

INDIAN CHRONICLE

25 December, 2022 | Thursday | Volume No:10 | Issue No: 270 | Pages: 8+8

www.indianchronicle.com

Published from : Ranga Reddy (Telangana State) ₹ 3

Seven passengers injured in RTC bus-lorry collision near Siddipet

Siddipet: Seven passengers sustained injuries when an RTC bus heading to Hyderabad from Godavarkhani rammed into a stationary lorry on Rajiv Rahadari at Nagulabanda under Kukunoorpally police station limits on Wednesday morning. The injured were Sushmitha, Bhulakshmi, Ayansh, Priyanka, Chandu, Pavan and Ammayya. They were rushed to the government hospital in Siddipet. Bhatti Vikramarka warns officials against negligence, stresses accountability in Khammam. Later, three of them were shifted to a corporate hospital in Hyderabad for better treatment. A case has been registered.

CM Revanth Reddy assures of funding for villages development

Hyderabad, Dec 24: In a recent event held in the Kodangal constituency, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy announced a significant initiative aimed at empowering local governance. A felicitation ceremony for newly elected Sarpanches saw Reddy reveal that funds will be provided directly to Sarpanches for the development of villages, marking a shift towards decentralised financial support.

The Chief Minister declared that large villages would receive ₹10 lakhs and smaller villages ₹5 lakhs under the newly introduced Special Development Fund for Sarpanches. Importantly, Reddy emphasised that these funds would be disbursed without the involvement of ministers, MLAs, or MPs, ensuring a more straightforward approach to village development.

"Your support has brought me to this position. Since

2009, you have carried me on your shoulders. I will transform Kodangal into a model for the entire country," Reddy stated. He also highlighted the importance of village prosperity for national growth, asserting, "The country will prosper only if the villages prosper."

During his address, the Chief Minister called for a united effort among Sarpanches, urging them to work collaboratively for the development of their communities, free from party politics and rivalries. He encouraged Sarpanches to strive for the highest quality of services for their constituents, reinforcing that village development should transcend political affiliations.

In addition to the funding initiative, Reddy announced that all eligible residents in the villages would also receive ration cards, further underscoring the government's commitment to the welfare of rural communities.

Haryana writing farmers' prosperity through collaboration, says Amit Shah

New Delhi, Dec 24

Union Home and Cooperation Minister Amit Shah, on Wednesday, addressed a Cooperative Conference organised by Krishak Bharati Cooperative Limited (KRIBHCO) on the theme 'Role of Cooperation in Sustainable Agriculture' here, with the Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini and several other dignitaries were also present.

Home Minister Shah said, "Haryana, connected with history, religion, spirituality, and traditions, is today gradually writing new dimensions of farmers' prosperity through the collaboration between agriculture and cooperatives."

He noted that on the occasion of the International Year of Cooperatives, Milk chilling centre, Haryana State Cooperative Supply and Marketing Federation Limited (HAFED) flour mill, distribution of RuPay Platinum Card and registration certificates of model Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS), and the portal on the International Year of Cooperatives were also inaugurated at this conference organised by KRIBHCO.

Home Minister Shah said that nearly 70 per cent of the country's population resides in rural areas, and a large section of "our population is directly or indirectly dependent on agriculture, farming, and animal husbandry for livelihood".

He added that "difference between Rs 12,000 crore and Rs 90,000 crore reflects the strength of cooperation. That is why it is said that by



bandy are viewed as independent businesses, these sectors provide employment to a large number of people".

He said the two sectors generating the maximum employment in the country are agriculture and animal husbandry.

"However, when agriculture and animal husbandry are linked with cooperation, it not only provides employment to 125 crore people but also plays an important role in making them prosperous."

The Union Minister said that in Gujarat "Amit at present distributes nearly

Rs 90,000 crore every year to 36 lakh women milk producers. If the same quantity of milk were sold at market prices, it would fetch only Rs 12,000 crore".

He added that the "difference between Rs 12,000 crore and Rs 90,000 crore reflects the strength of cooperation".

He added that "low water usage, fewer chemicals, and lower risk form

linking animal husbandry, agriculture, and cooperation, prosperity through cooperation can be achieved".

Home Minister Shah said that "agriculture and animal husbandry were always viewed only from the employment perspective, but Prime Minister Narendra Modi by establishing the Ministry of Cooperation at the Centre gave a new mantra of prosperity through Cooperation". He added that "now cooperation is being linked not only with employment but also with prosperity".

Home Minister Shah said after becoming the country's Prime Minister, Narendra Modi strengthened the foundation of agriculture and utilised agriculture strengthened through cooperation to make farmers prosperous.

He added that "Along with this, agriculture dependent on subsidies must gradually move towards sustainable farming, which ensures sustainable profits." He added that for this purpose, the state government has worked to promote different verticals like water and soil conservation, their testing, organic farming, climate-resilient agriculture, the Digital Agriculture Mission and cooperation.

the foundation of the new agriculture policy. This includes achieving higher yields with less water through scientific irrigation methods, reducing fertiliser use through natural farming, and selecting crops with minimal risk through soil testing".

He said that steps must be taken to increase farmers' income through soil health, water security, institutional credit, market access, and processing, packaging, and marketing of produce.

Home Minister Shah said that in Gujarat "Amit at present distributes nearly

Rs 90,000 crore every year to 36 lakh women milk producers. If the same quantity of milk were sold at market prices, it would fetch only Rs 12,000 crore".

He added that the "difference between Rs 12,000 crore and Rs 90,000 crore reflects the strength of cooperation".

He added that "low water usage, fewer chemicals, and lower risk form

linking animal husbandry, agriculture, and cooperation, prosperity through cooperation can be achieved".

Home Minister Shah said after becoming the country's Prime Minister, Narendra Modi strengthened the foundation of agriculture and utilised agriculture strengthened through cooperation to make farmers prosperous.

He added that "Along with this, agriculture dependent on subsidies must gradually move towards sustainable farming, which ensures sustainable profits." He added that for this purpose, the state government has worked to promote different verticals like water and soil conservation, their testing, organic farming, climate-resilient agriculture, the Digital Agriculture Mission and cooperation.

Cyberabad police arrest 11 in child trafficking racket, rescue two infants

Hyderabad, Dec 24:

The Cyberabad police on Wednesday arrested an 11-member gang involved in child trafficking in the State and rescued two infants from them.

The arrested are Vemula Babu Reddy, Venkippally Gangadhar Reddy, Daram Laxmi, Ram Hari Roy, Kummarri Harsha Roy, Sangeeta Debi, Gudepu Sujatha, Suraboina Anuradha, Esarapu Jyothi, V Madhavi and Pothula Sobha.

According to the DCP (Madhapur), Rituraj said the prime suspects Babu Reddy and Gangadhar Reddy had maintained two different gangs comprising men and women and took their help to search for poor people who would sell their



infants for a price.

"After identifying the women who were willing to sell the babies, the gang members would pay the parents some amount and take away the babies.

Later, they would sell the babies to childless couples for a price between Rs 6 lakh and Rs 7 lakh," said DCP Rituraj.

Babu Reddy and Harsha Roy were previously arrested by the Gopalapuram police in connection with the IVF centre racket in multiple cases and remanded. However, they managed to obtain bail from the court and resumed their activities.

Chilly weather to persist in Hyderabad on Christmas Eve and the next day

Hyderabad: Hyderabad and districts continue to experience cold wave conditions with minimum temperatures below normal by 3 degree Celsius and 4 degree Celsius at many locations.

While daytime temperatures on Wednesday are expected to climb up to 28 degree Celsius, temperatures during Christmas Eve on Wednesday night and early hours of Christmas on Thursday morning are expected to be chilly.



ISRO's 'Bahubali' rocket places 6,100 kg US satellite into orbit

The Indian Space Research Organisation's (ISRO) 'Bahubali' rocket on Wednesday successfully launched a 6,100-kg US communications satellite, the heaviest payload carried by an Indian launcher, into the desired orbit.

As part of the mission, LVM3-M6, nicknamed 'Bahubali' for its heavy-lift capability, placed the BlueBird Block-2 satellite into low earth orbit (LEO). It is the largest commercial communications satellite to be deployed in LEO. The satellite belongs to a next-generation BlueBird Block-2 constellation designed to provide space-based cellular broadband connectivity directly to standard mobile smartphones.

The BlueBird Block-2 mission is part of a global low earth orbit constellation aimed at enabling 4G and 5G voice and video



calls, text messaging, streaming and data services worldwide, at all times. The mission was a dedicated commercial launch aboard ISRO's LVM3 launch vehicle, which placed the satellite of US-based AST SpaceMobile into orbit. It marked the sixth operational mission of the LVM3.

Developed by ISRO, LVM3 is a three-stage

heavy-lift launch vehicle comprising two solid strap-on motors (S200), a liquid core stage (L110) and a cryogenic upper stage (C25). In earlier missions, the vehicle successfully launched Chandrayaan-2 and Chandrayaan-3. The previous LVM3 mission — LVM3-M5 carrying the CMS-03 satellite — was successfully conducted on November 2. ISRO Chairman V Narayanan said the mission was the first dedicated commercial launch undertaken by India for a US customer. "This is our 104th launch from Sriharikota and the ninth successful mission of the LVM3 launch vehicle, demonstrating its 100 per cent reliability," he said. Prime Minister Narendra Modi described the launch as a significant stride in India's space sector. "The successful LVM3 launch marks a proud milestone in India's space journey. It strengthens India's heavy-lift launch capability and reinforces our growing role in the global commercial launch market. This is also reflective of our efforts towards an 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat'. Congratulations to our hardworking space scientists and engineers. India continues to soar higher in the world of space," he said. The PM added that powered by India's youth, the country's space programme was becoming increasingly advanced and impactful. "With LVM3 demonstrating reliable heavy-lift performance, we are strengthening the foundation for future missions such as Gaganyaan, expanding commercial launch services and deepening global partnerships.

Incident-Free New Year Rachakonda CP Sudheer Babu

Strict Action on Drugs, Liquor Sales to Minors, No DJ Permission for Outdoor Events



...NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, December 24, (INDIAN CHRONICLE): "Rachakonda Police Commissioner Sudheer Babu, IPS, on Tuesday held a coordination meeting with owners and representatives of pubs, bars, restaurants, farmhouses, wine shops, and event organisers within the Rachakonda limits, in connection with New Year celebrations. The meeting focused on security arrangements and preventive measures to ensure that no untoward incidents occur during the festivities. Addressing the gathering, the Commissioner said the objective is to celebrate an Incident-Free New Year. He stressed that there should not be a single accident, no loss of life, and no disturbance to public peace during New Year celebrations. He appealed to the public, youth, and organisers to act responsibly and cooperate with the police. Anticipating large gatherings and heightened enthusiasm among youngsters, the Commissioner stated that comprehensive security measures are being implemented to prevent any law and order issues. Special teams from Traffic Police, SOT, She Teams, and patrol units will be deployed round the clock to prevent crimes and untoward incidents. The Commissioner made it clear that DJ systems will not be permitted at outdoor events, and fireworks are strictly prohibited. Event organisers were instructed not to allow crowds beyond the permitted capacity. To ensure women's safety, She Teams will be actively deployed at celebration venues. To curb drug abuse, special checks and inspections will be carried out during New Year celebrations. The Commissioner warned that strict action will be taken against drug peddlers and organised gangs involved in the supply of prohibited substances. Pubs, bars, and wine shops were directed to close strictly within the prescribed timings. The Commissioner warned of severe action against estab-

lishments selling liquor to minors. Organisers were advised to make proper parking arrangements and ensure the installation of CCTV cameras in and around pubs, bars, restaurants, and commercial establishments. He further stated that New Year events organised at farmhouses located on the city outskirts must strictly adhere to all rules and regulations. Drug consumption, obscene dance programmes, and any indecent activities involving women will not be tolerated under any circumstances. Traffic police were instructed to take necessary measures to avoid congestion on roads. Drunken driving checks will be enforced strictly, and vehicle owners who allow minors to drive will face legal action. To prevent overspeeding, reckless driving, and illegal bike racing during late-night hours, certain flyovers will be temporarily closed for a specified period, he said. The meeting was attended by Maheshwaram DCP Narayana Reddy, IPS, LB Nagar DCP Anuradha, IPS, Malkajgiri DCP C.H. Sridhar, IPS, Yadadri DCP Akanksh Yadav, IPS, SOT DCP Ramana Reddy, DCP Admin Indira, SB DCP G. Narasimha Reddy, Women Safety DCP Usha Rani, Traffic DCP Srinivas, Road Safety DCP Manohar, DCP Headquarters Shyam Sundar, and other senior police officials.

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

Death blow to Aravalli

The environmental degradation of Aravallis, India's oldest mountain range, has been a saga of bureaucratic apathy and human greed coming together to plunder the country's unique treasure. Over the decades, several hillocks of the range have vanished due to illegal mining and deforestation, leading to a loss of an ecosystem that is most crucial for the survival of not just mankind but also for wildlife. Once a thriving ecosystem of hills, forests, fauna, aquifers and natural drainage, the Aravallis, which straddles the States of Rajasthan, Haryana, Delhi and Gujarat, now carries the dubious distinction of being the country's most degraded forest range. Dealing a further blow to the mountain range is the new definition proposed by the Ministry of Environment and Forests for it. As per the new definition, proposed by a committee under the Environment Secretary, any landform that is at an elevation of 100 metres or more above the local profile will be considered as part of the Aravalli Hills, along with its slopes and adjacent land. This elevation-based definition could potentially leave more than 90% of the forest range vulnerable to mining and construction. What is more shocking is the Supreme Court's approval of the proposal. The 100-metre benchmark and the use of local profile — the immediate surroundings of a hill — as the measuring base, rather than a standardised baseline such as the State's lowest elevation, would result in a very significant part of the Aravalli range not being counted as Aravalli anymore.

With 550 km of the range lying in Rajasthan, the Supreme Court's approval of the new definition, recommended by a Centre-led panel, has triggered widespread protests across the State, joined by the opposition parties, environmental activists and social media influencers. Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav has promised that no new mining leases would be granted until a detailed study is undertaken. But questions remain over the extent of illegal mining, the future scope of mining in the areas excluded under the 100-metre definition, and the impact of every mining block on the surrounding landscape. And there are activities besides mining that can lead to environmental harm.

Sri Sri Sri Parama Hamsa Sadguru Pulaji Baba's 18th Anniversary In komatiguda



““Indian Chronicle” kumram bheem, Asifabad, District Reporte, Jade Srinivas, December, 24. “A spiritual Gyan Satsang discourse program was held on Tuesday on the occasion of the 18th anniversary of Sri Sri Sri Parama Hamsa Sadguru Pulaji Baba in Komatiguda village of Wankidi mandal. Sri Keshav Rao Dada, son of Sri Sant Sadguru Pulaji Baba, who participated as the chief guest, advised people to follow the path of meditation and adopt a spiritual lifestyle to remove bad qualities. Many prominent people, village elders, meditation center presidents and committee members participated in the program.”

Ground Breaking Ceremony And Borehole Repair For Shed Construction In Machhiguda

““Indian Chronicle” kumram bheem, Asifabad, District Reporte, Jade Srinivas, December, 24. “Bhoomi Puja was held for the construction of a shed in Machhiguda village of Wankidi mandal of Komaram Bheem district. Similarly, the repair work of the bore well in the village was also undertaken. The villagers, Machhiguda village Patel, Jambul Dari gram panchayat sarpanch Kumaram Pawan Kumar, and upa sarpanch Gurnule Vitthal participated in these programs. The villagers expressed their hope that these works will contribute to the development of the village.”



Golden Care Mega Free Medical Camp for Senior Citizens Held in Rachakonda



““NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, December 24, (INDIAN CHRONICLE): “As part of Golden Care, a flagship initiative aimed at the welfare, assistance, and protection of senior citizens, the Rachakonda Police Commissionerate, in association with the Rachakonda Security Council (RKSC), organised the 3rd Mega Free Medical Camp on Thursday at Lakshmi Gardens Convention Hall. The programme was conceptualised under the vision of Rachakonda Police Commissioner Sudher Babu, IPS. He attended the camp as the chief guest. A



total of 244 senior citizens received comprehensive medical services during the camp. With the support of Gemcare, Solis Eye Care, Soujanya Dental, and Maa ENT, specialist doctors provided consultations in General Medicine, Cardiology, Orthopaedics, Dentistry, ENT, and Ophthalmology. Essential diagnostic tests including ECG, blood pressure monitoring, and random blood sugar tests were conducted free of cost. Officials reiterated their commitment to senior citizen welfare and highlighted the importance of providing integrated healthcare services under one roof. Beneficiaries expressed gratitude to the Rachakonda Police Commissionerate for initiating and successfully conducting the programme. The event was attended by Malkajgiri DCP C.H. Sridhar, Women Safety DCP Usha Rani, Malkajgiri Additional DCP Venkata Ramana, Kushaiguda ACP Y. Venkat Reddy, Women Safety ACP Venkateshwarlu, RKSC Joint Secretary Radhikanath, RKSC Chief Coordinator M. Savithri, K. Suryanarayana, and CI-level officers from Kushaiguda, Neredmet, Cherlapally, Jawaharnagar, and Keesara divisions, along with She Teams CIs M. Muni and Anjaiah. The coordinated efforts ensured the smooth and successful conduct of the camp.”

Committed to the Comprehensive Development of Ramanthapur Division: Corporator Bandaru Sri Vani Venkata Rao



““KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, December 24 (Indian Chronicle): “Ramanthapur Division Corporator Bandaru Sri Vani Venkata Rao held a comprehensive review meeting with colony presidents and general secretaries from all localities in the division to discuss the development works completed so far, the projects currently in progress, and the developmental programmes planned for the coming days. Speaking on the occasion, Corporator Bandaru Sri Vani Venkata Rao stated that over the past five years, priority has been given to strengthening basic infrastructure in Ramanthapur Division, resulting in the completion of several key development works. Keeping public needs in focus, significant improvements have been achieved in sectors such as roads, drainage, drinking water supply, and sanitation, she said. Colony presidents observed that visible development has taken place across the division, while also



pointing out that a few issues still need to be addressed. In particular, they raised concerns about several electricity poles that are in a dangerous condition and urged the authorities to resolve the issue on an urgent basis. Responding to the concerns, the Corporator assured that every issue raised by the public would be carefully reviewed and that coordinated efforts with the concerned departments would be made to ensure swift resolution. The meeting was attended by Municipal DE Nagamani, Sanitation DE Sai Tarun, AMC Pochayya, Water Works Manager Ravinder, Electricity Department AE Lavanya, Horticulture official Narasimha, Street Light official Krishna, along with officials from GHMC Engineering, Sanitation, Water Works, Entomology, Police, Horticulture departments, and other public representatives.”

Aakarapu Arun Patel Visits Satyanagar, Ravinder Reddy Nagar and Lakshmi Srikant Colonies in Venkat Reddy Nagar Division

““KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, December 24 (Indian Chronicle): “On the directions of Uppal Assembly Constituency Congress Party In-charge Mandamula Parameshwar Reddy, and at the invitation of local resi-



dents, Uppal Constituency Youth Congress President Aakarapu Arun Patel undertook an extensive tour of Satyanagar, Ravinder Reddy Nagar and Lakshmi Srikant Colony on Wednesday. The Basti Bata programme received an overwhelming response from the public. Large

numbers of colony residents and elders gathered and shared their hardships, concerns and local issues. Speaking on the occasion, Arun Patel said that the trust shown by the people is inspiring and motivating him to work with greater commitment for public welfare.”

Residents demanded the installation of a well-equipped bus stop for the convenience of commuters, along with seating arrangements and display boards showing bus timings. They also complained that non-functional streetlights are causing difficulties during night hours and urged authorities to repair them immediately. The public further requested the laying of proper roads and improvement of drainage facilities. Concerned about the spread of diseases due to mosquitoes, residents appealed for daily anti-mosquito spraying in the colonies. They requested that all these issues be brought to the notice of the concerned officials and resolved on a war footing. Representatives of various colony associations, local elders and women actively participated in the programme.”

H Foundation Distributes Blankets and Sarees



““K. Sadanand “Malkajgiri, December 24: “Under the aegis of H Foundation, blankets and sarees were distributed to the underprivileged on Wednesday. As part of the programme, 3,500 blankets were distributed to the needy, while sarees were provided to 200 women. The initiative was conducted under the leadership of Foundation Co-Chairman and Managing Trustee Elizabeth Rani. Speaking on the occasion, H Foundation Medchal District In-



charge Konda Srisailam stated that the organisation has been actively involved in similar social service activities for the past 23 years, with a focus on supporting the poor and marginalized sections of society. Bandaru Devadasu, Tadanki Rekha, and others participated in the programme.”

Keerasa CI Meets Ambedkar Association Members

““NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, December 24, (INDIAN CHRONICLE): “Keerasa Circle Inspector Anjaneyulu was formally met by the newly formed committee of the United Keerasa Mandal Division-1 Ambedkar Asso-

ciation on Wednesday. The delegation was led by Association President Karre Ganesh and General Secretary Manchala Sanjeev. During the meeting, the CI extended his congratulations to the newly appointed committee members and advised the association to work proactively in the interest of society and social awareness. The meeting was attended by Vice Presidents Goranti Praveen and Pulipaka Tirupathi, Treasurer Rondla Mahesh, Joint Secretaries Suman Banni, Manchala Mahesh, Enkiala Nursing and Kurri Paramesh. Advisors Chiningani Nandanna and Ragula Ramesh Mudiraj, along with former MPTC Manchala Praveen, were also present.”

ASHA Workers' Agitation: Demand For Payment Of Pending Dues And Salaries

““Indian Chronicle” kumram bheem, Asifabad, District Reporte, Jade Srinivas, December, 24. “Asha workers staged a dharna in front of the primary



health center in Kautala mandal center of Komarambhim Asifabad district. They demanded additional money for the leprosy survey to be conducted in December, immediate payment of the previously pending leprosy, pulse polio, and election duty money, as well as payment of a fixed salary of 18,000. Later, the doctors of Kautala primary health center handed over a petition to Pawan Kalyan. ASHA workers Mamata, Nirosha, Maheshwari, Antakala, Sunita and others participated in this program.”

Early Detection Can Cure Hearing Problems in Children: Prof. N. Vani

““Indian Chronicle, Secunderabad, December 24. “Early identification of hearing impairment in children can ensure complete and effective treatment, said Prof.



N. Vani, Superintendent of Gandhi Hospital. She was speaking at a one-day training camp organised by the Meenakshi Venkataraman Foundation at the ENT Department seminar hall of Gandhi Hospital. Prof. Vani stated that the ENT Department has successfully performed cochlear implant surgeries on 26 children so far, while another 26 children are currently undergoing pre-implant therapy. She appreciated the Meenakshi Venkataraman Foundation for its continuous support to children suffering from hearing impairment. ENT Department Head Dr. Bhupender Singh Rathod highlighted that speech therapy is crucial both before and after cochlear implant surgery for better outcomes. On the occasion, digital hearing aids were distributed free of cost to five children. The programme was attended by doctors, Meenakshi Venkataraman Foundation Founder Trustee Sethuraman, Director Murali Natarajan, and audiologists.”

Distribution Of Anti- Worm Medicines To Cattle In Khamana

““Indian Chronicle” kumram bheem, Asifabad, District Report, Jade Srinivas, December 24. “In Khamana Gram Panchayat of Wankidi Mandal, distribution of anti-nutritional medicines was done under the auspices of the Veterinary Department. Sarpanch Sunita and Deputy Sarpanch Lobade Lahukumar participated in this program under the supervision of Mandal Veterinary Officer Dr. Sharanya. They said that farmers and animal husbandry should take advantage of this opportunity, as it is very useful for protecting the health of livestock. Veterinary staff and villagers participated in the program.



Wankidi Sarpanch Chunarkar Satish Takes Oath

““Indian Chronicle” kumram bheem, Asifabad, District Report, Jade Srinivas, December 24. “The new Sarpanch of Wankidi Gram Panchayat in Chunarkar Satish, was sworn in as per the constitution on Wednesday. Special Officer Shravan administered the oath to him. Along with Sarpanch Satish, seven ward members also took the oath. Satish said that he would not betray the trust of the people and that he would make the development of the village his first priority and make everyone a partner and make Wankidi village an ideal village.

VHP-Bajrang Dal Holds Protest Rally Condemning Attacks on Hindus in Bangladesh.



“P.S. ASHOKAN” KARIMNGAR BUREAU. “Following a nationwide call for protest, the Vishva Hindu Parishad and Bajrang Dal, Manthani unit, organised a protest rally condemning the alleged attacks and killings of Hindus in Bangladesh. As part of the protest, an effigy symbolising extremist violence was burnt to register strong opposition to what the organisations described as religiously motivated atrocities. “Addressing the gathering, VHP Peddapalli District Vice President Shri Kotha Srinivas Gupta stated that attacks on Hindus and acts of religious extremism would not be tolerated under any circumstances. He asserted that such violent and fanatical actions must be firmly opposed and resisted. He further remarked that the Bajrang Dal remains committed to the protection of Hindus and would not hesitate to make any sacrifice in defence of the community. “The speakers expressed deep anguish over the killing of Deepu Chandra in Bangladesh, describing it as part of a broader pattern of extremist violence. They alleged that conspiracies aimed at targeting and eliminating Hindus must be stopped decisively and condemned the continuing incidents of violence against Hindu minorities. “The organisations strongly criticised what they termed as the silence of certain secular and political groups, alleging selective outrage and failure to condemn attacks on Hindus. They reiterated that India stands for pluralism and peaceful coexistence, and urged the international community and opinion-makers to take a principled stand against religious extremism and violence targeting minorities anywhere in the world. “The protest rally was conducted from Gandhi Chowk, Manthani to the Ambedkar Statue, Manthani, after which the effigy was burnt as a symbolic act of protest. “Prominent participants in the programme included VHP Manthani Prakhand Vice President Ravula Satish, Bajrang Dal leader Rajesh, Dharmajagaran representative Kanukuntla Swamy, along with Garrepalli Venkateshwari, Kekkira Anil, Komuravelli Harish, Medagoni Rajamouli Goud, Turupati Ramu, Vadlakonda Sravan, Narendra Reddy, Ellanki Harish, Shekhar, Ajay, Charan, Sai Krishna, Nagesh, and a large number of Bajrang Dal activists and Hindu supporters, who participated in significant numbers.

Development of Marginalized Sections Is Chief Minister Revanth Reddy's Vision: Uppal Corporator Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy



““KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, December 24 (Indian Chronicle). “On the occasion of Christmas, gift packets were distributed to municipal workers at the Lourdes Matha Church in Church Colony of Uppal Division. The programme was attended as the chief guest by Uppal Corporator Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy, who personally participated in the distribution of gift packets. “Speaking on the occasion, Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy stated that Chief Minister Revanth Reddy is committed to the development and upliftment of all marginalized sections of society. She said the Congress government is working with a vision of inclusive growth while respecting all religions and ensuring equal importance to every faith. “She further added that the Chief Minister is ensuring social justice for all sections across Telangana and is governing with a spirit of equality and harmony, treating every religion with due respect. “The gift distribution programme was organized under the leadership of Church Colony President John Wilson, with the objective of enabling the poor to celebrate Christmas in a dignified and joyful manner. “Participants in the programme included Praveen Kumar, Satish Kumar, Sudhakar, Lulu Reddy, Arogya Mary, Bhaskar Mareneni, Vinay Makkena, Kiran Kumar, Bala, Karthik, and Ramu, among others.

Man Goes Missing After Family Dispute in Kapra Area

““NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, December 24, (INDIAN CHRONICLE). “A complaint has been received from Thodeti Laxmi (55), a housewife, residing near the ration shop at Chennapuram, Balajinagar, Kapra Mandal, Medchal District, reporting that her younger son has been missing since December 4, 2025. According to the complaint, the missing person has been identified as Thodeti Kanakaraju (28), son of Ramulu, working as a private employee. He is approximately 5.4 feet tall, has a dark complexion, and can speak Telugu. His mobile phone number is 9866812761. The complainant stated that she has three sons, all of whom are married and living separately. She is currently residing alone at the above address. On 04.12.2025 at around 10:00 AM, Kanakaraju reportedly left the house following a quarrel with his wife, Chittamma, due to internal family disputes. He did not return thereafter. She further stated that she made extensive efforts to trace him by searching at relatives' houses and other known locations, but was unsuccessful. His whereabouts remain unknown till date. Based on the complaint, police have registered a missing case and initiated efforts to trace the individual. Anyone with information regarding the whereabouts of Thodeti Kanakaraju is requested to contact the nearest police station or the provided phone numbers.



Children Should Uphold Truth and Moral Values: DWO

““Taj Khan, Kaghaznagar, December 24 (Indian Chronicle). “District Welfare Officer Adepu Bhaskar has stressed the need to inculcate truthfulness, commitment to righteousness, patriotism, and moral values among children. “In a press statement issued on Wednesday, he said that as part of Veer Bal Diwas, to be observed on December 30, the District Women and Child Welfare Department, in coordination with the Women Empowerment Centre, is organising elocution, essay writing, quiz and debate competitions for students of schools and colleges. “The main Veer Bal Diwas programme will be held at the Integrated District Collectorate building in the district headquarters. As part of the preparatory activities, competitions were conducted on Wednesday for students of the Zilla Parishad High School, Government Degree College, and Bendera Degree College at the Kaghaznagar mandal headquarters, he said. “Bhaskar stated that the objective of Veer Bal Diwas is to create awareness among students about patriotism and moral values, while remembering the sacrifice of brave children who laid down their



lives for righteousness and inspiring society with their ideals.

Darul Ansar Trust Promotes Communal Harmony Through Welfare Drive Distributes Blankets, Felicitates Young Advocates in Kaghaznagar



““Taj Khan, Kaghaznagar, December 24 (Indian Chronicle). “The Darul Ansar Charitable Trust on Wednesday organised a blanket distribution programme at the Minority Function Hall in Kaghaznagar town, extending support to the underprivileged. “The programme was attended by religious leaders from different faiths, including Father Mathun, Jamia Masjid Imam Maulana Intikhab Alam, temple priest Sanjay, and Gurudwara representa-

tive Guru Amar Singh, highlighting communal harmony and social unity. “On the occasion, the Trust also felicitated three Muslim minority youths from Kumram Bheem-Asifabad district who have successfully entered the legal profession. The young advocates were honoured for their excellent performance in LLB (Law) and for recently commencing their practice at the High Court. “Among those felicitated was Mohammed Abdul Mufasil, son of Abdul Shakeel, Congress State Minority General Secretary, and a resident of Sirpur Town. Having secured outstanding results in LLB, he recently began his legal career as a High Court advocate. Along with him, Mohammed Sohel Pasha and Syed Lukman Ahmed, who have also made successful strides in the legal profession, were felicitated by the Trust. “The event was attended by Darul Ansar Charitable Trust Secretary Mohammed Mufakham Ahmed, State Chairman Dr Abdul Quddus, State Vice Chairman Hafeez Syed Rizwan, Vice President Hafeez M.A. Riyaz, former councillor Sharath Kumar, BRS Minority President Zakir Shareef, Imam Mohammed Saddam, BRS Assembly Constituency In-charge Shyam Rao, and several others. “The young advocates were honoured with garlands and shawls, and speakers praised their dedication and perseverance, wishing them greater success in the future. The organisers said the programme stood as a symbol of social harmony and communal unity.

Ward members protest in Wankidi!

““Indian Chronicle” kumram bheem, Asifabad, District Report, Jade Srinivas, December 24. “There was tension in the Wankidi Major Gram Panchayat governing body meeting. The women ward members expressed their anger at the village Secretary Shiva Kumar, saying that the officials had insulted them by not giving them chairs to sit on. Before the oath-taking ceremony, the officials had placed 15 kurpis on the stage. The ward members were furious that the officials had removed the 7 chairs they were supposed to sit on when the sarpanch came to take the oath. They protested saying, “Aren’t we ward members?” A heated argument broke out when some locals instigated it. The meeting was tense for a while. The sarpanch, who was away from the oath-taking ceremony due to bad timing on the 22nd, took the oath on Wednesday. There was a commotion in this order. When the 10th ward member came on the stage to take the oath, the sarpanch’s BRS supporters shouted slogans calling her the deputy sarpanch Zindabad. The locals were surprised to see the Congress



candidate shouting slogans calling her the deputy sarpanch while she was the deputy sarpanch. With caste differences evident from the very beginning, questions are being raised among the locals about how the development of the panchayat will continue for the next five years.

The four labor codes that harm workers must be repealed: - CITU State Vice President S. Mallikarjun



““Mandava Srisailam... Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... December 24: CITU State Vice President S. Mallikarjun demanded the repeal of the four labor codes introduced by the BJP government, which are detrimental to workers. “On Wednesday, a meeting of the CITU District Committee was held at the local CITU district office under the chairmanship of District President Komatireddy Chandrareddy. “Speaking as the chief guest at this meeting, CITU State Vice President S. Mallikarjun criticized the central government for issuing a notification on November 21 for the implementation of the four labor codes as part of a conspiracy to turn the working class, the creators of wealth, into modern slaves for the benefit of corporate managements. He criticized that the codes include provisions that allow employers to increase the eight-hour workday, which workers fought for and achieved, to twelve hours. He strongly condemned the labor codes for questioning the workers’ right to strike and their right to form unions. They criticized the government for eliminating the concept of permanent employment and introducing a fixed-term employment system, thereby removing job security. They also criticized the Modi government for introducing a new definition that excludes workers earning more than 18,000 rupees from the purview of labor laws, thus exploiting the working class. On the other hand, they stated that a bill has been introduced under the name of Electricity Amendment 2025, which would eliminate the possibility of farmers receiving subsidies and endanger the rights of the states. They criticized the BJP, alleging that it is weakening the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA) and changing its name to V.V. Ramji, and that while the central government previously allocated 90% of the funds, it has now limited it to 60%, shifting the remaining 40% onto the states. They alleged that this is part of a conspiracy to gradually abolish the employment guarantee scheme. They also stated that the government has introduced a bill on insurance laws under the name “Sabka Bima Sabki Raksha” (Insurance for All, Protection for All), allowing 100% FDI in the insurance sector. They warned that this is extremely dangerous for employees and beneficiaries, and that it only benefits insurance companies, investors, and corporate entities, causing severe harm to the people of the country. They criticized that the bill introduced under the guise of nuclear safety, accountability, and sovereignty is part of a conspiracy to privatize nuclear power produced in the public sector. They alleged that the policies of the Narendra Modi-led BJP government are simultaneously attacking workers, farmers, employees, and the poor. They called upon people’s organizations to prepare for a resistance movement against these policies, and as part of this, urged workers and the public to participate in large numbers in the nationwide protest program at district centers on December 26th and the worker-farmer unity rally on January 19th to teach Modi’s policies a fitting lesson. Those who participated in the meeting included CITU District Secretary Kalluri Mallesham, District Treasurer MD Pasha, District Vice Presidents Dasari Pandu, Maya Krishna, Donuri Narsireddy, District Assistant Secretaries Gorige Somulu, Turkapalli Surender, Chekka Ramesh, Potta Yadamma, Silveru Ramakumari, Pailla Ganapathi Reddy, and District Committee members Adimoolam Nandeeswar, Gandhamalla Mathaiyah, Morigadi Ramesh, Burugu Swapna, Cheenkandla Siramulu, Radharapu Mallesham, Potharaju Jahangir, Bathula Dasu, Thooti Venkatesh, SD Umar, CH Srinu, Jonnakanti Devaiah, Konde Narasimha Jangayya, and others.

Journalist associations are pressing for amendments to GO 252; preparations underway for joint action:

- Indian Federation of Working Journalists (IFWJ),
Telangana Journalists Welfare Association (TJSS) representatives Mamidi Somaiah,

-Round Table meeting on the 27th“-Key decisions taken at the emergency meeting of journalist associations



“Mandava Srisailam... Hyderabad Indian Chronicle... December 24):- Several journalist associations held an emergency meeting in Hyderabad on Wednesday regarding GO 252 issued by the state government finalizing the media accreditation rules. The associations decided to act as a bridge between the journalists and the government and to exert pressure on the government to amend the flawed GO 252. Representatives from the Telangana Working Journalists Federation (TWJF), All India Working Journalists Association (AWJA), Indian Federation of Working Journalists (IFWJ), and Telangana Journalists Welfare Association (TJSS), including Mamidi Somaiah, K. Koteswara Rao, Pupulapula Anandam, Ananchinni Venkateswara Rao, and senior journalist Venkataratnam, participated in this meeting. They revealed the key decisions taken at the meeting to the media. They stated that it was decided to organize a round table meeting in Hyderabad on the 27th of this month, and to move forward by including representatives from all journalist associations. The journalists stated that the government is confusing them by deciding to issue two types of cards, and that the benefits of these accreditation and media cards have not been clearly specified. They questioned why the orders state that the accreditation card will only serve as identification for reporters to gather government information, while desk journalists can only use the media card for welfare schemes, calling this rule unfair. For the first time, accreditation cards will be issued to digital news media, but it has been clarified that this will only be for websites. They strongly objected to the significant reduction in the number of accreditation cards under these new rules. They expressed concern that while the previous government issued 23,000 accreditation cards, the new government order could lead to a reduction of over 10,000 cards. A fee of Rs. 250 has been imposed for obtaining a duplicate card if the original is lost. They also stated that making a police FIR mandatory in case of a lost card is unacceptable.

Previously, reporters had a card at the constituency level, but this has now been abolished. Cards will only be issued at the state, district, and mandal levels, and they said they would discuss this matter with the government. They requested the government to reconsider its decision, stating that previously there were special quotas for General, Sports, Cultural, Film, and Cartoonists, but now this quota has been abolished and limited only to cartoonists under the freelance quota. They said that a degree qualification or five years of experience is mandatory for state-level accreditation, and an Intermediate qualification is mandatory for district and mandal-level reporters, but their experience is not being considered. They urged the government to put an end to the previous practices of giving accreditation to auto drivers, sarpanches, and party workers. They stated that previously, one accreditation card was given for every 50,000 people in urban areas and mandals, but now the GO (Government Order) states that only one card will be given per mandal, which is unfair. The cards given to cable channels at the district level have been cancelled. They said that previously, cards were given at the district level, and it is unfair to state that these cards do not confer any special status, that they should be used only for journalism purposes, and that the words 'Accredited to the Government of Telangana' should not be used or printed on visiting cards or letterheads. They expressed concern that this GO will crush small newspapers and that it is a vindictive approach against small newspapers, adding insult to injury. They said that accreditation rules have been framed with stringent regulations in our state, unlike in any other state, and requested the state government to reconsider and amend this GO. He said that several journalists' associations would participate in the round table conference scheduled for the 27th of this month, where they would discuss Government Order 252 and formulate a plan of action, and that a joint action committee would be formed if necessary.

FSSAI License & Registration Mela on December 26th in Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District: - V. Jyothirmayi Assistant Food Controller, erstwhile Nalgonda district

“(Mandava Srisailam... Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... December 24): - As per the orders of the State Food Safety Commissioner, an FSSAI License & Registration Mela will be conducted on December 26th in Yadadri Bhuvanagiri district under the supervision of V. Jyothirmayi, Assistant Food Controller of the erstwhile Nalgonda district, according to district Food Safety department officials. They stated that the main objective of this mela is to create awareness among all types of food business operators in the district about the mandatory FSSAI license or registration, and to provide services easily in one place. They revealed that the mela will offer:“New FSSAI registrations“License renewals“License modifications“Necessary guidelines and advice“They advised all types of food business operators, including hotels, tiffin centers, restaurants, bakeries, grocery stores, meat and fish vendors, milk and dairy product vendors, food stalls, street food vendors, catering units, etc., to compulsorily attend this mela. On this occasion, Assistant Food Controller V. Jyothirmayi... Jyothirmayi stated that conducting a food business without an FSSAI license is illegal and warned that strict action would be taken against those who violate the regulations. She advised every food business operator to take advantage of this opportunity, attend the fair with the necessary documents, and obtain their license or registration.“Important Note for Business Owners“She stated that it has come to their attention that some brokers, consultancies, or Food Safety Mitra are issuing FSSAI registrations incorrectly, without considering the actual turnover of the businesses. She clarified that licenses or registrations obtained through such unauthorized means will be cancelled and will not be valid. There-

Complete the works under the Amruth 2.0 scheme in all municipalities of the district expeditiously: Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Additional Collector for Local Bodies, Bhaskara Rao

“(Mandava Srisailam.. Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau.. Indian Chronicle.. December 24): Additional Collector for Local Bodies, Bhaskara Rao, stated that the works being undertaken under the Amruth 2.0 scheme in all municipalities of the district should be completed expeditiously. He held a review meeting with the concerned officials in his chamber on Wednesday. On this occasion, the Additional Collector directed the concerned officials to expedite the electrical line works near the double-bedroom houses in the Bhuvanagiri municipality. He said that basic amenities should be provided at the double-bedroom houses in all the municipalities of the district. He directed that the Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) related to the urban development funds sanctioned for Alair, Choutuppal, Mothkur, Pochampally, and Yadagirigutta municipalities, and the UIDAI funds sanctioned for Bhuvanagiri municipality, should be submitted expeditiously. He also stated that the establishment of record



for, she urged every food business operator to contact the local Food Safety Officer, and after proper verification, obtain the license or registration only through the official government online process, and not to trust fraudulent brokers.“The officials of the Yadadri Bhuvanagiri district Food Safety Department appealed to make this program a success. As part of this, Assistant Food Controller V. Jyothirmayi of the erstwhile Nalgonda district will be available from 9:00 AM at Ganj, next to the Kanyaka Parameshwari Temple in Bhongir town, to provide necessary guidance. She requested business owners to utilize this opportunity.

rooms in all municipalities, the issuance of trade licenses, the identification of commercial properties, and the process of making water tap connections online should be completed quickly. The meeting was attended by the Municipal Commissioners of the district, the Executive Engineer of RWS, the Project Director of Housing, the D.E.E. of Public Health, and others.



SC, ST and Minority Welfare Adluri Lakshman Kumar, Government Whip and Alair MLA Birla Ilaiah, Women's Cooperative Development Corporation Chairperson Bandru Shobha Rani, district leaders, mandal leaders, Congress party workers, and others participated in the program.

Every consumer has the right to know about the quality, quantity, and price of goods: Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Collector Hanumantha Rao

“(Mandava Srisailam... Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... December 24): Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Collector Hanumantha Rao said that every consumer has the right to know about the quality, quantity, and price of goods. On Wednesday, the District Collector attended and addressed a meeting held at the Collectorate meeting hall under the auspices of the Civil Supplies Department to observe National Consumer Day. On this occasion, the District Collector said that everyone should cooperate in protecting consumer rights and that awareness should be created among the public about the laws to overcome adulteration and protect consumers. He stated that the Consumer Day would be truly meaningful only when proper justice is served not only to the educated but also to the common people. He said that obtaining quality goods and services is a fundamental right of every individual. He specifically requested consumer rights associations to stand by and provide services to farmers in remote villages to ensure they receive quality seeds. He said that since food and medicine are a part of daily life, justice will be served only if there are stringent punishments. He added that the district's Food Safety Officer is continuously conducting inspections to ensure a society free from adulteration. The Collector stated that the concerned officials should conduct extensive inspections of hospitals, medical shops, fertilizer shops, hotels, hostels, and other establishments in the district. He instructed that awareness programs be conducted for Sarpanches in the village panchayats and that measures be taken to ensure they inspect fertilizer and other shops. He said that the district



administration would soon be conducting extensive inspections and that this would mark the beginning of a society free from adulteration. The Collector informed that in the coming month, inspections would be conducted at the field level, from every village to the district level, in collaboration with the relevant enforcement officers. Additional Collector Veerareddy, speaking on the occasion, advised consumers to obtain a bill when purchasing any item, thereby protecting their rights. He also explained the services available to consumers. The program was attended by District Civil Supplies Officer Rojarami, District Manager of Civil Supplies Corporation Harikrishna, Food Safety Officer Swathi, District Drugs Inspector Balakrishna, District Metrology Officer Venkateshwarlu, members of the Consumer Forum, representatives of voluntary organizations, and other concerned officials.

Indiramma housing works should be completed quickly, and housewarming ceremonies should be held in a festive atmosphere:

- Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Collector Hanumantha Rao



“(Mandava Srisailam... Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... December 24): Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Collector Hanumantha Rao said that the Indiramma housing works, which are in various stages of completion, should be finished quickly, and house-

warming ceremonies should be held in a festive atmosphere. On Wednesday, the District Collector inspected the Indiramma housing construction works in Mandhanapalli village of Aleru mandal. On this occasion, the District Collector inquired about the total number of beneficiaries who received Indiramma houses in the village. He asked how many houses have been completed and how many are in the final stages. He said that all the housing works should be completed quickly. He instructed the concerned officials to take the initiative to provide bricks and sand at a lower price to those constructing Indiramma houses in the villages. He said that the beneficiaries should complete the construction of their houses quickly and hold housewarming ceremonies. Since new governing bodies have been formed in the villages, development works should be undertaken in the villages. He said that complete sanitation works should be carried out in one ward every day, and the drainage canals should be cleaned. Concerned officials participated in this program.

Traditional Day Celebrations Held Grandly at Ramanthapur Government Homoeopathic Medical College; Inaugurated by Principal Dr. N. Linga Raju

“(KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, December 24 (Indian Chronicle):“As part of the 58th Annual Day celebrations scheduled to be held on the 30th of this month, the JSPS Government Homoeopathic Medical College, Ramanthapur, organized Traditional Day celebrations with great enthusiasm on Wednesday under the banner of “Uthkrishna-25” at the Open Auditorium.“The program was inaugurated by the Principal and Additional Director of AYUSH, Prof. Dr. N. Linga Raju, by lighting the ceremonial lamp. Faculty members, professors, and students actively participated in the event, attending in vibrant traditional attire, which added cultural richness to the celebrations.“The event featured various student performances including dance competitions, singing competitions, and Bharatanatyam performances, which captivated the audience. Dr. Linga Raju presented prizes to students who secured first, second, and third positions in examinations, as well as winners of the recently conducted cultural programs.“Several dignitaries were



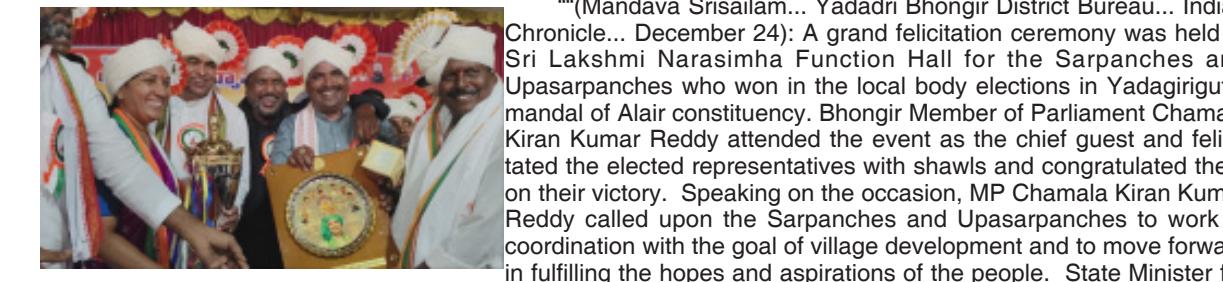
present on the occasion, including Vice Principal C.H. Srinivas Reddy, Krishna Murthy, Cultural Committee Coordinator Satyaveni, NSS Coordinator Dr. Dasar Parthasarathi, along with PG and UG students.

Happy Christmas... Merry Christmas
Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy extends Christmas greetings

“(NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, December 24, (INDIAN CHRONICLE):“Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy conveyed Christmas greetings to the people of the Uppal constituency, especially to Christian brothers and sisters. He stated that the birth of Jesus Christ, who preached love, service, forgiveness, and compassion, is a moment of great joy and spiritual significance for Christians across the world. He expressed hope that the festival would bring happiness, peace, and prosperity to all. The MLA wished that everyone celebrate Christmas with their families in a spirit of unity and harmony, and prayed that the blessings of Jesus Christ bring joy and well-being to every household.

Grand felicitation ceremony for Sarpanches and Upasarpaches of Alair constituency held at Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Function Hall:

- Bhongir MP Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy



“(Mandava Srisailam... Yadadri Bhongir District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... December 24): A grand felicitation ceremony was held at Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Function Hall for the Sarpanches and Upasarpaches who won in the local body elections in Yadagirigutta mandal of Alair constituency. Bhongir Member of Parliament Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy attended the event as the chief guest and felicitated the elected representatives with shawls and congratulated them on their victory. Speaking on the occasion, MP Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy called upon the Sarpanches and Upasarpaches to work in coordination with the goal of village development and to move forward in fulfilling the hopes and aspirations of the people. State Minister for

SC, ST and Minority Welfare Adluri Lakshman Kumar, Government Whip and Alair MLA Birla Ilaiah, Women's Cooperative Development Corporation Chairperson Bandru Shobha Rani, district leaders, mandal leaders, Congress party workers, and others participated in the program.

Tractor Seized for Illegal Sand Transportation

““Karimnagar Correspondent, December 24, INDIAN CHRONICLE”“The Karimnagar Rural Police have intensified their action against illegal sand transportation. During routine patrolling conducted in villages on Wednesday morning, the police caught a tractor involved in the illegal transportation of sand without any valid permission. The accused has been identified as Etharu Sammaiah, son of Mallaiah, a resident of Elandal village of Kothapally mandal. The incident occurred near the railway gate at Teegalaguttapally, where the Karimnagar Rural police intercepted the tractor while it was transporting sand illegally. A case has been registered against the accused, and the tractor has been seized. Further legal proceedings have been initiated, and the case has been forwarded to the court for necessary action. Speaking on the occasion, Karimnagar Rural CI A. Niranjan Reddy warned that strict action would be taken against anyone involved in illegal sand transportation without proper government permissions.



New Anganwadi Centre and Mahila Bhavan Inaugurated by BLR



“NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, December 24, (INDIAN CHRONICLE)”“A newly constructed Anganwadi Centre

Celebrate New Year Peacefully: Karimnagar Rural CI A. Niranjan Reddy

““Chittimalla Mahendar, Karimnagar Correspondent, December 23, INDIAN CHRONICLE”“In view of the New Year celebrations on the midnight of December 31, the Karimnagar Rural Police have taken stringent measures to ensure public safety and maintain law and order across all villages in Karimnagar Rural Mandal, said Inspector of Police A. Niranjan Reddy. He stated that welcoming the New Year joyfully is everyone's right, but such celebrations should not cause inconvenience or disturbance to others. He appealed to the public to cooperate with the police to ensure a peaceful and harmonious atmosphere throughout the district. Ban on Unauthorized Celebrations and Rallies”“CI Niranjan Reddy clarified that activities such as cake cutting at public places and major junctions, bike rallies, organizing parties without permission, and creating noise pollution through DJs and high-volume sound systems are strictly prohibited under the law. Strict legal and police action will be initiated against those who violate these restrictions, he warned. Special checks will also be conducted against drunk driving during the New Year celebrations. “Celebrate at Home with Family”“On behalf of the district police, CI Niranjan Reddy urged the people to celebrate the New Year peacefully at their homes along with family members. He particularly advised the youth to behave responsibly and requested parents to keep proper supervision over their children. Stating that public welfare is the primary objec-



““of the police and that the well-being of youth determines the future of society, these guidelines have been issued in the larger interest of public safety. He expressed his hope that all the people of the district would step into the New Year with happiness, safety, and peace.

Association Representatives Take Decisions to Ensure Peaceful and Safe Living in Uppal Bhagayat Property Owners Urged to Abide by Association Resolutions



““KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, December 24 (Indian Chronicle)”“A recent fire accident at a newly constructed furniture shop in the Uppal Bhagayat Residential Colony has caused severe panic among nearby residents. The incident raised serious concerns related to air pollution, safety lapses, and overall security, adversely affecting the daily lives of the local people. Residents, who had purchased homes with high hopes in what was promoted as a modern residential layout, expressed deep distress over such incidents and approached the Association seeking immediate intervention. Responding promptly, the Association convened an emergency meeting on Wednesday. During the meeting, the Uppal Bhagayat Plot Owners' Association took several key decisions in the interest of residents' safety and well-being. The Association resolved that henceforth, plots should be leased only for activities or businesses that do not adversely impact the health, safety, or lifestyle of local residents. It was strongly recom-



““mended that plots should not be leased to units that pose risks such as pollution, fire hazards, or other safety threats. In particular, leasing plots to car workshops, warehouses such as large logistics or e-commerce godowns, and similar high-risk commercial establishments should be strictly avoided. The Association appealed to all plot owners to take responsible decisions regarding the use of their plots, preserving the residential character of the colony. Emphasis was placed on ensuring a peaceful and secure environment where women, children, senior citizens, and all residents can live without fear. The Association expressed hope that all plot owners would respect and adhere to the resolutions passed in the meeting and take proactive measures to prevent the recurrence of such incidents and inconveniences in the future.

Families of 200 fishermen meet Jaishankar, seek their release from prison in Pakistan

““Pakistan Women of the fisherfolk families and the activists have been raising the issue of release and repatriation of the Indian fishermen in Pakistan jails for sometime now. Seeking to expedite the process for release and repatriation of around 200 Indian fishermen languishing in a Pakistani jail, a delegation included women from the fisherfolk families on Monday met External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar in New Delhi to hand over a representation. The delegation consisted of some lead-

ing activists working for the fishermen community such as Jatin Desai, Jivan Jungi and Chhagan Bamania, apart from three women from the fishermen families. The representation stated, “Most of these fishermen belong to Gujarat, Diu and Maharashtra. Around 160 of them have already completed their sentences, and their Indian nationality has also been confirmed long ago.” The delegation said the fishermen are languishing in Pakistan prisons despite the India-Pakistan Agreement on Consular Access, 2008.

Rs 5 Lakh for Small Villages, Rs 10 Lakh for Large Panchayats: CM Revanth Reddy Showers Sops on New Sarpanches

““Taj Khan, Kaghaznagar, December 24 (Indian Chronicle)”“Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy on Monday announced a major boost for newly elected village heads, declaring that large Gram Panchayats will receive ₹10 lakh each and smaller Panchayats ₹5 lakh each as special development funds in the coming year. Addressing a felicitation programme organised for newly elected Sarpanches in the Kodangal Assembly constituency, the Chief Minister said that funds would be released directly to Sarpanches to ensure speedy village development. He attended the programme as the chief guest and described the announcement as a “New Year gift” to grassroots leaders. The Chief Minister clarified that these special funds would be provided independently of ministers, MLAs or MPs, ensuring autonomy for village administrations. He also announced that ration cards would be issued to all eligible beneficiaries in villages. Urging Sarpanches to utilise the funds effectively, CM Revanth Reddy said village-level problems should be resolved locally and appealed for non-partisan development, stressing that public service offers no greater opportunity than serving villages. Speaking on water issues, the Chief Minister remarked that Telangana is synonymous with water resources but suffered injus-



““tice during the undivided state. He criticised the previous government, alleging that not a single irrigation project was completed during the last ten years, and that the Palamuru region continued to face drought despite promises. Villages prosper only when discrimination is eliminated from governance,” he said, calling upon Sarpanches to work unitedly, rise above political rivalries, and deliver high-quality public services. He reiterated that the development of villages alone ensures the development of the nation, and urged newly elected Sarpanches to strive for inclusive and sustainable growth.

Pre-Matric Scholarship Certificates Cleared in a Day in Kagaznagar Mandal



““Taj Khan, Kagaznagar, December 24 (Indian Chronicle)”“The Pre-Matric Scholarship process for government school students studying in Classes 5 to 10 was completed efficiently with the guidance and support of the Tahsildar of Kagaznagar Mandal, Sri M. Madhukar, and the Mandal Education Officer, Sri V. Prabhakar. With the dedicated efforts of the Tahsildar Office staff, all Income and Caste Certificates required for the students were approved within a single day.

Kagaznagar Municipal Workers Demand Release of Long-Pending Salaries



““Taj Khan, Kagaznagar, December 24 (Indian Chronicle)”“Municipal workers staged a strike in front of the Kagaznagar Town Municipal Office under the banner of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU), protesting against long-pending issues faced by municipal employees. Addressing the protest, Velishala Krishnamachari, CITU District Assistant Secretary, stated that municipal workers in Kagaznagar have not been paid their wages for the past four months, pushing them into severe financial distress. He alleged that despite submitting several representations to the District Collector and the Municipal Commissioner, authorities have failed to respond. Krishnamachari further demanded the immediate payment of ₹1.50 crore in pending Provident Fund (PF) and ESI dues, which have remained unpaid for a prolonged period. He said that repeated appeals to ensure regular monthly wages for municipal workers have been ignored, leaving employees with no option but to resort to agitation. He urged the District Collector and the Kagaznagar Municipal Commissioner to intervene immediately and ensure the release of all pending wages

““without further delay. Warning of intensified protests, he stated that the agitation would continue until the demands are met and held the Municipal Commissioner directly responsible for the ongoing situation. The protest was attended by Municipal Union District Secretary Shankar, Working President Sanjeev, and union members Malleesh, Ramesh, E. Lakshmi, Eshwaramma, Durgamma, Shobha, Priyadarshini, Tirupati, Bapu, Lakshman, Mahender, Rakesh, along with a large number of municipal workers.

Timber Auction Conducted Under Forest Department Supervision at Vempalli Depot



““Taj Khan, Kagaznagar, December 24 (Indian Chronicle)”“A timber auction was successfully conducted on Wednesday at the Vempalli Timber Depot, located in Vempalli village of Kagaznagar Mandal, under the supervision of the Forest Department. The auction was formally inaugurated at 11:00 a.m. by District Forest Officer Sri Neeraj Kumar Tibrewal, IFS. A total of 18 participants, including carpenters, sawmill owners, timber depot owners, and traders from various mandals within the Kagaznagar Forest Division, actively took part and placed competitive bids. Kagaznagar Forest Range Officer Sri Anil Kumar and Deputy Range Officer Sri Shashidhar Babu were present and closely monitored the auction proceedings. Officials stated that the auction was conducted with complete transparency, strictly adhering to Forest Department regulations. Speaking on the occasion, District Forest Officer Sri Neeraj Kumar Tibrewal, IFS, said that the timber sale is expected to generate significant revenue for the government.

Vigilance Inquiry Against Medchal District Registrar Allegedly Delayed



““NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, December 24, (INDIAN CHRONICLE)”“All India Hindustan Congress Party State President Botta Sailu has alleged undue delay and negligence in the vigilance inquiry initiated against Medchal District Registrar Ashok Kumar, questioning the role of senior officials in the Stamps and Registration Department. Addressing the media, Botta Sailu demanded an explanation from the Telangana Stamps and Duties Commissioner as to why the vigilance inquiry against the district registrar is allegedly being prolonged without conclusion. He alleged that irregularities are taking place in land registrations across the Medchal district, particularly involving government lands. According to him, several sub-registrar offices in the district are functioning under the indirect influence of the district registrar. He claimed that in nearly 12 sub-registrar offices, close associates of the district registrar are allegedly facilitating irregular registrations. He further stated that several sub-registrars have gone on leave and senior assistants are managing the offices, allegedly leading to procedural lapses. Botta Sailu questioned why the vigilance inquiry has not progressed de-

““spite serious complaints and said the delay raises suspicions about administrative inaction. He demanded the immediate transfer of the Medchal District Registrar and called for a full-fledged vigilance probe followed by strict action if wrongdoing is established. He also alleged that basic facilities are lacking at the district registrar's office, stating that even visitors are not provided proper seating arrangements. He further accused the official of failing to furnish information sought under the Right to Information Act, allegedly causing delays and violating transparency norms. Expressing concern over what he described as systemic issues in the Registration Department, Botta Sailu alleged that public revenue is being adversely affected due to irregular practices. He urged senior government authorities to intervene and ensure accountability, stating that repeated instructions issued by the government to officials are allegedly not being implemented effectively. He concluded by demanding immediate administrative action and strict monitoring to safeguard public interest and government revenue.

Kisan Grameena Mela Inaugurated with Grandeur



Tirupati Resident Spent Rs 3.89 Lakh on Quick Commerce; Cart Packed with Greek Yogurt, Whey Protein, Premium Gadgets, and Flagship Smartphones: How Tirupati Instamarted 2025



Chittimalla Mahendar, Karimnagar Correspondent, December 24 – Indian Chronicle : "The Kisan Grameena Mela was inaugurated in a grand manner at Ambedkar Stadium, Karimnagar, on Wednesday at 12 noon by former Governor and former Union Minister Shri Bandaru Dattatreya. He was accorded a warm welcome with drum beats, applause, and traditional festivities. After formally inaugurating the Mela, Shri Bandaru Dattatreya visited various stalls showcasing agricultural machinery, seeds, dairy products, and organic stores. Speaking on the occasion, he emphasized that farmers should come together in a united manner. He stated that collective efforts would enable farmers to market their produce through barter or organized sales and secure better prices. He further advised farmers to conduct soil testing and use fertilizers in appropriate quantities to achieve higher yields. Stressing the importance of innovation, he said farmers should adopt new technologies, high-yielding crop varieties, and modern cultivation practices to increase productivity and profits. He observed that rural people are still facing economic hardships, leading to urbanization and migration. Villages should become self-reliant centers, he said, which would strengthen the nation's economy. Kisan Jagrana President and Mela Organizer Shri Polasani Sugunakar Rao stated that the economic and social conditions of rural people are deteriorating day by day, and development is not reaching villages as expected. As a result, youth are moving away from agriculture and traditional occupations towards government and private jobs in cities, which could lead to

serious consequences in the future. He explained that to improve the socio-economic condition of rural people, especially farmers, Kisan Jagrana has been organizing Kisan Grameena Melas successfully in 2022, 2023, and again in 2025. The objective of the Mela is to create awareness among farmers about new scientific technologies, high-yielding seeds, and modern farming methods to achieve better harvests. He expressed concern that rural youth are losing interest in agriculture, causing severe losses to the sector, and said the Mela aims to motivate youth to return to farming. Former MLC and MLA Major Dr. Rajeshwar Rao stated that organizing the Kisan Grameena Mela is a noble initiative aimed at bringing positive change in the lives of rural people. Former MLA Shri Guddula Ramakrishna Reddy said the Mela is an effort to make agriculture more profitable and emphasized the need for conducting more such awareness programs for farmers. Karimnagar Dairy Chairman Shri Rajeshwar Rao highlighted that Karimnagar Dairy, which began with 12,000 members, has now grown to over one lakh members, emerging as one of the leading milk and dairy product organizations in Telangana. He said the Mela was organized with the objective of promoting farmers, dairy farming, and animal husbandry, and stressed the need to conduct more such events to encourage dairy farmers, fishermen, and sheep rearers. The event witnessed participation from farmer leaders, MPDO presidents, PACS chairmen, representatives of various organizations, and a large number of farmers. Several informative stalls were set up to guide and educate farmers on diverse agricultural and allied sectors.

Padmaja Singh Receives Best Interior Design Award



sign industry. Speaking on the occasion, Padmaja Singh said the recognition has increased her sense of responsibility and commitment towards delivering quality services. The Lotus Studio specialises in interior design solutions for apartments, villas, offices, hospitals, jewellery showrooms, and farmhouses, with a strong focus on customised furniture. She also announced plans to open more branches of The Lotus Studio across Hyderabad in the near future. On the occasion of the award, Raj Singh, Gautam, and Manasa congratulated Padmaja Singh by presenting her with floral bouquets.

'Immigration for Everyone' Third Edition Launched in Hyderabad



Hyderabad The Third Edition of Immigration for Everyone was officially launched at a grand ceremony held at Taj Krishna, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad. The book was unveiled by acclaimed actress Ananya Nagalla, who attended the event as Chief Guest, along with Naresh M. Gehi, Founder and Principal Attorney of Gehi & Associates (New York, USA).

The event witnessed the presence of several prominent personalities as Guests of Honour, including Cine Producers Gaur Krishna, T. Ganapati Reddy, Tej Palli, actor Ashish Gandhi, and actress Sahar Krishnan.

Immigration for Everyone – Third Edition is a practical, jargon-free guide that simplifies the U.S. immigration process for professionals, students, families, entrepreneurs, and investors. Drawing on over two decades of hands-on immigration law experience, the book incorporates recent U.S. executive orders and policy changes, offering clear insights into both immigrant and non-immigrant visa categories.

Speaking at the launch, Naresh M. Gehi said "U.S. immigration today is no longer just about moving abroad—it's about informed decision-making, legal precision, and long-term planning. This book is written to empower Indians with clarity, confidence, and compliance, whether they are students, professionals, or investors looking at the United States as a growth destination."

For flouting anti-pollution norms, 20K PUCC challans issued in Delhi; over 612 industries face action

Over 612 industries in Delhi are facing closure after being found flouting the GRAP (Graded Response Action Plan) Stage-4 norms, the government said in a statement on Monday. It said that while 251 of these are in industrial zones, 181 in redevelopment zones and 180 are in non-conforming areas. The government also said that 20,808 Pollution Under Control Certificate (PUCC) challans have been issued across the city since the imposition of GRAP-4, besides 3,771 challans to LMVs for flouting BS-6 norms and 2,360 to end-of-life (ELV)

Ahead of its December 25 inauguration, here's how you can reach Navi Mumbai International Airport



GNS News Agency, Dec 24

As Navi Mumbai International Airport (NMIA) prepares to begin commercial operations from December 25, access to it remains a central concern. Located at Ulwe in Panvel taluka, the airport sits outside Mumbai's main suburban rail line, and will open without direct metro or express rail connectivity. Until several planned infrastructure projects are completed, passengers will depend on a mix of suburban trains, buses, and road-based transport to reach the airport. Each mode offers distinct advantages and constraints that are likely to shape travel choices in the airport's early months. Suburban rail will remain the most economical way to reach Navi Mumbai airport, but it is also the most indirect. There is no direct train service to the airport terminal, and all rail passengers must change trains at least once and complete the final stretch by road.

Passengers travelling from South Mumbai and parts of Central Mumbai typically board Harbour Line services from Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus (CSMT) towards Vashi, Nerul or Belapur CBD. At Belapur CBD, they must switch to the Belapur-Urban suburban line to reach Targhar station. Commuters from Thane and the central suburbs can use Trans-Harbour Line services to Nerul before making the same change towards Targhar. Targhar station, which became operational recently, lies approximately 1.8 to 5 km from the airport terminals, depending on the route taken. From here, passengers must rely on auto-rickshaws, taxis or shuttle services to complete the last-mile journey. In non-peak hours, the journey from CSMT to Targhar usually takes between 75 to 90 minutes, but during peak periods it can exceed

two hours due to crowding and interchange delays. Travel from Navi Mumbai nodes is significantly shorter, typically under 30 to 35 minutes. Suburban rail fares remain low, with second-class tickets costing under Rs 40 and first-class fares ranging between Rs 95 and Rs 175. Despite its affordability, rail travel poses practical challenges for airport users. Peak-hour crowding on the Harbour and Central lines makes boarding with luggage difficult, while interchanges at Kurla, Dadar, and Belapur CBD involve foot over bridges and waiting time. Dedicated airport express trains have not yet been introduced. Public bus services will offer the cheapest surface connectivity to the Navi Mumbai International Airport, but they remain the least predictable option, particularly for time-sensitive travel.

Brihanmumbai Electric Supply and Transport (BEST) and Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation (MSRTC) buses operate between Mumbai, Thane, and various Navi Mumbai nodes, but none provide direct access to the airport terminal. Most bus journeys require passengers to alight at locations such as Panvel, Belapur, Nerul, or Ulwe, and then take an autorickshaw or taxi for the final leg. Travel times vary widely depending on traffic conditions, route congestion, and the number of intermediate stops. Fares are typically modest, ranging from Rs 50 to Rs 200, but multiple transfers are often unavoidable. Bus services are especially vulnerable to congestion along the Sion-Panvel Highway, near Panvel junctions and within Ulwe. Combined with limited luggage space and frequent stops, these factors make buses less suitable for passengers travelling on tight departure schedules. Interestingly, no city bus carrier, including BEST or NMMT, has announced a dedicated bus service to the airport so far. Road travel is expected to be the most common mode of reaching NMIA in its initial phase, particularly for passengers with luggage. Key access corridors include the Mumbai Trans Harbour Link (Atal Setu) from Sewri, the Sion-Panvel Highway, the Vashi Bridge, Palm Beach Road, and the Eastern Freeway for travellers from South and Central Mumbai.

Atal Setu has reduced the time for harbour crossings to about 20 minutes, significantly improving access from South Mumbai. However, congestion on feeder roads within Navi Mumbai often determines the overall journey time. Under moderate traffic conditions, travel from South Mumbai to NMIA typically takes 60–80 minutes, while journeys from the western suburbs can stretch to 90–120 minutes. From Thane and central suburbs, road travel usually takes 60–90 minutes, while residents of Navi Mumbai nodes can reach the airport in as little as 20–30 minutes during non-peak hours. Taxi fares generally range from Rs 1,000 to Rs 1,500 from South Mumbai and Rs 1,500 to Rs 2,500 from the western suburbs, with toll charges applying on Atal Setu. Several key connectivity projects linked to NMIA will not be operational before its launch. Metro Line 8, also known as the Gold Line, which will connect Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport and NMIA, has been approved but is still under construction, with operations expected around 2029. The Ulwe Coastal Road, designed to provide direct access from Atal Setu to the airport, is under construction and expected to open in early 2026. Dedicated airport rail or metro express services have yet to be announced.

Meanwhile, 28,519 trucks were checked at Delhi's border during this period, of which 2,912 were stopped from entering the Capital.

On Sunday alone, it added, 2,254 PUCC challans were issued across Delhi, with the highest issued in West Delhi (1158). Challans were issued against 261 LMVs for flouting BS-VI norms and against 1,623 end-of-life vehicles on Sunday.

In West Bengal, an ill-prepared Election Commission, BLOs on the brink



"I want to live. My family lacks nothing. But for this minor job, they have forced me, through humiliation, to die... I have completed almost 95% of the offline work, but I cannot manage anything online." These words, from a note by a Booth Level Officer (BLO), should shake the conscience of any democratic society. Before her life faded away, she wrote a line — that none of her family members was responsible for her death. Yet, no proceedings have been initiated, suo moto, to examine the role of the Election Commission of India (ECI) in the circumstances that allegedly led to her despair. This silence is deeply troubling. The need for an SIR, the crisis around it

There is no doubt that West Bengal required a Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of its electoral rolls as there are fake entries, names of deceased individuals, and — according to multiple reports — the names of infiltrators. Once the SIR process began, many infiltrators were said to have tried to cross the border to exit. The fault of allowing such infiltration lies principally with the Border Security Force, followed by the State police, and by political networks that helped irregular applicants acquire voter cards. But the validity of the SIR does not justify the manner in which it is being executed. An exercise that took two full years, in 2002, is now expected to be completed in less than two months, despite the manifold increase in the number of voters. This compression of time has resulted in BLOs facing immense pressure, many of whom are schoolteachers or para-teachers engaged in modestly paid contractual work.

From the day the SIR began, signs of the ECI's unpreparedness became evident. Voters have faced inconvenience, but the brunt of the crisis has been borne by BLOs. Apart from rigid deadlines, they face political pressure, particularly from Booth Level Agents of the ruling party. Several BLOs have fallen ill; some have died. A large demonstration of BLOs has already taken place in Kolkata, with some threatening to lock the ECI's office. Challenges on the ground Consider the operational challenges alone. BLOs were told that all voter forms would be distributed on November 4. They were not. Forms arrived in phases, forcing BLOs to visit households a number of times because members of the same family were listed under scattered serial numbers. Reports indicate that some BLOs have had to be

on their feet for 16 hours a day to complete these visits. There were also contradictions in the instructions given during training and the ECI's social media announcements. Something as basic as attaching a voter's photograph to the form was described as mandatory and then optional. The enumeration form should have had clear instructions on what to do. Even the Bengali used in parts of the form is confusing — something this writer experienced and had to call the BLO to clarify.

The most serious grievance is the unplanned digital component. BLOs say they were never informed during training that they would have to enter all data online. No meaningful digital training was given. Many senior teachers are not comfortable using smartphones or computers, yet the ECI expects them to complete large-scale data entry using the threat of disciplinary action. The data-entry app malfunctions. BLOs across districts report that it works reasonably only during limited windows — 6 a.m. to 11 a.m. and then 8 p.m. to 11 p.m. Even so, it is still not reliable. It frequently logs out, does not display how many forms have been uploaded, and offers no option to correct errors. The ECI has promised a window for editing later, but how can such a crucial democratic exercise depend on a flawed digital tool? This cannot be the face of "Digital India". Compounding these issues is a mapping problem: the app often displays "no record found" for names that are listed in the 2002 electoral rolls. Lack of a support system

The ECI initially indicated that additional BLOs would be appointed to help complete the SIR. This did not materialise to a large extent until BLOs submitted deputations. Even then, the assistance was limited to booths with more than 1,200 voters. The State government has not provided data-entry operators, though it is best positioned to do so. As a result, BLOs are overworked, under-trained, digitally unsupported, yet held to be fully accountable. Nobody argues that the SIR should be halted. Electoral transparency is indispensable. But the ECI must recognise that a democratic exercise cannot be sustained through coercion, fear or administrative opacity. It must extend the SIR deadline, ensure a fully functional digital platform, and deploy trained data-entry operators to assist BLOs. The speed at which the SIR is being pushed through raises questions. Why the haste? Is the ECI, intentionally or by omission, enabling the interests of a certain political party ahead of the Assembly elections? The ECI occupies a sacrosanct constitutional space in India. If it fails to act swiftly and sensitively, not only will more BLOs suffer, but also public trust in the impartiality of India's election machinery may erode further. A democracy cannot afford that cost. Angshuman Kar is Professor, Department of English and Culture Studies, Director, Centre for Australian Studies, Associate-in-Charge, Alumni Affairs and International Relations Centre, The University of Burdwan, and former Secretary, Eastern Region, Sahitya Akademi, India's Official Academy of Letters

WhatsApp ordered to enforce 'SIM binding,' log out web sessions every 6 hours



The Union government passed directions on Friday (November 28, 2025) requiring services like WhatsApp to only work if users have the SIM card used to sign up for the service in their device, and to log out web-based chat sessions every six hours. The order, sent directly to messaging platforms like WhatsApp, Telegram and Signal, represents a major enlargement of the Department of Telecommunications (DoT)'s exercised jurisdiction, building on groundwork laid by a set of contentious cybersecurity guidelines notified this year. Government officials have expressed frustration over their inability to track cyber fraudsters who use apps like WhatsApp, which currently only require users to validate their mobile number once, before being able to use the service on a range of devices. "SIM binding," as the directions put it, would force WhatsApp and other messaging platforms to stop working if the SIM is taken out, and presumably aid in the traceability of cyber frauds operating on WhatsApp — by, in return, adding possible friction to other users. The directions were first reported by tech policy news site MediaNama.

SIMs used outside the phone where WhatsApp has been registered, the DoT said in its order, were "being misused from outside the country to commit cyber-frauds". The order is in effect from February 2026. The DoT and WhatsApp did not have an immediate response to a query by The Hindu sent outside normal working hours. An industry source called the instructions "problematic" and that no feasibility study or consultation was held before these directions were issued, and that it was unclear if these measures would resist circumvention by fraudsters. The DoT, which typically oversees telcos, has rarely waded beyond "carriage," or the means of transmission, into the "content" layer of the internet, where apps like WhatsApp arguably operate, with the notable exception of website blocking. One official said that such divisions had to be constantly "rethought" in light of the "convergence" that the internet and telecom ecosystems have seen in recent years. Throughout this year, the groundwork for instructions like this to messaging platforms was laid: the DoT notified amendments to its 2024 Cyber Security Rules, which defined the concept of "Telecommunication Identifier User Entities," or TIUEs. This term could be applied to any firm which uses mobile numbers to identify users, from e-commerce platforms to messaging apps. The Internet and Mobile Association of India, which represents Meta and other digital firms, said in a filing to the DoT this year that the amended rules not only represented a "clear overreach of the delegated legislative power under the [2023] Act, but will also have broad implications for digital businesses across fintech, e-commerce, mobility, social media, and essentially any service that relies on telecom identifiers". The telecom industry has repeatedly called on the DoT to act in this direction, ruling that strict anti-spam regulations that are routinely issued for them do not curb frauds perpetrated on platforms like WhatsApp.

Why a career in Data Science needs more than just technical skills

In the rapidly evolving field of Data Science, technical skills such as programming, statistics, and machine learning are often emphasised as the foundation for success. However, while these are essential, they are not sufficient on their own. A successful career in Data Science also requires strong soft skills, business acumen, communication abilities, and ethical considerations.

Effective communication: One of the most critical non-technical skills for a data scientist is communication. Data scientists must translate complex analytical findings into actionable insights for stakeholders who may not have a technical background. A data scientist must explain results in simple terms, using visualisations and storytelling techniques to make data understandable. They must also collaborate with and work with their teams, business leaders, engineers and marketers, which requires the ability to convey technical details without jargon. Yet another useful skill is being able to write reports and document things clearly. This will ensure that analyses are reproducible and useful for future projects.

Business acumen: Technical skills alone cannot drive business value unless a data scientist understands the industry, company objectives, and key performance indicators (KPIs). They must identify which problems are worth solving and how data can provide solutions; assess whether a machine learning model or data analysis is worth the computational and financial cost; and have domain knowledge

in fields like healthcare, finance, or e-commerce to frame data problems effectively. A data scientist who lacks business awareness may build technically impressive models that do not align with the company's strategic goals.

Critical thinking: Data science is not just about applying algorithms. It also requires logical reasoning, creativity, and adaptability. Not every problem requires deep learning. Sometimes a simple regression or heuristic works better. So the ability to choose the optimal approach is crucial. Next, when a model underperforms, the data scientist must be able to diagnose why. Was it data quality, feature selection or bias? Another key requirement is the ability to handle ambiguity. Real-world data is messy and assumptions must be constantly questioned. Critical thinking ensures that data scientists do not blindly rely on tools but instead apply them thoughtfully. Teamwork: Data science projects are rarely solo endeavours. Professionals must work with engineers, product managers, designers, business executives and others. Collaboration requires empathy, conflict resolution, and adaptability... skills that go beyond coding. Ethical considerations:

As Data Science influences industries like healthcare, finance, and law enforcement, ethical implications become crucial. Models trained on biased data can perpetuate discrimination. Handling sensitive data requires compliance with regulations and GDPR and being aware of privacy concerns. Being transparent is important, as stakeholders should understand how models make decisions.

Tejas: Vital vanguard



The crash of a Tejas Mk-1 Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) at the Dubai Air Show on November 21, which resulted in the tragic death of Indian Air Force (IAF) pilot Wing Commander Namanshu Syal, has sparked an intense debate over Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd's (HAL) capabilities and the government's commitment to indigenous defence manufacturing.

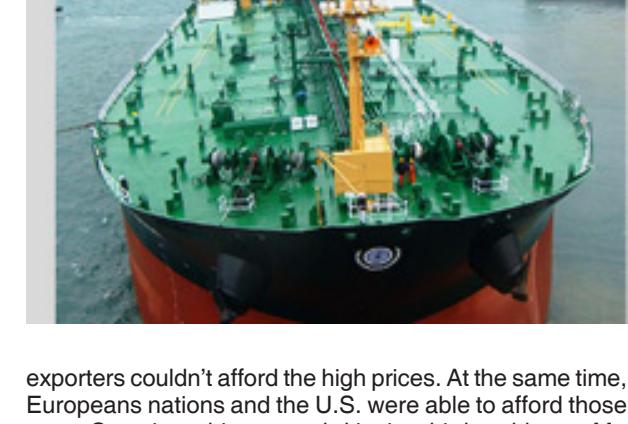
Officials from both HAL and the IAF, however, maintain that the Tejas platform remains one of the safest contemporary fighter aircraft in its class. Addressing the concerns at an event in Delhi on Friday, HAL chairman and managing director D.K. Sunil strongly defended the jet's track record. "There is absolutely no problem with Tejas; it is absolutely safe, and its safety record is the best in the world. What you saw in Dubai was an unfortunate incident," he said. Aviation experts have echoed this view, advising against drawing premature conclusions. They note that modern fighter operations involve inherent risks, and isolated incidents should be evaluated in context. Many believe the Dubai crash is unlikely to impact Tejas's growing export potential.

The Dubai crash marks the second Tejas accident in less than two years. In March 2024, a Tejas fighter went down in Rajasthan's Jaisalmer — the first crash in the aircraft's 23-year flight history. Since its maiden test flight in 2001, the Tejas had maintained an unblemished record. The long gap without major accidents had significantly strengthened confidence in the indigenous programme, which has been under development since the

early 1980s. The LCA was conceived as a replacement for the ageing MiG-21 fleet, which had served as the backbone of the IAF for decades. Over the years, the programme evolved through exhaustive testing, system upgrades and technological breakthroughs. Today, the Tejas family includes several variants: the Mk1, Mk1A and the under-development Mk2, along with trainer and naval versions. The Mk1 is the initial production model currently operated by the IAF, while the Mk1A represents a substantial technological leap with its AESA radar, advanced electronic warfare suite, beyond-visual-range missile capability, mid-air refuelling system and reduced radar cross-section. Smallest and lightest Tejas is the world's smallest and lightest supersonic fighter in its class. It features a delta-wing configuration and a quadruplex digital fly-by-wire flight control system, along with advanced flight control laws designed to enhance manoeuvrability.

With a maximum payload capacity of 4,000 kg and a maximum takeoff weight of 13,300 kg, the aircraft is designed primarily for air combat and offensive air support missions, with reconnaissance and anti-ship roles as secondary capabilities. The IAF currently flies the Mk1 with No. 45 Flying Daggers and No. 18 Flying Bullets squadrons at Sulur Air Force Station, with additional units planned in the coming years. A major milestone for the programme came in March 2024 when the first series production Mk1A completed its inaugural flight. HAL has since commissioned three dedicated production lines — two in Bengaluru and one in Nashik — to meet rising domestic and export demand. Beyond the Mk1A, the more advanced Tejas Mk2 remains in development. Conceived in 2012 as a 4.5-generation fighter to replace the Mirage-2000, Jaguar and MiG-29 fleets, the Mk2 has seen repeated delays, with its first prototype now expected around 2026. Once operational, the Mk2 is expected to be the most capable indigenous fighter. Despite the recent setback in Dubai, aviation analysts maintain that the Tejas programme represents a significant technological achievement and a critical pillar of India's aerospace ecosystem. The coming months — particularly the findings of the Dubai crash investigation — will be crucial. However, for now, HAL and the IAF remain firm that Tejas continues to be a safe, reliable and strategically vital platform for India's air combat capability.

Why is the Govt. reviving a PSU?



At the recent India Maritime Week, the government announced that the state-owned Shipping Corporation (SCI) would buy more than 200 merchant ships of practically all types through joint ventures with respective stakeholders, mostly State-owned. This marks a remarkable turnaround in the fortunes of this mini-ratna that once truly occupied the commanding heights or rather the depths of Indian shipping but had fallen into prolonged decay and was on the verge of privatisation for some five years. The recent geopolitical changes that have taken place in the world have clearly illustrated the importance of having national shipping services, says Anil Devli, CEO of Indian National Shipowners Association. "This has led to a clear change of mind in the country about the emerging importance of merchant navy for the economic security of India," he adds.

With a fleet of more than 120 ships, SCI was among the biggest ship owners in the world. It boasted of an entire range of merchant crafts — liners, oil tankers, gas carriers, chemical tankers, passenger vessels, offshore vessels. It had even made tentative forays into container shipping just as general cargo movement was becoming fully containerised across the world. Cabotage rules favoured SCI. Further, the national merchant carrier had the first rights to India's oil needs and, therefore, tankers dominated its fleet. A high point was SCI buying exactly the same number of new-built tankers as there were Param Veer Chakra awardees in one go from Korea and naming each ship after one brave fauji. Lt. Arun Khetarpal PVC was a product carrier bringing in naphtha and petrol from Gulf. Havildar Abdul Hamid PVC brought in crude oil. Not just military personnel, SCI ships honoured India's saints too — Kabirdas, Ramdas and Ravidas transited the Suez Canal to call on Venice, Antwerp and Rotterdam.

SCI ships often featured the latest. If an engine maker in Germany introduced a new engine, it would be introduced on an SCI ship soon. The company bought, through a joint venture, India's first ever Liquified Natural Gas ship that carried gas in liquid form below -160 degrees C. Stored in aluminium tanks and piped through stainless steel tubes, if the ultra sub-zero LNG ever came in contact with the steel with which the ship was made, then the whole structure could crumble like papad because of a phenomenon called cold corrosion. One small leak could poke a hole into the hull. As a government firm, SCI often served national needs overriding commercial interests. It carried itinerant workers from the mainland to Andamans at discounted rates. It would order new ships to be built in Indian yards despite the cost overruns and delays. SCI could be trusted to bring in goods for the armed forces without a charter party. During the Iran-Iraq war, the black hull of SCI oil tankers carried the word, INDIA, in bold white so the warring parties didn't rain missiles on a friendly Hindi ship. With its corporate office in Nariman Point, SCI was home to and training ground for thousands of seafaring engineers, navigating officers and ratings who would often move on to lucrative careers in foreign vessels and bring in billions of dollars of foreign exchange. Its sprawling training institute in the heart of Mumbai, Powai, would keep them skilled. Liberalisation, privatisation, globalisation as liberalisation-privatisation-globalisation triad took hold across nations in the 1990s, SCI's downfall began. Under the World Trade Organization's General Agreement and Trade and Services, India had to commit to principles such as Most Favoured Nation applying to national maritime carriers in foreign trade for exim cargo though cabotage rules that apply to domestic cargo were not required to be relaxed.

A series of deliberate government policies let SCI slip, starting with the erasure of its right of refusal over India's oil needs. New ships were not ordered. Before the recent purchase of second-hand gas carriers, SCI had ordered two vessels in the last 10 years with one being an offshore vessel. SCI's tanker fleet dwindled drastically. Today, the company's total fleet strength has halved. And the average age of an SCI ship stands at 18 years — merchant ships are candidates for scrapping when they cross 20. "In the past, Indian ships including SCI vessels carried up to 27% of all India's exim cargo and this came down to 7%," says Amitabh Kumar, retired Director General of Shipping. In 2019, SCI privatisation seemed like a sure shot although SCI put off those plans. At the same time, the pandemic showed why a big Indian shipowner was vital to India's interests. Mr. Kumar explains how the pandemic disrupted global shipping. Container freight rates skyrocketed, with peaks that were 10 times pre-pandemic levels, as port delays mounted and voyage durations increased. Indian exports such as shrimp or rice to African countries that were typically high-volume, low-margin, were affected since

exporters couldn't afford the high prices. At the same time, Europeans nations and the U.S. were able to afford those rates. Container ships started skipping third world ports. Mr. Kumar adds that imports too were affected similarly. He takes the case of rubber imports from Vietnam that was key raw material for tyres and hence of the auto industry. Exporters of high-margin, low-volume cargo were able to afford the prices, in contrast. India had little or container ships of its own that the government could ensure called on ports that mattered for Indian trade. Whatever container shipping capacity that India had left the country earlier when cabotage rules were removed. Cabotage ensures that domestic cargo is reserved for domestic shippers. When the rules were removed, Indian container companies such as Shreyas Shipping lost their business, says Mr. Kumar. Post-pandemic, the "so-called free trade regime" sought to be ushered in by GATS went out of vogue across the world, says Sukumar Muralidharan, an independent researcher and writer who has written extensively on global trade, investment and political economy. Covid exposed the shortcomings of the practices and there has been an increase in State-driven initiatives in business across the world, he says, adding that in the U.S., this started with the Biden administration driving major investments in semiconductor industry due to its strategic value. Expanding that, the business-friendly second Trump administration has not only raised tariff walls throwing the concept of Most Favoured Nation to the winds but so far spent nearly \$10 billion buying stakes in companies that it considers has strategic value. While in the past, U.S. government support to companies would typically come from grants and aid driving technology direction and occasionally legislation on curbing foreign ownership, the present administration has taken stakes in companies.

The U.S. government, which has historically kept away from having direct stakes in business and intervened only during crisis such as in the auto industry following the 2008 crash, is today the major shareholder in Intel. It has acquired what is termed a "golden" stake in the 120-year-old U.S. Steel that would give it powers to intervene in business decisions made by its Japanese owner, Nippon Steel. Rare earth companies have seen much interest from the U.S. government since they are crucial for supplying critical components to a range of futuristic deep tech businesses. In India, the SCI has become the object of attention of the government. Thousands of crores from the Maritime Development Fund are being allocated to join ventures between SCI and other PSU stakeholders to purchase ships.

In the past, Indian shipowners had complained that PSU entities like the Container Corporation of India or the oil majors did not give them long-term contracts that would help them raise capital and purchase new ships. Short-term contracts in the open market meant purchasing second hand or becoming third owners of ships with short lifespans.

But the SCI joint ventures with these PSUs will ensure long-term backing although how many of these purchases would be newbuilds from Indian shipyards is still a grey area. For instance, Bharat Shipping Line, a JV between SCI and CCI, will purchase 20 container ships, adding previous container tonnage to India. "The build up of Indian tonnage will happen gradually. In any case, ship prices are at record high levels because of the prolonged bull run in global shipping after the pandemic disruption. Now is not a really good time for massive fleet expansion," adds Mr. Kumar. Mr. Devli of INSA adds a caveat that measures to increase merchant ship cargo carrying capacity of India should be extended to private players as well. "It is important to make the business of merchant shipping competitive so that it will attract investment and lead to growth not just of SCI but of the entire Indian flag tonnage," he adds.

How will new codes change labour laws? | Explained



pliance support rather than punitive action," are some of the other features.

How have employers responded?

Almost all employers' organisations have welcomed the Codes. The president-designate of the Confederation of Indian Industries R. Mukundan told The Hindu that the labyrinthine labour law framework needed to be simplified, harmonised and modernised. "The Labour Codes do exactly that. They will create jobs, ensure social protection and maintain industrial harmony in a fast advancing economy," he said. He argues that the uniformity across States, digital filings, reduced disputes and the emphasis on flexibility will make India a more attractive destination for doing business. However, representatives of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) are sceptical. The Association of Indian Entrepreneurs (AIE) fear that the new Labour Codes may significantly increase operating costs for MSMEs and disrupt business continuity across key sectors. "While AIE fully supports progressive labour reforms and the need for a modern workforce framework, the organisation has cautioned that the immediate impact on MSMEs could be severe unless governments provide clarity, transitional support, and flexible implementation mechanisms," it said in a statement. It is seeking a transitional grace period with reduced penalties for MSMEs.

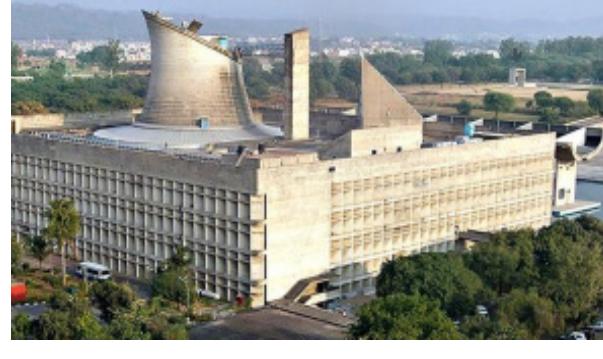
What are the concerns of trade unions?

Barring the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS), all Central Trade Unions (CTUs) are opposed to the Labour Codes. Ten CTUs and associated federations organised strikes against the proposed Labour Codes in 2019, 2020, 2022, 2023 and on July 9, 2025. The BMS has welcomed the implementation of two Labour Codes, the Code on Wages and Code on Social Security, and has questioned provisions in the Industrial Relations Code and the OSHWC Code. The CTUs worry that the codes will take away several federal rights, including the right to decide minimum wages in the States. The floor wage, according to them, is a joke played on workers as in the past too, the Centre had failed to address the demands and realities of workers. On social security, the CTUs argue that 93% of the workers are not covered under any social security and the codes have no provision to improve the scenario. Also, the threshold of workers for factory licence has been increased and this will exclude a lot more workers from the social security and minimum wages provisions, allege trade unions. On the Industrial Code too, they have issues as there will be "unwarranted restrictions" on the functioning of trade unions, including "limitations on membership, restrictions on outsiders serving as office-bearers, and the introduction of concepts such as the sole negotiating union and the negotiating council." The right to strike also sees curtailments in the code. Trade unions have questioned the reduction of retrenchment notice pay, limiting the period for workers' money claims, exclusion of house rent allowance from the definition of "wages", the overall emphasis on contractualisation and allowing women workers in night shifts in sectors such as mines.

What lies ahead?

The Government has announced that all stakeholders will get 45 days to respond to the draft Rules of the Codes which it will again pre-publish with some modifications. Opposition-ruled States have reservations: Kerala said it will not implement the codes, while Karnataka, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu have also questioned the Centre's "unilateral" approach. The trade unions have urged the Government to convene the Indian Labour Conference, the tripartite forum that has not met for over a decade, at the earliest. Employers also want the government to facilitate more discussions at the factory level so that relations are not

Chandigarh battle: Why did Centre backtrack from bringing Punjab & Haryana's capital under its control



of Punjab and Haryana. The Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJP's predecessor) opposed the reorganisation of Punjab terming it a "betrayal of public confidence".

1970: In face of threats of self-immolation by Akali Dal leader Sant Fateh Singh, then-Prime Minister Indira Gandhi promised to hand over entire Chandigarh to Punjab. In exchange, Haryana will be given the Hindi-speaking area of Fazilka including the famous Abohar market. As this area did not border Haryana, a 6.43 km-long corridor would be constructed to access it, declared Ms. Gandhi. With the help of Centre's aid, Haryana was to build a new capital and leave Chandigarh by 1975. This award was never implemented and even Punjab urged Centre to reconsider handing over Fazilka to Haryana. 1985: Years later, taking another stab at the Chandigarh issue, then-Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi signed the Rajiv-Longowal accord on July 25. The 11-point resolution awarded Chandigarh to Punjab and Haryana was to be compensated by the transfer of the Hindi-speaking areas of Punjab. A commission was to be set up to demarcate these areas by December 31, 1985 and the two transfers was to be effected on January 26 next year. It also promised to set up a commission to examine the remaining territorial claims and counter-claims of Punjab and Haryana. Though it was not specified, the future of Abohar and Fazilka, which under Mrs. Gandhi's award of 1970 were to be included in Haryana, too, would be settled by this commission. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and President of Akali Dal Sant Harchand Singh Longowal exchanging documents after signing a Memorandum of settlement on Punjab issue, in New Delhi on July 24, 1985. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and President of Akali Dal Sant Harchand Singh Longowal exchanging documents after signing a Memorandum of settlement on Punjab issue, in New Delhi on July 24, 1985. This resolution was also never implemented amid Opposition from Haryana and other political parties. The signature of the accord - Akali Dal chief Sant Harchand Singh Longowal, who had also allowed sharing of rivers Sutlej and Beas' waters with Haryana, was murdered along with the chief engineer of the Sutlej-Yamuna Link Canal. The river dispute still remains with the project stalled. Recent incidents

2005: Haryana asserted its claim on Chandigarh demanding a separate High Court for Haryana via a resolution. It urged the Centre to suitably amend the Punjab Reorganisation Act. As of date, no such changes have been made. 2022: MHA notified rules aligning the service conditions of all employees of Chandigarh with the Central Civil Services. About 60% of employees are from Punjab and 40% are from Haryana, in Chandigarh's civil services. The move was welcomed by the employees as it meant better benefits and salaries. In response, the Punjab Assembly unanimously passed a resolution to immediately transfer union territory of Chandigarh — the joint capital of Punjab and Haryana, to Punjab. Countering it, Haryana passed a resolution to retain its right to the two States' joint capital territory of Chandigarh. Meanwhile, the Chandigarh Municipal Corporation passed a resolution to remain as a Union Territory. 2024: Haryana government had offered 12 acres of land in Panchkula in exchange for 10 acres of land near IT Park Road in Chandigarh to construct its new Assembly building. Union Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change had reportedly granted environmental clearance for the land offered by Haryana. Outraged, all major parties in Punjab — Congress, BJP and even AAP, opposed the move urging the Punjab Governor to not allow the project, asserting that Chandigarh belonged to Punjab. In February this year, the Chandigarh administration rejected the land swap stating that the property offered by Haryana was not up to the UT's urban building standards. It claimed that the Panchkula land 'lacked proper access, had a natural drain (nullah) running through it and was in a low-lying area' while the IT Road land was a prime property valued at around ₹640 crore. The Centre's backtracking of its recent move to resolve the Chandigarh conundrum shows lack of political will to settle it and that the tussle for the joint capital is likely to feature in the 2027 electoral campaign for Punjab.

India's population to stabilise by 2080 due to dip in fertility rate: IASP



traceptives and wider access to birth control have further accelerated the decline, he said. "Couples today are better informed and exercise greater control over when and how many children to have," Mr. Chandran said. He said that late marriages and growing economic opportunities — especially for women pursuing careers — have also significantly influenced reproductive choices. "Development is inversely proportional to birth rates. Illiterate groups still have fertility levels above three, but among the educated, TFR ranges between 1.5 and 1.8," he said. Citing Kerala's example, Mr. Chandran said the State achieved replacement-level fertility (2.1) between 1987 and 1989 and now has a TFR of around 1.5. West Bengal's fertility rate has also seen a sharp fall. According to the Sample Registration System (SRS) Statistical Report 2023, the state's TFR has dropped to 1.3, down from 1.7 in 2013 — a decline of nearly 18% and well below the replacement level of 2.1. West Bengal now ranks among the lowest in the country, on par with Tamil Nadu and just above Delhi, while recording the lowest urban TFR and the second-lowest rural TFR nationally, he said. The demographer noted that while birth rates are falling, life expectancy continues to rise due to improvements in healthcare. "More people are living beyond 60, and this brings new challenges of elderly care, especially as younger people migrate for work," he said, adding that solutions such as elderly day-care facilities are increasingly being discussed. IASP, founded in 1971 and comprising around 1,100 demographers and population scientists, regularly deliberates on such issues with support from bodies including UNFPA, the Population Council and the Population Foundation of India.

Indian astronaut Shubhanshu Shukla foresees defining decade for India's space exploration

Hyderabad: Indian astronaut Shubhanshu Shukla on Thursday said that the next five to ten years are going to be really defining times for India as far as space exploration is concerned, as a lot of things are going to happen. In an interactive session on the sidelines of space startup Skyrout's facility inauguration here, Shukla said there are only a few countries which have done what India has achieved already and there are even fewer which are doing what India is planning to do in space.

He further said space voyages will not be restricted in future as the government is in the process of formulating how to make entire structures for selection, and how people from different fields can apply. "I think that the next five to ten years are going to be really defining times for our country as far as space exploration is concerned. A lot of things are going to happen. And I think it is going to be bright, shiny

for the kids who are coming up to explore this (space) and go forward in this domain," he said replying to a query. He also said there is a need to re-evaluate the existing global frameworks, treaties and laws, which are not binding on anyone, as anything done in outer space is going to affect each and every person on the planet Earth. He was part of the Axion-4 private space mission that lifted off from Florida on June 25 and docked at the ISS on June 26. He returned to Earth on 15 July. On students opting to become astronauts, he said, "You could be an engineer, scientist, researcher, medical professional. You can apply to be an astronaut, but will have to follow these three things that I mentioned in the previous answer — physical fitness, medical fitness and psychological fitness." Recalling his experiences in the International Space Station, Shukla said the body changes a lot in the initial few days as all the blood

Even before digital devices fragmented attention spans, teachers exhorted students to "Pay attention". When I was in school, in the 1970s and 1980s, teachers would use this phrase, sometimes banging on a desk with a wooden duster, to get our attention. The use of the verb 'pay' suggests that we have always perceived attention as a scarce resource, not to be frittered away. However, over the last decade, as gadgets made deeper inroads into our everyday lives, there is a growing recognition that our attentions are being parcelled and monetised, often leaving individuals distraught and dismayed. Is it possible to regain control of our attention spans? Attention, like many other psychological phenomena, is hard to define. Even without the tug of social media, we are bombarded by a plethora of sensations, only a fraction of which may be relevant to us in a given moment. Though the term 'attention' is used as if it's a "single entity," in Altered Traits, Daniel Goleman and Richard Davidson posit that it actually consists of a set of abilities that includes selective attention, vigilance, goal focus and meta-awareness.

Paying attention is hard work in the analogue world. However, it becomes exponentially harder when we are fed a continuous diet of digital 'brain rot'. Social media platforms are designed to lure our flickering attention only to fill our heads time and again with largely banal stuff. An article in The

Economist (dated September 13, 2025) likens this to a form of 'theft' because when we direct our attention to our device, it prevents us from engaging in something else, which, in turn, can dampen our productivity. Because attention is controlled by both voluntary and involuntary mechanisms, tech companies take advantage of the latter to keep us scrolling endlessly.

Two types of ADHD? In an article in Psyche, three psychiatrists, Paul Kudlow, Karline Treunicht and Elia Abi Jaoud observe that the incidence of attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) has mushroomed in both children and adults over the past two decades. Further, they argue that the disorder has morphed and the condition is more akin to a spectrum with two extremes that they refer to as Type I and Type II ADHD. As our ability to pay attention is determined by

both biological and environmental factors, most of us "fall somewhere between these two poles." According to the psychiatrists, Type I ADHD is the "classical form" which typically manifests in early childhood as a "neurodevelopmental condition". Given appropriate support either in the form of a structured learning environment or stimulant medication, most children with this form of ADHD get better with age. However, of late, the psychiatrists have been encountering a subset of patients who show a different profile. They don't necessarily have problems staying focused as children. However, in their teens or 20s, they start exhibiting a lack of focus, impulsivity and disorganisation though they weren't like this earlier. The authors posit that Type II ADHD possibly results from countless hours spent scrolling and swapping screens. Brains then get rewired, predisposing them to continually crave instant gratification. As a result, people find it difficult to engage in tasks that require a slower but deeper and more deliberate form of engagement like reading a book or listening to a lecture. The psychiatrists add a caveat that most studies regarding digital usage and symptoms of ADHD are correlational. However, the preliminary longitudinal evidence that exists suggests that heavy digital reliance precedes the onset of symptoms of inattention and impulsivity. According to the authors, the most effective treatment might be to curb digital usage to "deliberate windows" of short durations and engage in offline activities that enhance focus. As early as 1890, William James notes in Principles of Psychology that the skill of repeatedly redirecting a meandering mind is "the very root of judgment, character and will". Given how consequential attention is, everyone



Trump-MbS summit — \$1 trillion among friends



As adrenaline-high at the Saudi-American Summit last week demonstrated, the 80-year-old bilateral alliance remains perhaps the oldest transactional deal still going strong. It predates the establishment of post-Second World War global architectures such as the United Nations, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Bretton Woods Institutions. It was conceived as a secret "oil-for-security" strategic partnership signed on Valentine's Day 1945 between U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt and King Abdul Aziz bin Abdul Rehman al-Saud on the USS Quincy in the Suez Canal Area. Originally intended to last 60 years, it was renewed in 2005. Thanks to the exceptional amity between U.S. President Donald Trump and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MbS), this arrangement is currently being reset to the new domains of strategic cooperation, with the potential to anchor bilateral, regional and global developments in a more consequential manner. The trajectory of ties

During the past 80 years, U.S.-Saudi ties have not always had smooth sailing. First, thanks to shale technology, the U.S. has become the world's largest producer of crude and a significant exporter. While this has reduced the commercial content of the relationship, the U.S.'s exports have remained steady, leading to a decline in the bilateral merchandise trade and a balance swinging in America's favour. As Saudi Arabia's trading partner, the U.S. now ranks below China and India. Historically, the ties came under strain during the Ramadan War of 1973, when Saudi Arabia joined an Arab oil embargo. In the mid-1980s, the Saudis surprised the Americans by buying intermediate-range ballistic missiles from China, a country they did not even recognise then. There have been tensions as the American military supplies were stanching during the Yemen war, affecting Saudi offensive and defensive capabilities against the Houthis.

The assassination of Jamal Khashoggi, a prominent Saudi commentator working with The Washington Post, in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul in October 2018 jolted ties, and the Biden presidency initially decided to keep MbS at arm's-length. The friction pushed the Saudis into diversifying their ties with China and Russia. In December 2022, China's President Xi Jinping visited Riyadh and held three separate summits with the leaders of Saudi Arabia, Arab and Muslim countries, respectively. Later, Beijing also facilitated the resumption of diplomatic ties between Saudi Arabia and Iran. Since late 2023, the U.S. support for Israel's brutal military campaign in Gaza has also made it difficult for Riyadh to turn a new page in bilateral ties. The Saudis have resisted U.S. pressure to formally recognise Israel, pre-conditioning it on the creation of a pathway to Palestinian statehood, which Israel has ruled out. New contours under the Trump presidency

There has been a positive sea change in bilateral ties since Mr. Trump took over the U.S. presidency this year. His first visit of his second term abroad was to Saudi Arabia in May 2025, where an agreement to supply \$142 billion worth of military equipment was secured. The new contours of this new relationship were in evidence at the no-holds-barred state visit. It included a moving guard of honour, a fly-past, a private lunch and a 300-guest banquet, both hosted by Mr. Trump, who also attended the investment forum at which deals worth \$270 billion were signed. On his part, MbS readily agreed to raise the promised Saudi investments in the U.S. economy from \$600 billion to \$1 trillion without a fixed time frame. The amount is nearly as big as the country's GDP and the entire corpus of the Kingdom's

The illusion of flow: U-turns slowing Hyderabad down

A little before 8 a.m. on a weekday, Dinakar Kumar Rao stays perched on his two-wheeler at the edge of Uppal junction, watching traffic crawl in slow motion. The skywalk above him may tower impressively, but the chaos below feels like a road network stuck mid-thought — cars edging forward, stopping, shuffling sideways, building pressure that bursts into honks.

Rao, 47, has lived in Boduppal for over a decade and has learnt to mark time by these rhythms. What he once assumed was temporary inconvenience on his long commute to Gachibowli has now settled into a daily test of patience. "What should have become easier has somehow become more complicated," he says. "It is not just being stuck in traffic; it is the sense that movement itself has stopped making sense." Uppal junction embodies that confusion. One approach road is closed, forcing thousands of commuters into a long U-turn loop before they can rejoin the main road. The diversion adds only a few minutes, yet the irritation accumulates far beyond the number. "You take a loop, lose five minutes and end up exactly where you started," he says. Across the city, the pattern repeats. At Jubilee Hills, a car trying to beat a U-turn curve smashed into a bus in July, flinging its driver onto the bonnet. In Rasoolpura in September, a man was thrown off his scooter when a speeding vehicle cut through a U-turn near the NTR statue. Such incidents, buried in FIRs and routine police reports, say more about the city's design anxieties than any traffic dashboard ever does. The numbers underline the scale. Nearly 800 U-turns dot the tri-commissionerate — 439 in Cyberabad, about 200 in Hyderabad and nearly 150 in Rachakonda. Between 2021 and 2025, the city recorded 366 accidents at U-turn locations, including 25 fatal crashes. In 2024 alone, nearly 4% of all road accidents occurred at U-turn points. Police booked close to 20,000 violations for prohibited or improper turns over five years, with the numbers rising each year. With roughly 1,500 new vehicles added daily and average speeds hovering at just 22-23 kmph, Hyderabad's roads are inching close to saturation. Authorities insist that U-turns exist for good reason. Each one, they say, goes through a proposal stage, GHMC approval and a trial run before opening. But over time, a pattern has emerged: U-turns open with fanfare, close under pressure, reopen with tweaks and quietly shut again. Tarnaka is the clearest example: reopened experimentally in April 2025 and shut within weeks after massive

Public Investment Fund (PIF), which already has 40% of its foreign investments in the U.S. economy. The groundbreaking Strategic Defence Agreement was signed, formally designating Saudi Arabia as a "major non-NATO ally" and committing the U.S. to actively assist Saudi Arabia if it came under an attack.

The two sides also made tangible progress towards collaboration in civil nuclear energy and the supply of state-of-the-art Artificial Intelligence (AI) chips. Given the Trumpian propensity for "truthful hyperbole" and Saudi economic stringency, observers are sceptical about all key promises made during the visit being fully realised. Moreover, the bilateral differences on basic issues such as the global oil glut, Riyadh-Tel Aviv reconciliation, Iran, and the Kingdom's drive towards strategic autonomy were papered over during the Summit, which was conspicuous by the absence of any final communiqué. The visit can, nevertheless, be considered as a qualified bilateral success, particularly as it managed to bury the past ghost issues. The robust revival of the U.S.-Saudi ties in Trump 2.0 is bound to have a regional impact. Under MbS, Saudi Arabia, the Arab world's largest economy, has abandoned its low-key diplomatic profile, adopting a more assertive and visible pursuit of national interests. This process has accelerated after the two-year-long Israeli military campaign that has subdued Iran, the Kingdom's long-standing rival in the region and the Islamic world. MbS has already persuaded Mr. Trump to drop sanctions against Syria's new regime and has asked for stronger American intervention to end the Sudanese civil war. Even the Iranian President has sought the MbS facilitation of the resumption of nuclear talks with Washington. The robust endorsement by the White House during the recent visit would further empower MbS, who at 40 years could be around for decades, making him an indispensable, long-term U.S. interlocutor as the region's geopolitical architecture gets reconfigured. While the visit was silent on global issues, there are signs of subterranean bilateral coordination. Although oil has largely disappeared as the driver for bilateral economic synergy, the Saudi economy continues to be highly dependent on oil export revenues. Moreover, as recent U.S. sanctions against the two Russian oil majors demonstrated, Washington intends to continue its dominance of the global oil market. Both Saudis and Americans want the oil price to be at a moderate, sustainable level. The concerted American actions on sanctions against Iran, Venezuela and two Russian oil majors can only help stem the emerging supply-side oil glut, shore up the price and create market space for higher exports by both Saudi Arabia and the U.S. For the U.S., reinforced ties with Saudi Arabia would also stave off the recent encroachments by China and Russia on its turf, and complement its regional Pax Americana. Impact on India

The Washington Summit does have several implications for India. First, it may provide advanced U.S. military equipment access to Pakistan, with which Riyadh concluded a strategic mutual defence agreement in September 2025, apparently with the U.S. nod-and-wink. Second, although India, as the world's third-largest oil importer, would prefer oil prices to be low, moderation and stability in the oil market may still be preferable as it navigates for alternative sources to Russian supplies. Third, soaring Saudi ambitions for its post-oil Vision-2030, such as AI data centres, may create economic opportunities for India. Fourth, curbing China's foray into Saudi Arabia may open the door wider for India. India also needs to prioritise entering into a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement with Saudi Arabia. Lastly, the emerging modus vivendi with Israel may also facilitate the work on the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor, which transits through Saudi Arabia. At a different level, White House's differential treatment of MbS shows that its single-minded pursuit of economic transactions continues to trump all previous qualms, such as human rights and proliferation concerns, may light India's pathway to an economic peace with the Americans. The evident MbS-Trump bonhomie during the White House Summit signals the U.S. reclaiming primacy in Riyadh. The locus of the relationship has, nevertheless, shifted from the past "oil-for-security" paradigm. As the new, more nebulous drivers congeal and Saudi Arabia asserts its sovereign autonomy, the alliance enters an uncharted territory. While much may remain uncharted, it would, nevertheless, be fascinating to watch its progression.

Jams. Tolichowki has gone through similar flip-flop interventions. Even the TRANSCO U-turn near IKEA in Cyberabad was briefly redesigned as a junction before spiralling queues forced authorities to revert to the earlier layout. Hyderabad Joint Commissioner of Police (Traffic) D. Joel Davis acknowledges the growing concern. "Each U-turn is introduced only after a trial to assess whether it solves congestion or adds to it. Now, teams are being formed to revisit all U-turns across the city to determine which should stay open and which must be closed," he says. For commuters, however, the city is not a policy blueprint but a daily negotiation, and those negotiations are wearing thin. Karkhana is a good place to see how. Suresh Kumar, 54, has commuted on this stretch for over 30 years and remembers when late-night cricket matches in the bylanes were the biggest disturbances. "In the last two years alone, the U-turns on this two-kilometre stretch have opened and closed so many times that even regular drivers have stopped keeping count," he says. "First it was near Mahankali temple, then shifted towards Grill 9 restaurant, then pushed further down, and now it sits half a kilometre before Vikrampuri signal." For residents, this has created its own arithmetic. A short trip to the corner store now means looping past a busy signal, adding minutes and irritation. "Anyone coming into Karkhana from Trimulgherry or Dairy Farm Road must go all the way to Vikrampuri just to double back home. From the outside it looks orderly, but the discomfort belongs to us," says Kumar. Those new to the city find the maze even harder to navigate. When Anita Verghese moved to Hyderabad a few months ago, she expected the city to be simpler than the metros she had lived in. Within days, she found herself circling through one U-turn after another across the western corridor. "It is confusing, exhausting and, frankly, unnecessary," she says. "As a pedestrian, you feel like a non-entity because there is no signal to help you cross. It feels as though signals were removed. U-turns put in their place to create an illusion of movement and everyone just went along with it." That illusion matters. While U-turns theoretically reduce delays by eliminating signal stops, the extra distance and merging time often exceed what a red light would have required. In peak hours, reaching a U-turn 300-400 metres ahead can take over a minute, followed by another half-minute to merge. Analysis shows many commuters spend more than 90 seconds on a U-turn manoeuvre, longer than the average 70-second delay at a properly timed signal.

When a convicted Sengottaiyan stood disqualified from contesting elections



A quarter of a century ago, former AIADMK veteran leader K. A. Sengottaiyan, who joined actor-politician Vijay's Tamil Vetti Kazhagam on Thursday (November 27, 2025), stood disqualified from contesting elections. In the year 2000, the former Transport Minister was convicted in two different corruption cases and sentenced to jail attracting disqualification from contesting polls under the Representation of People Act.

Mr. Sengottaiyan had served as Minister for Transport in Jayalalithaa's first Cabinet (1991-96). Soon after the AIADMK faced a rout in the 1996 Assembly elections, the M. Karunanidhi government had registered multiple corruption cases against the former Chief Minister, some of her erstwhile Cabinet colleagues, their family members and bureaucrats. The CB-CID registered cases against Mr. Sengottaiyan, his personal assistant and officials, under the Prevention of Corruption Act accusing them of causing wrongful loss to the Jeeva Transport Corporation (JTC), Anna Transport Corporation (ATC) and J Jayalalithaa Transport Corporation (JJTC, later renamed Rajiv Gandhi Transport Corporation). They were accused of conspiring and deriving pecuniary advantage in the procurement of bus spare parts, printing of tickets and bus body building.

On October 3 that year, Mr. Sengottaiyan was arrested by the CB-CID in the ATC corruption case. He was the fourth former Minister to be held on corruption charges after Indira Kumari, T.M. Selvaganapathy and K.P. Krishnan. He was remanded in the Salem Central Prison. Subsequently, he was arrested in the JTC and JJTC cases. He secured bail in January 2007. Later, the government constituted three Special Courts in Chennai to exclusively try the 46 corruption cases related to the 1991-96 Jayalalithaa government. Mr. Sengottaiyan's cases were transferred here and charges were framed against him. Mr. Sengottaiyan took the defence that the cases were foisted on him due to political vendetta.

"The Chief Minister (Karunanidhi) had been attempting to distance him from the AIADMK as he played a vital role in protecting Ms. Jayalalitha, the then Leader of the Opposition, from being physically attacked in the Assembly and also as he was a staunch pillar of support for his party leader in Coimbatore and Erode districts," The Hindu reported in July 2000 citing his defence in the ATC scam. On August 4, 2000, Mr. Sengottaiyan and the co-accused were convicted in the JTC scam and sentenced to undergo rigorous imprisonment for four years. He was also directed to pay a fine of ₹1.05 lakh. "In the 195-page order, the Special Judge-I, Mr. A.C. Arumugaperumal Adityan, found the three guilty and sentenced them under various provisions of PCA and IPC. The convicted were later lodged in the Central Prison, Vellore. Mr. Sengottaiyan, is the fourth member of the previous AIADMK cabinet, besides the former Chief Minister, Ms. Jayalalitha, to be convicted and sentenced by Special Courts set up to try cases registered under PCA," The Hindu reported.

Four months later, Mr. Sengottaiyan was convicted in the ATC case and sentenced to five years rigorous imprisonment by Special Judge-II S.S.P. Darwesh. On account of his conviction in these two cases, Mr. Sengottaiyan could not contest in the 2001 Assembly elections, in which the AIADMK was voted back to power. Jayalalithaa herself stood disqualified from contesting in the election on account of her conviction in the TANSI land deal cases. In April 2002, Mr. Sengottaiyan was acquitted in the JJTC case by the Special Court. Subsequently, in February 2005, the Madras High Court set aside his convictions in the ATC and JTC cases. In the 2006 Assembly elections, he won for the fifth time from the Gobichettipalayam constituency, though the AIADMK lost power. The Karunanidhi Government then moved the Supreme Court challenging Mr. Sengottaiyan's acquittal in the two cases. However, in November 2006, the Supreme Court declined to interfere with the judgement solely on account of delay in filing the appeal. "To a question from the Bench about the reason for the delay in filing the appeal, senior counsel Altaf Ahmad, appearing for the State, said it was filed after the new government assumed office in this May," a report in The Hindu said. The Bench told the counsel "change of political climate cannot be cited as a reason for the delay. You can't go by that logic. State is a State. This happens to bureaucrats who can't act independently [to go on appeal]. The appeal is being dismissed only on the ground of delay." In 2011, Jayalalithaa returned as Chief Minister and inducted Mr. Sengottaiyan as a Minister in a Cabinet. She later sacked him. Thereafter, he returned as Minister only in the Edappadi K. Palaswami Cabinet in February 2017.

Hong Kong blaze: Why buildings have disastrous fires and how they can be prevented



On November 26, a fire started on scaffolding at the Wang Fuk Court housing complex in Tai Po in Hong Kong and spread rapidly across multiple high-rise blocks wrapped in bamboo and other flammable external materials. At least 44 people had died as of 7 am IST (November 27) while hundreds were missing. The local police had reportedly arrested three construction executives even as investigators were looking into how renovation work on the structure had allowed the fire to spread vertically so fast.

Why do buildings burn?

Buildings burn when three things come together and keep feeding each other: heat, fuel, and oxygen. Potential ignition sources include short circuits, welding sparks or a kitchen flame but also any fireworks inside or nearby. The heat from these sources heats nearby material until it decomposes and releases flammable gases. Those gases can mix with air and burn, releasing even more heat, which then warms other materials. In a building filled with plastics, fabrics, paper, and synthetic foams, this positive feedback loop can quickly avalanche into a big fire. Once a room's surfaces all get hot enough, the space can reach a point called flashover, when almost everything ignites within seconds and the fire becomes very hard to control or survive. Many large fires since 2000 have started off as localised blazes that the structures' geometry and construction materials fanned into building-scale disasters. Architects and engineers have known that external scaffolding, cladding systems, and cavities on the façade can act like open chimneys that allow hot gases to race upwards, pulling in fresh air from below and warming up the higher levels.

How are occupants put at risk?

In Hong Kong, based on an early assessment by investigators, bamboo poles and plastic mesh that surrounded the towers gave the first fire a continuous and combustible path up the towers' exterior. Similarly, in Shanghai in 2010, sparks from welding had ignited nylon netting and bamboo scaffolding, and the resulting fire spread into a 28-storey apartment building under renovation. In London's Grenfell Tower in 2017, an electrical fault in a fridge started a small flat fire, but flammable cladding and insulation on the façade plus a ventilated gap behind the panels created a powerful artificial chimney that carried flames rapidly up the tower, killing 72 people. A similar sort of external cladding contributed to repeated fires at Dubai's Torch Tower in 2015 and 2017. Inside buildings, the way a fire grows is shaped by the fire load (i.e. the quantity of materials that can burn), compartmentation, and escape routes. Hospitals, nightclubs, offices, and factories in particular are known to have a dense fire load, including beds, medical plastics, soundproofing foam, paper files, stored chemicals, and textiles. When ignition occurs in a poorly compartmented space, flames and smoke can spread through stairwells and ceiling voids. The 2011 AMRI Hospital fire in Kolkata began with an electrical fault in the basement, where hospital administrators had stored flammable materials. The smoke and heat moved upwards even as alarms and attempts at evacuation failed, and eventually 89 people died.

In the Station nightclub fire in the US in 2003, pyrotechnics ignited polyurethane foam around the stage. Within minutes, the foam and ceiling were burning, and smoke and

overcrowding together led to the death of 100 people, compounded by a lack of sprinklers. A similar story played out in 2016 at the Ghost Ship warehouse fire in California, where 36 people died during a party in a cluttered and illegally converted warehouse with no sprinklers or alarms. More than 250 workers died in the Ali Enterprises garment factory fire in Karachi in 2012 because the company's owners and managers had barred the windows and locked the exits, so the workers couldn't outrun the smoke and heat, even though the structure itself didn't collapse immediately. In Dhaka's FR Tower fire in 2019, office workers were trapped in a high-rise building that had few usable exits and no sprinklers, again allowing an ordinary fire to become lethal. Twenty-five people were killed.

How can buildings collapse?

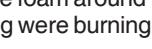
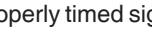
The structure of a building also determines how long it can stand when it's on fire. While steel is strong, it loses much of that virtue when it's exposed to temperatures of 500° to 600° C. Without proper fireproofing, then, a building's beams and columns can start sagging, pulling other elements out of alignment. In Madrid's Windsor Tower in 2005, the concrete core and some protected elements withstood the heat but unprotected steel perimeter members failed, leading to a partial collapse of the structure. In 2017, Tehran's Plasco Building — a high-rise with a steel frame and a significant fire load — the absence of sprinklers and low compartmentation allowed a fire to burn for long enough to cause a floor to collapse, which led to more failures around the building that eventually pulled the whole structure down. In 2001, at New York's World Trade Centre, the aircraft's collisions with the Twin Towers stripped them of fireproofing, and large, multi-floor fires heated the floor trusses and columns until they buckled. The tragic result was the complete collapse of the towers despite their modern design. In most of these examples, the ignition was usually in the form of routine activity such as electrical faults, hot work, fireworks, cooking, etc. The main killers were subsequently the fast spread of the fire and smoke rather than exotic fuels. The rapid spread was facilitated by combustible façades, scaffolding, insulation, and materials indoors, which together created continuous fuel beds and chimneys.

How can building fires be prevented?

When they design and construct a (reasonably well-funded) building, engineers and architects generally assume that small fires will occur, so much of the design is already invested in keeping an accidental fire in one place for a set period of time, thus allowing the occupants to leave before the conditions become lethal.

The central idea is, once again, to have compartments. The floors, walls, and ceilings are arranged to create fire compartments with a specific fire-resistance rating. To do that, builders build them with concrete, fire-resistant masonry and/or protected steel (which is steel that's been given a fire-resistant coating or encasement that slows the transfer of heat). Fire doors and fire-resisting glazing are also used to close openings between compartments. The ultimate desired effect is for each such compartment to resist the spread of a fire for 60 minutes, 120 minutes or so on.

Modern building codes also attempt to prevent fires from racing upwards or across the outside of a building by restricting the use of combustible cladding and balcony materials and by forcing designers to break up continuous air gaps behind façades with interruptions. Architects and engineers may also select materials that prevent structural collapse in exchange for being damaged themselves. After the Grenfell Tower fire, for instance, the UK banned certain combustible materials in the external walls of high-rise housing and later extended this to hotels, hospitals, and other buildings. In fact there's now a move to ban metal composite panels with a polyethylene core on many buildings altogether. Building codes in many countries, including India, also specify minimum separation distances between buildings and impose limits on the floor area per compartment to reduce the chances of an external fire spreading from one part of a city block to another.



No extension beyond March for IndiGo's wet-leased planes from Turkey; its Turkish Airlines 777s to go back after February



the Turkish Airlines' Boeing 777s will have to go back after February.

IndiGo uses the two wet-leased Boeing 777s for its flights to Istanbul from Delhi and Mumbai. Amid backlash against Turkey in India due to the former's public backing of Pakistan during Operation Sindoora, the DGCA had informed IndiGo that it would not allow lease extensions for the two aircraft beyond August. However, in August, the regulator allowed a one-time final lease extension till February-end upon IndiGo's request, but stated that no further extensions will be given. DGCA approvals are mandatory for Indian airlines to wet-lease aircraft.

IndiGo has the permission to use wet-leased aircraft from Turkey-based airlines only till March, and no further extension will be provided, India's aviation regulator Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) said late Monday. Moreover, the lease on two wide-body Boeing 777 aircraft that are among the planes IndiGo has on lease from Turkish carriers is valid only till the end of February, and has not been extended. The clarification came amid speculation in a section of the media that IndiGo had received the DGCA's nod for a six-month lease extension on the two Boeing 777s.

IndiGo has a total of seven aircraft on wet lease—taking the aircraft on lease along with the operating crew—from Turkish carriers—five Boeing 737 planes from Corendon Airlines till March-end, apart from the two Boeing 777 jets from Turkish Airlines till February-end. IndiGo also has the regulator's permission to lease five Airbus A320 planes from another Turkish carrier Freebird Airways, but these are yet to be inducted by the Indian airline.

"M/s IndiGo has been permitted to operate aircraft on wet lease from Turkey with a last extension valid till March 2026 with a sunset clause that no further extension will be given. This is based on the undertaking submitted by IndiGo airlines in the instant case wherein they have sought last time extension, since their long-range aircraft (A321-XLR) are to be delivered by February 2026," the DGCA said. A senior official said that while the lease validity for the narrow-body planes from Turkish carriers is there till March,

IndiGo has a total of 15 wet-leased aircraft in operation, with eight yet to be inducted. Apart from Turkey-based airlines, IndiGo has taken aircraft on wet lease from the likes of Norway-based Norse Atlantic Airways, Qatar Airways, and Latvia's SmartLynx Airlines. The only other Indian airline operating wet-leased aircraft is SpiceJet, with 17 such planes in operation, all from operators in Europe. In a typical wet lease arrangement, the lessor provides the aircraft with crew, maintenance, and insurance, and retains operational control. Such arrangements are best suited for short-term capacity increases or to test new routes. Dry lease, on the other hand, includes just the aircraft, which means that the lessee airline is required to provide crew, look after the plane's maintenance and insurance, and has full operational control. Dry leases are better for long-term use by lessee airlines.

'MUFG deal a huge endorsement of India's progress': Shriram Finance

The deal between Shriram Finance and Japan's MUFG Bank is a "huge endorsement" of India's progress, Umesh Revankar, the vehicle financier's Executive Vice Chairman, said on Monday, noting that a reduction in credit cost for all lenders is an indication of the economy being structurally healthier and the development of "financial discipline". "That's why I think more international institutions want to come to India and tie up with NBFCs (non-banking financial companies)," Revankar told reporters on Monday.

The board of Shriram Finance – India's second-largest non-bank excluding housing finance companies – on Monday approved entering into definitive agreements with MUFG Bank to sell a 20 per cent stake for Rs 39,618 crore, or \$4.4 billion. This is the biggest overseas investment into the Indian financial sector and comes amid frenetic activity that has seen multiple Japanese firms put money in recent months, including Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation buying a 24.2 per cent stake in Yes Bank and Mizuho Securities agreeing to buy more than 60 per cent in Avendus Capital with a view to increase its stake to 78.3 per cent for almost Rs 5,000 crore. Further, in October, the UAE's Emirates NBD Bank agreed to buy a 60 per cent stake in RBL Bank for around \$3 billion.

The rush of foreign money into Indian lending comes at a time when foreign direct investment (FDI) into India has weakened, with 2024-25 seeing net FDI inflow of less than \$1 billion amid rising repatriation of funds by foreign investors and increasing overseas investments by Indian companies. In the first seven months of 2025-26, net FDI into India stood at \$6.2 billion. Shriram Finance's stake sale to MUFG Bank – whose parent is the Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group – is subject to shareholder and regulatory approvals. According to officials, the deal may be completed by April-May 2026. Revankar said the deal with MUFG "should change (the FDI trend). It's a huge (sign of) belief in the Indian economy... Since it's the fastest growing large economy, more capital will come to India". According to Yasushi Itagaki, MUFG's Senior Managing Corporate Executive and Group COO-I & Group Head, Global Commercial Banking Business Group, India is the Japanese firm's "most strategically important key market" among Asian countries "given the strong potential for enduring economic growth". The investment will help MUFG establish a "solid business foundation" in India's Small and Medium Enterprises and retail sectors and "capture the country's growing domestic demand".

Although Reuters reported last week, quoting MUFG officials, that there is a chance "we may push our stake above 50 per cent" as Indian regulations permitted the same,



Revankar said on Monday that the Japanese bank wants to be a minority shareholder and "we have never discussed anything beyond that". Itagaki, meanwhile, said MUFG first needs to "digest" its investment in Shriram Finance and for the time being it will be focused on ensuring "the delivery of this partnership into reality". "Although we have a very long-term strategic view to support Shriram Finance, our priority is to stay focused on realising the value...as a minority shareholder in Shriram Finance." Apart from Shriram Finance, for the moment, "we have no appetite in further expanding our investment in India's financial services segment", Itagaki added.

While the MUFG investment offers plenty of money for growth to Shriram Finance – its capital adequacy ratio is expected to rise to around 31 per cent from 20.68 per cent once the funds are received – the Chennai-based lender is not looking to move away from its existing customer base and business segments, with Revankar saying there was no intention to get into new areas, something which MUFG appreciates. As at the end of September, Shriram Finance had almost 97 lakh customers and assets under management of Rs 2.81 lakh crore. Commercial vehicle loans made up 46 per cent of its book, passenger vehicle loans accounting for another 21 per cent and the share of loans to Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) being 14 per cent. It reported a net profit of Rs 2,307 crore for July-September, up 11 per cent year-on-year. When asked about applying to become a bank, Revankar said the subject was "not a discussion at all". "Even MUFG, they want us to service our constituency, the underbanked and unbanked. We would like to remain there. We feel that there is enough opportunity for growth...in the constituency that we have built, which is vehicle (loans) and SMEs to expand our loan book... Right now, I don't see any distinct advantage (in getting a banking licence) for serving our existing customer base."

Duty-free access, visas as India-New Zealand seal FTA

New Delhi: India and New Zealand on Monday announced the conclusion of talks for a free trade agreement that will give duty-free access to a range of domestic goods, particularly from labour-intensive sectors, and includes an FDI commitment of USD 20 billion over 15 years. The agreement is expected to help double bilateral trade in goods and services to USD 5 billion in five years. On the other hand, New Zealand will get duty-free access to goods such as sheep meat, wool, coal and over 95 per cent of forestry and wood articles. Under the pact, Wellington will get duty concessions on a number of other items such as kiwi fruit, wine, some seafood, cherries, avocados, persimmons, bulk infant formula, Manuka honey and milk albumins. To protect the interests of domestic farmers and MSMEs, India will not give any duty concessions in the politically sensitive dairy sector, like milk, cream, whey, yoghurt, and cheese. The other products which will not be covered under the pact include vegetable products (onions, chana, peas, corn, almonds), sugar, artificial honey, animal, vegetable or microbial fats and oils, arms and ammunition, gems and jewellery, copper and its products, and aluminium and articles. In the services sector, New Zealand will give a temporary employment entry visa pathway for Indian professionals in skilled occupations with a quota of 5,000 visas annually and a stay of up to three years. This pathway covers Indian professions such as AYUSH practitioners, yoga

instructors, Indian chefs, and music teachers, as well as high-demand sectors including IT, engineering, healthcare, education, and construction, strengthening workforce mobility and services trade. The agreement is likely to be signed and implemented in about 7-8 months. The pact would help Indian exporters, reeling under the impact of 50 per cent tariffs imposed by the Trump administration on Indian goods, to diversify shipments in the Oceania region. India has already implemented a trade pact with Australia. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his New Zealand counterpart Christopher Luxon on Monday announced the firming up of the pact. The two Prime Ministers held a phone conversation, following which the announcement on the FTA was made. With negotiations having been initiated during Luxon's visit to India in March 2025, the two leaders agreed that the conclusion of the FTA in a record time of nine months reflects the shared ambition and political will to further deepen ties between the countries. The FTA would significantly deepen bilateral economic engagement, enhance market access, promote investment flows, strengthen strategic cooperation between the two countries, and also open up new opportunities for innovators, entrepreneurs, farmers, MSMEs, students and youth of both countries across various sectors. Both leaders expressed confidence in doubling bilateral trade over the next five years as well as an investment of USD 20 billion in India from New Zealand over the next 15 years."

India, New Zealand wrap FTA talks, aim to double trade in five years



AIMING TO double bilateral trade over the next five years, India and New Zealand Monday announced the conclusion of negotiations on a free trade agreement. Bilateral trade between the countries in 2024-25 was \$1.3 billion. Officials in New Delhi said while talks have concluded, the deal is expected to be signed in 2-3 months after "legal scrubbing", a process where lawyers and trade experts from both sides finalise the agreement's text. The implementation itself could take over six months once it is passed by the New Zealand Parliament. In India, the Cabinet has already given the deal a green light. In a post on X, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, "Concluded in just nine months, this historic milestone reflects a strong political will and shared ambition to deepen economic ties between our two countries... The India-NZ partnership is going to scale newer heights. The FTA sets the stage for doubling bilateral trade in the coming 5 years."

Formal negotiations on the FTA had commenced on March 16 this year when New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon met Modi in New Delhi. Describing the FTA as a "big deal", Luxon said boosting trade would translate into more jobs, higher wages, and expanded opportunities for businesses. He also highlighted India's scale and growth trajectory, noting that the agreement provides New Zealand exporters improved access to a market of over 1.4 billion consumers. India, New Zealand fta, india new zealand trade Describing the FTA as a "big deal", Luxon said boosting trade would translate into more jobs, higher wages, and expanded opportunities for businesses.

Details released by the government showed that New Delhi has agreed to reduce tariffs on 95 per cent of products exported from New Zealand. Wellington would eliminate tariffs on 100 per cent of its tariff lines for all Indian exports. This alone may not result in immediate export growth since average tariffs in New Zealand are one of the lowest in the world, at about 2.3 per cent. Bringing some parity into the deal, New Zealand has "committed" \$20 billion investments into India over the next 15 years in exchange for receiving market access in a high-tariff (over 15 per cent) and fast-growing Indian consumer market. The lopsided nature of the tariff rates could result in higher gains for New Zealand than for India in goods trade, experts said. At a time when a bilateral trade agreement between India and its biggest export destination, the US, remains stuck, New Delhi has managed to conclude talks with New Zealand in a record nine months. So far this year, it has signed two deals, one with Oman last Thursday, and another with the UK in May. The FTA removes numerical caps on Indian students, guarantees a minimum of 20 hours per week work during study, and provides extended post-study work opportunities up to three years for STEM Bachelor's and Master's graduates, and up to four years for Doctorate holders—creating clear pathways for skills development and global careers, the ministry said. "For the first time with any country, New Zealand has created a dedicated pathway for student mobility and post-study work visas with India," the Commerce and Industry Ministry said.

"The FTA establishes a new Temporary Employment

Tamannaah Bhatia eases into her day with soaked nuts, 'tea and time': 'These minutes are private...'



Tamannaah Bhatia, 35, recently gave a glimpse of a slow morning as she "eased" into the day. "I didn't rush my Monday. I eased into it. These minutes are private until now. Just me and tea and time," she said in an Instagram video, where she can be seen relishing some milk tea after eating some soaked nuts.

Taking a cue from the Stree 2 actor's morning routine, we asked an expert about pairing tea and some nuts. Starting the day with dry fruits and tea, as Tamannaah Bhatia shares, can be a gentle and effective way to ease into morning routines while supporting both nutrition and energy balance, said consultant dietitian Garima Goyal. "Dry fruits such as almonds, walnuts, or pistachios are rich in healthy fats, pro-

tein (TEE) Visa pathway for Indian professionals in skilled occupations, with a quota of 5,000 visas at any given time and a stay of up to three years. This pathway covers Indian professions such as AYUSH practitioners, yoga instructors, Indian chefs, and music teachers, as well as high-demand sectors including IT, engineering, healthcare, education, and construction, strengthening skilled workforce mobility and services trade," the ministry said. In New Zealand, while Prime Minister Luxon said the deal reduces or eliminates tariffs on almost 95 per cent of his country's exports, Foreign Minister Winston Peters said it was "neither free nor fair". "Regrettably, this is a bad deal for New Zealand. It gives too much away, especially on immigration, and does not get enough in return for New Zealanders, including on dairy. New Zealand First urged its coalition partner not to rush into concluding a low-quality deal with India, and to use all three years of this Parliamentary cycle in order to get the best possible deal. We also indicated we felt it would be unwise for National to sign up to a deal with India when a Parliamentary majority for that deal was uncertain," Peters said. He said these concerns have been conveyed to Indian External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar. Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal said, "This FTA opens doors for Indian businesses in the region through well-integrated directional exports and gives our youth choices to learn, work and grow on a global stage".

Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal, said, "India's strengths are expanding exports, supporting labour-intensive growth and power services. New Zealand gains deeper, more predictable access to India's large and growing economy. The movement of people, students, professionals, and skilled workers converges these strengths." Apart from tariff liberalisation, the FTA includes provisions to address non-tariff barriers through enhanced regulatory cooperation, transparency, and streamlined customs, sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures and technical barriers to trade disciplines, the Commerce and Industry Ministry said. "All systemic facilitations and fast-track mechanisms for imports that serve as inputs for our manufactured exports ensure that tariff concessions translate into effective and meaningful market access," it said. Cooperation has been agreed in AYUSH, culture, fisheries, tourism, forestry, horticulture and traditional knowledge systems, it said. "Tariff asymmetry has shaped the deal. New Zealand's average import tariff is just 2.3 per cent, compared with India's 16.2 per cent, and 58.3 per cent of New Zealand's tariff lines are already duty-free. As a result, Indian exporters already enjoy wide access in New Zealand markets," former trade officer and founder of think tank GTRI, Ajay Srivastava said.

Srivastava said an FTA alone is unlikely to unlock the full potential of India-New Zealand economic ties, as trade volumes remain modest. Business groups on both sides say the pact must be backed by practical steps to deepen commercial links. New Zealand could expand dairy and horticulture exports to India even at MFN (Most Favoured Nation) tariffs, while India could scale up exports of pharmaceuticals, textiles and IT services to New Zealand, he said. "For India, the agreement strengthens access to a high-income, rules-based Pacific market and supports its broader Indo-Pacific economic strategy. For New Zealand, the deal offers more secure entry into one of the world's fastest-growing large economies at a time of rising global trade uncertainty. New Zealand could expand dairy and horticulture exports to India even at MFN tariffs, while India could scale up exports of pharmaceuticals, textiles and IT services to New Zealand. Wellington could also diversify by growing education, tourism and aviation training services for Indian students and professionals," Srivastava said. In a statement, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said the two leaders agreed that the conclusion of the FTA in a record nine months reflects their shared ambition and political will to deepen ties between the two countries further.

tein and micronutrients, which provide sustained energy and satiety without causing a sudden surge in blood sugar. Including a small portion of these nutrient-dense foods early in the day can help reduce mid-morning hunger and support metabolic steadiness, especially for people with busy schedules," said Goyal.

Pairing dry fruits with tea adds another dimension to the morning ritual. "Tea, particularly when consumed without excessive sugar, offers antioxidants that support immunity and gentle stimulation without the intensity of strong coffee. For many individuals, this combination of light nourishment and antioxidant hydration can set a calm, balanced tone for the day ahead," said Goyal.

However, it's essential to be mindful of portion size and overall dietary balance. "Dry fruits are calorie-dense, so keeping the serving moderate, typically a small handful, ensures you get their benefits without overshooting daily energy needs," Goyal said. Choosing wholesome, minimally processed tea varieties and incorporating whole-food meals later in the morning also ensures that nutrition remains comprehensive rather than limited to small morning bites, she added. So, a morning that includes dry fruits and tea can be both enjoyable and nourishing, especially when you enjoy it without rushing your system. When it fits within a well-structured eating pattern, Goyal mentioned.

FSSAI dismisses 'misleading' social media claims alleging link between eggs and cancer: 'Rely on verified scientific evidence'

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), India's food regulator, recently clarified that eggs available in India are safe for human consumption and dismissed social media claims alleging that egg consumption is carcinogenic or cancer-causing. In its official statement, FSSAI stated that linking eggs to cancer risk is "misleading, scientifically unsupported and capable of creating unnecessary public alarm".

Recall that many social media posts claimed detection of nitrofuran metabolites (AOZ) — substances purportedly linked to cancer — in eggs sold in India. According to PTI, FSSAI officials emphasised that the use of nitrofurans is strictly prohibited at all stages of poultry and egg production under the Food Safety and Standards (Contaminants, Toxins and Residues) Regulations, 2011.

"The regulator explained that an Extraneous Maximum Residue Limit (EMRL) of 1.0 µg/kg has been prescribed for

nitrofuran metabolites — but solely for regulatory enforcement purposes. This limit represents the minimum level that can be reliably detected by advanced laboratory methods and does not indicate that the substance is permitted for use. Detection of trace residues below the EMRL does not constitute a food safety violation nor does it imply any health risk," an FSSAI official said. In alignment with international practices, the European Union and the United States also prohibit the use of nitrofurans in food-producing animals. "No national or international health authority has associated normal egg consumption with increased cancer risk," the regulator reiterated. In the strongly-worded statement, FSSAI urged consumers to "rely on verified scientific evidence and official advisories, reiterating that eggs remain a safe, nutritious, and valuable component of a balanced diet when produced and consumed in compliance with food safety regulations."

From fighting hunger to winning World Cup for Blind: TC Deepika hopes inspiring story can drive change in her Andhra village and beyond



GNS News Agency, Dec 24

After winning the Women's T20 World Cup for the Blind in November, the Indian team visited the Prime Minister's residence, Rashtrapati Bhavan and the BCCI's headquarters in Mumbai even as a steady stream of VIPs lined up to meet them. For captain T C Deepika, one interaction made a "real difference". While meeting Andhra Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan, Deepika raised an issue affecting her village, Tambalabatti, along the Karnataka border. The captain, who scored 246 runs in five games at the World Cup in Sri Lanka including a 91 from 58 balls against Australia in the semifinals, now hopes her team's win will become a catalyst of change in her village – in more ways than one.

The Indian Express visited Deepika's village of 45 families, almost all of them from the Yadav community primarily engaged in farming. It found that the roads were not the only problem there. "The families living there still follow regressive practices," Deepika said, speaking to this newspaper separately over phone. "Women are still asked to sleep outside their homes, either in farms or under a tree, during their menstrual cycle. Pregnant women, too, are not allowed to stay at home. It is also quite common to see girls getting married at a young age," she said, adding that these restrictions are due "lack of education". "Class 4 is where education ends in our village," Deepika's brother Girish said.

Deepika's own journey, her father Chakthamappa (60) said, started with a costly mishap when she was "five months old" leading to loss of vision in one eye. "She accidentally poked her finger into her right eye. Since there were no facilities nearby, we took her to two hospitals, one was 30 km away and another around 68 km. They kept her in the hospital for two months. They said they couldn't do much. It cost Rs 3,000, but it was like Rs 3 lakh to us at that time," he said. Chakthamappa and his wife Chithamma (45) were daily wage farm labourers, earning Rs 800 together on the days they got work. When they didn't, sometimes "for a

few days in a row, the family went to sleep on an empty stomach". Chakthamappa also grew tamarind on two acres of land he owned, but incurred losses and went into debt. "Many times when I was young, my brothers and I used to roam around the village searching for fruits fallen on the streets. If we found anything, we picked it up and ate it," Deepika said. Girish said the financial situation was so dire that their "grandfather died of starvation" and their father "got food only once a day when he was young". After studying till Class 4 at a school near her home, Deepika moved to the School of the Blind at Kunigal in Karnataka till Class 7, and later went to the Ranga Rao Memorial School for the Disabled in Mysuru till Class 10, where she picked up cricket. The school offered free education and hostel accommodation for visually-challenged children.

But the distance between her home and school meant that every time her father wanted to visit her, he had to borrow money and work on the moneylender's farm. "He used to come and visit me once every six months. He used to borrow Rs 500-1,000. When I realised that, I told him there was no need to come. Whenever he visited, I used to check his pockets to see if he had money to go back home. When they gave me food in the hostel or any sweets or cake, I used to cry a lot, wondering if my brothers had eaten or not," Deepika said. After completing Class 10, Deepika returned to her hometown and continued her education at Gnana Jyothi Education Trust's school, a college about 7 km from her village. It was in 2019 that she received a call from Shikha Shetty, who is now the manager of the national blind women's team, asking if Deepika wanted to participate in selection trials. The BCCI proudly congratulates the Indian Blind Women's Cricket Team, who recently won the inaugural Women's T20 World Cup for the Blind. The entire team visited the BCCI headquarters in Mumbai on December 19 and were welcomed by BCCI Hon. Treasurer Mr. Raghuram...

Deepika thought cricket could be a way out of poverty. A well-wisher from her school days, whom she refers to as "Mohan Anna", helped her with funds to get to the selection trials. Once she made the cut, Samarthanam Trust for the Disabled took care of her. "My life changed after that," she said. Samarthanam was also the organiser of the six-team World Cup, which was hosted by Cricket Association for the Blind in India and co-hosted by Sri Lanka Cricket Association for the Visually Handicapped. India beat Nepal by seven wickets in the final in Colombo to emerge winners. Summing up the performance, BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia said, "It was a great effort from Deepika and her team and I would like to congratulate them for their brilliant run in the tournament, which has made the whole country proud."

Pat Cummins ruled out of Ashes, Nathan Lyon to miss Boxing Day Test against England

GNS News Agency, Dec 24

Australian captain Pat Cummins was ruled out of the remaining two Ashes Tests in Melbourne and Sydney, head coach Andrew McDonald said on Tuesday. The 32-year-old had hinted after the win in the third Test at Adelaide that he could miss the Boxing Day Test, with a decision on his involvement in the New Year's Test in Sydney meant to be taken later. "He won't play any part in the rest of the series. That was a discussion that we had a long time out around his return. Yeah, we were taking on some risk. We've now won the series, and that was the goal. To position him for further risk and jeopardise him long term is not something that we want to do."

"Pat's really comfortable with that. If he had any setback in the build-in as well, we would have shut him down straight away," McDonald told reporters on Tuesday. Off-spinner Nathan Lyon would also miss the Boxing Day Test, with Cricket Australia saying that the 38-year-old would need surgery after he tore his right hamstring during the Adelaide Test. The hosts have added Jhye Richardson and Todd Murphy to their squad as replacements for both players. Steve Smith, who led in the first two Tests at Perth and Brisbane, will return to captain the hosts in the fourth Test, starting on December 26. Richardson last played a Test match against England at Adelaide in the 2021-22 Ashes series. Murphy last played for Australia against Sri Lanka at Galle in January. "It's always pretty robust around when you've got three, three potential candidates, or even four."

England to probe reports of excessive drinking in Queensland



GNS News Agency, Dec 24

England cricket's managing director Rob Key, who broke his silence on the Ashes defeat on Tuesday, has revealed they will investigate their players conduct during a four-day break between the second and third Test in Noosa. Key then went on to add that drinking heavily is 'completely unacceptable' for an international cricket team. After losing the second Test at Brisbane, England took a break before the start of the third Test in Adelaide, heading to Queensland's coast to revive the atmosphere. While Key defended the break taken by the team, following reports of players being involved in heavy drinking, questions are being raised if the team prepared well for the third Test at Adelaide. According to a report in BBC, "some members of the team followed two days of drinking in Brisbane with four more in Noosa — six in total, as many days as there had been of Test cricket at this point in the tour." Glenn McGrath, England's managing director, Jofra Archer, centre, is

congratulated by teammates after taking five wickets during play on day two of the third Ashes cricket test between England and Australia in Adelaide, Australia, Thursday, Dec. 18, 2025. (AP Photo/James Elsby) The report further stated that: "The England party was hardly inconspicuous, drinking by the side of the road, with plenty wearing traditional Akubra hats that became the uniform of the holiday." And speaking about the incident, Key said, "If there's things where people are saying that our players went out and drank excessively then of course we'll be looking into that. I'm not a drinker. Drinking excessive amounts of alcohol for an international cricket team is not something that I'd expect to see at any stage. We've added security. We've got enough ways of finding out exactly what happened. And everything that I've heard so far is that they sat down, had lunch, had dinner and didn't go out late and had the odd drink. I don't mind that." Before landing in Australia for the Ashes, England had already ticketed off two players, Harry Brook and Jacob Bethel, after the duo were spotted drinking in New Zealand, the night before the final ODI. And Key said having a break in between the series is absolutely necessary. "Harry Brook is going to spend six days at home this entire winter. Jofra Archer will go through to the World Cup and the Indian Premier League. So I think it's so important that these players, especially multi-format players, can get away and live a normal life. [But] if it goes into where they're drinking lots and it's a stag do, that's completely unacceptable. I think a drinking culture doesn't help anyone in any stretch whatsoever. [But] I have no issue with Noosa if it was to get away and just throw your phone away, down tools, go on the beach, all of that stuff."

Virat Kohli likely to play Vijay Hazare Trophy behind closed doors in Bengaluru



GNS News Agency, Dec 24

Fans in Bengaluru will not get a glimpse to watch Virat Kohli featuring in the Vijay Hazare Trophy after the local authorities failed to give permission for crowd presence. It is understood that talks between the Karnataka State Cricket Association and the state government authorities is underway and there will be a clear picture as to whether Delhi's first round match against Andhra takes place at M Chinnaswamy Stadium or not on Wednesday. If not, there is a strong likelihood that the fixture will be played in BCCI's Centre of Excellence behind closed doors.

Virat Kohli, alongside Rishabh Pant, who is captaining Delhi in the tournament, arrived in Bengaluru on late Mon-

day evening. The Delhi team are scheduled to have their training session at the CoE on Tuesday as a decision on the match-day venue set to be taken by the afternoon. It is understood that KSCA which is headed by former India pacer Venkatesh Prasad, approached the state government seeking permission to host the match in front of 3,000 fans. However, with concerns still remaining about the crowd management and this being a festive season, and the presence of Kohli and Pant would attract huge number of fans. As it could again lead to chaotic scenes, the authorities are understood to have informed the KSCA to play behind closed doors. As far as the venue goes, a committee formed by the state government inspected the Chinnaswamy Stadium to inspect the ground and take a call. It is understood that the KSCA will be informed of the report later in the day. Since the stampede incident which led to 11 people losing their lives outside the Chinnaswamy Stadium premises in Royal Challengers Bengaluru's victory celebrations on June 4, the stadium hasn't been allotted any matches. It was scheduled to host the ICC Women's World Cup opener and final, but those matches were moved out. And ever since Bengaluru was allotted the Elite D fixtures of the Vijay Hazare and it was confirmed that Kohli would turn up for Delhi, fans remained hopeful that they could watch him play Chinnaswamy. Earlier last week, the first two rounds of Delhi, which was scheduled to be played in Alur, was moved to Chinnaswamy.

Why reaching 2700 rating is arguably the hardest leap to make in chess

GNS News Agency, Dec 24

Wesley So remembers the four years he spent labouring away as a 2600-rated player. The leap from 2500 to 2600 for the Philippines-born American grandmaster had happened almost in the blink of an eye when he was just 15 years old. But breaking into 2700 would have felt like summiting Mount Everest from the Everest Base Camp. Among the sport's more elusive clubs, the 2700 rating group in chess currently has a membership of 33 grandmasters. Call it the hardest club to leave in chess. Or a quicksand of a rating trap, one which allows you to get in easily, but pulls you in harder, clinging on to you when you try to graduate to 2700—the informal term the sport has for anyone rated over 2700 is 'super grandmaster'.

"It's one of the hardest things (in chess)," sighs Wesley So. "It takes time, for sure. It took me like four years to get to 2700 after becoming 2600 at 15. Moving from 2500 to 2600 is relatively smooth for most people. But 2600 to 2700 is really difficult. Because chess is very competitive and there are a lot of young kids who are trying to get to 2700. The thing is there's also a lot of pressure involved, you know?" India has currently nine challengers—Karthikeyan Murali (2660), Pranav V (26341), Raunak Sadhwani (2638), Pranesh M (2627), Aryan Chopra (2626), Aditya Mittal (2624), Abhimanyu Puranik (2622), SL Narayanan (2616), Leon Luke Mendonca (2615)—fighting it out in the 2600 ratings club with dreams of making the leap to the 2700s some day. Some like Sadhwani already have a plan, drawn up after conversations with others who have breached that frontier.

"I've spoken to a few people and I think the solution is to play more tournaments. So first, you need to do some training (camp) for two or three months and then you need to play back to back tournaments to gain ratings. I think this is the way which might be interesting to try and I'm going to do it soon," Sadhwani, who turned 20 on Monday. Currently playing in the Global Chess League for the Ganges Grandmasters, Sadhwani says that the pursuit of 2700 occupies considerable space in his mind. "Even before the GCL started, I was training (for breaching into 2700). So for me, the process has already started. I train about 6 to 7 hours daily for this." Mendonca too has been picking the brains of other top players in his quest to raise his level.

Leon Luke Mendonca of the Alpine SG Pipers takes on Volodar Murzin in the Global Chess League at Mumbai's Opera House. (Photo: GCL) Leon Luke Mendonca of the Alpine SG Pipers takes on Volodar Murzin in the Global Chess League at Mumbai's Opera House. (Photo: GCL) "I've actually asked many people (what the secret is to making it to the 2700 club). I have been in 2600 for the last two and a half years. In this phase, I have been trying a lot of things, changing a lot of things, talking to different people

like coaches. But finally you just have to do what works for you because what works for someone else may not work for you. So you have to find your own path and hopefully something clicks," Mendonca, who plays for the Alpine SG Pipers with multiple 2700-rated players like Praggnanandhaa, Fabiano Caruana, and Anish Giri tells So points out that there are plenty of perks involved with being a 2700 rated player: much more invitations from elite closed events like Norway Chess and so on. Simply put, it's easier to make a living from the sport as a 2700-rated player than as a 2600-rated player. "I think the secret to reaching 2700 is just to keep improving. Obviously, not everyone can achieve 2700. But if you just try to keep improving, playing better, you'll get it eventually. It depends a lot. Because obviously, if you reach 2700, you have a good chance to be a chess professional. You can make a living, good money if you reach 2700," says So.

Frenchman Maxime Vachier-Lagrave, one of the permanent fixtures in the 2700-rating club, was one of the outliers, having breached the 2700 rating in a hot minute. But the bigger challenge was maintaining his position there. "For me, it was strange, because I jumped from 2600 to 2700 over the course of a summer. But when I got there, I still had to be consistent to stay there. It took me a few years to have a standout result as a 2700. I first made it to 2700 for the first time in 2008 and from there on it was always like being between 2680 and 2730 for like three to four years. The 2013 World Cup was really a breakthrough tournament where I reached the semis," says Vachier-Lagrave. Ask the Frenchman, who is currently occupying the world no 15 spot in the FIDE rankings, what the difference between a 2600-rated player and a 2700-rated player is, and he replies with a smile: "In general we do everything a little bit better. 2600 players can do things extremely well. We saw at the World Cup that there were so many good results from 2600-rated players. But sometimes we are a bit better prepared, bit more experienced, better in endgames, better in handling nerves. There's no one particular aspect. But whatever we do, we do a little bit better than 2600."

'There were better players but you carried Shubman Gill till the very end and dropped him': Former India batter slams selectors for 'zero planning'



instant impression with his quick-fire 37.

Samson, who smashed a world record three centuries last year, was unveiled as the first choice opener and keeper in the squad that was unveiled a day later. Kaif blasted the selectors for their timid planning and wasting crucial preparatory matches over the last three months where they experimented with a completely different set-up, involving Gill as vice-captain

"They knew there were better players. I am talking about the T20 format. Just this one. There were better players than Gill. So it was the mistake of the selectors. They have made a mistake and Indian cricket has gone behind. For two to three months, you could have invested in Jaiswal, Samson, and Jitesh," Kaif said on his YouTube channel.

Kaif said the return of Axar as vice-captain for the first time since January also meant the spin-bowling all-rounder lost crucial months to sharpen his leadership skills under captain Suryakumar Yadav. "It is a loss for Axar Patel who returns as vice-captain and for the Indian team as well. The squad is still solid and there is no doubt. But if Axar had continued as vice-captain, he would have been a part of this team meeting, and he would have gotten time to work on his leadership. Let's assume Surya gets injured, then if Axar had had those two to three months as vice-captain, he would know more about his team and the players. If he has to captain, he would have been better prepared, so that opportunity was taken away from him," remarked Kaif. "You carried Gill till the very end and then dropped him. I feel it is the right call. It came late, but it was right. The planning is zero. There is no planning. It has been a waste of time in the name of planning. You backed that player who is not ready now. There were better players than him who should have played. It was your mistake as selectors. Now you had no other choice but to remove him. This has happened very rarely."

GNS News Agency, Dec 24

England cricket's managing director Rob Key, who broke his silence on the Ashes defeat on Tuesday, has revealed they will investigate their players conduct during a four-day break between the second and third Test in Noosa. Key then went on to add that drinking heavily is 'completely unacceptable' for an international cricket team. After losing the second Test at Brisbane, England took a break before the start of the third Test in Adelaide, heading to Queensland's coast to revive the atmosphere. While Key defended the break taken by the team, following reports of players being involved in heavy drinking, questions are being raised if the team prepared well for the third Test at Adelaide. According to a report in BBC, "some members of the team followed two days of drinking in Brisbane with four more in Noosa — six in total, as many days as there had been of Test cricket at this point in the tour." Glenn McGrath, England's managing director, Jofra Archer, centre, is

Dhurandhar actor talks Arjun Rampal's torture scene in the film; recalls bone chilling experience: 'Yeh allow ho gaya?'



see what they have created — like the 26/11 scene or when Arjun Rampal's character tells Hamza that they know there is a spy within them — that scene is spine-chilling. The torture scene that comes after that — I mean, I just thought, 'Yeh allow ho gaya' (This got allowed)? That scene is insane." He then moved on to the scale of the film and said that he wondered whether Dhar and his team had bitten off more than they could chew. Kaushik said, "Aditya narrated most of the film to me, and I felt that this is a good story, but will they be able to pull it off? When we were shooting in Bangkok, they had recreated Lyari there. 8 blocks had been transformed into Pakistan, with all the shops, houses, and alleys. That's when I realised that the scale of the film is huge."

He continued, "I mean, they were using actual houses that people could stay in. They told me that the crew stays in those houses when they aren't shooting. People were living on the set, and they could convert anything that they wanted for the film. For 40 days it was like an actual township. There was a restaurant and separate houses dedicated to the costume, makeup and action teams. That's when I was like, 'Iss film ka scale alag hai' (The scale of this film is something different)." Directed by Aditya Dhar, the cast of Dhurandhar includes Ranveer Singh, Akshaye Khanna, Arjun Rampal, R Madhavan, Sara Arjun, Sanjay Dutt and Naveen Kaushik.

The Aditya Dhar directorial is currently running away with the numbers at the box office. Apart from the several records it has broken, the project is also being discussed for the way it has been filmed, especially the scenes based in Pakistan. Actor Naveen Kaushik, who is a part of the film, recently talked about the same and revealed that he couldn't believe what the makers of Dhurandhar pulled off and all that they got away with, considering the gory visuals involved.

First talking about the violence in the film, Naveen told *Just Too Filmy* that there were many scenes that left him in awe and shock. He specifically talked about the torture scene with Arjun Rampal and said, "I mean, I read the script, but I wasn't there for the entire shoot. But when you finally

Truth behind Govinda's cameo in Avatar: Fire and Ash, years after actor claimed he was offered lead role by James Cameron



Some Govinda fans have been jumping with joy on social media in reaction to a new video that's being widely circulated. The video shows the actor, appearing as a Na'vi, decked up in a glittery, colourful Indian attire, and mouthing his popular "Hata sawan ki ghata" dialogue from David Dhawan's 1997 romantic comedy *Deewana Masatana*. The caption suggests that this is his cameo in James Cameron's Hollywood epic fantasy threequel, *Avatar: Fire and Ash*. However, that's not exactly the case.

What's the truth behind Govinda's 'cameo'?

Sorry Govinda fans, but in case you're wondering if there's any truth to Govinda's appearance in *Avatar: Fire and Ash*, let us break it to you that it's a fake video generated by AI (Artificial Intelligence). Govinda's close-up of speaking in local Mumbai dialect, as Jake Sully (Sam Worthington) and his family react in the background, is not there in *Avatar: Fire and Ash*. The AI-generated video, of course, stems from Govinda's years-old claims that he was offered to star in the first part of the *Avatar* franchise, which released in 2009, by director James Cameron. The actor claimed he even met Cameron, but rejected the part even though he was offered Rs 18 crore for it. One of the concerns was his unwillingness to "paint his body blue" to play a Na'vi, the humanoid native of the fantasy world of Pandora in the franchise.

"I had met a Sardarji in America and gave him a business idea that worked. Some years later, he made me meet James Cameron. He asked me to do a film with James, so I invited them for dinner to discuss it. James told me the hero in the film was handicapped, so I said I am not doing the film. He offered me Rs 18 crore for it and said I would be required to shoot for 410 days. I said that is okay, but if I paint my body, I will be in the hospital," Govinda claimed in a chat on Bheeshm International's YouTube channel earlier this year.

Govinda even claimed that he suggested Cameron the title of the film. He also added that he regrets the decision since *Avatar* went on to become one of the world's biggest hits, amassing \$2.92 billion at the global box office. Its sequel, *Avatar: The Way of Water* (2022) also earned \$2.3 billion.

The threequel, *Avatar: Fire and Ash*, witnessed an opening weekend of \$347 million. Govinda's longtime collaborator and producer Pahlaj Nihalani dismissed the actor's claims and suggested that he may be referring to their

Bollywood sports drama *Avatar*, which they'd shot 40% portions of but was eventually shelved on Govinda's request. "Woh *Avatar* title se pata nahi uske dimaag mein kya aaya, baad mein claim karta raha ki main waha (Hollywood) ki *Avatar* kar raha hoon. Uske dimaag ka disc ghum gaya aur language Hindi se English mein chala gaya (I don't know what happened to him, but he started claiming that he was offered the Hollywood *Avatar*)," Nihalani told *Friday Talkies* in 2024.

James Cameron's film has a \$340 mil opening weekend, drops to single digits in India

one, it is yet to be seen in the new film will also turn into a multi-billion earner for the studio.

Priya Banerjee shares screen space with husband Prateik Smita Patil

Mumbai: Actress Priya Banerjee has opened up about sharing screen space with her husband, Prateik Smita Patil, in season four of 'Four More Shots Please'. Speaking about the experience, Priya revealed that working together was a fun and spontaneous decision. She added that she took on the project purely for the excitement and the joy of collaborating with her partner on screen. Banerjee said, "It felt special to share the screen with Prateik after sharing a new chapter of life with him. After our wedding went viral, the makers reached out for this small cameo."

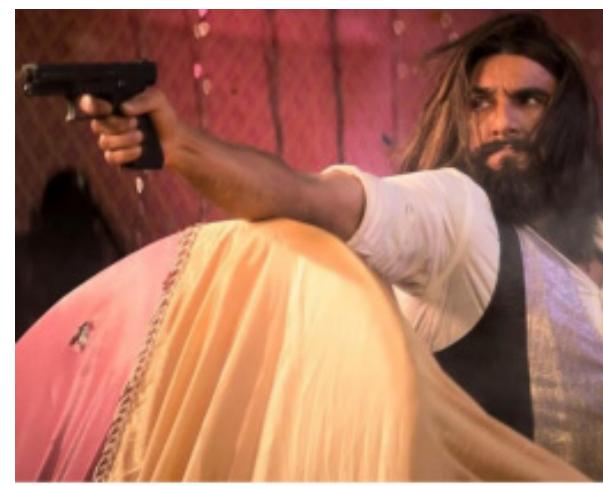
She added, "Prateik insisted I do it, saying it would be fun to be a part of one of his most loved shows. It was completely spontaneous. I literally did it for the kicks, the kiss, and the joy of sharing that moment with him on screen."

'Four More Shots Please!' returned with its much-awaited final season. Priya Banerjee made a special cameo in the popular series, marking the couple's first on-screen collaboration after their marriage.

Interestingly, in October, Prateik and Priya walked the ramp together at a fashion event, dressed in stunning white outfits. The actor shared that walking alongside Priya brings him a sense of comfort, confidence, and joy that he doesn't experience otherwise. When asked whether it's more fun walking the ramp with his wife or another actress, Prateik mentioned, "Obviously with my wife. I am sorry, unfortunately, I don't enjoy it with anyone else. No offence to all the beautiful women in the world. But I will enjoy it only with my wife on the ramp."

On February 14, Priya and Prateik got married at their home in the presence of their closest family and friends. The couple shared a series of stunning pictures from their intimate wedding on Instagram and captioned them, "I'll marry you in every lifetime #priyaKaprateik."

Ranveer Singh's spy thriller surpasses Kantara Chapter 1, Chhaava; becomes the biggest grosser of 2025



Dhurandhar box office collection day 18: Aditya Dhar's period spy thriller Dhurandhar, starring Ranveer Singh in the lead role, continues to break global box office records despite a significant fall in domestic earnings on its third Monday. The film has now collected Rs 571.75 crore at the Indian box office and Rs 872.25 crore at the worldwide box office.

Dhurandhar witnesses a significant drop in IndiaOn Monday (day 18), at the domestic box office, Dhurandhar added another Rs 16 crore to its overall haul. While the film hasn't dropped down to single digits even in its third week, the earnings on its third Monday were a massive drop, at about 58%, from those on its third Sunday (day 17), when the film amassed Rs 38.5 crore. Over its third weekend, Dhurandhar earned close to Rs 100 crore at the domestic box office, which is the highest in history for any Indian film

going through its third weekend. That also allowed it to become the quickest Hindi film to hit the Rs 500 crore milestone and dethrone Sandeep Reddy Vanga's 2023 family crime drama *Animal*, starring Ranbir Kapoor, as the 10th highest grosser at the Indian box office. *Animal* made Rs 553.87 crore in India during its theatrical run.

Dhurandhar will soon surpass Vicky Kaushal's *Chhaava*, which made Rs 601.54 crore in India at the time of its release, earlier this year. Globally, *Chhaava* made around Rs 807 crore, and Dhurandhar has already crossed that benchmark. In three days, it'll also face fresh competition from Sameer Vidhwans' romantic comedy *Tu Meri Main Tera Main Tera Tu Meri*, starring Kartik Aaryan and Ananya Panday. Dhurandhar creates history worldwide

Even after registering the 58% drop in its domestic box office collection on the third Monday, Dhurandhar has broken a couple of more records at the global box office. After earning another Rs 16 crore in India, the worldwide box office collection of the film now stands at Rs 872.25 crore. This has made it the highest Indian grosser of 2025 worldwide. After surpassing *Laman Uttekar*'s period war drama *Chhaava* (Rs 807.91 crore), starring Vicky Kaushal, the Ranveer Singh-starrer has now also surpassed Rishab Shetty's Kannada period action epic *Kantara: Chapter 1* (Rs 852.31 crore) to become the highest-grossing Indian film of 2025 at the global box office. Not just that, Dhurandhar has also edged past the worldwide box office haul of *Street 2* (Rs 857.15 crore) to become the 12th highest Indian grosser worldwide ever. Its next target now is *Secret Superstar*, which amassed Rs 912.75 crore at the global box office. Co-produced by Lokesh Dhar and Aditya Dhar's B62 Studios and Jyoti Deshpande-led Jio Studios, Dhurandhar boasts of an ensemble cast also including Akshaye Khanna, Sanjay Dutt, R Madhavan, Arjun Rampal, Rakesh Bedi, Sara Arjun, and Gaurav Gera.

'Tamannaah Bhatia was never under consideration', says Dhurandhar choreographer after news of Aditya Dhar 'rejecting' her surfaces online



While Dhurandhar continues its unstoppable run at the box office, the film has also remained in the news for reasons both celebratory and controversial. Even as audiences and critics praise its scale and performances, a section has labelled it a "well-made propaganda film." Amid this chatter, a fresh headline emerged after an interview of choreographer Vijay Ganguly went viral.

Vijay, who choreographed Dhurandhar's song *Shararat*, recently told *Filmmyan* that he had initially envisioned Tamannaah Bhatia for the number. He said, "In my head, she was the one. I had suggested her, but Aditya was very clear that he did not want what people call an item song — something that went out of the story. If it were just about one girl, it would have taken attention away from the story." Explaining the creative choice further, he added, "That's why there are two girls, not one. He didn't want the attention to be about this one person. If it were Tamannaah, it would've been about her and not the story. Jo ho raha tha film mein, there was a lot going on, and if you go away from the story, then the song is just a cut-to-song." Soon after the interview gained traction, several headlines began doing the rounds online, suggesting that director Aditya Dhar had "rejected" Tamannaah Bhatia. In response, Vijay Ganguly took to his Instagram handle to set the record straight.

He wrote, "To clarify: Tamannaah Bhatia was never under consideration because her star power is so significant it might have overwhelmed the specific needs of this scene. In Dhurandhar, the music is woven into a high-stakes moment where the tension is key. The makers opted for two performers to keep the focus on the story's progression. This choice was about protecting the film's atmosphere and ensuring the narrative remains the hero of the sequence."

Addressing the way his words were interpreted, he added, "I genuinely enjoy conversations around cinema and the many layers that go into making a film. That said, I have often refrained from putting myself out there because, at

times, words get selectively lifted, misquoted or sensationalised to serve headlines rather than the craft." Vijay also expressed disappointment over the direction the discussion had taken, saying, "It's unfortunate that instead of the conversation staying on the song and the creative intent behind *Shararat*, the focus has shifted to comparisons between two wonderful artists, with strong and reductive terms like 'rejections' being used — something that was never the spirit of what was shared." He concluded with a reminder of the collaborative nature of filmmaking: "Cinema is collaborative. It thrives on respect, nuance and context. I hope we can keep the spotlight where it belongs — on the work and the many people who pour their hearts into it." Meanwhile, Dhurandhar continues to dominate the box office. The film has crossed the Rs 800 crore mark in just 17 days. On its 18th day, it earned Rs 10.32 crore in India as of 8 pm. It is now poised to surpass Rishab Shetty's *Kantara: The Legend* to become the highest-grossing Indian film of the year. According to *Sacnilk*, Dhurandhar has already emerged as the highest-grossing Indian film of 2025 worldwide, with a total collection of Rs 852 crore in 18 days, overtaking *Kantara: The Legend*.

Chinmayi reacts after Samantha Ruth Prabhu is mobbed by unruly crowd in Hyderabad: 'Controlling humans who don't know basic civil behaviour...'



A day after South Indian star Samantha Ruth Prabhu was mobbed by an unruly crowd at an event in Hyderabad, her close friend and playback singer-cum-dubbing artiste Chinmayi Sripathi has stepped forward, expressing shock at the entire incident. She also maintained that it shouldn't be the responsibility of female artistes alone to ensure their safety.

Reposting a clip of the incident on X (formerly Twitter), Chinmayi expressed her sympathy for Samantha's team, including her personal assistant Arya, who can be seen trying tirelessly to ensure her safety as the crowd descended into a frenzy. "The actress' team, including her team member, Arya, is literally safeguarding her with his entire person. He must have been left with several bruises at the very least. Controlling a mob of humans who don't know basic civil behaviour is not an actress' job," Chinmayi wrote.

The incident reportedly took place in Hyderabad, Telangana, when Samantha arrived for the inauguration of a saree store. As she left the venue, the massive crowd grew chaotic, jostling and creating a chilling atmosphere. In the clip, the actor can be seen struggling to navigate through the public while her team tries their best to ensure that she reaches the car safely. At one point, the crowd becomes so uncontrollable that someone accidentally steps on her saree from behind. However, she, without losing her cool, manages to enter the car and flee the spot. The actress' team including her team member, Arya, is literally safeguarding her with his entire person. He must have been left with several bruises at the very least. This incident comes days after actor Nidhhi Agerwal was similarly mobbed during a promotional event in Hyderabad. The incident occurred at a mall in the city, where she had arrived for the launch of a song from her upcoming film, *The Raja Saab*, in which she stars alongside Prabhas. Clips of the incident, which soon went viral, showed

ing her with his entire person. He must have been left with several bruises at the very least. This incident comes days after actor Nidhhi Agerwal was similarly mobbed during a promotional event in Hyderabad. The incident occurred at a mall in the city, where she had arrived for the launch of a song from her upcoming film, *The Raja Saab*, in which she stars alongside Prabhas. Clips of the incident, which soon went viral, showed