to contain the violence ahead of national elections scheduled for February.

The interim government, led by Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus, condemned the violence and de-



clared a state day of mourning, pledging a transparent investigation into Hadi's killing and warning against attempts to derail Bangladesh's democratic transition.

"The government urges all citizens of Bangladesh to resist all forms of mob violence committed by a few fringe elements. We strongly and unequivocally condemn all acts of violence, intimidation, arson and destruction of property," Yunus, who serves as the chief adviser to the interim government, said.

Addressing attacks on the media, Yunus expressed solidarity with journalists, saying assaults on news organisations were an assault on democracy itself. "Attacks on journalists are attacks on truth. We promise full justice," he said, assuring that those responsible would be held accountable.

The renewed violence comes amid heightened regional sensitivities, with Indian agencies closely monitoring developments in Bangladesh as instability once again spills on to the streets, raising concerns over security, diplomatic missions and the broader political trajectory of India's eastern neighbour.

Hyderabad has no link to Bondi beach shooting: Telangana DGP

GNS News Agency, Dec 19

Hyderabad: Telangana Director General of Police (DGP) Shivadhar Reddy on Friday, December 19, said that the recent shooting incident at Bondi Beach in Australia has no connection with Hyderabad, even as that the accused, Sajid Akram, hails from the city.

The DGP said that Sajid Akram, a native of Hyderabad, moved to Australia in 1998 in search of employment. Since then, he had travelled back to India only on six occasions.

After marrying a European woman in Australia, he visited Hyderabad with her once in 1998. He later returned in 2004, and again in February 2009, he added.

According to Reddy, Akram visited India in June 2011 and again in 2016 to settle his property matters. His most recent trip was in 2022 to see his mother and sister.

The Telangana police chief firmly stated that, although the accused has origins in Hyderabad, the Bondi Beach attack is entirely unrelated to any activities or connections in the city.

At least 16 people were killed in the violent gun attack at Bondi Beach on December 14, which authorities in Australia are treating as a terror-related incident.



“Get Ready for GHMC Elections,” Parameshwar Reddy Calls on Congress Cadre



“(KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, December 19 (Indian Chronicle):““Urging party workers to gear up for the upcoming (GHMC) elections, Uppal Assembly Constituency Congress Party In-charge Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy called on senior leaders and grassroots cadre to remain election-ready at all times.“Addressing a key party workers’ meeting held on Thursday at the Division in the Kapra Circle of the Uppal constituency, Parameshwar Reddy said that elections could be announced anytime and emphasized preparedness across the organization.“He stated that since the formation of the people’s government under Chief Minister , a steady flow of funds has begun for the development of the Uppal constituency. In contrast, he alleged that during the previous BRS regime, Uppal did not receive adequate funds, resulting in stalled development.“After Revanth Reddy became Chief Minister, there has been no shortage of funds for constituency development,” he asserted.“Parameshwar Reddy advised party workers and leaders to extensively tour colonies, identify pub-



lic issues, and bring them to his notice. He assured the cadre that he is ready to secure any amount of funds required for resolving issues and accelerating development in the constituency.“He further noted that under the leadership of , the Congress party has been strengthened across the state. He said that the development and welfare initiatives undertaken during the two years of Congress governance have helped the party achieve success in local body elections, expressing confidence that the upcoming GHMC elections would yield even better results.“The meeting was attended by Division Presidents Polepaka Anjaiah and Srinivas Mudiraj, along with senior Congress leaders Seetharam Reddy, Vittal Nayak, Shravan Reddy, Rayani Uday Kiran, Suresh Goud, Krishna Nayak, Mallesham, Kantha Rao, Rajesh Auto Sirinu, Yadanna, Rahimuddin, Shravan Goud, Subbu, Anil, Sammayya, Bestha Ramesh, Apparao, Venu, Mallikarjun, Srikanth Gupta, Venkat, Babu, Rajesh, Harsha, Nagaraju, Ramesh, Sunitha, Ramalakshmi, Rani, Swarna, Rajitha, Ellamma, Yadamma, and several others.

Traffic diversions in Hyderabad for Christmas celebrations at LB stadium on Dec 20

Hyderabad: In view of Christmas celebrations – 2025, being held at LB Stadium by the State government and Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy scheduled to attend, there will be certain traffic restrictions imposed in the city between 5pm and 10 pm on December 20.Traffic will be either stopped or diverted at the following routes on a need basis.Traffic from AR Petrol Pump junction towards BJR Statue will be diverted towards Nampally Railway Station and traffic from Basheerbagh towards A.R. Petrol Pump will be diverted towards SBI, Abid Road and Nampally Railway Station road.



LS clocks 111% productivity, RS 121% as stormy Parl session ends

New Delhi Dec 19

The 19-day winter session of Parliament ended on a stormy note on Friday with the government describing the sittings as highly productive and reform-oriented and the Opposition vowing a public agitation against the new Bill that replaces Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005.The 15-sitting session saw the government introduce 10 Bills and both Houses pass eight of these. On productivity, both Houses scored well. The Lok Sabha productivity stood at 111 per cent and the Rajya Sabha's at 121 per cent.

The most consequential draft legislations that cleared both Houses are--The Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India Bill, 2025, to open India's hitherto controlled nuclear sector to private capital and The Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) or VB-G RAM G, replacing MNREGA.

The session also saw two major discussions--on the 150th anniversary of Vande Mataram which Prime Minister Narendra Modi opened in the Lok Sabha and the second on electoral reforms and special intensive revision of electoral rolls.

"The winter session was a highly productive session for the nation, with pro-people, pro-poor and pro-village Bills being passed. It shows that Prime

Minister Narendra Modi's reform express has taken off and is not going to stop," Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju said today, expressing "full satisfaction at the transaction of government business" during the session.

Answering a query by The Tribune on whether he had any regrets about the session, Rijiju blamed the Opposition conduct. "We are disappointed for two reasons. One--Opposition members' misconduct at the end of the session during the passage of the Viksit Bharat G RAM G Bill. Two--we could not take up the scheduled discussion on air pollution because of the disruptions created by the Congress," said Rijiju.

The Congress dismissed the government's charges with party general secretary Jairam Ramesh, the party's chief whip in the Rajya Sabha, saying that the NDA dispensation ran away from the pollution debate.

Jairam's comments came after Speaker Om Birla said all parties decided to defer the pollution debate in the Lok Sabha yesterday, citing a "non-conducive atmosphere" after the Opposition ruckus. The Speaker's reference was to Opposition MPs protesting the passage of the VB G RAM G Bill on Thursday, with some even climbing up the secretary general's table in acts which the government termed "unacceptable and undignified".

While the Congress said it would plan the way forward to protest the G RAM G Bill, the government said the Opposition should thank it for permitting a debate on the Election Commission (EC) and electoral reforms.

"This happened for the first time ever. Never has the EC functioning been discussed in the House before," Rijiju said, also thanking the Opposition camp for participating in the discussions on spe-

cial agendas like Vande Mataram and later on the Bills.

"But the Opposition created unprecedented disruption in the end," said Rijiju, blaming the Congress for a thwarted debate on pollution which Lok Sabha Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi had demanded.

Importantly, Rahul is away to Germany while his sister Priyanka Gandhi Vadra today represented the Congress in the customary end of session tea the Speaker hosts. Present in the meeting were PM Modi, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, NCP-SP's Supriya Sule and other senior Opposition and government leaders.

Rajya Sabha Chairman, in his valedictory remarks, described the conduct of Opposition MPs (who stormed the well during the passage of G RAM G Bill in the wee hours on Friday) as "unbecoming" and asked them to introspect.

Revanth Reddy clarifies Salman Khan Ventures project is only expression of interest

Hyderabad: Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy on Thursday said that the proposed Rs 10,000 crore integrated township and film studio project announced by Salman Khan Ventures, during the Global Summit was only an expression of interest, and not a finalised investment.Hyderabad city guideSpeaking informally to media persons, the Chief Minister said no agreement had been formalised so far. He explained that Salman Khan Ventures, along with some Middle East-based firms, had shown interest in the State government's plan to develop a large sports arena in the proposed Future City.The government plans to develop a sports arena spread over 500 to 600 acres, featuring cricket, football and tennis stadia, indoor sports facilities and a golf course. A Detailed Project Report (DPR) will be prepared, after which global tenders will be invited to execute the project.Revanth Reddy clarified that no project would be awarded on a nomination basis and that all interested companies, including Salman Khan Ventures, would have to participate in the global bidding process. The State government would provide land and transfer the title to the successful bidder. No company will take interest if the land is not transferred in their name, he said.

Government Whip Beerla Ailaiah met with PCC President Mahesh Kumar Goud and offered him the prasadam of Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy

“(Mandava Srisailam... Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... December 19):- Telangana State Government Whip and Alair MLA Beerla Ailaiah paid a courtesy visit to Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee President (MLC) Mahesh Kumar Goud at the MLA quarters in Hyderabad on Friday and felicitated him with a shawl. On this occasion, he presented him with the prasadam of Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy of Yadagirigutta. Mahesh Kumar Goud expressed his happiness that Beerla Ailaiah played a key role in the Congress party winning the majority of seats in the recently held Gram Panchayat elections in the Alair constituency. He also specially congratulated Alair MLA Beerla



Ailaiah for his continuous efforts for the party. On this occasion, he called upon the leaders and workers to work unitedly to further strengthen the Congress party.

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

India-Oman trade deal — expanding India's footprint in West Asia

Hit by the maverick trade policies of the United States President Donald Trump, India has been focusing on strategic hedging, expanding markets and accelerating Free Trade Agreements with a number of countries. The recent FTA with Oman, signed during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the Gulf country, is part of this broader strategy. This is the second trade deal with a Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) country after the UAE, and comes as a major boost to the efforts to expand market access in the West Asian market. With Oman providing India duty-free access to 98 per cent of its tariff lines, Indian manufacturers will get breathing space and a chance to reroute goods through a Gulf hub that can serve Africa and parts of Europe. The Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) with Muscat and similar agreements with other partners like the European Union or New Zealand provide the much-needed strategic hedging. India already has 15 FTAs covering 26 countries and preferential trade agreements with another 26. It is negotiating with over 50 more partners. Trade between India and Oman exceeded \$10 billion in 2024-25, providing a strong foundation for greater economic cooperation. The two countries have also agreed to enhance services exports, allowing a more liberal entry and stay conditions for skilled professionals. A deal with Oman could provide the springboard India needs to find other markets in the region and in Africa. Its strategic location serves as a hub from where Indian products can find other markets. The zero-duty access could result in \$2 billion worth of exports to Oman in the near term, benefitting gems and jewellery, textiles, leather, footwear, sports goods, plastics, furniture, agricultural products and engineering products. Oman largely exports crude oil, liquefied natural gas and fertilizers, methyl alcohol, along with petroleum coke. These items are critical for India's energy sector. The CEPA provides for 100 per cent FDI by Indian companies in major services sectors in Oman. Indian exports, largely driven by machinery and parts exports, have doubled in the last five years from \$2 billion to \$6 billion.

Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy Performs Special Prayers at Kalabhairava Swamy Temple

“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, December 19



(Indian Chronicle):“On the occasion of Amavasya, , MLA of Uppal, performed special prayers on Friday at the located in Uppal Bhagath.“Speaking on the occasion, the MLA expressed his hope that, with the blessings of Lord Kalabhairava, everyone would lead a happy and peaceful life.“The event was attended by state leaders Sai Jan Shekhar and Gandham Nageswara Rao, along with Uppal Division leaders Akula Mahender, Jetta Kishore, Ram Reddy, Anya Balakrishna, Kadige Shekhar, Panga Mahender Reddy, party workers, and others.

The Path Of Compromise Is The Royal Path - SP Nitika Pant

““Indian Chronicle” kumram bheem, Asifabad,District Reporte,Jade



Srinivas.December,19““District SP Nitika Pant IPS has urged the litigants to take advantage of the "National Lok Adalat" to be held till the 21st of this month.If disputes are escalated,they will continue for a lifetime, but if the path of compromise is chosen, a solution will be found immediately, the SP said, "Compromise is the royal path." He said that this Lok Adalat will be available in Asifabad and Sirpur (T) courts under the auspices of the Free Legal Services Authority, in which the cases settled will be completely closed.

Condolences To Employees who Died On Election Duty



“ “Indian Chronicle” kumram bheem, Asifabad,District Reporte,Jade Srinivas.December,19““Asifabad: On election duty To family members of deceased employees“The district expresses its deepest condolences.Election

Officer,Collector Venkatesh Dhotre"said in a statement. Of the deceased"Ex- gratia to be paid to family members"To send proposals to Govt"Actions are being taken.Venkatapuram Mandal, Mulugu District Mandal Parishad Development Officer"Rajendra Prasad, Asifabad in the district.Mission Bhagiratha AE Katta Raju Election Duty He said he died during maintenance.“Gram Panchayat Elections He praised the role of the officials in successfully organizing the event. Mandal To receive reports directly from parishad development officers and other district officers Nodal officers have been appointed for election monitoring at the district level.“He said that the elections were conducted in a robust manner with the appointment of observers.Review proposals related to the code of conduct and make appropriate recommendations"It was stated that a screening committee has been formed at the state level to do this.Unexpected incidents are monitored live from the control room set up in the Collectorate.The incident was resolved immediately after it occurred, including the closure of liquor shops and polling.Zonal on incidents inside and outside the centers,vote counting, etc.Direct information was collected from the authorities and resolved immediately.“He said. With the completion of the Gram Panchayat election process, the code of conduct“It was explained that it would end at 5 pm.

Special Pujas and Annadanam Held at Sri Shiva Shankara Mahamayi Temple, Uppal



““KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal | December 19(Indian Chronical)““Special prayers and annaprasadam (free food distribution) were conducted with great devotion at Sri Shiva Shankara Mahamayi Temple in on Friday, on the occasion of Margashira Masa Amavasya.“Devotees gathered in large numbers to participate in the special pujas offered to the Goddess, followed by annaprasadam arranged for all attendees. The religious programme was organised by the temple committee members, who ensured smooth conduct of the rituals.“Temple members and organisers who took part in the event included Upoji Balavanth Chary, Bikshapathi, Rajagopal Chary, Srinivas, Madhu, Pawan,



Cholleti Srinivas, Sridhara Chary, Palerla Gopi, Srinivas Sharma, Shameerpet Hanumanth Reddy, Bazaar Jagannath Goud, Krishna Reddy, Palakurshi Praveen, Jagan, Esuri Yadagiri, Pudoor Krishna Reddy, Naveen, Mudugonda Ravi, Gundala Anil Reddy, Praveen Reddy, Narsimha Chary, Rao, Nursing Rao, Turai Das, Mahesh, Ram Prakash, Gopi Chary, Pasupu Neti Ramesh, Venkaiah, Kumar, Bhaskar, Boothukuri Sai Kumar Goud, Naveen Goud, Papayya Goud, Raju, Sandeep, Mahesh Kumar, Bhavani Shankar, Lakshman, Santosh Kumar, Banti, Srinu, Srinivas Goud, Ganesh Goud, Yadi Goud, Venkatesh, and several others.

Sattu Srinu Appointed as Pan-India Executive Member of Head World Human Rights Council

““KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Hyderabad, December 19 (Indian Chronicle):““Head World Human Rights Council, which has been actively working across Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, has appointed“Telangana-based social activist Sattu Srinu as its Pan-India Executive Member.“The appointment orders were issued on Friday by the organization's Chairman Madhav, who also formally handed over the appointment letter to Srinu.“Speaking on the occasion, Sattu Srinu expressed his gratitude to Chairman Madhav for reposing faith in him, and also thanked the National General Secretary Satish Devarakonda for his efforts in facilitating the appointment. He stated that he would work tirelessly for the growth of the organization and stand firmly in support of victims, striving to ensure justice for those who have suffered.“He further affirmed that, on behalf of the Head World Human Rights Council, he would remain fully committed to the protection and promotion of human rights.““On the occasion of assuming office, members of the organization and several eminent citizens congratulated Sattu Srinu and extended their best wishes.



ESG Compliance Essential for Global Competitiveness: Jayesh Ranjan

European Pressure Mounting; ESG Leadership Summit Held by Hyderabad Management

Indian chronicle, Secunderabad,December 19:““Telangana Special Chief Secretary Jayesh Ranjan stated that companies failing to comply with ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) norms will not be able to survive in the international market. He empha-



sized that business leaders must clearly understand ESG requirements and ensure their products and operations strictly adhere to these standards.“Speaking as the chief guest at the ESG Leadership Summit organized by the Hyderabad Management Association (HMA) at Begumpet on Friday, Jayesh Ranjan said that Telangana's growth strategy is closely linked to global sustainability norms. He referred to the recently held “Rising Telangana Global Summit”, where a vision document was released outlining the state's goal of contributing significantly to India's target of becoming a \$30 trillion economy by 2047.“He highlighted that Telangana's pharma, life sciences, and

biotechnology products are exported to 93 countries, but warned that European nations have already issued strong signals that non-ESG-compliant products may be banned. “This is a serious challenge. To access international markets, especially Europe, ESG compliance is unavoidable,” he said.“Jayesh Ranjan added that exports would be the key driver for Telangana to achieve a \$3 trillion economy, with exports expected to grow tenfold over the next two decades. He welcomed HMA's initiative to launch ESG certification programs, stating that such efforts would benefit the city, state, and country.““Vision and Policy Are Key to Success: Prof. Sunaina Singh““Former Nalanda University Vice-Chancellor Prof. Sunaina Singh shared her experience of transforming Nalanda into a net-zero campus, stating that clear vision and well-defined policies are essential for sustainable success. She said Nalanda was developed on net-zero principles, transforming barren land into a green campus spread over 455 acres.““Green Lifestyle Is the Way Forward““HMA President Alwala Devender Reddy stressed that sustainability must become a way of life, not just a policy. HMA Vice-President Sharath Chandra Maraju announced initiatives such as a Personal Green Scorecard to encourage individual green efforts and an ESG Certification Program to build sustainability expertise and guide students toward green jobs.“The event was attended by Manisha Saboo (Infosys Foundation), Prof. Dr. Sriharsha Reddy (IMT Hyderabad), Suresh Kochattil, Anirban Ghosh (Mahindra University), Chetana Jain, and other industry and academic leaders.

Tummalaguda Sarpanch Ram Prasad joins Congress

““Indian Chronicle” kumram bheem, Asifabad,District Reporte,Jade Srinivas.December,19““Sarpanch Ram Prasad joins Congress Congratulating Konda Ramprasad, the new village sarpanch of Tummalaguda in Bejjar mandal,



Ramprasad joined the Congress party in a meeting organized by MLC Dande Vitthal. He said that village development is possible only with the Congress party. MLC Dande Vitthal assured that Rs. 50 lakhs will be sanctioned for village development, including solving the problem of waste lands and setting up a library for unemployed youth. Congress leaders, activists and villagers participated in this program.

Congress Wins In Gram Panchayat Elections: DCC President Congratulates

““Indian Chronicle” kumram bheem, Asifabad,District Reporte,Jade Srinivas .December,19““DCC President Atram Sugunakka congratulated the Congress Party's Sarpanchs,



Upasarpnchs and ward members who won the three-phase Gram Panchayat elections in Asifabad district.She thanked the people of the district for supporting the Congress Party in the elections.She said that the trust of the people is the strength of the Congress Party and the support received by the party at the village level will serve as an inspiration for more public service in the future.She thanked the leaders, activists and leaders of affiliated associations who worked hard for the party's victory. She called on the elected representatives to work with commitment for the development of villages and the welfare of the“[5:09 PM, 12/19/2025] +91 99485 55073: End..

All Parks in Ramanthapur Division to Be Developed: Corporator Bandaru Srivani Venkatravu

““KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, December 19 (Indian Chronicle):““Ramanthapur Corporator Bandaru Srivani Venkatravu stated that all parks located in various colonies within the Ramanthapur Division will be comprehensively developed. Speaking on Friday at three parks in Pragathi Nagar, she said that facilities such as



walking tracks, sit-outs for senior citizens, toilets, and other amenities are being provided for public convenience.“She added that steps are being taken to make the parks more pleasant and more useful for the general public.“Those who participated in the programme included D. Nagamani, A.E. Mounika, Work Inspector Mahender, Colony President Arroz, Krishnamurthy, Damodara Kameswara Rao, Deva, Praveen Goud, Anji Reddy, and others.

Telangana Sampath Extends Greetings to BJP National Executive President Nitin Nabin

““KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, December 19 (Indian Chronicle):““NITIN NABIN, who was recently appointed as the National Executive President of the , was felicitated on Friday at the BJP National Headquarters in New Delhi.“On this occasion, BJYM state leader Telangana Sampath met Nitin Nabin and conveyed his heartfelt congratulations. Telangana Sampath expressed his happiness over meeting the BJP National Executive President and stated that he would extend his full support and efforts to strengthen the in Telangana under Nitin Nabin's leadership.



Madatha Venkat Goud was appointed as BC JAC state convener



Yellandu, December 19: ““ Madatha Venkat Goud has been appointed as the State BC JAC Convener. On this occasion, the appointment papers were received from the state BC JAC president on Friday. On the occasion, fans of the Eighth House members congratulated him. On the occasion of being appointed as the state con-

vener, the EKT organizers said that they will organize a congratulatory and movement activity meeting in the town today. He also said that all arrangements have been made to organize his 60th birthday in a grand manner and called upon the fans of Madata to participate in large numbers in both programs and make them a success.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University - Last Dates Announced for Exam Fee

““Taj Khan, Kagaznagar, December 19 (Indian Chronicle)“““The Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University Study Centre at Government Degree College, Kagaznagar, has announced the examination fee payment schedule for undergraduate students.““Students currently pursuing First Year (2025 Batch), Second Year (2020–2024 Batch), Third Year (2020–2023 Batch) degree courses, as well as re-admitted students, are informed that the Semester–1, Semester–3, and Semester–5 examinations scheduled to be held in February/ March 2026 require payment of examination fees online within the stipulated deadlines.““The last date to pay the examination fee without late fee is December 27, 2025. Students can pay the fee with a late fee of ₹500 up to January 2, 2026, and with a late fee of ₹1,000 up to January 7, 2026.““In addition, science students are required to pay separate practical examination fees.““This information was jointly announced by College Principal Ms. K.



Sridevi and Study Centre Coordinator Sri Thuduru Dattatreya. For further details, students are advised to contact the following mobile numbers: 9160144943, 9494314314, or 9866398678.

Blanket Distribution to Sanitation Workers Under Lions Club Auspices

Sanitation Workers Are Diamonds in the Rough – Uppal Deputy Commissioner G. Raju



““KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, December 19 (Indian Chronicle)“““Sanitation workers who wake up at dawn and sweep the roads to safeguard the health of city residents are true heroes and heroines, said Uppal Deputy Commissioner G. Raju. He praised their dedication, noting that many of them ensure good education for their children and help them rise to high positions—even up to the level of a Sub-Collector.““He was speaking as the chief guest at a program where free blankets were distributed to sanitation workers under the auspices of the Lions Club, organized by the Snehapuri Lions Service Association at Adarshanagar, Journalist Colony, Uppal.““On the occasion, G. Raju cited inspiring examples:

a sanitation worker from the Secunderabad area who works in the mornings and teaches children in the evenings, and another woman sanitation worker from the Khammam Municipality who, despite poor health, ensured higher education for her son and groomed him to become a Sub-Collector. He described such individuals as “diamonds in the rough,” lauding their perseverance and commitment.““Former Governor of the Lions Service Association Manohar Raju, Association President Sridhar, Secretary Anil Kumar, Directors Pullarao, Sudhakar Reddy, Subbarao, A. V. Prasad, Sadanandam, Mahesh, George, Kalyan, and other association members participated in the program.

NHRC Orders On-the-Spot Inquiry into Death of Sri Chaitanya Junior College intermediate Student Varshitha



““Indian Chronicle OU December 18:“The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has taken serious cognizance of the tragic death by suicide of *Ms. Varshitha, a first-year Intermediate student from Mahabubnagar district, who was residing at the Sri Chaitanya Junior College hostel, Bachupally, Hyderabad.““The Commission acted on a complaint filed by Mr. *Sabavath Kalyan, Law Student, University of Delhi, who highlighted that the incident reflects a disturbing and recurring pattern of student deaths in private residential junior colleges across Telangana.““According to the complaint, such incidents are allegedly linked to excessive academic pressure, mental harassment, lack of counselling and emotional support, poor hostel management, and negligence by college authorities, amounting to violations of the students’ fundamental right to life



and dignity under Article 21 of the Constitution of India.““Considering the seriousness of the allegations, the NHRC has directed the Director General (Investigation), NHRC, to depute a team for an on-the-spot inquiry and submit its findings within two weeks.

Sarojini Naidu Women’s Pharmacy College Celebrates Graduation Day in Grand Manner

Minister Uttam Kumar Reddy Attends as Chief Guest, Distributes Degree

““Indian Chronicle, Secunderabad, December 19:“The Graduation Day celebrations of Sarojini Naidu Women’s Pharmacy College, Lalapet, were held in a grand manner on Friday at the college premises in Tarnaka.“The programme was held under the chairmanship of Dr. B. Prajashankar, Chairman of SNPMV. Telangana Minister for Irrigation N. Uttam Kumar Reddy attended the event as the chief guest and distributed degree certificates to the graduating students.“Addressing the graduates, Minister Uttam Kumar Reddy congratulated all the students and highlighted the crucial role of pharmacists in strengthening the healthcare system. He advised the students to adopt lifelong learning, innovation, and a spirit of service to society to excel in their professional careers.“The Minister later presented degree certificates to students of B.Pharmacy and Pharm.D courses. The Pullareddy Me-



morial Gold Medal was awarded to B.Pharmacy topper Camila Afris for securing the highest marks.“College Director, Principal, faculty members, students, and staff participated in the programme.

Representatives Submit Memorandum to Zonal Commissioner Seeking Separate Chilkkanagar Division



““KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, December 19 (Indian Chronicle)““Residents of Chilkkanagar, along with representatives of community organizations and youth

groups, submitted a memorandum to the Zonal Commissioner requesting the formation of a separate Chilkkanagar Division. They proposed that the canal stretch from Azmath Nagar canal to Kaveri Nagar canal near the Reddy cremation ground be treated as the boundary for the new division.“The delegation met the Zonal Commissioner in the presence of Uppal MLA . The representatives stated that the Zonal Commissioner responded positively to the request and assured them that Chilkkanagar—being a predominantly poor and middle-class locality—would be considered for separation as an independent division.“Those who participated in the meeting included Erelli Ravinder Reddy, President of Swami Vivekananda Youth Association; representatives of various caste organizations; and BRS leaders Gudi Madhusudhan Reddy, Jalli Mohan, and Kompalli Raju.

Alphores E-Techno School’s “IMMENSE” Annual Day Celebrations Reach New Heights

““Chittimalla Mahender, Karimnagar Bureau, December 19, Indian Chronicle:““Stressing the importance of inculcating moral values in students from an early age, Smt. Pamela Satpathy, IAS, District Collector and Magistrate of Karimnagar, stated that academic success combined with ethics enables students not only to scale great heights but also to lead meaningful and exemplary lives.““She was speaking as the Chief Guest at the grand annual day celebrations titled “IMMENSE”, organised at Alphores E-Techno School, Kothapalli, Karimnagar, in the presence of Dr. V. Narender Reddy, Chairman of Alphores Educational Institutions.““Before the commencement of the programme, the dignitaries offered prayers to the idol of Goddess Saraswati, lit the ceremonial lamp, formally inaugurated the celebrations, and extended their best wishes to the students.““Addressing the gathering, the District Collector advised students to face today’s competitive world with proper planning and strategic thinking, excel in their studies, secure prestigious positions, and strive to fulfil the aspirations of their parents. She shared that from a young age she nurtured a strong passion for education and a firm determination to achieve a respectable position in society, which ultimately led her to serve as the District Collector of Karimnagar today.““She urged parents to closely observe their children’s activities and guide them appropriately whenever required. Highlighting India’s rapid development, she called upon everyone to become active partners in the nation’s progress.““She appreciated Alphores Educational Institutions for imparting not only quality education but also strong moral values, stating that Dr. Narender Reddy’s dedicated efforts towards the all-round development of students are truly inspiring. She further lauded Alphores institutions for standing at the forefront of education across Telangana under his leadership.““Speaking on the occasion, Dr. V. Narender Reddy, Chairman of Alphores Educational Institutions, advised students to practise and

master what they learn in classrooms and to work hard towards achieving the goals set by their parents. He emphasised the importance of time management, planning, and consistent effort in achieving success.““He encouraged students to cultivate excellence and popularity through dedication and discipline, citing examples of global sports icons who earned immense recognition through hard work. He described District Collector Pamela Satpathy as a great source of inspiration and guidance for students.““Dr. Narender Reddy underlined that moral values are essential in today’s times and play a vital role in earning respect and recognition. He stated that since the inception of the institutions, Alphores has been committed to providing quality education and continuous motivation for student success. He expressed special gratitude to the staff for their relentless efforts and to parents for their constant encouragement and support.““As part of the celebrations, students presented a wide range of vibrant cultural programmes reflecting India’s rich traditions and heritage. Performances such as Shiva Tandavam, Krishna Leelas, Mahishasura Mardini, the life story of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, the role of Tanaji in the freedom struggle, an exquisite Kathak Ramleela, Hanuman Chalisa significance, the historical Operation Sindoor, and captivating rural-themed performances stood out as major attractions.““A biopic showcasing the inspiring journey of the District Collector proved to be highly motivational and served as a guiding light for students.““On this occasion, students who excelled in academics, various examinations, and sports competitions during the academic year were honoured with prizes and certificates by the dignitaries.““The grandly organised programme witnessed the participation of the school principal, teaching staff, parents, well-wishers, and students, making the annual day celebrations a memorable and inspiring event.

Inter-Gurukul Sports Meet Conducted at Kagaznagar Minority Boys’ School



““Taj Khan, Kagaznagar, December 19 (Indian Chronicle)““A Sports Meet was successfully organized at the Telangana Minority Gurukul Boys’ School–I, located in the Balagalu area of Chintaguda Gram Panchayat, Kagaznagar Mandal. The event was formally inaugurated by MPDO Ujjwal Kumar, who attended as the chief guest and lit the sports torch, marking the commencement of the competitions.““Students from 10 Minority Gurukul schools of the erstwhile Adilabad district

participated enthusiastically in the event, showcasing their sporting talent and team spirit.““Prominent dignitaries present on the occasion included District Minority Welfare Officer Abdul Nadeem Qudusuddin, Regional Level Coordinator of Telangana Minority Gurukul Educational Institutions Society Dr. Rajender, Vigilance Officer Taher, Headmistress Romi Pratibha, along with teachers and staff members.““The event concluded on a spirited note, promoting physical fitness, discipline, and unity among students.

Even after the BRS party candidates were utterly defeated in the Sarpanch elections... KTR's victory celebrations and 'friendly gatherings' resemble the futile journey of an incompetent person: - Government Whip, Alair MLA, and DCC President Beerla Ailaiah

“(Mandava Srisailam... Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... December 19):-
Telangana State Government Whip, Alair MLA, and DCC President Beerla Ailaiah, speaking at a press conference held at the CLP office in Hyderabad on Friday, said that he feels sorry for KTR. He added that it is laughable to see him going on district tours under the guise of victory celebrations and friendly gatherings, even after suffering a crushing defeat in the Sarpanch elections. They said that KTR's tours are like the aimless journeys of an incompetent person, and that he is undertaking consolation tours to comfort the defeated Sarpanches. They added that KTR is struggling immensely to save the party that is collapsing due to Kavitha's actions, and that his mental state is questionable given the way he is holding victory celebrations after the party suffered a crushing defeat. They stated that in the elections held for 12,703 Gram Panchayats across the state, the Congress party won 8,335 Sarpanch positions, while BRS and BJP together won only 4,221. This means the Congress party secured 66 percent of the seats. In Yadadri district, where KTR held a victory celebration, out of the total 480 Sarpanch seats, Congress party candidates won in 290 places, while BRS Sarpanches won 165 seats and BJP candidates won 13 seats. They said that the Congress party secured almost 60 percent of the seats. So why did KTR hold victory celebrations and cordial meetings? They alleged that KTR is desperately trying to protect the Sarpanches who won here and there, and that in some places, BRS candidates won due to local dynamics in the villages. After witnessing KCR's slumber at his farmhouse and KTR's guest house politics, those sarpanches will not remain in the BRS party, and that is why KTR is holding hurried meetings to appease them, he said. KTR is making baseless statements against the Congress party, alleging that they won through coercion. He is making unnecessary accusations, claiming that they intimidated people with the help of the police. If the Congress party resorted to intimidation and violence, how did so many Sarpanches from BRS win? If we hadn't acted democratically, would 4,000 BRS Sarpanches have won across the state? He said that in the last ten years, they lured and intimidated every single person who won from the opposition parties and made them join the BRS. During the 2019 Sarpanch elections, the BRS committed many atrocities. Yet, our Congress workers stood firm against them, and now that they have lost power, KTR is making weak excuses. The Sarpanch elections were conducted very peacefully. Except for a few minor incidents, there were no major clashes anywhere. KTR is making baseless allegations and deriving perverse pleasure from it. If he had done so much development in



Yadadri district, why did the people decisively defeat the BRS candidates in Alair, Munugode, and Bhongir? The people of Telangana are not so foolish as to listen to KTR's nonsensical talk. KTR, no matter how many attempts you make, BRS is finished. Your party is done for. Kavitha has put a big hole in the BRS boat; it's like a ship sinking in the middle of the ocean. KTR is telling tall tales about achieving a resounding victory in the Zilla Parishad elections, but you should first worry about whether you'll even retain your position in the party until then. Kavitha on one side and Harish Rao on the other are working to destroy your party. First, save your party; then, if you survive, we'll see. In any election in the state, under the leadership of "our CM Revanth Reddy," the Congress party will be victorious. We won in the Assembly elections, we reduced BRS to zero in the Parliament elections, we pushed them to third place in Cantonment, we won with a 25,000 majority in Jubilee Hills, and we crushed them in the Sarpanch elections. We have already proven this, and we will accept any challenge and emerge victorious in the future, said Government Whip, Alair MLA, and Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District DCC President Beerla Ilaiah.

Public Grievance Program to be held as usual on Monday: Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Collector Hanumanth Rao

“(Mandava Srisailam... Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... December 19):
Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Collector Hanumanth Rao“Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Collector Hanumanth Rao stated that the public grievance program will be held as usual on Monday.“In a statement on Friday, Collector Hanumanth Rao said that the public grievance program, which is held every Monday in the meeting hall for the speedy resolution of public problems, will be conducted as usual from December 22nd (Monday). He said that the public grievance program was temporarily postponed due to the implementation of the election code of conduct in the wake of the Gram Panchayat elections. The Collector stated that since the Gram Panchayat election process has now concluded, the public grievance program will resume as usual.



The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act must be continued: - CPM State Secretariat Member MD Jahangir demands

“(Mandava Srisailam... Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... December 19):-
CPM State Secretariat member MD Jahangir demanded that the BJP government at the Centre continue the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, stating that due to Modi's policies, bad times have befallen Indian democracy, especially for the rural poor. He strongly condemned the introduction of the Jee Ram Jee-2025 scheme, which makes the right to work dependent on the mercy of the rulers. On Friday, the CPM and the Telangana Agricultural Workers' Union burned copies of the VB Jee Ram Jee bill in front of the Babu Jagjivan Ram statue in Bhongir district center, protesting against the Modi government's move to weaken the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act and replace it with this new bill. Speaking on the occasion, Jahangir said that it is very unfortunate that the government is unilaterally changing the employment guarantee act, which plays a crucial role in the livelihood of the rural poor, and getting a bill of its liking passed in Parliament. He criticized Modi for trying to weaken the employment guarantee act by changing Gandhi's name to Ram's name and thus depriving the poor of their livelihood. He called upon people from all sections of society to revolt against this bill, which will cause hardship to agricultural laborers and the poor. Telangana Agricultural Labourers' Union District General Secretary Kondamudugu Narasimha criticized the Modi government, stating that it lacks clarity on why the rural employment guarantee act was repealed. He said that this new bill is eliminating existing employment opportunities. He criticized the government for using farmers as a pretext, claiming that the bill was introduced to prevent a shortage of laborers during the agricultural season. He stated that previously, 90% of the funds for employment guarantee works came from the central government and 10% from the state government, but now, under the new scheme, states are required to contribute 40%, which he called part of the central government's conspiracy to abolish the act. He said that the works have been divided into four categories, including projects worth crores of rupees, and that this is essentially turning the employment guarantee scheme into a source of income for contractors. He criticized the government for abolishing the provision that states with higher wages than those set by the central government should maintain those higher wages as minimum wages.

He also stated that the provision for increasing wages based on inflation has now been removed. He criticized the government for not strictly implementing the Aadhaar rule, even though the Supreme Court had clarified this, and for illegally linking Aadhaar to employment, paying wages based on measurements, and implementing two-shift attendance and KYC. He said that legalizing biometrics, AI, and GPS is nothing more than a way to remove the poor from the employment guarantee scheme. He questioned who would benefit from this, stating that while panchayats previously played a major role, now all powers will rest with the central government, and even social audits will be conducted using technology instead of people. They expressed their anguish, stating that many aspects of the current employment guarantee scheme are contrary to the spirit of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). They pointed out that while the government had previously sanctioned special employment funds for the development of lands given to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and other backward classes, as well as for colony development, double-bedroom houses, and residential area development, using employment guarantee funds, there is now no mention of these initiatives. They asserted that the current employment law completely undermines and nullifies the fundamental spirit of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act. They recalled that the 100-day employment guarantee act was introduced as a government responsibility because the poor could not survive due to the declining number of workdays in the villages. They alleged that the government has now introduced a new bill to further curtail employment opportunities by transforming the scheme into a mission. They demanded that the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act should remain in place, as this new bill will eliminate even the limited employment opportunities that currently exist. Also participating in this program were CPM District Committee members Komatireddy Chandrareddy, Dayyala Narasimha, Agricultural Workers' Union District Vice President and Cheemalakonduru Sarpanch Pallerla Anjaiah, and leaders of people's organizations Eerlapalli Muthyalu, Lavudiya Raju, MD Saleem, Kondamadugu Nagamani, Rambabu, and others.

Paddy procurement process should be completed quickly: Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Collector Hanumantha Rao



“(Mandava Srisailam... Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... December 19):
Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Collector Hanumantha Rao said that

the paddy procurement process should be completed quickly.“On Friday, the District Collector inspected the IKP paddy procurement center in Tummalagudem village of Ramannapet mandal. On this occasion, the District Collector inspected the paddy at the procurement center and inquired why the procurement was so delayed, stating that the paddy harvested by the farmers should have already been procured at the centers. He instructed that the weighing and procurement should be completed immediately without any further delay. He also directed that the procured paddy be immediately transported to the mills. He inquired whether the tab entries had been completed for all the paddy procured so far. He instructed that the tab entries should be completed regularly without any pending entries. He also inquired whether the money had been credited to the accounts of the farmers whose tab entries had been completed. Concerned officials participated in this program.

The machinery of the concerned departments must have a complete understanding of the measures and precautions to be taken during disasters - State Government Chief Secretary Ramakrishna Rao

“(Mandava Srisailam... Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... December 19):-
On Friday, State Government Chief Secretary Ramakrishna Rao, along with NDMA (National Disaster Management Authority) Director Sudhir Bal, Telangana Fire Service Director Narayana Rao, and officials from the concerned departments, reviewed the mock exercise on flood and industrial accident prevention, scheduled to be held on December 22nd under the auspices of the National Disaster Management Authority and the Telangana State Government, through a video conference with all district collectors and district officials of the concerned departments. On this occasion, Telangana State Chief Secretary Ramakrishna Rao said that the machinery of the concerned departments should have a complete understanding of the measures and precautions to be taken during various types of disasters, including floods, industrial accidents, and road accidents.“He said that during floods, the concerned department officials must work in coordination to alert the public, evacuate those trapped in floodwaters to safe areas, and provide necessary basic facilities in relief camps. He also said that medical teams should be vigilant to provide emergency medical services to those injured in various accidents. It was stated that a



mock exercise is conducted annually to ensure that officials from the irrigation, electricity, roads, police, medical, civil supplies, and other departments work in coordination during a disaster. District Collector Hanumantha Rao, Additional Revenue Collector Veera Reddy, DRO Jayamma, Special Deputy Collectors, RDO Shekhar Reddy, and district officials from the concerned departments participated in this video conference.

Alphores E-Techno School's “IMMENSE” Annual Day Celebrations Reach New Heights

“(Chittimalla Mahender, Karimnagar Bureau, December 19, Indian Chronicle:““Stressing the importance of inculcating moral values in students from an early age, Smt. Pamela Satpathy, IAS, District Collector and Magistrate of Karimnagar, stated that academic success combined with ethics enables students not only to scale great



heights but also to lead meaningful and exemplary lives.““She was speaking as the Chief Guest at the grand annual day celebrations titled “IMMENSE”, organised at Alphores E-Techno School, Kothapalli, Karimnagar, in the presence of Dr. V. Narender Reddy, Chairman of Alphores Educational Institutions.““Before the commencement of the programme, the dignitaries offered prayers to the idol of Goddess Saraswati, lit the ceremonial lamp, formally inaugurated the celebrations, and extended their best wishes to the students.““Addressing the gathering, the District Collector advised students to face today's competitive world with proper planning and strategic thinking, excel in their studies, secure prestigious positions, and strive to fulfil the aspirations of their parents. She shared that from a young age she nurtured a strong passion for education and a firm determination to achieve a respectable position in society, which ultimately led her to serve as the District Collector of Karimnagar today.““She urged parents to closely observe their children's activities and guide them appropriately whenever required. Highlighting India's rapid development, she called upon everyone to become active partners in the nation's progress.““She appreciated Alphores Educational Institutions for imparting not only quality education but also strong moral values, stating that Dr. Narender Reddy's

dedicated efforts towards the all-round development of students are truly inspiring. She further lauded Alphores institutions for standing at the forefront of education across Telangana under his leadership.““Speaking on the occasion, Dr. V. Narender Reddy, Chairman of Alphores Educational Institutions, advised students to practise and master what they learn in classrooms and to work hard towards achieving the goals set by their parents. He emphasised the importance of time management, planning, and consistent effort in achieving success.““He encouraged students to cultivate excellence and popularity through dedication and discipline, citing examples of global sports icons who earned immense recognition through hard work. He described District Collector Pamela Satpathy as a great source of inspiration and guidance for students.““Dr. Narender Reddy underlined that moral values are essential in today's times and play a vital role in earning respect and recognition. He stated that since the inception of the institutions, Alphores has been committed to providing quality education and continuous motivation for student success. He expressed special gratitude to the staff for their relentless efforts and to parents for their constant encouragement and support.““As part of the celebrations, students presented a wide range of vibrant cultural programmes reflecting India's rich traditions and heritage. Performances such as Shiva Tandavam, Krishna Leelas, Mahishasura Mardini, the life story of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, the role of Tanaji in the freedom struggle, an exquisite Kathak Ramleela, Hanuman Chalisa significance, the historical Operation Sindoor, and captivating rural-themed performances stood out as major attractions.““A biopic showcasing the inspiring journey of the District Collector proved to be highly motivational and served as a guiding light for students.““On this occasion, students who excelled in academics, various examinations, and sports competitions during the academic year were honoured with prizes and certificates by the dignitaries.““The grandly organised programme witnessed the participation of the school principal, teaching staff, parents, well-wishers, and students, making the annual day celebrations a memorable and inspiring event.

Innovative Competitions Under the Name '100 Weekend Wonders of Telangana': - Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Collector Hanumantha Rao



“(Mandava Srisailam... Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... December 19):-
Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Collector M. Hanumantha Rao and District Youth, Sports, and Tourism Officer K. Dhananjayulu stated that innovative competitions are being organized under the name '100 Weekend Wonders of Telangana'. On this occasion, they unveiled a poster. Speaking afterward, District Collector M. Hanumantha Rao said that the State Tourism Development Corporation is conducting this initiative to bring to light the amazing and lesser-known tourist destinations in the state. He mentioned that Tourism MD Valluri Kranthi stated that substantial cash prizes will be awarded to those who introduce the hidden tourist beauties of the state in the form of photos and videos. He also said that

new services under the name 'Custom Tours' have been made available for tourists visiting Yadadri Bhuvanagiri district, tailored to their preferences. District Youth, Sports, and Tourism Officer K. Dhananjayulu said that IT employees, students, and families are always looking for new places to visit on weekends, and it is in this context that they are organizing a competition called '100 Weekend Wonders of Telangana'. He stated that the objective of this competition is to identify 100 new destinations such as waterfalls, ancient temples, and trekking points that are not widely known to the public, and to create a coffee table book with details about them. Entries can be submitted in 10 categories: Nature, Wildlife, Art and Culture, Heritage, Water Bodies, Cuisine, Farm Stays, Resorts, Spiritual, and Adventure. Participants can submit three good photos, a 60-second video, and 100 words of information about their chosen location, including details on transportation, accommodation, and budget. This can be submitted via a Google Form or by tagging their accounts on social media. The best entries will receive a first prize of ₹50,000, a second prize of ₹30,000, and a third prize of ₹20,000. Consolation prizes include free stays at Haritha Hotels. Interested individuals are requested to submit their entries by January 5th. The winners will be announced during Sankranti. www.tourism.telangana.gov.in

Permanent solution to the drinking water problem in New Ramnagar... Solution to a decades-old problem: Former Municipal Chairman Barre Jahangir

“(Mandava Srisailam... Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... December 19): Former Municipal Chairman Barre Jahangir said that a permanent solution has been provided to the long-standing drinking water problem in the 8th ward's New Ramnagar colony of Bhuvanagiri town, the district headquarters of Yadadri-Bhuvanagiri district, by providing tap water connections to every house. He inspected the works being carried out under the Amrut scheme 2 in the Ramnagar colony of the 8th ward near the town. Under this scheme, the central and state governments jointly sanctioned over seven crore rupees for the development of municipalities, and as part of this, new pipelines are being laid to supply drinking water to every house. Speaking on this occasion, he said that although the 8th ward's New

Ramnagar colony in the district headquarters was formed more than ten years ago, the Bhuvanagiri municipality had failed to provide tap water to every house, and he is now working to permanently eradicate this persistent drinking water problem. With the cooperation of MLA Kumbham Anil Kumar Reddy and MP Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy, he assured that through the drinking water scheme, gate valves will be installed through three internal links in the colony to provide drinking water to every house in the New Ramnagar colony of the ward, and other development works in the colony will also be completed soon. Colony residents Bellamkonda Upender, Kantham Naresh, Bellamkonda Suresh, Subbarao, Public Health AE Lokesh, and water supply staff participated in this program.

Mega blood donation camp success at Illandu Hospital : DCHS Ravibabu.



“Yellandu,, December 19:):”A mega blood donation camp was organized at Illandu Hospital under the aegis of Telangana Vaidya Vidhana Parishad on Friday. Despising this program, DCHO Ravi Babu said that among the camps organized so far in the district, Illandu has collected the most. Hospitals under the jurisdiction are at the forefront.. With the cooperation of the State Health Department, District Ministers, District Collector and District MLAs, DCHS Dr. Ravi Babu appointed special-ist doctors and made necessary medical equipment

available for the development of the hospital under the jurisdiction of the Vaidya Vidhan Parishad. A mega blood donation camp has been established after starting the storage.. 110 people have donated blood in the blood donation camp organized in Illandu more than the blood packets received in the blood donation camps held so far in the Vaidya Vidhana Parishad hospital across the district.. 110 units have been collected in this mega blood donation camp. Parishad Hospital Doctors Pasumarthi Sai Charisma, Sandhya, Hospital Lab Incharge, Blood Storage Incharge T.Rajesh expressed their gratitude. Bhadradi Kothagudem District Chemist & Druggist Association District Organization Secretary, Illandu T Mohan Rao Medicals Head T. in Mega Blood Donation Camp. Rajinikanth came along with his son Kaushik and both of them participated in blood donation camps and donated their blood. After the end DCHS Ravi Babu, Hospital Superintendent Dr. Harshavardhan and RMO Dr. Ram Niwas gave certificates to each of them..

Timber Auction to Be Held, on December 24, at Vempalli Timber Depot

“Taj Khan, Kagaznagar, December 19 (Indian Chronicle)““The Forest Department has announced that a timber auction will be conducted at the Vempalli Timber Depot, located within Kagaznagar Village limits of Kagaznagar Mandal, Kumram Bheem Asifabad District, on Tuesday, December 24 2025, at 11:00 a.m.““The auction will be conducted under the supervision of District Forest Officer Sri Neeraj Kumar Tibrewal, IFS. The Forest Department stated that the sale will be carried out in a completely transparent manner, strictly adhering to departmental rules and regulations.““Eligible timber traders and consumers are permitted to participate in the auction. Participants are required to strictly comply with the prescribed terms and conditions. Interested parties may contact the Vempalli Timber Depot office for details regarding types of timber, quantities, auction procedure, and registration process.““The District Forest Officer emphasized that the timber sale is being organized with the objective of sustainable utilization of forest resources and appealed for the cooperation of all concerned.““Date: December 24, 2025“Time: 11:00 a.m.““Venue: Vempalli Timber Depot, Kagaznagar Mandal,



Kumram Bheem Asifabad District: Issued by: Mohd. Issak - CC to: District Forest Officer, K.B Asifabad.

We will utilize the funds of Rs 1000 crore effectively - OU VC

“Indian Chronicle OU December 19: OU Vice Chancellor Professor Kumar Molugaram said that the Rs 1000 crore funds allocated by the state Chief Minister Revanth Reddy to Osmania University will be effectively utilized. He said that new UG and PG courses in Bioinformatics will be introduced in OU. A two-day international conference on 'Biotechnology Innovations for Sustainable Development' to celebrate the Silver Jubilee celebrations of OU Genetics and Biotechnology began at OU Tagore Auditorium on Friday. OU VC Prof Kumar was the chief guest, and guests of honor were Professor Shyamala M. (USA), OST Prof Jitendra Kumar, Dean of the Faculty of Science, Principal of the University Science College Prof Vignylatha and others.““Inaugurating the international conference with the lighting of the lamp, the VC congratulated the Department of Genetics, which has been sharing technical expertise and knowledge in the field of biotechnology for 25 years. He said that innovative educa-



tional programs should be expanded further at the university level. He said that students should not be limited to just degrees but should improve their skills in accordance with the changing modern technology. He said that such conferences would be very useful for students for that. In the current era, women should not be limited to just knowledge but should also cultivate entrepreneurship skills and reach the top, said the keynote speaker Prof. Shyamala M.. In this conference professors students,

Telangana Government Retired Employees Association District Elections Held at Kumuram Bheem Asifabad



“Taj Khan, Kagaznagar, December 19 (Indian Chronicle)““The district elections (2025–2028) of the Telangana State Government Retired Employees Association were conducted on December 19, 2025, at the Association Building located in Kumuram Bheem Asifabad district.““The elections were conducted under the supervision of Mr. M.C. Linganna, District President of Nirmal, who served as the Election Officer, while Mr. Laxmareddy, District President of Adilabad, participated as the Election Observer.“In the district elections, the following office bearers were unanimously elected:“Mr. Garipelli Karna Goud – District President“Mr. Nampally Shankar – General Secretary“Mr. Komatipelli Lingayya – Treasurer“Mr. M. Subhash – District Vice President“Mr. Achyuth Rao – Vice President–1“Mr. M. Muralidhar Rao – Vice President–2“Ms. K. Lingamma – Women Vice President“Mr. P. Kanakaiah – Secretary–1“Mr. Ramagiri Krishan Kumar – Secretary–2“Mr. Shyam Rao Durge – Joint Secretary–1“Mr. Shaik Mahboob – Joint Secretary–2“Mr. K. Purushottam – Organising Secretary–1“Mr. B. Narsaiah – Organising Secretary–2“Ms. Amal Mary –



Women Organising Secretary“Mr. Athram Govardhan – Publicity Secretary“The election proceedings began with the collective rendition of “Vande Mataram” and concluded with the National Anthem, “Jana Gana Mana.““On the same day, Pensioners’ Day was observed at the Association building. Mr. M.C. Linganna, District President of Nirmal, Mr. Laxmareddy, District President of Adilabad, and Mr. G. Karna Goud, District President of Kumuram Bheem Asifabad, paid floral tributes to the portrait of D.S. Nakara.““Speaking on the occasion, the leaders stated that pensioners are able to live peacefully today due to the historic legal struggle led by D.S. Nakara, and expressed deep gratitude for his contributions. They also emphasized that employees appointed after 2004 should intensify their legal struggle to secure the Old Pension Scheme (OPS) in place of the Contributory Pension Scheme (CPS), as stated by leaders of the All India State Pensioners Federation.“The programme was attended by a large number of retired employees from Asifabad and Kagaznagar units, along with district-level presidents, secretaries, and members of the Telangana State Government Retired Employees Association.

ECI to deploy Micro Roll Observers in Bengal; what will their responsibilities be?



GNS News Agency, Dec 19

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has decided to deploy Micro Roll Observers in West Bengal to assist Electoral Roll Observers and Special Electoral Roll Observers in the SIF process. The decision follows a proposal from state Chief Electoral Officer Manoj Agarwal, aimed at further scrutiny of enumeration forms and BLO entries.In a letter to the CEO on Friday, ECI Secretary Sujet Kumar Mishra approved the proposal, delegating the power to ap-

point these Micro Roll Observers to the CEO. The letter said that the observers would be drawn from Group B or above officers of the Central government, as well as equivalent officers from Central PSUs and nationalised banks. They would remain under the “discipline and control” of the CEO during their engagement, and the CEO would be responsible for preparing a database, organising their training, and deploying them across constituencies. The letter added, “During their engagement, they shall work exclusively for preparation/revision of the electoral roll... At no point of time, the Electoral Roll Micro Observer shall divulge, disclose or supply the information... to any unauthorised person(s).” Micro Roll Observers will be engaged from the draft publication stage until final publication. They will receive a consolidated remuneration of Rs 30,000 for the period, drawn from their “parent cadre”, according to the letter. It cites that the proposal for Micro Roll Observers was approved “under the provisions of Article 324(6) of the Constitution of India and para 11.4.7 of the Manual on Electoral Rolls – March 2023”. Earlier, the ECI also deputed Special Roll Observers for the state and electoral districts, who are already working with DEOs and EROs towards “error-free revision”.

351 on December 11: As Kolkata’s AQI crosses Delhi more than once this December, what experts say

GNS News Agency, Dec 19

Kolkata’s air quality has deteriorated sharply this winter, with the city recording AQI levels worse than Delhi on several occasions this December — a rare and alarming trend for the eastern metropolis. Last week, residents in Kolkata breathed air more toxic than that in the national capital, with the index entering the ‘very poor’ and ‘severe’ categories. On December 10, the Air Quality Index at Victoria Memorial was 347 (very poor), compared to Delhi’s 299 (poor). The following day, the AQI at the same location climbed to 351, while Delhi recorded 306.

The rise has triggered concern among environmentalists and public health experts, who warn that the city may continue to “gasp for breath” unless air quality improves. Winter conditions, including low wind speed and temperature inversion, trap pollutants closer to the ground. Chairman of the West Bengal Pollution Control Board, Dr Kalyan Rudra, told The Indian Express, “In Victoria, the pollution level is high now due to the metro work. But a rise in AQI is due to several factors like if there is less wind speed, low temperature and meteorological factors.”

Environmental scientist Dr Swati Nandi Chakraborty said, “This is a climate disaster. The climate conditions are deteriorating mainly due to greenhouse. We are seeing that the temperatures and humidity are fluctuating. The carbon in the air is high and it has been noticed that at night, there is not much dew. All this is causing a rise in pollution. The lower the temperature, the higher the pollution level.” Environmentalist and activist Naba Dutta said, “There are many reasons for this rise in pollution. There is construction going on all over the city and rules are flouted. All the things which need to be done, like planting trees and having water bodies, are not being done. We have seen that in the name of development, private individuals and the government have cut trees and several water bodies have



been illegally filled.” He also said that large-scale Metro construction has contributed “significantly.” “In order to reduce the pollution, there is spraying of water on the roads (as a measure), but that is hardly done.” According to him, the “increase in population has led to a surge in waste generation, with inadequate recycling or reduction efforts”. He also alleged that while the city has 11 AQI monitoring machines, some are “not functioning” and some are positioned in “greener areas”, which may not show the state in localised pollution hotspots.

AQI levels between 301 and 400 — the category Kolkata entered this month — reduce lung capacity, inflame airways and can trigger frequent asthma attacks. Anything above 400 becomes severe and harmful to all. In recent days, as temperatures marginally increased, AQI levels improved to around 100 in locations such as Fort William, Ballygunge and Jadavpur. But the Victoria Memorial zone continued to hover around 220, which environmentalists attribute to ongoing construction activity and heavy traffic congestion in the area.

The quiet magic of tiramisu and where to find the city’s best

GNS News Agency, Dec 19

There is something quietly magical about tiramisu. Maybe it is the way espresso-soaked biscuit, clouded mascarpone and cocoa surrender at the tongue to a warm, soothing and strangely intimate sensation. Whatever the secret is, tiramisu has long crossed the boundaries of its Italian birthplace to become a beloved dessert that people return to, much like their favourite song on a difficult day. Originating in Italy’s Veneto region in the 1960s, tiramisu is not as ancient as many other Italian culinary classics. Popular lore traces its birth to the restaurant Le Beccherie in Treviso, where a comforting combination of coffee and zabaglione was created as an energy-restoring dessert for Alba Campeol during pregnancy. What began as a nourishing, homemade pick-me-up has today become a global obsession.

In recent years, tiramisu has enjoyed a renewed moment of virality, despite never really going out of fashion. From tiramisu lattes and ice creams to rasgulla tiramisu, masala chai versions, tiramisu tres leches, chocolates and even mithai-inspired avatars, the dessert has been endlessly reimagined. Almost every café and restaurant seems to have its own take. Yet purists insist that nothing compares to the bittersweet indulgence of a truly authentic tiramisu made with espresso, mascarpone and cocoa, executed with restraint and respect. Pune on My Plate: The quiet magic of tiramisu and where to find the city’s best At Buon Cibo in Baner and Ravet, tiramisu is designed to be comforting, inclusive and fuss-free. At Alto Vino, JW Marriott Pune, tiramisu is treated with near-ceremonial reverence. Prepared in large bowls and served in generous scoops, it features mascarpone, espresso-soaked Italian ladyfingers and Kahlúa, the coffee-flavoured liqueur that deepens its aroma. “Tiramisu was always among the desserts I liked the most,” says chef Christian Huber, who is from Italy. “As a coffee lover, it was the perfect ending to a meal or something you could savour on its own. In my youth, when I was still playing sports, after the games, if we won, we always got invited to a pizzeria for dinner. In that particular pizzeria, there would be only tiramisu as a dessert. Since then, I got addicted to it and tried to perfect it. Tiramisu is the only sweet drama you need in life.”

Anamika, the manager at Alto Vino, says “The classic version contains eggs, while an eggless version is prepared on request. It’s made fresh daily in a large bowl and served across nearly 36 scoops.” Da Nona, the Italian grandmother-themed restaurant in Deccan, has built a loyal following around a tiramisu that regulars swear by. Light, airy and never cloying, it has quietly become the restaurant’s signature dessert. “It’s our best seller and my personal favourite too,” says Piyush Kulkarni, who runs the space. “People come back just for the tiramisu.” Few places, however, see demand quite like Dario’s in Koregaon Park. “Tiramisu has truly found its place in the hearts of dessert lovers,” the team shares. “We make a fresh batch of our rum-soaked mascarpone tiramisu every day—about eight portions on weekdays and over twelve on weekends.” Crafted by a bakery chef who has been with the restaurant for over a decade, tiramisu accounts for over half of its dessert orders. “Regulars don’t even look at the menu anymore—



they come only for this.”

Then there is Rihla Bakehouse, a small but beloved name in Baner and Kondhwa. Founded by Neel Patil, an engineer-turned-baker who pursued a culinary degree before opening the bakery, Rihla’s tiramisu has earned cult status for its clean flavours and comforting texture. “We have been making tiramisu for four years now,” Patil shares, “and people often tell us it reminds them why they fell in love with the dessert in the first place.” Old-school style, eggless versions. At Dohiti, tiramisu took nearly two years to earn a place on the menu. Inspired by founder and chef Geeta Pathak’s first encounter with authentic tiramisu during a culinary backpacking journey across Europe, the dessert follows an old-school, grandmother-style approach—without shortcuts. Pune on My Plate: The quiet magic of tiramisu and where to find the city’s best At Dohiti, tiramisu took nearly two years to earn a place on the menu. (Express photo) Every element is made from scratch daily, from the savoiardi biscuits to the sabayon, before being assembled with care. Instead of rum, Dohiti uses Kahlúa coffee liqueur, paired with freshly pulled espresso brewed using Black Baza coffee rather than instant blends. The result is a tiramisu with depth, warmth and quiet complexity — restrained, layered and deeply comforting.

“Tiramisu is not a dessert you rush,” says Geeta. “We wanted to do it the way it’s meant to be done—slowly, honestly, and with respect for every layer. It’s meant to feel familiar, not flashy. At Buon Cibo in Baner and Ravet, tiramisu is designed to be comforting, inclusive and fuss-free. Their eggless version, priced at Rs 320, layers coffee-soaked Italian ladyfingers with whipped mascarpone and finishes with a light dusting of cocoa.”

Mumbai police arrest differently-abled man for rape committed in 2009



GNS News Agency, Dec 19

The Mumbai police recently arrested a 45-year-old differently-abled person for an alleged rape committed in 2009.The victim, 34, who is also a differently-abled person, alleged that the accused sexually assaulted her 16 years ago after a friend of hers took her to his place. The victim

has claimed that the accused mixed sedative pills in her soft drink and then raped her.According to the police, the victim, who is now married, learnt through her friends that the accused had sexually assaulted several girls by similarly spiking their soft drinks.

The incident came to light last week when the victim informed her husband about the assault, and the latter approached an NGO. A case was subsequently filed at a Mumbai police station under Section 376 (rape) and other relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).A police officer, who is part of the probe, said, “The accused was arrested on December 14, and we hired a certified translator who helped in the interrogation.”“The victim and the accused used to live in the same vicinity. The victim has alleged that the accused also misbehaved with other girls, but no one else has come forward to testify. We have been verifying the facts and looking for the woman who brought the victim to the accused’s place in 2009,” the officer added.The accused was sent to judicial custody on December 18. He has denied all charges.

UP Assembly drama: BJP and SP face off over cough syrup racket — with some props

GNS News Agency, Dec 19

Allegations flew thick and fast over the multi-crore codeine-based cough syrup racket before the start of the Winter Session of the Uttar Pradesh Assembly, Friday. While Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath accused leaders of the Samajwadi Party (SP) of having “links” with the accused arrested in the case, SP leaders decided to stage a symbolic protest. SP MLA Brajesh Yadav arrived on a bicycle to the Assembly — with a giant cut out of a cough syrup bottle attached to the handlebars. It sported the words: “Jadui syrup. Peene waala mar jaata hai, bechne waala dulatmand ho jaata hai. Satta ka sanrakshan pata hai, phir videsh nikal jata hai (The ‘magical syrup’ kills the person who consumes it, while the seller grows rich. With political protection secured, they escape abroad).”SP MLA Brajesh Yadav arrived on a bicycle to the Assembly session — with a giant cutout of a cough syrup bottle. Another SP MLA, Mukesh Verma, wore a poster that asked when big names involved in the racket would be arrested.



Speaking before the start of the session, the CM said, “We’ve been able to track this illegal smuggling and the FSDA, UP Police and STF have made arrests. However, everyone knows that every mafia has links to the Samajwadi Party... A preliminary probe [in this case] revealed that the arrested accused... have connections to the SP... A state-level SIT is working on the investigation... the investigation will reveal who all received money in this case.”

He further said, “Codeine phosphate is used for medicine and comes under the NDPS, its quota and allotment is predefined by the Central Narcotics Bureau for medicinal use. However, following reports of its misuse in cough syrup, we had taken action as there were also complaints about its illegal smuggling.”Adityanath said the SIT is also tracing the flow of funds from the illegal smuggling to individuals. While the final inquiry report will reveal who benefited from

the syndicate, he took a dig at SP Chief Akhilesh Yadav, saying that instead of focusing on the facts, he is “trying to clean his glasses while dust sits on his face.”

UP CM Yogi Adityanath on the first day of the Winter Session of the State Assembly in Lucknow, Friday UP CM Yogi Adityanath on the first day of the Winter Session of the State Assembly in Lucknow. (Express Photo by Vishal Srivastav)He also alleged that there are pictures of Samajwadi Party leaders with the accused. “Photo inki hai un mafion ke saath, swabhavik roop se awadh len den mein sanlipta samne aayegi. Janch ho jaane dijiye dudh ka dudh, pani ka pani saamne aayega. (

There are photos of them with these mafias; naturally, their involvement in transactions will come to light. Let the inquiry be done and everything would be clear).”He said that while the Assembly would not conduct any other proceedings today as it has been adjourned after paying condolences to a sitting MLA who died recently, they plan to respond on this issue both in the Legislative Council and outside the House.The House was adjourned after condolences were paid to SP MLA from Ghosi, Sudhakar Singh, who died recently. It will convene next on Monday. However, discussions are likely in the Legislative Council.

Kolkata civic body issues 12,823 birth and death certificates in 4 months amid SIR

GNS News Agency, Dec 19

Nearly 2,000 certificates were issued directly by the KMC headquarters, while 8,291 birth and 2,505 death certificates were processed through borough offices. (file)Nearly 2,000 certificates were issued directly by the KMC headquarters, while 8,291 birth and 2,505 death certificates were processed through borough offices. (Photo: Wikimedia Commons)The Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) issued 12,823 certificates between August 9 and December 9, according to data released by the civic body during the ongoing revision of the electoral rolls.“The civic body issued a total of 12,823 certificates to residents across the city during this period,” said an official.

The volume of “late-entry” applications — for births or deaths registered decades ago — has strained archival and verification systems. The sharp rise in applications for these certificates is linked to the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in West Bengal, with thousands of residents seeking documents as proof of identity and residence for verification hearings.Of the total certificates issued, 9,617 were birth certificates and 3,206 death certificates.The data also reflects the impact of decentralisation. Nearly 2,000 certificates were issued directly by the KMC headquarters, while 8,291 birth and 2,505 death certificates were processed through borough offices.Births or deaths occurring within one year are handled by borough offices, while cases



older than a year require verification at the headquarters.In response to complaints about difficulties in securing application slots, Mayor Firhad Hakim recently directed the health wing to increase capacity. The slot limit has been raised from 150 to between 500 and 1,000 per day.To manage the surge, the KMC has also introduced chatbot-based appointments via WhatsApp (8335999111) and set up dedicated counters at the S N Banerjee Road headquarters for manual submissions and immediate verification.“Headquarters now assist with manual submissions and immediate document verification. Employees from other municipal departments have been temporarily deputed to the health wing to manage the heavy footfall,” an official said.

Noida schools receive hoax bomb threat emails, security stepped up



GNS News Agency, Dec 19

Police said no suspicious objects were found so far and cyber teams are investigating the source of the hoax emails.Bomb threat emails sent to several Noida schools led to heightened security, evacuations and precautionary closures on Friday.Several schools in Noida received emails containing bomb threats on Friday morning, triggering security alerts and precautionary closures across parts of the city. The Noida police said preliminary investigations indicated that the threats were hoaxes, however, vigilance was

increased, and legal action is underway.

According to the police, shortly after the schools reported the emails, senior officers, along with local police teams, the bomb disposal squad, dog units, and anti-sabotage teams, were deployed. “We conducted thorough checks inside school premises and in surrounding areas, including nearby metro stations, markets, and other crowded locations,” said an officer.“No suspicious object has been found so far. Initial findings indicate the emails were hoax messages, but the matter is being investigated seriously,” a senior officer stated.

As a precautionary measure, several schools informed parents that they would remain closed for the day to allow security agencies to complete their sweeps. In advisories sent to parents, schools cited a “security-related alert received across the Delhi–NCR region” and announced the suspension of classes on Friday.Some schools that were already in session arranged for the early dispersal of students. Parents were advised to ensure that an authorised escort was present at bus drop-off points, while those who did not use the bus were instructed to pick up their children directly from the campus.The police said that cyber teams are working to trace the origin of the emails. “Necessary legal action will be taken once the source is identified,” an officer said, adding that coordination with intelligence agencies is ongoing.

Work on Mumbai’s Rs 2,395-crore Madh-Versova cable-stayed bridge likely to begin in 2 months



GNS News Agency, Dec 19

Come February 2026, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) is eyeing to begin the construction of a Rs 2,395 crore cable-stayed bridge linking Madh with Versova.Having received the in-principle approval from the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), the civic body has now kicked off preliminary surveys and soil investigation on the project site.

What is the project?

To eliminate a detour of nearly 18 to 20 kilometres, the upcoming bridge will start at Madh Jetty Road, cross over creeks, and connect near the Fisheries University Road in

Andheri’s Versova pocket. This new link between Madh and Versova will significantly reduce travel time for commuters heading to the Air Force, INS Hamla, Madh, Marve, and various locations in Malad and Kandivali.As per the design, the bridge is proposed to have an arm connecting the Dahisar Bhayandar coastal road.

How will it benefit commuters?

At present, there is no direct link between Versova and Madh, forcing commuters to travel via Lokhandwala, Oshiwara, Link Road, or the Marve Road. These routes are heavily congested during peak hours, with travel times reaching between one hour to an hour and a half. The proposed bridge will create a direct connection by constructing a cable-stayed bridge over Marve Creek. The 2.1 km bridge will reduce the detour by nearly 18 to 20 km, cutting travel time to a mere 10 minutes.The total length is proposed at 2.06 km (2,064 metres), of which 600 metres will consist of the cable-stayed structure, with the main span measuring 300 metres and 150 metres forming the back span on either side.“While we have started preliminary surveys, full-fledged work will only commence after procuring the final Stage-II approvals from the forest department as well as the High Court permission. As per the current progression, work on the project site can be started by February 15, 2026,” a senior BMC officer told

Will remain CM for next 2.5 years, repeats Siddaramaiah amid Winter Session in Karnataka: ‘High command in our favour’

GNS News Agency, Dec 19

For the second time during the Winter Session of the state legislature, Congress leader Siddaramaiah asserted Friday that he was picked to be the Chief Minister of Karnataka for a full five-year term and said he felt that the Congress high command wanted him to continue at the post.“Ours is a high command party. We will abide by what the party high command decides. Right now, I am the CM, and going ahead also, I will be the CM,” Siddaramaiah told the Legislative Assembly as he replied to a debate on problems in the North Karnataka region.



The Chief Minister stressed that there was no agreement for power-sharing after 2.5 years with his deputy and state Congress chief D K Shivakumar. “We feel the party high command is in our favour,” Siddaramaiah said, amid speculation in some quarters that Shivakumar was likely to up the ante in his efforts to become the chief minister after the legislature session concludes on Friday.“For the next 2.5 years also, I will be the CM,” Siddaramaiah said as the Opposition BJP suggested that he did not appear confident of remaining in the post. “We are in power now, will remain in power for five years and we will return in 2028. The BJP will not come to power in Karnataka on its own,” he added, in a pointed remark at the Opposition.Siddaramaiah, in the course of the reply, also suggested that he remained politically strong although he may have weakened physically of late. He had returned to the legislature on Thursday after a brief absence due to a stomach ailment.His latest remarks come amid the Winter Session of the Karnataka legislature which began on December 8 and has been marked by frequent dinner meetings of various groupings of legislators allied to the chief minister and his deputy.On Thursday night, a group of MLAs from backward and Dalit communities, cutting across party lines, had dinner with Public Works

Department (PWD) Minister Satish Jarkiholi – who is viewed to be close to the chief minister – in what is seen as a counter to another dinner meeting organised by Shivakumar for his supporters a few days ago.Earlier this week, Siddaramaiah had asserted in the legislature that he would abide by any decision of the party high command on the leadership issue amid an obvious effort by Shivakumar to reignite the issue of leadership change in the public domain. “I am the CM. I am CM now and until the high command decides,” Siddaramaiah had said on Tuesday.Since November 20, when the Congress government in the state completed half of its tenure, speculation has intensified over whether Shivakumar would replace Siddaramaiah in the coming days, though Siddaramaiah’s loyalists have argued that the Congress high command is not keen to destabilise state politics.With Shivakumar trying to keep the issue alive through the media and his supporters, including religious leaders, the Congress high command had earlier directed the two leaders to hold breakfast meetings to convey the message of unity ahead of the Winter Session of the legislature.

Pune man impregnates minor girl, forges birth certificate to show her as adult in hospital: Police

The police on Thursday booked a 25-year-old man, a resident of Pune, on charges of rape and forgery after it was found that he had allegedly sexually exploited a minor girl between 2023 and 2024 and impregnated her, officials said.At the time of her delivery, the man allegedly admitted her to the government-run Sassoon hospital in Pune by submitting a fake birth certificate of the Nagpur Municipal Corporation to prove that she was an adult, the police said. The minor had given birth to a baby at the Sassoon hospital, the Pune police said.

The Pune police said that they filed a First Information Report (FIR) against the man under sections 376 and 196 of the Indian Penal Code and sections of the Prevention of Children from Sexual Offences (Pocso) Act, based on a complaint from the Child Welfare Committee (CWC), this month.The girl’s mother was also booked as she was reportedly aware of the fact that the man had been sexually exploiting her minor daughter for a year, the police said.“We initiated a probe into this case. We recovered a copy of the birth certificate used by the accused. We communicated



with the Nagpur Municipal Corporation, which revealed that the birth certificate is bogus. So the accused and the girl’s mother, who was found involved in the offence, have been booked under IPC and Pocso sections. Further investigation is on,” said a senior police officer.

Punjab erupts against proposed MGNREGA overhaul with VB-G RAM G Bill; copies burnt, CM Mann calls special Assembly sessio

GNS News Agency, Dec 19

Opposition to the Centre’s proposed repeal of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is intensifying across Punjab, with farm and labour unions taking to the streets and burning copies of the new Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) Bill or the VB-G RAM G Bill in villages.Following protests on Thursday and Friday, Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann announced Friday morning that a special session of the Punjab Legislative Assembly would be held next month to oppose the “attack on the livelihood of the poor”.In a post on X, Mann said, “The BJP-led central government is trying to push poor families towards hunger by changing the ‘MGNREGA’ scheme, which has been a means of livelihood for the poor and workers. To raise the voice of Punjabis strongly against this high-handedness, a special session of the Punjab Legislative Assembly will be convened in the second week of January.”However, labour and farmer unions noted that while the state government has taken a strong stand against MGNREGA, it has so far remained silent on the draft Electricity Amendment Bill, which is also being opposed by several states, including Punjab, for allegedly paving the way for privatisation in the power

sector.Labour unions intensify protestsOn the ground, the resistance is being spearheaded by labour and farmer organisations. On the call of a joint front of rural and farm labour organisations, the Punjab Khet Mazdoor Union on Thursday staged protests against “anti-worker amendments” to the MGNREGA. Effigies of the Centre and copies of the proposed VB-G RAM G Bill were burnt in dozens of villages across Sri Muktsar Sahib, Faridkot, Moga, Sangrur and Bathinda districts.The union’s state general secretary Lachhman Singh Sewewala and state president Jora Singh Nasrali said demonstrations were held at multiple locations, addressed by leaders, including Gurpal Singh Nangal, Major Singh Kaleke, Gurjant Singh Saunke, and others.Labour leaders alleged that the Narendra Modi-led government is not only diluting employment guarantees by altering the MGNREGA, but is also pushing the ideological agenda of the BJP and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) by removing Mahatma Gandhi’s name from the scheme. They said rural and farm workers, already facing chronic unemployment due to privatisation and policies following the Green Revolution, were receiving only limited employment under MGNREGA, which now faces further dilution.MGNREGA, enacted in 2005, guarantees 100 days of unskilled manual work per rural household as a statutory right,

Trump administration could strip some naturalised Americans of their citizenship: Report



GNS News Agency, Dec 19

New York/Washington: The Trump administration is looking at plans to strip some naturalised Americans of their citizenship, the latest in a series of efforts undertaken by President Donald Trump to crack down on immigration.A report in the New York Times cited new internal guidance issued on Tuesday to US Citizenship and Immigration Services field offices, asking them to “supply Office of Immigration Litigation with 100-200 denaturalisation cases per month” in fiscal year 2026.

While federal law provides for stripping naturalised Americans of their citizenship if they committed fraud while applying for citizenship or in a handful of other situations, the new guidance “would represent a massive escalation of denaturalisation in the modern era,” said the report.It added that such a move could impact people who had made honest mistakes on their citizenship paperwork and “sow fear among law-abiding Americans.” The guidance is the latest in a series of measures announced by Trump in his second term in the White House as part of an intensified crack-down on immigration, both illegal and legal.The NYT report

added that there are about 26 million naturalised Americans in the country, citing Census Bureau data. USCIS estimates show that more than 800,000 new citizens were sworn in last year, most of whom were born in Mexico, India, the Philippines, the Dominican Republic or Vietnam.“It’s no secret that US Citizenship and Immigration Services’ war on fraud includes prioritising those who’ve unlawfully obtained US citizenship — especially under the previous administration,” USCIS spokesman Matthew Tragesser said in the NYT report. “We will pursue denaturalisation proceedings for those individuals lying or misrepresenting themselves during the naturalisation process. We look forward to continuing to work with the Department of Justice to restore integrity to America’s immigration system.” Former agency officials have voiced concern over such a guideline.“Imposing arbitrary numerical targets on denaturalisation cases risks politicising citizenship revocation,” former USCIS official Sarah Pierce said.“And requiring monthly quotas that are 10 times higher than the total annual number of denaturalisations in recent years turns a serious and rare tool into a blunt instrument and fuels unnecessary fear and uncertainty for the millions of naturalised Americans.”The NYT report said the new guidance was part of a document outlining USCIS priorities for the 2026 fiscal year, which began in October and listed goals such as “provide employee feedback opportunities”, “strengthen management of high-risk cases” and “pursue denaturalisation.”

The Justice Department has also said it would make denaturalisation a priority this year. In a memo earlier this year, officials said they would target individuals in an array of categories beyond committing fraud in obtaining citizenship.“Categories of eligible people include gang members, those who committed financial fraud, individuals connected to drug cartels and violent criminals,” the NYT report said.

Trump suspends green card lottery programme that let Brown University, MIT shootings suspect into US

GNS News Agency, Dec 19

Washington: President Donald Trump suspended the green card lottery programme on Thursday that allowed the suspect in the Brown University and MIT shootings to come to the United States.Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem said in a post on the social platform X that, at Trump’s direction, she is ordering the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services to pause the programme.

“This heinous individual should never have been allowed in our country,” she said of the suspect, Portuguese national Claudio Neves Valente.Neves Valente, 48, is suspected in the shootings at Brown University that killed two students and wounded nine others, and the killing of an MIT professor. He was found dead Thursday evening from a self-inflicted gunshot wound, officials said.Neves Valente had studied at Brown on a student visa beginning in 2000, according to an affidavit from a Providence police detective. In 2017, he was issued a diversity immigrant visa and months later obtained legal permanent residence status, according to the affidavit.It was not immediately clear where he was between taking a leave of absence from the school in 2001 and getting the visa in 2017.

The diversity visa programme makes up to 50,000 green cards available each year by lottery to people from countries that are little represented in the US, many of them in Africa. The lottery was created by Congress, and the move is almost certain to invite legal challenges.Nearly 20 million people applied for the 2025 visa lottery, with more than 131,000 selected when including spouses with the winners. After winning, they must undergo vetting to win ad-



mission to the United States. Portuguese citizens won only 38 slots.Lottery winners are invited to apply for a green card. They are interviewed at consulates and subject to the same requirements and vetting as other green-card applicants.Trump has long opposed the diversity visa lottery. Noem’s announcement is the latest example of using tragedy to advance immigration policy goals. After an Afghan man was identified as the gunman in a fatal attack on National Guard members in November, Trump’s administration imposed sweeping rules against immigration from Afghanistan and other counties.While pursuing mass deportation, Trump has sought to limit or eliminate avenues to legal immigration. He has not been deterred if they are enshrined in law, like the diversity visa lottery, or the Constitution, as with a right to citizenship for anyone born on US soil. The Supreme Court recently agreed to hear his challenge to birthright citizenship.

Mallika Sherawat calls White House Christmas dinner invite ‘completely surreal’

GNS News Agency, Dec 19

Mumbai: Actress Mallika Sherawat shared her excitement after receiving an invitation to the White House Christmas dinner. Describing the experience as completely surreal, she expressed her gratitude for the honor, marking a special moment in her illustrious career.On Friday, the Murder actress took to Instagram to share a series of photos from the White House Christmas dinner.

In the pictures, Mallika could be seen posing amid the festive décor, with sparkling lights and beautifully adorned Christmas trees. She also posted a video capturing US President Donald Trump delivering his Christmas and New Year wishes to the audience, with Mallika visible in the crowd.Additionally, she shared a glimpse of the lavish Christmas meal served at the White House. Sharing her photos, she wrote, “Being invited to the White House Christmas dinner feels completely surreal – Grateful #whitehouse #xmasdinner.”The Christmas reception was held at the White House on December 18. Interestingly, this isn’t Mallika Sherawat’s first White House invitation.Back in April 2011, she attended the White House Correspondents’ Dinner during the Obama administration in connection with her role in Politics of Love, a film centered on the 2008 US elections. She was celebrated for her performance as an Obama



volunteer and even had the opportunity to interact with President Barack Obama, despite her film facing distribution challenges.On the professional front, Mallika Sherawat was last seen on screen in Vicky Vidya Ka Woh Wala Video alongside Rajkummar Rao and Triptii Dimri.She made her film debut in 2002 with Jeena Sirf Merre Liye, where she was credited as Reema Lamba. Her rise to fame began in 2004 with the Emraan Hashmi-starrer Murder. Mallika later ventured into international cinema and featured in films like Hiss and Politics of Love.

Flights cancelled, roads flooded as rare storm soaks Dubai, Sharjah, Qatar

UAE airport authorities cancelled or delayed dozens of flights and roads were flooded in major cities as the heaviest rainstorm in months lashed the desert nation on Friday (December 19, 2025).Dubai’s Emirates airline axed 13 flights on Friday (December 19, 2025) and there were also delays and cancellations at neighbouring Sharjah’s airport after the overnight downpour, which woke residents with lightning flashes and loud cracks of thunder.

Sharjah’s main street was completely flooded early on Friday (December 19, 2025), with residents seen wading through it in bare feet. One man rode his bicycle through the water, which reached the top of its wheels. The scenes evoked memories of April 2024, when record rains caused widespread flooding and forced the cancellation of more than 2,000 flights at Dubai’s major international air hub.On Thursday (December 18, 2025), Dubai police had urged residents

to stay in unless “absolutely necessary” as the rainstorm approached.Early on Friday (December 19, 2025), water-pumping trucks were seen around Dubai clearing blocked roads and large puddles in the streets. The Dubai Airports website showed dozens of flights had been delayed on Friday, and some cancelled.

“Some flights... are cancelled or delayed due to adverse weather,” a Dubai Airports spokesperson said.The National Center of Meteorology had warned of rainfall across the country from Thursday to Friday, including in Dubai and the capital Abu Dhabi.Other Gulf states also experienced heavy rain, including Qatar where the Arab Cup football’s third-place play-off between Saudi Arabia and UAE was cancelled on Thursday.Last year’s downpours in the UAE, the heaviest since records began 76 years ago, killed at least four people and brought Dubai to a standstill for days.

Over two million Afghans forcibly deported from Iran and Pakistan: UN



GNS News Agency, Dec 19

Kabul: As many as 2.17 million Afghans have been forcibly deported from Iran and Pakistan, with children comprising more than 60 per cent of returnees, according to the United Nations.According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Afghanistan has been facing one of the world’s largest displacement and returnee crises as Iran and Pakistan have been forcibly deporting Afghans.By October 9, approximately 2.17 million Afghan nationals have been deported from Pakistan and Iran, with more than 60 per cent of them being children, placing a burden on child protection systems, education, and healthcare, Afghanistan’s news agency Khaama Press reported.The UNDP emphasised that the young and rural population in Afghanistan is facing overlapping crises. Economic restrictions, poverty, gender inequality, and deportation of refugees from neighbouring nations have increased Afghanistan’s vulnerability and risk of long-term stability.

It warned that the deportation of returnees has placed pressure on fragile infrastructure and essential services of Afghanistan, which include housing, water, sanitation, healthcare, and food security, sectors already weakened by years of conflict and economic collapse.The UNDP has urged the international community to support returnees, rebuild damaged infrastructure, and strengthen livelihoods, warning that failure to act risks deepening poverty, instability, and humanitarian suffering in Afghanistan.Earlier in November, several Afghan refugees in Pakistan said that they had been overwhelmed by continuous pressure from the country’s police, which, apart from conducting searches, was arresting people and exploiting their vulnerable situation as a source of income.

A report in an Afghan newspaper, ‘8AM Media’, also known as Hasht-e-Subh Daily, highlighted that Afghan refugees in Pakistan do not have basic human rights and live in constant fear and anxiety.Human rights groups and refugee-support groups have remained silent regarding the uncertainty and the government’s failure to fulfil its commitment to human rights and the protection of refugees.Over the past few months, as tensions between the Taliban and Pakistan continue, Islamabad has increased its pressure on Afghan refugees, with the Pakistani forces conducting widespread harassment of migrants each day in various areas, including Islamabad.

Apart from official operations involving the arrest of Afghan refugees without visas, people in plain clothes extort money from migrants in residential areas. Afghan people have said that they live in inhumane conditions filled with fear and anxiety, and their refugee rights are not respected.“The situation is extremely distressing. I wish the official operations team would simply arrest and take people away. This method is not right; the police know no one will report them, so they come individually for searches. Several men in plain clothes lie in wait in the neighbourhood, grab someone, and take them away. It is unclear whether they are police, thieves, or cooperating with the police. Now, even if an ordinary person commits theft or kidnapping under the name of the police, people assume he is a police officer,” the report quoted an Afghan national as saying.“These individuals detain migrants in their personal vehicles; some are released on the spot after paying money, while others are taken to police posts. They are probably police themselves or collaborating with the police. The level of theft and robbery is extremely high, and no institution hears the people’s voices. The situation is deeply painful; a country that has no defender and whose citizens have no protection or credibility anywhere in the world,” the refugee added.

Retired NASCAR driver Greg Biffle, family among 7 killed in North Carolina plane crash

GNS News Agency, Dec 19

Statesville: A business jet crashed on Thursday while trying to return to a North Carolina airport shortly after take-off, killing all seven people aboard, including retired NASCAR driver Greg Biffle and his family, authorities said.

The Cessna C550 erupted into a large fire when it hit the ground. It had departed Statesville Regional Airport, about 72 kilometres north of Charlotte, but soon crashed while trying to return and land, the North Carolina State Highway Patrol said.Flight records show the plane was registered to a company run by Biffle. The cause of the crash wasn’t immediately known, nor was the reason for the plane’s return to the airport in drizzle and cloudy conditions.Federal Aviation Administration records show Biffle was rated to fly helicopters and single and multi-engine planes. It wasn’t clear if Biffle was piloting the plane at the time of the crash.Biffle was on the plane with his wife, Cristina, and children Ryder, 5, and Emma, 14, according to the highway patrol and a family statement. Others on the plane were identified as Dennis Dutton, his son Jack, and Craig Wadsworth.“Each of them meant everything to us, and their absence leaves an immeasurable void in our lives,” the joint family statement said.Biffle, 55, won more than 50 races across NASCAR’s three circuits, including 19 at the Cup Series level. He also won the Trucks Series championship in 2000 and the Xfinity Series title in 2002.

NASCAR said it was devastated by the news.“Greg was more than a champion driver; he was a beloved member of the NASCAR community, a fierce competitor, and a friend to so many,” NASCAR said. “His passion for racing, his integrity, and his commitment to fans and fellow competitors alike made a lasting impact on the sport.” The plane, bound for Florida, took off from the Statesville airport shortly after 10 am, according to tracking data posted by FlightAware.com.Golfers playing next to the airport were shocked as they witnessed the disaster, even dropping to the ground at the Lakewood Golf Club while the plane was overhead. The ninth hole was covered with debris.

“We were like, Oh my gosh! That’s way too low,” said Joshua Green of Mooresville. “It was scary.” The National Transportation Safety Board and the Federal Aviation Administration were investigating.The Cessna plane, built in



1981, is a popular mid-sized business jet with an excellent reputation, aviation safety expert Jeff Guzzetti said. It has two engines and typically seats six to eight passengers and two pilots.In 2024, Biffle was honoured for his humanitarian efforts after Hurricane Helene struck the US, even using his personal helicopter to deliver aid to flooded, remote western North Carolina.

“The last time I spoke with Cristina, just a couple of weeks ago, she reached out to ask how she could help with relief efforts in Jamaica. That’s who the Biffles were,” US Rep. Richard Hudson, a Republican from North Carolina, said.Wadsworth was Biffle’s friend and helped him with odd jobs, including delivering supplies to places hit by Hurricane Helene, roommate Benito Howell said.“He didn’t know how to say no,” Howell said of Wadsworth, who had worked for several NASCAR teams. “He loved everybody. He always tried to help everybody.”The joint family statement also spoke about Dutton and his son Jack, saying they were “deeply loved as well, and their loss is felt by all who knew them.” With 2025 almost over, there have been 1,331 US crashes this year investigated by the NTSB, from two-seat planes to commercial aircraft, compared to a total of 1,482 in 2024.Major air disasters around the world in 2025 include the plane-helicopter collision that killed 67 in Washington, the Air India crash that killed 260 in India, and a crash in Russia’s Far East that claimed 48 lives. Fourteen people, including 11 on the ground, died in a UPS cargo plane crash in Kentucky.

Bangladesh violence: ‘Standing with journalists, deeply sorry for the violence,’ says government

GNS News Agency, Dec 19

The Bangladesh Intern government led by Nobel laureate Prof. Dr Yunus on Friday (December 19, 2025) strongly condemned the recent wave of violence and attacks on journalists, urging citizens to resist what it described as mob actions carried out by a handful of fringe elements seeking to destabilise the country at a critical political moment.In a statement issued on Friday (December 19, 2025) noon, the government said it “strongly and unequivocally” condemns all acts of violence, intimidation, arson, and destruction of property, stressing that Bangladesh is currently undergoing a historic democratic transition that must not be derailed by chaos or hatred.

Referring to the upcoming elections and referendum, the government said these were not merely political exercises but a “solemn national commitment,” closely tied to the ideals for which Inqilab Mancha spokesperson Sharif Osman Hadi was killed. Honouring his sacrifice, the statement said, requires restraint, responsibility, and a collective rejection of violence.Expressing solidarity with the media, the government said it stood firmly with journalists from The Daily Star, Prothom Alo, and New Age, whose offices and staff were targeted during the unrest.

“We are deeply sorry for the terror and violence you have endured,” the statement said, adding that attacks on journalists are attacks on truth itself. The government pledged full justice for those responsible. The statement also condemned the lynching of a Hindu man in Mymensingh, calling it a heinous crime and asserting that there is “no space for such violence in the new Bangladesh.” It said those responsible would not be spared.Calling for calm, the government urged citizens to honour Hadi’s memory by rejecting violence, incitement, and hatred, and by standing in defence of peace, democracy, and the rule of law.Earlier,



The government said it “strongly and unequivocally” condemns all acts of violence, intimidation, arson, and destruction of property

Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus spoke by telephone with the editors of Prothom Alo and The Daily Star following the barbaric attacks on the offices of the two newspapers.Expressing his deep sympathy to Prothom Alo editor Matur Rahman and The Daily Star editor Mahfuz Anam, the Chief Adviser said: “This unexpected and disgraceful attack on your institutions and journalists has deeply pained me. In this difficult time, the government stands firmly by your side.”

From the food of soldiers to the taste of Pune, why ‘pithla-bhakri’ atop the iconic Sinhagad fort is an unmissable experience



After the mist clears and the sun reaches the fort walls, Sinhagad is filled with the aroma of garlic, chillies, and besan. At the top, small eateries come alive, with bhakris (a kind of bread) puffing on tavas, pithla bubbling, and the hiss of oil mingling with the sound of laughter. Plates clatter, butter-milk froths, and the fort hums with the flavours. Once, these hills had echoed with the clash of swords when Tanaji Malusare, the military commander of the erstwhile Maratha kingdom, fought bravely to win the fort for Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. Centuries later, it continues to be the most popular spot in Pune, where hundreds come to feel the valour and savour the spirit of traditional Maharashtrian dishes from the eateries. At Sinhagad, pithla-bhakri isn't just a meal, it is its soul. Every morning, women climb its slopes, carrying baskets of flour, curd, and vegetables on their heads to feed people with love and turn the fort's legacy of strength into one of nourishment and warmth.

sinhagad fort Laughter, chatter, and the clatter of steel plates. Each bite of pithla bhakri carries the fort's warmth, its history, and the love of those who make it. (Express Photo) "So many people come here just to have food, pithla-bhakri, matki usal, bharit, thecha, they love it all," says Vandana Shinde, who has been cooking at the fort for over 25 years. "Earlier, we made everything on wood fires. Now we use stoves, but the love and taste remain the same." The

The women who fought their way into the Afghan Embassy



The team of the visiting Taliban Foreign Minister, Amir Khan Muttaqi, which used the premises to hold a press conference, did not think it necessary to invite a single woman. The Ministry of External Affairs did not think it was necessary either. Earlier that day, Mr. Muttaqi was hosted at the grand official venue, Hyderabad House, without a woman, official or otherwise, in sight. Whether this was mandated by the Taliban leader, a former Minister of Education for a regime that doesn't allow girls in school beyond Class 6; or a genuine oversight; or a "technical error", as he termed it, it wasn't allowed to pass.

Reportage of the 'men only' press meet, followed by public outrage, forced the government to distance itself from the event and the Taliban delegation to rethink. Two days later, I received a call, inviting me to another press conference. Everyone was invited, with no conditions laid on attire, as they may have been in Kabul. Inside the briefing hall, male journalists, who had attended the previous press conference, had cleared the front row for female journalists, to ensure that Mr. Muttaqi would have no choice but to see them and take their questions. "This is your day," said one of my male colleagues. "We will not be asking any questions, so as to ensure you will all be able to." I smiled, protesting that we should behave as we normally do, sitting together without any gender distinction, and compete for the official's attention, but I was also touched by the

Growing up with Kali in Kolkata

While the rest of India celebrates Diwali, West Bengal worships Kali. Yes, Durga Puja — the 10-day festival that precedes Kali Puja by a few weeks — has UNESCO's intangible heritage status; it gets international attention; it is bigger, glitzier and grander than any other festival in Kolkata. But this is the goddess Kali's stomping ground. English historian H.E.A. Cotton wrote "Kali, the patron saint of the city, is at Kalighat." Kali has the city's heart. In fact, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, who lives a stone's throw from the Kalighat temple, is a renowned devotee of the goddess. Kali is the goddess of deserted areas. She is worshipped in the dead of night. She appears naked and unashamed, unconcerned about what she is wearing. She fits no definition of a "good girl". And that is why, at a time when Kolkata is gearing up for Kali Puja, the Chief Minister's comments following the rape of a medical student in the State are especially galling. "How did she come out [of the hostel] at 12:30 a.m.?" Banerjee said, according to media reports. She said while it was everyone's right to go out, "when and wherever they want to", she cautioned private institutions like medical colleges to be careful. "Especially when it's a girl child, they should not be allowed to go out at night."

Her remarks have ignited a political firestorm. The opposition has accused her of victim blaming. Sadly, almost no political party can claim moral high ground when it comes to blaming the victim of assault. Good girls don't stay out that late. Good girls don't dress like that. Good girls don't go around alone in deserted areas. We have heard that refrain over and over again. When journalist Soumya Viswanathan was murdered in Delhi in 2008, then chief minister Sheila Dikshit said, "All by herself till 3 a.m. at night... you should not be so adventurous." After a rape case in Gurugram in 2012, the city bosses said women should not work after 8 p.m. If they had to, they needed to tell the labour department in advance.

At one time, Kali embarrassed me. I was then living and working in California, where Diwali usually meant good desi food and a few sparklers in the backyard at some Indian friend's house party. When culturally conscious Ameri-

thali that arrives at your table is a mound of golden pithla, soft yet spicy, sitting beside a perfectly charred bhakri. A smoky vangyache bharit — mashed brinjal tempered with onion and spices — and at its side lies a handful of zanzan matki usal; along with it, you are served a fiery red thecha that demands courage, and a bowl of cool, thick curd to balance it all. If you're lucky, a glass of Maharashtrian butter milk called tak follows — light, salty, and perfect after the climb.

"Sinhagad Pithla Bhakri", the term itself comprises everything, the love that these people put in their food, it is so simple and authentic, I think that is what makes it so special. We come here for our daughter, she loves the food here," says Archana Navathe, who's been visiting for 34 years. Her daughter Yadynee, visiting from Italy, laughs, "If I could, I would eat this food every day. So much love, and on top of that, the dahi and tak! I make it a point to have at least three to four matkifuls of dahi sakhar." And when you just want a quick bite, the hot and fresh bhajis with onion and potato, dipped in gram flour batter and fried golden, will be ready in an instant. "The bhajis here are a delight, crispy, flavourful, and best enjoyed with the view and friends," says Nandakishore Parikh, a regular visitor from Rajasthan. The dish itself tells the story of endurance. Pithla-bhakri was once a soldier's food, quick to cook, rich in protein, made from simple ingredients that lasted through long campaigns. "It reminds me of the time when our Mavalas, Shivaji Maharaj's soldiers, survived on this same meal," says Nilesh Bhosale, a Pune businessman. "It's simple but full of strength." Every serving here carries a history of its own. "My mother used to serve food straight on the hand, a hot bhakri with pithla on top," recalls Ganga Waghmare, whose family has fed visitors for four decades. "Even at midnight, trekkers would come hungry, and we'd serve them by the fire." The fort stands as a monument to courage, its strength now lying in the hands of the ones who cook, serve, and feed. At Sinhagad, history is not just remembered; it's eaten, shared, and savoured, one plate of pithla bhakri at a time.

gesture. That day, as Mr. Muttaqi faced a fusillade of questions about the Taliban's denial of basic rights to women in the country, the solidarity of journalists against the prior injustice, however small, sent a powerful message: women cannot and should not be left out of the room.

The truth is, most journalists see their profession as gender-neutral, although there are circumstances and countries where they face different impediments to doing their jobs. In the heat of a conflict, or a riot, or even during a raucous election rally, women will often find that they are not assigned the "tough" stories; discouraged from the frontlines and trenches in a war; or face sexual harassment in the newsroom or in the field. During the protests in the capital against the brutal rape of "Nirbhaya" in 2012, I remember young female colleagues returning ashen-faced from India Gate with horrifying stories of being manhandled or groped by the protesters themselves. On assignment in wars,

I have often been told, "this is no place for women", or been asked to stay back. These are all battles women face in every field, not just in journalism, and learn to fight them. I will also admit that women journalists are sometimes treated more politely and with more consideration than their male counterparts. I once fought my way onto an Indian warship going on an evacuation mission. As the only woman on-board, I got my own cabin, while five colleagues were cramped into one room on hard bunks. Let us be clear, though: the fight that day in the briefing hall of the Afghanistan Embassy was not primarily for gender justice or equality, but for media access. It is a fight that journalists wage on a daily basis, and increasingly in democracies such as India and the U.S., where leaders shy away from press conferences, or restrict the media that can attend or the questions they can ask. That battle for access may have been won on that day, in that hall, but the fight continues. Sadly, the much larger, and in some ways, more vital battle for millions of Afghan women to go to school, college, or work, and even gyms and public parks has not even begun to be fought.

How the pre-primary education system reinforces inequality from the start



Are we orienting our students towards accepting different standards of living that an unequal society imposes on them? Does pre-primary schooling teach children from rural and deprived classes to set their aspirations according to their present conditions? A household is forced to make the first school choice of their children. Discrimination starts at this level and sets a potentially inequitable trajectory for the entire life of the child. The 2025 Comprehensive Modular Survey: Education (NSS 80th Round) by the National Statistical Office (MoSPI) reveals deep-rooted disparities driven by type of schools, geography and household income.

At 10.4%, pre-primary has the lowest enrollment compared to other levels. Students in primary education constitute 41.6%. Pre-primary is not a substantial proportion when compared to the total enrolled students in school education. The UNESCO, the UNICEF, and the National Education Policy 2020 all agree that pre-primary orients children to the schooling process, improves school readiness, and thereby reduces chances of dropout. Yet, pre-primary remains the lowest proportion of the student population of the school system.

Is there any gender discrimination at this level? Data from the Comprehensive Modular Survey shows there is not much difference in terms of gender distribution with pre-primary students comprising 10.3% of all enrolled males and 10.6% of all enrolled females. A deeper look, however, exposes the emergence of rural vs urban as a new discriminator for these young learners. Nearly two-thirds (65.6%) of pre-primary children in rural areas are enrolled in government institutions. Conversely, 62.9% students enrolled in urban sectors have enrolled in private unaided schools. The reasons could be willingness to spend more money, size of family (with grandparents to look after children at home), occupied parents, and, of course, most importantly a trust deficit among urban households about the quality of pre-primary education offered by government schools. The surging enrollment in private schools in urban sectors indicates de-facto privatization of foundational education in urban India. This rising privatisation in pre-primary education raises questions of equitable access to education at the early stages of learning.

Parents in urban sectors would be willing to spend more money for buying better quality pre-primary educa-

Is landlockedness the reason for Bihar's underdevelopment?



It is election season in Bihar. While the Opposition often speaks about the lack of development and industrialisation in the State, in its campaigns, the National Democratic Alliance, which is in power, argues that a change of government will bring back the 'Jungle Raj' of the earlier decade. What makes Bihar one of India's most underdeveloped States? Is landlockedness a reason for its underdevelopment, as some argue? R. Nagaraj and Manindra Nath Thakur discuss the question in a conversation moderated by Saptaparno Ghosh. Edited excerpts: It is often argued that Bihar is disadvantaged because it is a landlocked State. Punjab and Telangana are landlocked as well, and they are doing relatively well. So how is being landlocked a constraint for Bihar?

R. Nagaraj: If you look at the success of Telangana, especially Hyderabad, it is mostly because of the tertiary sector; it has nothing to do with geography. If a State has an educated workforce and good infrastructure, being landlocked will not be an issue. Punjab, too, has a developed network of railways and roads, and has FCI (Food Corporation of India) godowns across the country to help with export of crops. Manindra Nath Thakur: Let us look at Bihar's prominent exports: makhana, litchi, and corn. It has been difficult for Bihar to transport these items from Patna to West Bengal or to any port. These, alongside the vegetables Bihar exports, are perishable. Moreover, significant costs are incurred due to road transport; time and distance are crucial factors in agrarian exports. One way Bihar is attempting to resolve this issue is by launching projects along the Ganga. So, it is not that concerns about being landlocked are not genuine, but they cannot be cited as a major reason for the State's economic backwardness. Prof. Nagaraj spoke of the tertiary sector; you spoke of agrarian exports. Bihar has been assessed as an agrarian economy. What should be its imperative going forward: industrialisation or agriculture?

Manindra Nath Thakur: In the last 10 years, the Chief Minister has tried to engage with industrialists. However, industrialists have often raised concerns about access to ports, citing the need to spend more on transportation. Having said that, I do think that in this modern capitalist system, no society can think of surviving with just agricultural products. While Bihar should capitalise on its potential in terms of agricultural production and processing, it must ultimately transition to industry. Without that, there is no future. R. Nagaraj: Before we think of high-technology and/or manufacturing industries, we should consider where the comparative advantage lies. Four-fifth of Bihar's labour force is in agriculture. But despite Bihar having fertile land and irrigation facilities, agricultural productivity is mostly less than

tion for their children. But the financial burden of pre-primary education on parents from the rural and urban sectors lays the foundations for two different expenditure patterns. Urban parents take up more financial responsibility, compared to their rural counterpart. The difference in the expenditure gap between rural and urban households is substantial. In rural sector, the average expenditure for educating a pre-primary student is ₹6,059. The average expenditure per student in urban areas is ₹18,943. Urban families spend over three times more than their rural counterparts. One could attribute this to higher costs in urban areas. That is justifiable too, because there is difference in the expenditure for pre-primary education in government schools in rural and urban sectors. For pre-primary education in rural government schools, a household has to spend ₹557 in an year while it is ₹1,094 in urban areas. The difference is almost double. The difference in the expenditure between rural government school and private un-aided school is enormous though. For a rural family, the choice of a private unaided school comes at an average cost of ₹17,986. This means a rural family has to spend more than 32 times the expenditure required for a government institution. Comparing ₹557 and ₹17,986 shows that the natural choice of a rural household is a government school.

In addition the survey has reported that urban parents spend 783 per student for private coaching and tuition at pre-primary level. Is this expenditure gap, among sectors, justifiable in terms of quality of education? The expenditure gaps between government schools in rural and urban schools, between government schools in rural and urban, between government schools in rural and private schools in urban are alarming. But more serious is the systematic consent-making regarding this structural inequity as neutral and natural, through this differential pricing of pre-primary education. Sabotaging the idea of equity How does a nation attain its dream of equity in education when there is a deep divide between households falling into various sectors? The survey indicates that the idea of equity in education is sabotaged at the very foundational level of pre-primary stage. Households that can afford to buy more expensive education at pre-primary level upends any attempt to create a level playing field when children begin their education. Parents who understand this huge expenditure gap between rural/urban sectors and government/private sectors orient themselves towards a thinking that the variable pricing in education as natural. It sets them up to accepting structural inequalities that will plague their children's education in future. Students are systemically accustomed to educational "goods and services" that fit their standards in government schools and accept, in future, the differences between theirs and their private school counterparts as genuine and natural. This also orients them to accepting any such unequal treatments in their future, not just in school days, but in adult life as well, as natural and non-political. Hence, the deep sectoral divide exposed by the "Comprehensive Modular Survey: Education" (NSS 80th Round) is a serious indicator of perpetuating inequality with the consent of the socially and economically disadvantaged. Pre-primary is foundational. But, foundation for what? Normalising inequity or better education? The pre-primary schooling system needs to be redesigned from being institutions that manufacture consent to ones that present a level playing field to all children. This will create the foundation of equity in the education system.

the national average. Why is agriculture not picking up? That is the big question. In the 1970s or 80s, a committee set up under the agricultural economist, S.R. Sen, was figuring out how to take the Green Revolution to the Indo-Gangetic belt. It came up with a plan for massive State investments in infrastructure and electrification to ensure that States have abundant water for the cultivation of wheat and rice. Surprisingly, the Green Revolution spread to the Malwa region of Madhya Pradesh rather than the Indo-Gangetic belt. We must understand what went wrong. I think it will be both in Bihar's interest and the national interest to get basic wheat, rice, and sugarcane cultivation going. This way, western India will be burdened less; it can conserve more water and move to value-added crops. Manindra Nath Thakur: On the agrarian front, I don't think Bihar should repeat the mistake that Punjab made during the Green Revolution, which produced a water crisis. Although Bihar has abundant water, it may face the same consequences as Punjab if water is overused. Moreover, increasing agricultural production is linked with the heavy use of fertilizers and pesticides, creating a health crisis. Therefore, I don't support the shifting of agriculture to eastern India. Agriculture is not profitable anywhere in the world unless it is heavily supported by the State. R. Nagaraj: Madhya Pradesh was also seen as a backward State. It does not have the same water resources as Bihar, yet the Green Revolution expanded there. Prosperity in the Malwa region is amazing. Therefore, I am sceptical about the idea that agriculture has no potential.

So what do you think are the factors that contributed to Bihar's underdevelopment?

Manindra Nath Thakur: Apart from what I have said, there are also notions that the Centre is not interested in Bihar's growth. The State, I think, is frozen in its transition from feudalism to capitalism. One of the reasons for this is the internal colonisation of the State. Earlier, Bihar supplied raw materials, but due to policies such as freight equalisation, it suffered significantly, and industries didn't develop locally, despite having the advantage of raw material availability. Bihar ultimately lost revenues and its natural advantage. Now, with a supply of labour from Bihar, nobody is interested in developing the State. R. Nagaraj: A commodity where freight equalisation was done and which benefited eastern India was cement. Steel did not accrue the same advantage. Cement has heavy transport costs compared to steel so the freight equalisation policy for it helped eastern India. Furthermore, why Bihar is leaving Bihar has no element of capitalist conspiracy. In fact, when investments in agriculture were made in Bihar, migration to Punjab declined. It is clear that if people have more options at home, they will not move out. Literature often suggests that Bihar has a 'socialist hangover', and that entrepreneurship does not draw confidence. R. Nagaraj:

The socialist ideology in Bihar is often equated with caste politics and caste in general — basically, distributing limited resources across various castes. If the focus shifts to productive investment, it will do a lot of good for Bihar. Policy must focus on how to augment production rather than looking at redistributing the limited resources more equitably or in a manner that helps people stay in power. Manindra Nath Thakur: Bihar has never really followed the socialist model. It also failed to understand the logic behind India's shift to capitalism.

Nature guide Payal Mehta on how her curiosity led to a life in the wild



The next in the monthly series by WWF-India that highlights niche and unconventional green careers through the stories of well-known personalities from the field of environment and conservation. Let me start by saying, I didn't "take a path." A path unfolded as I walked. Growing up, my parents' enthusiasm for Nature was infectious, yet my own relationship with it was different. I loved the night sky, rural landscapes, flowers, and fireflies. At the same time, formal education taught me about photosynthesis, the water cycle, tides, and genetics. However, all of this felt like separate puzzle pieces.

As a young adult, I had no fixed career ambition. I was curious about many things: pure sciences, mountaineering, journalism, and even dance. When I heard about a naturalist training programme at Kanha National Park, I decided to "check it out". The idea of working in the wild, leading tours, and sharing the wonders of Nature with others felt worth exploring. I came with well-understood theoretical knowledge and a deep appreciation for the outdoors. But the first 30 days of training opened my eyes in unexpected ways. I learnt to distinguish species, observe behaviour, and ask deeper questions. Previously disconnected knowledge suddenly came together in a clear understanding of

nature's intricate choreography. After training, I worked as a professional naturalist in Kanha. Later, I left to pursue freelance tour leading across South Asia. During this time, restoration ecologist Pradip Krishen asked me to train two young men as naturalists for Rao Jodha Park in Jodhpur. That assignment opened many doors and training opportunities came through word of mouth. Harsha, an excellent naturalist, and I trained community youth with the Nature Conservation Foundation, created an online Nature Guide Course during the COVID lockdown and co-founded Nature Guides Academy with two fellow naturalists, Narayana and Shreenidhi, in 2024.

Currently, my days shift between two worlds. As a guide, I rise before sunrise, meet my group, and venture into the wild with our local team. We search for creatures big and small, share meals, and sometimes gather around bonfires to tell stories. As a mentor, my days are filled with teaching: field sessions on natural history, guiding skills, conservation, and tourism ethics. The best part of my work is being in the wilderness, learning something new every day, meeting people from around the world, and witnessing that spark when a guest or young guide feels inspired to do more for nature. This requires more than just technical knowledge. It demands sensitivity toward wildlife, local communities, and guests. Some of my greatest teachers have been the communities we work with. While training the Idu Mishmi youth of Arunachal Pradesh, we were told it must be nature-culture guiding, not just nature guiding. Their lives are woven with the forest and its spirits. Practice walks ended with foraging dinner, bonfires with homemade yuchi, and forest stories. We learnt more than we taught. To young people exploring this path, I say: choosing to be a naturalist is choosing a way of life. It is not just about knowing the wilderness, but also understanding people, respecting them, and standing up for what is right. A good guide becomes more than a naturalist. They become an example, a teacher, and a voice for the wild.

Donald Trump moves to name some Muslim Brotherhood chapters 'terrorist organizations'

President Donald Trump on Monday (November 24, 2025) signed an executive order directing top national security officials to begin the process of designating certain chapters of the Muslim Brotherhood as Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs) and as Specially Designated Global Terrorists (SDGTs). The order instructs Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent to undertake the review and follow the statutory steps for potential designations. The executive order directs to set in motion a process by which certain chapters or other subdivisions of the Muslim Brotherhood shall be considered for designation as Foreign Terrorist Organizations" under section 219 of the INA, and as SDGTs under IEEPA and Executive Order 13224.



"it is the policy of the United States to cooperate with its regional partners to eliminate the capabilities and operations of Muslim Brotherhood chapters designated as foreign terrorist organizations... deprive those chapters of resources, and thereby end any threat such chapters pose to United States nationals or the national security of the United States." Under the implementation section, the order directs that within 30 days, the Secretary of State and Secretary of the Treasury "shall submit a joint report to the President... concerning the designation of any Muslim Brotherhood chapters or other subdivisions, including those in Lebanon, Jordan, and Egypt." Within 45 days of submitting that report, the secretaries must "take all appropriate action" regarding the designations under applicable U.S. laws and Executive Order 13224. The order also lays out general provisions noting that it does not alter existing authorities of federal agencies, will be implemented according to applicable law and appropriations, and "is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit... enforceable at law or in equity by any party against the United States." It adds that publication costs "shall be borne by the Department of State."

Who is Justice Surya Kant, the 53rd Chief Justice of India?

Justice Surya Kant took oath as the 53rd Chief Justice of India (CJI) on Monday (November 24, 2025). He took his oath in Hindi. Justice Surya Kant will remain in the post for nearly 15 months. He will demit office on February 9, 2027 on attaining the age of 65 years.

On November 22, 2025, Justice Surya Kant said one of the biggest challenges in his tenure as top Judge would be to bring 90,000 pending cases in the Supreme Court down to a "manageable" number. Born on February 10, 1962 in Hisar district of Haryana to a middle-class family, Justice Kant went from being a small-town lawyer to the country's highest judicial office, where he has been part of several verdicts and orders of national importance and constitutional matters. He also has the distinction of standing 'first class first' in his Master's degree in law in 2011 from Kurukshetra University.



Justice Kant had been the subject of controversy over a letter written by Justice (now retired) A.K. Goel to then Chief Justice of India (CJI) Dipak Misra. Justice Goel, then an apex court judge, had disagreed with a proposal to elevate Justice Kant as Chief Justice of the Himachal Pradesh High Court. However, the Misra Collegium, in a notification dated October 3, 2018, went ahead with Justice Kant's elevation. Justice Kant, who penned several notable judgments in the Punjab and Haryana HC, was appointed the Chief Justice of Himachal Pradesh High Court on October 5, 2018. His tenure as an Supreme Court Judge is marked by verdicts on the abrogation of Article 370, free speech and citizenship rights. He was part of the Bench that kept the colonial-era sedition law in abeyance, directing that no new FIRs be registered under it until a government review. Justice Kant also nudged the Election Commission of India (ECI) to disclose the details of 65 lakh voters excluded from the draft electoral rolls in Bihar while hearing a batch of petitions challenging the poll panel's decision to undertake Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the voters list in the poll-bound State.

He is also credited with directing that one-third of seats in bar associations, including the Supreme Court Bar Association, be reserved for women. Justice Kant was part of the Bench that appointed a five-member committee headed by former top court Judge Justice Indu Malhotra to probe the security breach during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Punjab in 2022, saying such matters required "a judicially trained mind". He also upheld the One Rank-One

Pension scheme for defence forces, calling it constitutionally valid, and continues to hear petitions of women officers in the armed forces seeking parity in permanent commission. Justice Kant was on the seven-Judge Bench that overruled the 1967 Aligarh Muslim University judgment, opening the way for reconsideration of the institution's minority status.

The rational ape: study says chimpanzees reason through their beliefs



When, in 1960, the British primatologist Jane Goodall first observed chimpanzees at Gombe National Park in Tanzania using twigs to fish termites out of anthills, she was making scientific history. Researchers had until then believed only humans could use tools. Goodall's discovery erased that line as well as raised important questions about what it means to be human. Now, a study published in Science on October 30 has suggested that another supposedly uniquely human trait — the ability to weigh evidence, revise beliefs, and change one's mind — may not be ours alone. (This is of course setting aside machines.) A team of experts from the Netherlands, Uganda, the UK, and the US observed 15-23 chimpanzees at the Ngamba Island Chimpanzee Sanctuary in Uganda through a series of carefully designed behavioural tests. The question they were trying to answer was simple: when faced with conflicting clues about where food is hidden, do chimpanzees follow the most recent signal or do they combine information, remember it, and update their beliefs, much like humans do when they think rationally?

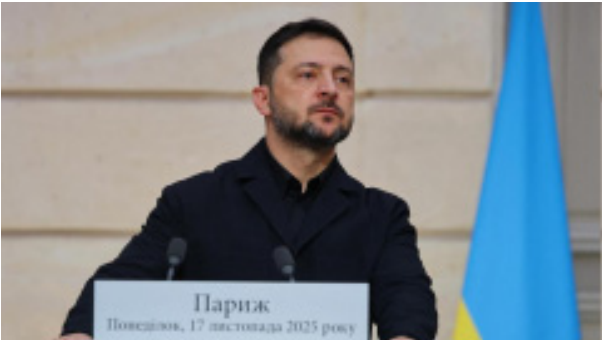
The researchers used five simple tests to examine how chimpanzees revised their beliefs. "To run this study, we really had to break it down and ask: what is rationality at its roots?" Utrecht University assistant professor and the study's lead author Hanna Schleihaut said. "What are its most fundamental components? And how do you test this in a non-verbal way?" The team used a Bayesian model to generate predictions about the great apes' decisions and compared them with their actual behaviour. A Bayesian model is a statistical way to understand or predict something by continuously updating one's beliefs with new evidence. The first test checked how chimpanzees responded to strong and weak clues. A strong clue could be in the form of seeing food dropped into a container; a weak clue could be hearing food rattling inside the container. The researchers also switched the order in which these clues appeared. This way, the team observed that when the strong clue came second, the chimpanzees were more likely to change their original choice, suggesting they weren't simply reacting to the most recent signal but were weighing how reliable each clue could be.

The second test examined whether this pattern held when the team swapped the clues. This time, the strong clue was auditory while the weak clue involved vague movements or traces of food. As before, the chimpanzees con-

sistently favoured the stronger, more reliable clues regardless of when it appeared. The third test explored how well the chimpanzees remembered the clues. The scientists introduced three containers, one with a strong clue, one with a weak clue, and a third with no clues. After the chimpanzees picked the container with the strongest clue, the researchers removed it and presented them with the remaining two (somewhat like the Monty Hall problem for humans). The chimpanzees more often than not picked the container with the weak clue rather than the one with no information, suggesting they kept multiple possibilities in mind rather than focus solely on the strongest clue. Next, the scientists checked whether the chimpanzees could differentiate between information they already had and something new. The great apes were made to hear either the same sounds of food rattling in a can twice or a new sound the second time. The chimpanzees changed their choice only when the second signal added something new, indicating they could tell old information from genuinely new evidence. The final test explored how the chimpanzees responded when their initial belief was undermined. When the scientists presented a "defeater" clue that directly contradicted a prior strong clue, for instance by revealing that a rattling sound had come from a pebble rather than food, the chimpanzees revised their choices. However, they ignored the same "defeater" when it wasn't linked to previous positive evidence. Not uniquely human. Taken together, the tests show the chimpanzees didn't simply respond to the last or loudest clues. Instead they evaluated how relevant and reliable each piece of information was, kept multiple possibilities open, and updated their choices in ways that resemble rational, evidence-based reasoning in humans. "This shows [the study] that they are aware of the reasons for their choices, a skill that has been believed to be uniquely human," Prof. Schleihaut said.

How would this sort of rational thinking turn up in the everyday lives of wild chimpanzees? Since this study was carried out in semi-captive conditions and with rescued chimpanzees, the researchers could offer only hypothetical examples. As Prof. Schleihaut said: "Imagine a chimpanzee sees a red fruit on the ground and walks towards a tree because it assumes the fruit must have fallen from there. But when it reaches the spot, it realises the 'fruit' was only a cluster of red leaves. In that moment, the chimpanzee should revise its belief: it should no longer think that this tree is full of ripe fruit." According to Tetsuro Matsuzawa, a primatologist and former director of Kyoto University Primate Research Institute (and who wasn't involved in the study), it would be extremely difficult to observe such traits in wild chimpanzees in their daily lives because researchers simply wouldn't be able to make enough repeat observations to show reliably that chimpanzees can revise their beliefs in ways demonstrated in the study. Nonetheless, he added, "This study also raises bigger questions about the evolutionary roots of human rationality. It shows that rational thinking is not limited to humans, and prompts us to ask how much of this ability is shared with chimpanzees and other great apes, a question now brought to the forefront."

Ukraine, when peace is a hard choice



US President Donald Trump's peace plan for Ukraine has 28 points aimed at bringing the long-drawn conflict to an end, but Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy says the proposal puts the country in a spot, where it must make a "very difficult choice", between dignity and a key partner.

Mr. Trump, whose team drafted the proposal in consultation with Russian officials, has said he expects a response from Ukraine by November 26, 2025. Well over three years since Russian President Vladimir Putin launched the invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, why does the "peace plan" pose a hard challenge for Ukraine? Why is President Zelenskyy wary of the plan despite the loss of lives and large-scale destruction in his country? Read this profile by Stanly Johny to understand what the plan entails, and why the proposal makes Ukraine very uncomfortable. Effectively, the plan asks Kyiv to cede territory to Russia — Russia now controls more than 20% of Ukraine's pre-2014 territory — scale down its military, by capping its armed forces at 6,00,000 personnel and by giving up long-range weapons, and to formally renounce its bid to join NATO. It rules out any European peacekeeping presence or sanctions on Russia for its alleged war crimes.

While the Trump plan apparently seeks to address both Russia's security concerns and Ukraine's demand for security guarantees, at a fundamental level, it acknowledges the facts on the ground which favour Moscow. As The Hindu's editorial today points out, several elements of the Trump plan mirror Russia's long-standing demands, including the halt of NATO's eastward expansion, prompting some commentators to describe the peace plan a "gift to

Putin". Although imperfect, "Mr. Trump's plan at least offers a structured framework for dialogue, involving the U.S., Europe, NATO, Ukraine and Russia," it notes, underscoring the need for trust-building at a time when the post-Cold War European security order lies in tatters. "A peace deal must address this lack of trust and seek to build a new security equilibrium in the region, addressing Europe's fears and Russia's concerns," it further says. Also read this explainer from earlier this year, that puts the Russia-Ukraine war and Mr. Trump's recent intervention in context. In the latest development in this connection, the US and Ukraine have said they had created an "updated and refined peace framework" to end the war with Russia — based on an alternative proposal made by European countries — after a meeting between US Secretary of State Marco Rubio late and a Ukrainian delegation led by Volodymyr Zelenskyy's chief of staff Andriy Yermak late Sunday in Switzerland. Further details are awaited. Meanwhile, Israel has been blatantly violating the ceasefire — the U.S.-brokered ceasefire took effect on October 10, 2025 — in Gaza multiple times, killing dozens and injuring hundreds, according to multiple reports from the ground. Hospitals in Gaza are yet again running out of critical supplies amid Israel's new wave of airstrikes. What does a ceasefire really mean in this context, and what are the prospects for peace when the perpetrator faces no consequence? As our recent editorial contended, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is making a mockery of the ceasefire agreement and Mr. Trump should know his efforts to bring in peace mean little, as long as Israel continues its genocide in Gaza, killing Palestinian civilians day after day with impunity.

Top five stories we are reading this week:

COP30 ends with president's commitment to end deforestation, "transition away" from fossil fuels — Jacob Koshy reports; Also watch: Is COP30 an inflection point in the fight against climate change?

Bangladesh seeks Hasina's extradition, sends letter — Kallol Bhattacharjee reports To deter migration, U.K. proposes new rules for settlement — Sriram Lakshman rep Sri Lanka President Dissanayake assures Tamil party of action on Constitution, PC polls next year

The new direction for India should be toward Asia, writes Mukul Sanwal

Washington and the whirlwind rollercoaster

Following in his fellow Bengalurean's footsteps, Rahul too has been employed in multiple roles because of his 'versatility'. He began his Test career at No. 6 — where he had never batted previously — in Melbourne in 2014 before moving up to No. 3 in the second innings and to the opener's slot in the next game in Sydney, where he produced his maiden century. For the next decade, he batted in various positions. He became a white-ball wicketkeeper — he still holds that role in the 50-over format — and was even the designated Test stumper for two matches in South Africa in 2023-24. Just about the only thing Rahul hasn't done, yet, is keep wicket to his own bowling. Which brings us to Washington, an accidental Test debutant in January 2021 because India were struggling to put 11 fit men on the park for the deciding Test against Australia in Brisbane. More than half the team that started the series in Adelaide was unavailable for the fourth Test at the Gabba — skipper Virat Kohli had returned home on paternity leave while Mohammed Shami, Ravindra Jadeja, R. Ashwin, Hanuma Vihari and Jasprit Bumrah had all picked up tour-ending injuries. Washington wasn't in the original Test party, travel-

ling with the extended squad as a 'net bowler', until he had to perforce be pressed into service at the Gabba. He had a Test to remember, both for the fact that he was part of the group that created history by consigning Australia to their first loss at the Gabba toir in more than three decades and that he played a significant hand in the three-wicket series-clinching victory. In the first innings with India well behind the eight-ball, he made a flowing 62 in a century stand with Shardul Thakur, then produced a crucial 22 in a tense run-chase while displaying nerves of steel. He played in three of India's next four Tests, at home against England in February-March 2021, with unbeaten efforts of 85 and 96 bookending two ducks, but was then put out to pasture for the next three and a half years for no discernible reason. He was still a bit player in white-ball internationals, and when he did return to the Test fold, it was under interesting — for want of a better word — circumstances. Having finally earned a top-order berth in the Tamil Nadu team, the left-hander made 152 against Delhi in October last year, immediately after which he was drafted into the Test side for the second game of a three-match series against New Zealand. I

Net direct tax collections rise 8% till Dec 17, refunds down 13.5%: Income Tax Dept



Net direct tax collections grew 8 per cent year-on-year to Rs 17.05 lakh crore during April 1-December 17 this year, data released by the Income Tax Department on Friday showed. This came on the back of a sharp 13.52 per cent year-on-year decline in refunds issued during the same period that stood at Rs 2.97 lakh crore as on December 17 as against Rs 3.43 lakh crore in the year-ago period. On a month-on-month basis, however, refunds picked up by Rs 54,534 crore to Rs 2.97 lakh crore on December 17 from Rs 2.43 lakh crore on November 10.

The slower rate of income tax refunds has been consistently flagged by many income taxpayers on the social media following the filing deadline of September 16. In November, Central Board of Direct Taxes Chairman Ravi Agrawal had said that low-value refunds were being released, but the Income Tax Department was undertaking an analysis of the refund claims that were “high value” or “red flagged” by the system. The wrongful deductions claimed are being analysed, he had said. Overall, at gross level, direct tax collections grew 4.16 per cent to Rs 20.02 lakh crore during April 1-December 17. In the year-ago period, gross direct tax collections had stood at Rs 19.22 lakh crore.

IndiGo under antitrust watchdog CCI’s scanner after massive operational disruptions hit flight ops across India

India’s antitrust watchdog Competition Commission of India (CCI) has decided to launch a probe into the network-wide disruption faced by IndiGo earlier this month to see if India’s largest airline had violated competition rules. The CCI is likely to investigate whether IndiGo, which commands a 65 per cent share in the domestic air passenger market, had abused its dominant position in the market, according to industry insiders. A separate probe into the disruption, which brought the country’s aviation system to its knees, is underway by an inquiry panel set up by aviation regulator Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA).

“The Competition Commission of India (CCI) has taken cognizance of Information filed against IndiGo in the context of the recent flight disruptions witnessed in the aviation sector, across various routes. Based on the initial assessment, the Commission has decided to proceed further in the matter in accordance with the provisions of the Competition Act, 2002,” the Commission said Thursday in a release, but did not elaborate further. There were demands from some quarters for a CCI inquiry to determine whether IndiGo indulged in anti-competitive practices or abuse of dominant position in view of the massive operational disruption that the airline grappled with in the first week of December. The disruption led to scores of flights getting cancelled on a daily basis, leaving thousands of passengers stranded at airports across the country. On the worst day of the disruption—December 5—over 1,600 of the airline’s 2,300-plus daily flights were cancelled.

IndiGo’s under-preparedness for the second phase of the new rest and duty norms for pilots is being seen as a major reason for the crisis. The situation has since stabilised after the DGCA allowed IndiGo a temporary exemption till February 10 from a few night duty-related changes in the new Flight Duty Time Limitation (FDTL) rules for pilots. IndiGo’s operations have been stable for the past week, with the airline now operating over 2,200 daily flights. As per the DGCA, IndiGo admitted that it was short on pilots vis-a-vis the requirement under the new FDTL norms and that the disruptions arose “primarily from misjudgement and planning gaps in implementing” the rules’ second phase that took effect on November 1. According to experts, a company’s dominance by itself is not considered anticompetitive, but abuse of dominant position is. Abuse occurs when one or more companies use their dominant market position in an exclusionary or an exploitative manner—like predatory pricing and denial of market access—that negatively impacts competition. The CCI first examines the available information to conclude whether or not there appears to have been a contravention of competition law. In cases where it infers that the rules were likely flouted, the antitrust watchdog orders a formal investigation into the matter. Among other actions, the CCI can impose hefty fi-

With December being the month for the third installment or 75 per cent of tax liability of the tax to be paid in advance for a financial year, the advance tax collections rose by 4.27 per cent to Rs 7.88 lakh crore as on December 17. While corporate advance tax grew 7.98 per cent year-on-year to Rs 6.07 lakh crore during April 1-December 17, non-corporate advance tax was down 6.49 per cent year-on-year to Rs 1.81 lakh crore. Non-corporate tax includes taxes paid by individuals, HUFs (Hindu Undivided Families), firms, Association of Persons (AoPs), Body of Individuals (Bols), local authorities, artificial juridical person.

On the securities markets front, Securities Transaction Tax (STT) after having posted a lower year-on-year level last month inched up 0.2 per cent year-on-year to Rs 40,194.77 crore as on December 17 from Rs 40,114.02 crore in the year-ago period. STT is a direct tax levied on purchase and sale of securities listed on the stock exchanges in India. With just over three months remaining for this financial year, the government is likely to see a shortfall in its tax revenue targets. In the Budget 2025-26, direct tax collections were estimated to be Rs 25.20 lakh crore from corporate tax and taxes on income. So far, the government has collected Rs 17.05 lakh crore and it needs to collect Rs 8.15 lakh crore in the last quarter to meet the Budget target. Fiscal pressures are significant this year, with the tax reductions under the Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime, along with lower nominal GDP growth, personal income tax cuts and lagging disinvestment proceeds. Union Bank of India in its latest report said that the fiscal arithmetic shows FY26 revenue shortfall to be around Rs 53,000 crore. The overall revenue loss on account of GST, as per Nomura Global Markets Research, has been around Rs 24,000 crore or nearly 0.07 per cent of GDP, with the fiscal hit to the central government seen to be modest at around Rs 14,000-15,000 crore or about 0.04 per cent of GDP in November.



nancial penalties—up to 10 per cent of the average turnover of the company for the past three years—if its probe reveals abuse of dominant position.

In all, Indian airlines fly around 1,200 domestic routes, of which IndiGo has over 950 routes in operation. Notably though, nearly 600—or 63 per cent—of these are monopoly routes, and about 200 (21 per cent) are duopoly routes where IndiGo has just one competitor. But experts point out that IndiGo’s monopoly on a significant number of routes and the duopoly in India’s airline sector is not really by design, and much of it can be attributed to the failure of other domestic airlines to compete effectively, and even survive. Many have gone under over the past couple of decades—Go First and Jet Airways being the biggest examples over the past few years. To that extent, it can be argued that the presence of a dominant airline means that many routes, which would otherwise shut down, are in operation. Even beyond aviation, for India, where a growing number of sectors—for instance telecom, cement, steel, private ports, private sector airports, and specific segments within the larger e-commerce space—have seen an increase in market concentration over the past few years, the IndiGo crisis is a wake-up call about the perils of monopolies and duopolies, say experts.

They point out that while large, strong, and stable companies are desirable in every sector for efficiency, stability, and competitiveness, it gets problematic if their share of the market expands to such an extent that it smothers other players and creates a high entry barrier. Notwithstanding the reasons for this high market concentration, such a skewed market share ratio in any industry is concerning, according to experts and some senior officials in the government. Being a customer-facing industry, the impact is far more immediate and easy to spot in the airline sector than various other sectors in the business-to-business (B2B) domain. High market concentration risks include systemic risk if the dominant players falter, fewer choices for consumers due to low competition, higher prices, less innovation, and lower quality.

Bharat Express and two Namo Bharat Rapid Rail trains — to meet the rising demand for train travel during special occasions, according to Railway Ministry data.

Apart from running special trains, the Railways has also taken up a project to create special holding areas — similar to those at New Delhi Railway Station — at 76 stations across the country. This will allow passengers to enter platforms in a controlled manner, along with systematic ticket checking. The Zonal Railways conducts ticket checking campaigns from time to time to keep a check on ticketless train passengers. More than 30,000 hand-held terminals (HHTs) have been provided to ticket checking staff to increase transparency and efficiency, accuracy of calculation and collection of excess charges, as well as monitoring of deficiencies in on-board services, said Vaishnav.

HHT is a tablet-like device for Ticket Examiners (TTEs). It has replaced the old paper charts system in the Indian Railways. HHTs help TTEs to download reservation charts, check tickets of passengers, manage waitlists, allocate vacant berths and also to fine those travelling without ticket. According to the Indian Railways’ year book, in FY24, a total of 5.39 lakh checks were conducted against ticketless/irregular travel (including carriage of unbooked luggage).

Looking to expand market access, India inks free trade pact with Oman



India Thursday signed a free trade agreement (FTA) with Oman, the second trade deal with a Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) country after the UAE, in an effort to expand market access for its exporters in the West Asian market at a time when steep tariffs in the US market are hurting trade and investments. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who met Oman Sultan Haitham bin Tarik in Muscat, told the India-Oman Business Forum: “Today we are taking a historic decision, the echoes of which will be heard for many decades to come. The Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement, or CEPA, will infuse our partnership with new confidence and energy in the 21st century. This is the blueprint for our shared future. It will give new momentum to our trade, new confidence to investment, and open new doors of opportunity in every sector.” “CEPA will create many new opportunities for growth, innovation and employment for our youth. Your role is crucial in ensuring that this agreement moves from paper to performance. Because only when policy and enterprise work together does a partnership create new history,” he said.

Under the deal, Oman has offered zero-duty access on 98 per cent of its tariff lines that could result in \$2 billion worth of exports in the near term, according to official estimates, benefitting gems and jewellery, textiles, leather, footwear, sports goods, plastics, furniture, agricultural products and engineering products, among others. India, on its part, has liberalised tariffs on 77.79 per cent of its total tariff lines, protecting sensitive sectors such as agricultural products including dairy, tea, coffee, rubber, and tobacco products; gold and silver bullion, and jewellery. As part of the services sector deal, Oman has increased the quota for Intra-Corporate Transferees from 20 per cent to 50 per cent. Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal said the pact between the two countries was a defining milestone in the bilateral relationship and the first agreement for Oman in nearly two decades. He said the two countries can cooperate on energy transition, including green hydrogen, renewable energy and infrastructure development. The Ministry of Commerce and Industry said, “For the first time, Oman has offered wide-ranging commitments under Mode 4, including a notable increase in the quota for Intra-Corporate Transferees from 20 per cent to 50 per cent, together with a longer permitted duration of stay for Contractual Service Suppliers, extended from the existing 90 days to two years, with the possibility of a further two-year extension.” According to the Ministry, the agreement also provides for more liberal entry and stay conditions for skilled professionals in key sectors such as accountancy, taxation, architecture, medical and allied services, thereby supporting deeper and more seamless professional engagement.

Should healthy people get routine MRIs? Doctors disagree with Elon Musk: ‘Recipe for overdiagnosis, unwanted procedures’

A fresh debate has erupted online around preventive health screening following comments about the use of routine MRI or Magnetic Resonance Imaging scans in people without symptoms. The discussion gained momentum after Elon Musk responded to a social media post about preventive MRIs, stating, “Widespread MRI usage done at least annually with AI reviewing the data would greatly improve wellbeing and mortality.” The idea suggests that frequent, high-end imaging could help detect problems early and potentially extend life.

However, this view has been strongly criticised by medical professionals, particularly cardiologists, who warn against unnecessary testing. Dr Deepak Krishnamurthy, director and lead cardiologist at KIMS Hospital, Bengaluru, reacted sharply to the suggestion, calling it “A recipe for overdiagnosis and unnecessary procedures.” He pointed out that even patients with symptoms are often anxious about excessive testing, adding, “People who come with symptoms are often worried about being over-investigated with non-indicated tests. And here we will screen everyone with an annual MRI. The absurdity is astounding.” A recipe for over diagnosis and unnecessary procedures. People who come with symptoms are often worried about being over investigated with non-indicated tests. And here we will screen everyone with an annual MRI. The debate intensified further after reports emerged that US President Donald Trump, 79, had undergone MRI scans of his heart and abdomen as part of preventive screening, with differing medical opinions on whether such imaging is clinically justified. White House physician Sean P Barbabella informed through a memo that Trump’s cardiovascular system and abdomen were “perfectly normal.” He added, “The purpose of this imaging is preventive: to identify issues early, confirm overall health, and ensure he maintains long-term vitality and function.” For everyday people trying to make informed health decisions, this controversy raises important questions about what preventive care should actually look like.

When does preventive screening turn into over-testing?

Dr Palleti Siva Karthik Reddy, MBBS, MD, consultant physician, general medicine, tells indianexpress.com, “Preventive screening is valuable only when it is targeted, evidence-based, and linked to conditions where early detection clearly improves outcomes. This typically applies to specific age groups, risk profiles, and diseases, such as blood pressure screening, diabetes testing, cervical cancer screening, or mammography in defined populations.” He adds, “It crosses into over-testing when investigations are done without symptoms, risk factors, or proven benefit. In such cases, the likelihood of detecting incidental findings increases, many of which would never cause harm. This leads to unnecessary anxiety, further tests, and sometimes invasive procedures, without improving life expectancy or quality of life.”

Risks of routine, advanced imaging in healthy individuals Advanced imaging in healthy people often reveals incidental abnormalities that are clinically insignificant. Dr Reddy says, “These findings can label a healthy person as

“The CEPA provides for 100 per cent Foreign Direct Investment by Indian companies in major services sectors in Oman. Both sides have agreed to hold future discussions on social security coordination once Oman’s contributory social security system is implemented,” it stated. Oman’s total annual imports are around \$40 billion, but nearly two-thirds of its imports are machinery goods where India could gain market access. Indian exports, largely driven by machinery and parts exports, have doubled in the last five years from \$2 billion to \$6 billion. New Delhi’s top exports include machinery, aircraft, rice, iron and steel articles, beauty and personal care products and ceramic products. The CEPA, according to the government, is expected to have three outcomes: “Strengthen and further develop closer economic and commercial integration, increase trade between the two countries by reducing trade barriers and creating a stable framework, and unlock opportunities in all major sectors of the economy, enhance economic growth, create jobs and boost investment flows between both countries.”

Ajay Srivastava, former trade officer and head of think tank Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI), said while more than 80 per cent of Indian goods already enter Oman at an average tariff of around 5 per cent, duties on some items run as high as 100 per cent. “Their elimination under the CEPA is expected to improve price competitiveness for Indian exporters, though growth prospects are tempered by the size of Oman’s domestic market,” he said. Oman’s gains are concentrated in energy and industrial inputs. India has offered tariff liberalisation on about 78 per cent of its tariff lines, largely through tariff-rate quotas to protect sensitive sectors. India imported roughly \$6.6 billion of goods from Oman in fiscal 2025, dominated by crude oil, liquefied natural gas and fertilisers, alongside chemical inputs such as methanol and ammonia, Srivastava said. S C Ralhan, president of Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO), said Oman’s strategic location makes it a vital gateway to the Gulf and Africa, and the CEPA will enable Indian exporters to integrate more effectively into regional value chains, diversify markets, and expand India’s export footprint. “With bilateral trade already exceeding \$10 billion, the agreement provides a strong platform for accelerated growth in merchandise trade. The CEPA also delivers ambitious and forward-looking commitments in services, covering 127 sub-sectors including IT and computer-related services, business and professional services, R&D, education, health, and audio-visual services, unlocking high-value opportunities for Indian service providers,” he said.

With Oman offering zero-duty access on 98% of its tariff lines, the pact is likely to improve competitiveness for Indian industrial exports. This is India’s second pact with a Gulf Cooperation Council member. It entered into a CEPA with the UAE in 2022. Other members of the GCC are Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and Saudi Arabia. Modi reached Oman Wednesday after visiting Jordan and Ethiopia. Talks for the CEPA formally began in November 2023 and negotiations concluded this year. Over 6,000 India-Oman joint ventures are present in Oman. The Oman-India Joint Investment Fund (OIJIF), a 50-50 JV between the State Bank of India and Oman Investment Authority, was set up as a special purpose vehicle (SPV) to invest in India. It has fully invested \$320 million and currently the third tranche of \$300 million is under implementation.



a patient, triggering a cascade of repeat scans, biopsies, or even surgeries. This process, known as overdiagnosis, causes psychological stress, financial burden, and physical harm from unnecessary procedures. Evidence-based preventive care is guided by established medical guidelines, population-level data, and long-term outcome studies. It is usually conservative, specific, and personalised to risk factors like age, family history, and lifestyle. In contrast, Dr Reddy states, advice driven by commercial or technological enthusiasm often promotes one-size-fits-all testing, promises reassurance through scans, and lacks clear evidence of improved outcomes. “Individuals should ask whether a test is recommended by major medical bodies, whether it changes management, and whether its benefits clearly outweigh its risks. A trusted physician, not a tech personality or marketing narrative, should guide preventive health decisions.”

Flipkart buys majority stake in Minivet AI to drive GenAI-led ecomm innovation

New Delhi: Ecommerce company Flipkart on Friday said it has acquired a majority stake in Minivet AI, an Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning solutions provider.

The acquisition is a strategic move to build and invest in core Generative AI (GenAI) capabilities, at a time when e-commerce is rapidly shifting towards visual, conversational, and AI-led discovery, the Walmart-backed ecommerce firm said in a statement. It, however, did not disclose the financial details of the acquisition, including the quantum of stake bought or size of deal. “Flipkart, India’s homegrown e-commerce marketplace, today announced it executed definitive documents to acquire a majority stake in Minivet AI, an innovative AI/ML solutions provider founded in 2024,” it said. The latest move is expected to accelerate the transition to a more intuitive, interactive, and immersive shopping experience for e-commerce platforms, including Flipkart, it said. Minivet AI focuses on generative video for e-commerce, transforming static product catalogs into rich, engaging video content at scale.

Aakash Chopra lauds Jharkhand captain after he guides team to maiden SMAT title



GNS News Agency, Dec 19

Former India batter Aakash Chopra lavished praise on Ishan Kishan who scored a blistering 101 runs against Haryana in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy, guiding Jharkhand to their maiden Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy. Chopra lauded Chopra for having a good domestic season, adding that he will be in pole position for a comeback to the Indian team if he has a good Indian Premier League (IPL) season.

“Ishan Kishan has turned into I-shaandar Kishan. Ev-

everyone used to say he did not play domestic cricket and wasn't serious about his game so we will not select him for the Indian team. Now, he has made his team Jharkhand the champions of the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy. He has played as captain and led them to 11 wins out of 12 and he has also scored 517 runs including a century in the final. He has led from the front and he has led by example,” Chopra said in a video posted on X. “He has also performed in the Ranji Trophy where he has nearly 250 runs and a century. Now, let's remind ourselves that in ODIs, he scored a double century.

There are a very few cricketers who have achieved that feat. He was, is and will be a great player and now he has made a comeback. Ishan Kishan's time has almost come. Not this World Cup but after it provided he has a good IPL, he will either be in the conversation for an Indian team spot or will be in the team proper,” he added. The century against Haryana was a show of intent from the wicket-keeper batter Kishan who has been out of the Indian set up since 2023 having played his last T20I match against Australia in November 2023. He played his last Test against West Indies in September 2023 while his last ODI was against Sri Lanka in October 2023.

‘Important to keep putting pressure on yourself to get ready for World Cup’: Varun Chakaravarth

GNS News Agency, Dec 19

With the T20 World Cup squad set to be announced on Saturday, spinner Varun Chakaravarth is almost shoo-in to be a part of that team with the Kolkata Knight Riders tweeker in top form, most recently taking 6 wickets in the first three matches against South Africa. “It is very important to keep putting pressure on yourself to get ready for the World Cup. You have to challenge yourself even when there is no challenge. If a match feels easy, you have to create that pressure mentally and start challenging yourself. Confidence, bowling the right lengths, and understanding the opposition are key. That is one major factor I want to take into the World Cup. With a better understanding of the opposition, I think I can do well,” the Karnataka-born spinner said on ‘Follow The Blues’ on JioHotstar.

“My plan is simple, stick to the basics and bowl my length. Sometimes it works, and thankfully in the last three matches, it has worked well. I will try the same in the next match. When you are not confident, your mindset affects your skill. The key is to stay confident and back your skills. That is when you execute well, without much change. That is the secret to being consistent. At this level, you must be consistent, playing at the highest level is important to know



where you stand. In my first match at the international level, I struggled a bit initially and that's when I understood a few things. I went back to practice and made corrections. So, it is very important to keep playing at the highest level,” he added. The 34-year-old who is expected to be a vital cog in India's T20 World Cup defence, starting from February 7, has taken 51 wickets from 32 T20Is thus far. He will next be in action on Friday when he features for India against South Africa in the 5th and final T20 match at Ahmedabad.

India T20 World Cup squad: Can Ishan Kishan pip Shubman Gill to the spot

GNS News Agency, Dec 19

The Ajit Agarkar-led senior selection committee will meet in Mumbai on Saturday afternoon to pick India's squad for the upcoming bilateral series against New Zealand and more importantly for the T20 World Cup scheduled to begin on February 7. The selection is expected to be largely on the expected lines with no major changes from the squad that was named to play the T20Is against South Africa. Having largely played with a similar group since the last T20 World Cup, India, under Suryakumar Yadav as captain and Gautam Gambhir as head coach, have preferred to have a settled squad. In the recent times, the only major decision that the selectors took in terms of the T20 side was to bring Shubman Gill into the fold and make him vice-captain. However, with Gill struggling since his return to the team at the Asia Cup, Ishan Kishan stuck a timely century in the Syed Mushtaq Ali T20 final.

Gill vs Ishan?

This definitely doesn't look like a question at this stage with the T20 World Cup less than two months away. While Gill's form has definitely been concerning, should India decide to ring changes at the top, they would look inside and go for Sanju Samson who has done exceptionally well at the top. Sending Samson up the order would also free-up another slot for India to accommodate either an all-round option or a specialist batsman in the XI. So the chances of Gill not ending up in the squad for a second successive T20 World Cup looks unlikely at this stage. However, with Yashasvi Jaiswal struggling with fitness issue, should the selectors prefer another back-up option then Ishan could come into the picture. But that would mean India have three wicketkeepers in the squad. With Samson ahead of the pecking order even if India want to look beyond Gill, the chances are slim for Ishan to make the cut. He may have an outside chance when it comes to making the reserves list.



What about Rinku?

The middle-order batsman has been part of the T20 squad in recent months, but with India preferring multi-dimensional players he missed out to Washington Sundar. Going by the recent trends, all things point out to Washington taking the spot, although it was Rinku who got the nod for Asia Cup. With Hardik Pandya around to play the finisher's role and Jitesh Sharma also in the mix, the selectors could see Rinku as a surplus to their requirements now. Washington, on the other hand, provides all-round option. With the World Cup being played in India and Sri Lanka, if the pitches slow down, Washington will provide much-needed balance to the squad and against teams loaded with left-handed batsmen, will offer favourable match-ups. Moreover, he can also be banked to bowl in the powerplay, which India prefer from their spinners. For the rest of the spots in the squad there are no real debates with Jasprit Bumrah, Arshdeep Singh and Harshit Rana being the designated frontline pacers. In the spin department, there is Varun Chakaravarth and Kuldeep Yadav to go with Axar Patel and Washington. The batting line-up will comprise of Gill, Abhishek Sharma, Suryakumar, Tilak Varma, Shivam Dube alongside Pandya and the two wicketkeepers.

‘I didn’t really expect to go’: Josh Inglis opens up about playing IPL 2026 for LSG after getting Rs 8.6 crore deal at auction

GNS News Agency, Dec 19

Inglis said that he was getting married in early April, which would not allow him to feature for the entirety of the league, which is reportedly set to start on March 26.

“Well, I sort of watched a lot of it [IPL auction] and I was pushed back in the pecking order. I don't have full availability this year. I'm getting married in early April. So, I didn't really expect to go, to be honest. So I sort of saw my name go by unsold... the first one I was like, ‘alright stuff this, I'm going to bed’, and I need to switch on for tomorrow [Ashes] and then woke up to the news. I didn't know until I'd seen a few messages this morning,” he told ABC Sport. Inglis was released by Punjab Kings ahead of the auction, but when his name was called out on Tuesday, it sparked a bidding war between the 2025 finalists and LSG, with the latter eventually outbidding the former to secure the player.

South African legend AB de Villiers had referred to the Inglis deal as the ‘craziest signing’ he had ever seen, especially for a player who was available only for a limited number of matches. “Josh Inglis, this is the craziest signing I have ever seen in my life. He is only going to be available



for four matches. LSG sign him for 8.6 crores. I don't know, is he really worth that much? Then you look at guys who were unsold like Jonny Bairstow, Devon Conway, all of them would be available for the entire season and possibly a better signing for LSG,” he said on his YouTube channel. Reports had emerged before the auction that Inglis had informed the BCCI, before that auction, that he could play only four matches of the upcoming season and had given himself a base price of Rs 2 crore ahead of the auction.

Gurpreet Singh Sandhu on Indian football crisis: The thought of having no football, no games scares me... I don’t have an MBA



GNS News Agency, Dec 19

It's a Thursday afternoon and I'm at my home in Bengaluru, getting a deep clean done and tending to my two cats, Flower and Chubby. It's nice to have this time, but also strange. In normal circumstances, this would have been a period when things would be heating up in the Indian Super League; we would have been 10 games or so in and so many narratives, talking points would have emerged. Instead, we are just training, checking social media for updates and waiting for the Indian Super League (ISL) — rather, Indian domestic football — to restart again. I don't think something like this has ever happened in Indian football before. Even during Covid, when the world had shut down and fear was everywhere, we still managed to make the league happen. In many ways, that time was tougher than now. There were bubbles, uncertainty, anxiety about health — but there was still football.

Gurpreet Gurpreet Singh Sandhu in action. (FILE photo) When the ISL finished in April, my mind immediately shifted to the pre-season. After the Super Cup ended, the thoughts turned to the league, which seemed like just around the corner. You prepare your body, your mind. For me, that meant going to Norway for two or three months, training there, coming back sharper, joining the national team. That structure gave meaning to everything. I liked that life. There's no sense of excitement, no countdown. We're just... sitting. Waiting. I honestly feel like a sitting duck. I'm not living with any long-term vision right now. It's one week at a time. One day at a time.

I'm fortunate to be at a club like Bengaluru FC where most of our concerns are taken care of. But at this point, I don't even think of myself as “an ISL player.” I think of myself simply as a professional footballer with a contract. Whatever the club asks, we do. Right now, that means train-

If they are coached and managed correctly, they are going to be fine, says Michael Vaughan on England

GNS News Agency, Dec 19

Despite England staring at another Ashes series loss Down Under which will mean they won't be able to get hold of the Urn which they let go off in 2021, former captain Michael Vaughan has warned against wholesale changes to the team. Australia, thanks to a fine unbeaten century from Travis Head on Day 3 of the third Test at Adelaide Oval, have a firm grip on the match with their lead currently standing at 356 runs and six wickets in hand.

The Bazball approach which England embraced with an eye on the ongoing series has failed to deliver with their batting approach coming under intense scrutiny right through the series. A defeat in Adelaide would mean fourth successive Test series loss in Australia, where England are without a win in 17 straight Tests. Each of England's previous Ashes defeats on Australian soil has brought out plenty of changes.

However, Vaughan said the England and Wales Cricket Board shouldn't take a similar route this time despite the series loss. “English cricket often works in four-year cycles, home and away Ashes series,” Vaughan told the Ashes Briefing on BBC iPlayer. “One or two players need to go because they aren't good enough at this level, but a number of them have enough talent. If they are coached and managed correctly, and given the right kind of preparation, they are going to be fine in four years. It's the only way I can see that English cricket can possibly be competitive in Australia, if they stick with some of the players that have the

ing. Making sure operations don't collapse. That the kitman is there. The physio is there. The ball boys are there. The whole ecosystem keeps breathing. Because once that stops, everything dies. The thought of having no football, no games scares me. Truly. I don't have an MBA on the side. I don't have a doctorate to fall back on. Football is what I chose when I was young. I grew up with dreams like: I want to play professionally, I want to play 200 games. I've done that. Over 200 games for BFC in eight years. Abroad, if you tell someone a player has been professional for nine years but one full year of his career had no league, no matches, they'd be shocked. That's not normal. That's not how a footballer's life is supposed to work.

And so, we wait. Whenever I speak to Sandesh (Jhingan), Amrinder (Singh) or Sunil (Chhetri) bhai, it's the same conversation every time. “Any update?” “Anything new?” Someone saw something on social media, someone heard about a meeting. We get hopeful for a moment. Then the news comes — no resolution yet. And then you shut it out and go back to what feels safe. The pitch. I'm grateful, honestly, that at least we can train. Because I don't even want to imagine what happens if that stops. This is an extremely fragile time for footballers. So many players aren't training at all. So many are out of contract. Some were injured and thought pre-season would be time for rehab, some thought they'd join a club, use it as a stepping stone — and suddenly everything disappears. It's brutal.

I saw Messi come to India and of course, it's great. Great for the sport, great for the hype, great for his bank account too. But somewhere, I felt it could have been more meaningful. Imagine Messi, Suárez, De Paul watching an ISL game. Bengaluru FC vs Mumbai City at the Kantereava Stadium. East Bengal vs Mohun Bagan in Kolkata. Imagine him interacting with Indian players, sharing feedback, talking about what he went through, what we need to do as a footballing country. But these events are planned months in advance. I get that, and when the organisers planned this tour, no one would have predicted this level of crisis in Indian football. I understand that some of the best minds in Indian football are trying to work out a solution. What I feel, though, is that all the other issues related to administration can be done on the side. The league should not be a collateral damage. The ISL, the Indian Women's League, the I-League all matter. Development matters. But so do the players who show up every day to train despite the uncertainty. For players like us, who gave everything to this game, the scariest thing isn't losing form. It's losing football itself.



experience. Bad experience is better than no experience,” Vaughan added. While the likes of captain Ben Stokes, batsman Joe Root touring Australia for another Ashes looks far-fetched at the moment, Vaughan believed many in England's set-up have it in them to have another shot Down Under. And Vaughan said the next two Tests at Melbourne and Sydney will provide England plenty of opportunities to learn. “I look back to 2002-03, we were 4-0 down and won in Sydney. I learnt a lot about the next few years from winning that one game,” said Vaughan. “England can't think there is nothing to gain from the next two games. If this goes wrong, and it looks like it may do, Melbourne and Sydney are still opportunities to learn for the next time they come or the next time they play Australia.”

Harmanpreet Kaur still the best person to lead India, says Anjum Chopra

GNS News Agency, Dec 19

Former India player Anjum Chopra believes Harmanpreet Kaur remains the “best person” to lead the women's national team even as debates around captaincy resurface ahead of a busy international season and the upcoming Women's Premier League (WPL). With the Indian women's team returning to action in a T20 series against Sri Lanka after their World Cup triumph, Chopra feels the focus should be firmly on sustaining momentum rather than speculating about leadership changes. “My personal view over the past so many years has been that Harmanpreet Kaur is a match winner. I don't think I need to say anything further,” Chopra told PTI Videos. “She's the best person to lead this Indian team.” Chopra dismissed recent suggestion from former India captain Shantha Rangaswamy to change the captain, stressing that such views are personal.

“Everybody has their right to share what they feel... There's nothing right or wrong. It's just the timing of it,” she said. “I still feel that she's the correct person and the apt person to lead India.” Looking ahead to the Sri Lanka series, Chopra underlined the importance of quickly shifting focus back to cricket after weeks of celebrations. “The quicker they get back into playing... everybody wants to continue that winning momentum,” she said.

“The moment you step back onto the park, you want to start exactly from where you left.” She added that the five-match T20 series is crucial preparation with another T20 World Cup on the horizon. The former opener also spoke at length about the evolving power game in women's cricket, acknowledging comparisons with teams like Australia and New Zealand. “Power is not something that everybody is born with,” Chopra said. “There are certain players... like Harman (Harmanpreet Kaur) and Richa (Ghosh)... the power they possess is possibly natural power.” However, she stressed that power can be developed. “Power is something that you can always gain. And there are techniques, there is a proper training to it,” she said, adding that Indian players have made significant progress. “You can't be chas-



ing down 340 runs without having those big hits... they are improving on that.” Chopra credited leagues like the WPL for accelerating that growth. “Tournaments like the WPL, tournaments where the international players rub shoulders with our domestic players... that awareness will keep happening,” she said.

Stick to basics, bowl the right length: Varun Chakaravarth

Hyderabad: India's star spin bowler Varun Chakaravarth says his plan is simple, stick to the basics and bowl his length. In a chat ‘Follow The Blues’ on JioHotstar, Varun says sometimes it works and thankfully in the last three matches. “I will try the same in the next match. It's about mindset and skill. When you are not confident, your mindset affects your skill. The key is to stay confident and back your skills. That is when you execute well, without much change. That is the secret to being consistent,” says Varun. “At this level, you must be consistent, playing at the highest level is important to know where you stand. In my first match at the international level,

Dhurandhar: Real-life Uzair Baloch inherited Rehman Dakait’s gang after his encounter; played football with gangster Arshad Pappu’s severed head



?D?ay 13 Update: Ranveer Singh film earns Rs 454 cr; Amitabh Bachchan says Ikkis postponed for astrological reasonsUzair Baloch’s dominance after Rehman Dakait’s encounter

Rehman Dakait was killed in an encounter in 2009 and while many eyebrows were raised about who was behind the murder, Uzair Baloch decided to take charge of the gang since he was the de facto leader at this point. He also took over Rehman’s political party, People’s Aman Committee (PAC), which had a strong hold on Lyari elections. Much like the film, Uzair and Rehman had a connection with the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) leaders and after Rehman’s death, PPP continued to protect Uzair till 2012.In 2011, PAC was dissolved under the Anti-terrorism Act in Pakistan. Uzair could not contest elections under his party now, but posters of his face, and his dominance in Lyari continued.Rakesh Bedi’s character Jameel Jamali is loosely based on the Pakistani politician Nabil Gabol and as per Vice News’ 2012 documentary on Lyari, ‘Guide to Karachi’, it is obvious that Nabil and Aslam had joined hands, and their main mission was to get rid of Uzair. It was in 2012 that PPP and PAC were completely at war with each other, and this reportedly started the ‘Lyari grand operation’ in 2012, led by Chaudhary Aslam.The Vice documentary shows that Nabil, who was the local elected representative of the are, had not visited Lyari in 4 years. Nabil and Uzair are completely at odds with each other at this point. The locals described Uzair as “Robin Hood” and questioned Nabil’s absence. Nabil’s first visit in Lyari had him carrying a gun as he said that Lyari had a “Chicago-like mafia.” Uzair, who was being targeted at this point, said that this was happening because of the local good that he had done in the area.The Ranveer Singh starrer is set in Lyari which is the ground zero for gang activity in Pakistan Ranveer Singh’s Dhurandhar is set in Pakistan’s Lyari.Uzair Baloch’s multi-storey house with swimming pool in LyariThe area of Lyari in Karachi is known for the local gang wars but it is often stated that the locals here struggled for clean water, and wages. In such a place, Uzair, who was known for his extortion rackets and drug dealings, built himself a 4-floor mansion with a swimming pool.

Arshad Pappu’s killing on the streetsIn 2013, years after the death of Rehman Dakait, Uzair Baloch got hold of Arshad Pappu and killed him. It is said that parts of his body were mutilated and burnt on the streets of Lyari. Some eye-witnesses claim that Arshad’s head was used as a football by Uzair and his men after they killed him on the streets of Lyari. In the film, Arshad Pappu makes a small appearance when Rakesh Bedi’s Jameel plans to get Rehman Dakait killed via Chaudhry Aslam. Here, Arshad is shown as a co-conspirator. It appears that his character will significance in the sequel.By 2014, there were over 50 cases of extortion against Uzair and he was also involved in killings of many gangsters and police officers. The government issued a warrant against him but before his arrest, he managed to leave the country. In 2015, he was arrested by Interpol at Dubai International Airport and brought back to Pakistan.In 2020, Uzair was sentenced to 12 years imprisonment and sent to Karachi Central Jail. Just a few days ago, Uzair was acquitted in a 2012 arms case due to lack of evidence. He continues to be in prison.

Ranveer Singh-starrer Dhurandhar ended on a significant note as Akshaye Khanna’s Rehman Dakait was killed by Ranveer’s Hamza in collusion with Sanjay Dutt’s Chaudhry Aslam Khan. Towards the end of the film, we see Rehman’s brother Uzair, played by Danish Pandor, reaching the hospital as he breaks down in Hamza’s arms, since he is completely unaware that he has killed his older brother. But, Uzair’s story is not over yet as he will come back in Dhurandhar 2, which releases in March.In real life, Uzair Baloch was a dreaded gangster who took over Rehman’s gang after his death, and was responsible for the brutal killing of gangster Arshad Pappu, whose mutilated body was found in Lyari. It is also said that locals saw Uzair and his colleagues toss around Arshad’s body after killing him, and even spotted them playing football with his severed head.Uzair Baloch’s entry in the world of crime

Uzair was the cousin of Rehman Dakait. In 2003, Uzair’s father, Faiz Muhammad, was kidnapped for ransom by Arshad Pappu, and was later brutally killed. Arshad entered the world of crime after this incident as his cousin Rehman Dakait invited him to join his gang. Rehman had a hold over the Lyari gangs in those days, and he too, had a beef with Arshad Pappu as he was trying to assert his dominance on Lyari.Dhurandhar Part 2 is slated for an Eid 2026 release. Akshaye Khanna plays the crime kingpin Rehman Dakait in Dhurandhar who is killed in a staged encounter.

It was around the same time that Uzair was also arrested by Chaudhry Aslam Khan, played by Sanjay Dutt, in Dhurandhar, but was later released, thanks to Rehman’s connections with politicians. But, even this took two years as Uzair was imprisoned in the Karachi central prison.. As per a report by Dawn, Uzair was not interested in joining Rehman’s gang at first, but he was persuaded since they had a common enemy.Dhurandhar Box Office Collection

Mrs Deshpande review: Madhuri Dixit show is disappointingly more off than on



Mrs Deshpande review: A serial killer is on the loose in Mumbai, targeting his victims with a coil of lurid green rope, arranging them in different poses in different locations. A grizzled cop (Priyanshu Chatterjee) with a long memory remembers a much older series of killings 25 years back in Pune, whose perpetrator has been in prison for that long. Are these copycat killings? But who would know about those murders, carefully buried in dusty case files?

Cue Mrs Deshpande (Madhuri Dixit) who is whistled up by the senior policeman to help them crack this case, whose victims seem to have no connection to each other other than a striking similarity in the modus operandi of their murders. She’s been far away from Mumbai, in Hyderabad central jail, being a model prisoner, suspiciously good, in fact.A younger cop (Siddharth Chandekar) assigned on the case is against the decision. He believes that a smart killer like Mrs Deshpande will find a chink in their armour, and instead of helping them will make sure that she finds loopholes in the security cordon.

The six-part series, based on French thriller La Mante,

is directed by Nagesh Kukunoor, who’s been having quite a busy year, with his show on the Rajiv Gandhi assassination being out earlier this year. And Madhuri Dixit seems right for the job at hand, with her character’s plain demeanour hiding a steely glint: it’s clear that Mrs Deshpande’s task is still not complete, and you know that she will leave no stone unturned to get it done.We get a bunch of ancillary characters revolving around Mrs D. A curly-haired fellow (Kavin Dave) is roaming around, threatening people. A young man, heavily tattooed, shows up at the cop’s wife’s door, and you wonder what’s going to happen next. But the crucial character who’s supposed to keep us mesmerised, Mrs Deshpande, manages to dredge up menace only sporadically. Dixit’s mobile face has always been her most potent ally, and here it stays mostly static: it could have been a deliberate choice by the director, which the actor follows through with, but leaves you unmoved.

It’s strange because Kukunoor managed to pull off a terrific on-the-edge series in The Hunt. Here, the tension keeps leaching. It’s doubly strange because series driver Madhuri Dixit is right for roles which are out of her comfort zone: she no longer has to appear glamorous to catch our attention. But she’s written flatly, like many other stretchers in the show: the flashbacks of her childhood which gives us hints as to how an innocent young girl turned into a killer are much more impactful.Also Read – The Great Shamsuddin Family movie review: A family we will never see in mainstream Hindi cinemaResult: Mrs Deshpande is disappointingly off and on, more off than on.Mrs Deshpande cast: Madhuri Dixit, Siddharth Chandekar, Priyanshu Chatterjee, Kavin DaveMrs Deshpande director: Nagesh KukunoorMrs Deshpande rating: Two and a half stars

Radhika Apte says early days on a South Indian film set were ‘traumatic’: ‘I wouldn’t want any woman in that position’

Radhika Apte talks about her early days in the film industry.Radhika Apte talks about her early days in the film industry.Radhika Apte has completed two decades in the film industry. While she now gains enough say in what she wants to do and doesn’t, she still shudders at the thought of what she was made to go through in her early days. While she distanced herself from Hindi films made by some “big people,” she was subjected to sexism even in the South Indian films she did back in the late 2000s.“I didn’t too many big Hindi films where this happened. There were some offers that came to me, and I went to meet them. When I realized, I said I’m never going to work with them. They’re awful people. Very big people. If I start putting names, you’ll be like, ‘Whaaat?’ But yeah, not working with you guys,” Radhika recalled in an edition of Creator X Creator on

SCREEN.“Then I did some South films because I really needed money,” said Radhika, adding, “Some of the films that I did, I had a really difficult time on those sets. I remember there was this one time, where I was the only woman on set. We were shooting in this small town. They wanted to add more padding on my bums and breasts. They were like, ‘Amma, more padding!’ I said, ‘How much more padding?’ (laughs). How much rounder would you make somebody?”“I was the only woman! I had no manager. I had no agent. My team was all men because they’d given me the role. They said, ‘No, you’re not allowed to get your own team,’” recalled Radhika. She added that the sexism started from cracking lewd jokes about women on set to adding more padding on her body. “I’m giving you the extreme example of literally telling you what your physicality needs to be, with no women around you,” said the

Amid Dhurandhar success, Alia Bhatt praises ‘outstanding’ Ranveer Singh for a 6-year-old film; maintains silence on Aditya Dhar’s film



The Hindi film industry has been going gaga over Dhurandhar and many actors, directors and other technicians have been showering praise on the Ranveer Singh-starrer. But, amid all this, actor Alia Bhatt has maintained her silence. The actor is yet to post about the film. Alia’s silence was noted by the fans, considering she and Ranveer have previously collaborated on Zoya Akhtar’s Gully Boy and Karan Johar’s Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani. The two have previously appeared together on Koffee with Karan as well, where they were quite vocal about their friendship.While Alia is yet to say something about Dhurandhar, she recently spoke about Ranveer in a chat

with Vogue. Alia was discussing the different looks from the different phases of her life when she saw the picture from Gully Boy’s premiere at the Berlin International Film Festival. Alia spoke about Ranveer’s work in the film and said, “That evening was the premiere and Gully Boy got a lot of love.” She then added, “Ranveer headlined the movie, he was the Gully Boy. He was just outstanding, like even the music and the rap, till today, I think has a solid vibe.”

Alia Bhatt and Ranveer Singh have shared a strong bond in the past as director Karan Johar pointed out during their appearance on Koffee with Karan. On that episode, Alia also shared that she shared the news of her engagement with Ranbir with Ranveer, even though she was yet to announce it to the rest of the world.They also share some history, as Ranveer’s wife, Deepika Padukone, and Alia’s husband, Ranbir Kapoor, used to date each other back when they made their film debuts. Ranbir and Deepika dated each other for a few years but then broke up in a public fashion, as Deepika, in an earlier appearance on Koffee with Karan, implied that Ranbir cheated on her during the course of their relationship. Since then, the two seemed to have made up, as they have also worked in a few films together, like Tamasha and Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani.Ranveer is currently looking forward to the release of the sequel of Dhurandhar, which releases in March. He is announced to be the star of Farhan Akhtar’s Don 3, which is expected to start shooting next year. Alia is currently looking forward to Sanjay Leela Bhansali’s Love and War, which also stars Ranbir Kapoor and Vicky Kaushal.

Forced to live on the street, with no clothes to wear, almost died of starvation, he became Bollywood’s most famous writer

Filmmaking in India has existed for over a 100 years now. Over these decades, the industry has introduced us to countless iconic names—from the Kapoor family to legends like Madhubala and Meena Kumari, superstars such as Ashok Kumar and Rajesh Khanna, and towering figures like Dilip Kumar and Amitabh Bachchan. Yet, if you pause to notice, they are all actors. Hardly anyone beyond a niche of film enthusiasts remembers who wrote the very first Indian film—or even the writer behind a recent blockbuster, be it this year’s Saiyaara or Dhurandhar.But there was one man who, along with his partner, ensured that audiences knew a film not just by its stars, but by its writers. That man was Javed Akhtar.

Dream to work with Guru DuttBorn in 1945, Javed Akhtar arrived in Mumbai at the age of 19 with a singular dream—to become an assistant to legendary filmmaker Guru Dutt. Fate, however, had other plans. Guru Dutt passed away within a week of Javed’s arrival, abruptly ending his dream.Born to renowned poet Jan Nisar Akhtar and hailing from a family steeped in poetry and literature, writing came naturally to him. To survive in a city as unforgiving as Mumbai, Javed began job hunting and soon found work with filmmaker Kamal Amrohi—the husband of Meena Kumari and the director of Mahal and Pakeezah.He worked there for a year, earning just Rs 50 a month. During this period, he received an offer to work as a ghostwriter for a well-known writer. Although the salary was generous, after three days of contemplation, Javed realised that a name mattered more than money. He turned down the offer—a decision that would define his life.Javed also saw immense hardships during the struggle period but it didn’t dent his determination. Talking about his early days in Mumbai where he arrived in a third-class railway compartment, he said in the documentary Angry Young Men, “I lived with some friends, slept on railways stations, parks, studio compounds, in corridors, on benches, and so on. Some days, I’d walk all the way from Dadar to Bandra, because I didn’t have money for bus fare. Some days, it would strike me that I hadn’t eaten for two days. I would always think to myself that if one day a biography were to be written about me, this would make for an incredible moment.”

He also spoke about facing indignities. “One day, I realised I have nothing to wear. Now, you’ll wonder how that’s possible. But that’s how it was. I had worn out my last pair of trousers, my only pair of trousers...”He recalled moments that shaped his life. “There are two-three moments which have traumatised me very badly; that trauma has remained with me. To be hungry for two days, three days, it’s traumatic. On the third day, there is no difference between a human being and a dog. All your sense of dignity, your self respect, it becomes so vague. The only thing that you know is that you’re hungry.”Soon after, he met S.M. Sagar, who was directing an action film titled Sarhadi Lootera. Sagar hired him as an assistant for Rs 100 a month. Javed’s job was to help actors rehearse their lines. Midway through the shoot, the film’s dialogue writer quit. When Sagar asked Javed if he could take over, he replied simply, “Will try!”That attempt changed everything. Javed became the film’s dialogue writer—and it was on this very film that he met his future partner of nearly two decades, Salim Khan, who was acting in the movie. Though Sarhadi Lootera failed at the box office, it marked the birth of what would become the most historic writer duo in Indian cinema. Success,



however, was still a distant dream.After writing a script for S.M. Sagar for an Ashok Kumar film, Salim-Javed earned a respectable Rs 5,000. What they didn’t receive was credit. Disillusioned, they turned to G.P. Sippy.Around the same time, a young Ramesh Sippy was keen on setting up a writing department in his father’s production house. Salim-Javed approached him with a story. Initially reluctant, Ramesh Sippy soon found himself completely drawn in—and by the end of the narration, he hired them both for Rs 750 a month.Their first film with Sippy Films was Andaz. Even before its release, many in the industry had written it off as a failure, largely because its hero, Rajesh Khanna, dies at the very beginning. Defying all predictions, Andaz went on to become a blockbuster.Yet again, despite the story being a Salim-Javed original, they were denied proper credit and were listed merely under the Sippy Films Story Department.Collaboration with Rajesh KhannaUnwilling to accept this, the duo aligned with Rajesh Khanna. At the time, the superstar had signed a Hindi remake of the Tamil film Deiva Cheyal. Unhappy with the original script, Rajesh Khanna asked Salim-Javed to rewrite it, promising them full credit. The result was the 1971 hit Haathi Mere Saathi.The film succeeded, but the promise wasn’t kept. Salim-Javed were paid only Rs 10,000, and the experience strained their relationship with Khanna. Around the same period, they also wrote Seeta Aur Geeta, another massive hit. Yet again, the screenplay credit went to Sippy Films.Disheartened but determined, Salim-Javed wrote Zanjeer. Director Prakash Mehra took the script to several established stars, including Dilip Kumar and Raj Kumar. It was Salim-Javed who insisted that the film be made with a then-rising Amitabh Bachchan.Zanjeer released and changed the course of Hindi cinema. The duo earned Rs 55,000 for the story—but their names were still missing from the posters.This time, they took matters into their own hands. They hired a painter and had their names written boldly across the posters, shocking the industry and re-writing the rules of recognition.What followed was history. Films like Deewar, Trishul, and Sholay didn’t just succeed—they redefined Indian cinema. To this day, their dialogues echo across generations.The partnership ended in 1982, but the legacy never faded. As Sholay completes a grand 50 years, Salim-Javed’s contribution continues to remind us that stars may shine on screen, but it is writers who build worlds that last forever.

