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Cricket tournament reaches semi-final stage

Secunderabad Cantonment. February 22 (Indian Chronicle): "The Cantonment Merger Movement Cricket Tournament, which has been going on at the Bowenpally Play Ground for three days with the main demand of merging the Cantonment civilian areas with GHMC, has reached the semi-finals. The second round of competitions was inaugurated by Jampana Pratap, former vice-president of the Cantonment Board. Thunder Strikers. Akram CC teams congratulated the participating cricketers and started the competitions by throwing the toss. Sai Sarath said that the final match will start at 10 pm on Sunday. Organizer Sai Sarath. Narendar Reddy. Jagadish. Mukesh Yadav. Vara Prasad. Sai Baba Yadav. Chotu. participated in this program.



Raja Singh Arrested en Route to Banswada

Goshamahal MLA Raja Singh was detained by police on Sunday while travelling to Banswada. He was arrested at Peddashankampet and subsequently taken to a nearby police station. His detention followed heightened tensions in Banswada and Kamareddy.

Meanwhile, Telangana BJP chief Ramchandra Rao has already been placed under house arrest at his residence in Tarnaka after police stopped him from travelling to Kamareddy. Both incidents come amid ongoing unrest in the region.

Will finish all pending irrigation projects in 2 yrs at any cost: CM

Hyderabad/Mulugu: Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy has asserted that the Congress government is sincere in completing all pending irrigation projects despite paucity of funds. The state government will complete all the pending projects within two years at any cost, the Chief Minister declared, assuring that the requisite funds will be provided for land acquisition and project works.

Revanth Reddy spoke to the media on Sunday after inspecting and reviewing the progress of the Devadula project at Tupakulagudem in Kannagudem mandal of Mulugu district on Sunday.

has "continued for years without completion".

Mentioning that Telangana currently has a debt burden of Rs.8.11 lakh crore, the Chief Minister said his government is committed to completing the irrigation projects within two years under any circumstances. He declared that funds would be sanctioned immediately for the completion of Devadula. The project cost, initially estimated at around Rs.6,000 crore, has now escalated to Rs.18,500 crore, he said.

The Chief Minister declared that all Godavari basin projects from Thummi Hetti to Bhadrachalam would be taken up for completion. He pointed out that, though not a drop of water had been lifted from the Kaleshwaram project in the last two years, Telangana had emerged as number one in rice production. He pointed out that many of the promises made during the erstwhile regime had proved to be "illusions". The Chief Minister commented that allegations and "propaganda" would serve no purpose at a time when north Telangana is witnessing expanded cultivation.

Referring to structures such as Medigadda, Annaram and Sundilla barrages under the Kaleshwaram project, he said the government is currently not criticising their construction but would respond to allegations through debates in the Assembly. He proposed a detailed discussion on the utilisation of Godavari waters during the Budget session and invited the Opposition to present their decade-long administrative achievements and point out any shortcomings in the current government's two-year tenure. "If there are mistakes on our part, we will correct them," he said.

Dismissing allegations that Telangana's waters were being diverted to neighbouring States, Revanth Reddy questioned whether elected representatives from Telangana would act against the State's interests. "There is no benefit in cheap accusations. Politics should be limited to elections," he said, adding that complex disputes can be resolved only through discussions or, if necessary, through courts.

The Chief Minister reiterated that his government's goal is to provide irrigation water to every acre and drinking water to every citizen. He asserted that Telangana's rights over Godavari waters, including flood waters, would be protected at all costs.

Concluding his remarks, the Chief Minister exuded confidence that the Congress government would continue in power until 2034 and reaffirmed his resolve to safeguard Telangana's water rights while accelerating irrigation development across the State.



Referring to the controversial Kaleshwaram project, Revanth Reddy said an expert committee has been constituted and several agencies are examining possible structural and geological impacts of the project.

"Kaleshwaram is not anyone's personal property; it was built with public money. We will not let it go to waste. We will take precautions to prevent future damage and bring it back into use," he observed.

The Chief Minister said that the Godavari water dispute has taken a political turn. Still, his government is determined to complete all pending irrigation projects related to the basin.

Revanth Reddy recalled that certain Telangana projects were neglected during the undivided Andhra Pradesh era and observed that it would have been beneficial if some of the major schemes had been completed then. "Telangana was formed with adequate funds and water resources. If projects like Pranahita, SRSP and Devadula had been completed sincerely over the last 10 years, 967 TMC of water could have been fully utilised," he remarked.

The Chief Minister alleged that, except for the Kaleshwaram project, other Godavari basin projects were ignored by the previous regime. He observed that the Devadula project's foundation stone was laid in 2001 by (AP CM) N Chandrababu Naidu, but its construction



Ferrari car crashes into vehicles in Jubilee Hills

Hyderabad, Feb 22

A serious road accident occurred on Jubilee Hills Road No. 45 in Hyderabad involving a speeding Ferrari. The luxury car collided with an electric pole in the median and then crashed into an oncoming vehicle. Subsequently, another car collided with the first, resulting in damage to three vehicles. The front of the Ferrari was crushed in the collision. Fortunately, no injuries were reported.

Accreditation Committees on the proposal of Unions

“Solve website problems” - Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy



“Arvapalli Nagesh Khammam Staff Reporter, February 22 (Indian Chronicle)“Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy, Minister of State Revenue, Information, Civil Relations and Housing, has assured that accreditation committees will be set up on the proposal of journalist unions. “On Sunday, a group of TUWJ (IJU) Journalist Union leaders under the chairmanship of State General Secretary K Ram Narayana handed over a petition to Minister Ponguleti on the issues of accreditation of journalists, website, cable channels and small newspapers at Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy's camp office in Khammam. “Union State General Secretary Kattekolam Ram Narayana explained to the Minister the problems faced by journalists of all disciplines. He said that 44,709 journalists in the state were told that accreditation cards would be given, and according to the CV given by them, there was confusion among the journalists that even 50% of the cards would not be received. The minister brought to the notice that the regulations given to freelancer and veteran journalists are troublesome and when the website is opened, the questions asked in it are not suitable for giving cards. It is mentioned that the website format is not easy. “According to the past tradition in district accreditation committees, if a letter is sent from a registered union, the commissioner's office approves them and takes them as members of the committee. This is very sad. He appealed to continue the old method. It is stated that according to the present JIV, the Collector nominates all, this is not possible and it will bring new complications for the Collector. Ram

Narayana requested the Minister to look into our plea and continue the same tradition as the previous Accreditation Committees. “According to G.O, major magazines, satellite channels, it is said that the cards of desk journalists have been reduced and the journalists are worried that this will lead to problems. Even the people of small newspapers are worried that they will not get cards like in the past and explained that injustice will be done to journalists of cable channels. “They explained to the minister on all aspects for 20 minutes that although they had received cards in the past, they were worried that they would not receive the cards this time. The minister responded positively to this. Minister Ponguleti assured that accreditation committees will be formed based on the proposals of the unions. The accreditation website will be simplified. The deadline for accreditations will be extended by another month, journalists and community leaders should not worry. Minister Ponguleti made it clear that accreditation cards will be given to all those who are eligible. “Among those who met the minister were Mateti Venugopal, state committee members of TUWJ (IJU) Journalist Union, former district presidents Vanam Venkateshwarlu, union district secretary Maisa Paparao, district electronic media president Mamidala Bhupal, journalists district housing society president Kanakam Saidulu, union district vice-president Moinuddin, district treasurer Nagandla Siva, Khammam city committee president secretaries. Cherukupalli Srinivas, Nancharla Janardhana Chari, District Organizing Secretary Veginati Madhavrao, District Leaders Eluru Venugopala Rao and other journalists participated.

Police Raid Illegal Lucky Draw Scheme in Medipally; Two Booked



“NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, February 22, (INDIAN CHRONICLE):“Medipally Police have registered a case against individuals who were allegedly conducting a banned and unauthorized lucky draw scheme and collecting money from the public without government permission. On February 21, 2026, at around 5:00 PM, acting on credible information and under the instructions of the Medipally ACP, Sub-Inspector of Police G. Uday Bhaskar, along with staff and panch witnesses, conducted a raid at Flat No. 224, Suraj Nagar Colony, Bolligudem, under Medipally Police Station limits. During the raid, the police found that Saudhasothu Saraswathi (47) and her son Saudhasothu Parashuram (27) were allegedly organizing a government-prohibited lucky draw scheme. The accused had fixed the price of each coupon at Rs. 299 and were reportedly selling a maximum of



five coupons per person. Payments were being collected through a Paytm scanner. As part of the scheme, the organizers had announced expensive prizes including a car, Bullet motorcycle, regular bike, scooter, and iPhone to attract the public. A total of 5,000 coupons had been printed, out of which 1,500 coupons were found in a glass draw box and 3,500 blank coupons were recovered at the premises. Police seized the Paytm scanner and a Samsung mobile phone from the spot. Since no government permission or legal registration was obtained for conducting the scheme, a case has been registered against the accused and further investigation is underway. Medipally Police have appealed to the public to remain cautious about illegal lucky draw schemes, online frauds, and unauthorized promotional programs. Citizens are advised to immediately inform the nearest police station if they come across any suspicious activities. Legal action will be taken against those involved in such unlawful practices.

Operation Kagar-2 Pushes Naxal Movement Toward Collapse

Major Blow to Maoists as Top Commanders Surrender

“Indian Chronicle (Taj Khan), February 22,“Senior Maoist Leaders Surrender, Marking Critical Turning Point“The Centre's intensified campaign to eliminate Naxalism from Indian soil appears to be reaching its decisive phase, with senior Maoist leaders surrendering one after another, dealing a severe setback to the banned outfit. “According to latest reports, top Maoist commander Devji (alias Tippiri Tirupati) and Central Committee member Rajireddy have surrendered before the police along with their associates. Their surrender is being viewed as a significant development in the ongoing anti-Naxal operations. “The Union Home Ministry had earlier declared that Naxalism would be eradicated from the country by March 31, 2026. As part of this mission, ‘Operation Kagar-2’ was launched, intensifying pressure on Maoist strongholds and limiting their movement in forest regions. “Security forces reportedly implemented strategic measures aimed at persuading underground leaders that joining mainstream society would be more beneficial than continuing armed struggle in remote forest areas. “Key Leaders Lay Down Arms“Devji, considered one of the most influential strategists within the Maoist party, is reported to have surrendered before the Telangana State Intelligence Bureau (SIB). Rajireddy, a key member of the Maoist Central Committee, also laid down arms. Along with them, around 16 other senior cadres are said to have surrendered. “Sources indicate that the Telangana Intelligence wing had been engaging in dialogue with these leaders over the past several months, explaining the rehabilitation packages



offered by the government to those who renounce violence. “Strongholds Weakened“Once regarded as impregnable fortresses, the Bastar forest regions and adjoining border areas have gradually come under tighter security control. Under Operation Kagar, security forces established camps deep inside forest zones, significantly restricting Maoist mobility. “The exit of top leadership has reportedly affected the morale of lower-rung cadres. With the Centre's deadline approaching, pressure is mounting on the remaining Maoist ranks to either join peace talks or surrender. “Officials believe that the surrender of leaders like Devji and Rajireddy represents a major structural blow to the Maoist movement. Observers suggest that the decades-long armed insurgency could soon approach its formal conclusion if the current trend continues.

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

On India and growth

India's September-quarter GDP data for the current financial year beat all estimates, coming in at 8.2%, higher than 7.8% in Q1 FY26 and well above the year-ago period. This offers fleeting reassurance to policymakers, days after October's trade data revealed a historic deficit of \$41.68 billion, driven partly by a trebling of bullion imports — a signal of economic uncertainty. Growth has been led by manufacturing (9.1%) and services (9.2%), supported by a recovery in private consumption. Private Final Consumption Expenditure grew 7.9% in Q2 FY26, compared with 6.4% in Q2 FY25, while government spending also provided a modest boost. Together, these suggest a broad-based uptick in domestic activity despite global headwinds. Yet, the full effects of the external shock may surface in the quarters ahead. The U.S.'s 'two-stage' India tariffs, in August, landed mid-quarter. Some front-loading of export orders ahead of these tariffs may also have inflated Q2 output. A second statistical effect is at play. Retail inflation fell to 0.25% in October, the lowest in the current CPI series, contributing to a GDP deflator reportedly below 1%. A deflator this low mechanically inflates real GDP relative to nominal; the narrow gap between nominal GDP (8.7%) and real GDP (8.2%) underscores this. Should inflation rise or input costs firm up — if oil prices climb as India diversifies away from Russian crude — headline GDP growth may moderate. The RBI's upcoming Monetary Policy Committee meeting adds uncertainty, as any policy rate will shape demand-side pressures. The Gross Value Added breakdown shows construction growing 7.2%, and the services sub-segment of financial, real estate and professional services rising 10.2% — indicating that capital-intensive, infrastructure-linked sectors have been central to this momentum. Monthly industrial indicators reinforce this pattern: the IIP rose 4% in September, with core capital-intensive categories such as steel (14.1%) and cement (5.3%) recording strong gains. This aligns with the impact of the RBI's three repo-rate cuts this year, which lowered the policy rate to 5.5% in June and may have supported investment activity. Crucially, the composition of growth remains skewed. The quarter's expansion has been driven by capital-intensive and higher-skill sectors — banking and technology — while high-employment, labour-absorbing sectors continue to lag. IIP data for the past six months also point to weak rural consumption. There is, therefore, reason for cautious optimism. But the September-quarter growth spurt appears concentrated in better-paying formal sectors, even as low-income, export-linked, labour-intensive segments struggle. With September and October trade data already flashing warning signs, it might be too early to conclude that this pace of growth could be sustained.

TWJF (G2843) Extends Support to Injured Samrat Gupta

Arvapalli Nagesh, "Khammam Staff Reporter Feb 22: (Indian Chronicle) Leaders of the TWJF (H - 2843) Khammam district unit visited and extended support to TBJA District President Samrat Gupta, who was injured in a road accident. District President Santhosh Chakravarthy



and Treasurer Arvapalli Nagesh met him at Bhavani Hospital, where he underwent minor surgery to his right leg. Doctors stated that his condition is stable. Union leaders promptly shifted him to the hospital immediately after the accident and ensured he received necessary medical care. TWJF (H-2843) leaders expressed solidarity and wished him a speedy recovery, stating that the journalists' fraternity stands united during such difficult times.

Resolving Public Issues Is a Top Priority: Adam Santosh Kumar

Indian Chronicle, Secunderabad, February 22: Congress Secunderabad In-charge and contestant MLA Adam Santosh Kumar stated that addressing the problems of the Secunderabad constituency remains his foremost priority. On Sunday, he undertook a padayatra in the Mettuguda division, covering the stretch from Amar Talkies to Chinta Bavi. As part of the outreach programme, he went door to door to interact with residents and gain firsthand insight into their concerns. He held extensive discussions with the public on several key civic issues, including colony development, drainage-related problems, road repairs, drinking water supply, installation of streetlights, and sanitation. He assured the residents that he would make sincere and consistent efforts to resolve these issues. Several party workers and local leaders—Gunti Krishna, Amarnath Goud, Jalender Reddy, Shilpa Chari, Rajender Yadav, Suresh Lal, Jaggu, Brahmaji, Waheed, Kishore, Srinivas, Ramani, Gandikota Kumar, Ganesh, Benna, and Ganta Raju—participated in large numbers in the padayatra. Adam Santosh Kumar expressed confidence that the party would secure positive results in the forthcoming GHMC elections with the support and blessings of the people.

Fogging Conducted at Uppal Mosques for Ramzan Night Prayers – Initiative by Irshad Khan (Uppal Khan)



KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 22 (Indian Chronicle): On the occasion of the holy month of Ramzan, special measures were taken to ensure a mosquito-free environment at mosques during night prayers. Uppal Minority Congress leader Irshad Khan (Uppal Khan) initiated the effort to safeguard the comfort and health of devotees. Acting on the directions of Uppal Constituency Congress Party In-charge Mandamula Parameshwar Reddy, a fogging drive was conducted on Saturday night under the supervision of Irshad Khan across major mosques in the Uppal area. Fogging was carried out at



Ek Minar Mosque, Beerappagadda Mosque, Kalyanipuri Mosque, and several other mosques in the locality to prevent mosquito nuisance. The initiative aimed to ensure that devotees could perform Ramzan night prayers without disturbance. Speaking on the occasion, Irshad Khan stated that the health and comfort of worshippers during the sacred month of Ramzan is their top priority. He assured that such community service activities would continue for the welfare of the public. Local residents and mosque committee members appreciated Irshad Khan for organizing the initiative.

Huge Response to Free Mega Medical Camp Organized by Neradam Balayya Bhagyalakshmi Trust



KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 22 (Indian Chronicle): A free mega medical camp organized under the leadership of Neradam Bhaskar Goud, Chairman of Neradam Balayya Bhagyalakshmi Trust, and Dr. Neradam Manusha Goud received an overwhelming response from the public. The camp, held on Sunday at Sattireddy School in Srinagar Colony, Uppal, provided free eye check-ups, distribution of spectacles, and homeopathy medicines. Local colony association leaders including Om Prakash, Prabhakar Reddy, Sudarshan Reddy, Anjiah, Srinivas, Kondal, Bal Reddy, Srikanth, Nagaraju, and senior leaders from Chilukanagar Division



such as Ambati Jagadeesh, Errelli Ravinder Reddy, Gudi Madhusudan Reddy, Ravinder Mudiraj, Pittala Naresh, Satyaraj Goud, Narsing Rao, Tirupati, Papireddy, Sikandar, Akram and others participated in the program. Speaking on the occasion, Neradam Bhaskar Goud stated that "Service to humanity is service to God." He expressed happiness over the positive response from the public towards the free mega health camps. Approximately 500 people underwent free eye examinations, and spectacles were distributed at no cost. Participants were also examined and provided necessary homeopathy medicines during the camp.

Drainage Sewage Flowing on Roads Are Authorities Ignoring the Issue?

Erram Srinivas, President, Prajavani Voluntary Organization



KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 22 (Indian Chronicle): Erram Srinivas, President of Prajavani Voluntary Organization, expressed serious concern over the unchecked flow of drainage sewage, heaps of mud, and disposal of expired medicines on roads in Ramanthapur and Bhagayat areas under the GHMC Uppal Circle. He alleged that septic tank waste is being illegally dumped in Bhagayat, chemicals are being poured into manholes, and mud piles are being dumped indiscriminately on roads and left unattended. Despite repeated complaints to officials, no action has been taken, he said. Srinivas further stated that the alarming increase in mosquitoes due to these unhygienic conditions is causing severe hardship to residents. He warned that the mos-



quito menace is leading to the spread of diseases such as dengue and malaria, forcing people to seek hospital treatment. He cautioned that if these issues are not controlled immediately, the situation may become more serious in the coming days. Srinivas demanded that Uppal GHMC officials take strict action against those responsible for causing inconvenience and health hazards to the public.

Land acquisition should be excluded at the 200-year-old Hanuman temple



of the temple. Maheshwar Reddy, who responded favorably, assured that he would talk to the relevant authorities to protect the temple from land acquisition and take appropriate steps. Temple committee members B. Ganesh, Kana Kayya, Yadi, Nagaraju, Gangadhar, Suresh, Giridhar Reddy, Indrasena Reddy, and Hari Krishna participated in this program.

Secunderabad Cantonment, February 22 (Indian Chronicle): The temple committee members submitted a petition to Jakkula Maheshwar Reddy, former vice-chairman of the Cantonment Board, requesting that steps be taken to exclude the Chinathokatta Hanuman Nagar Sri Sanjeevani Anjaneya Swamy temple from the land acquisition being carried out as part of the state government's expansion of the elevated corridor road from Paradise to Dairy Farm. They explained to the Jakkulas that the 200-year-old temple is being managed by the state government's Endowment Department and that the road expansion is disrupting the sanctity and heritage

Public Health is Our Top Priority: Beerappagadda Welfare Association President Rachakonda Shiva Kumar

KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 22 (Indian Chronicle): A free medical camp was organized on Sunday at the Beerappagadda Community Hall under the leadership of Beerappagadda Welfare Association President and BJP youth leader Rachakonda Shiva Kumar, with the support of Sri Abhaya Trust Multispecialty Hospital. Telangana MBC first Chairman Taduri Srinivas, who attended the program as the chief guest, stated that



if young leaders like Shiva Kumar are given proper opportunities in politics, they can render greater service to society. He emphasized that service-minded youth should come forward, adding that such leadership is essential for the future of politics. Chilukanagar contested corporator Gone Srikanth also appreciated the spirit of service shown by the youth. During the free medical camp, hundreds of residents received medical check-ups including blood pressure, sugar tests, and general health screenings. Free medicines were distributed to the beneficiaries. Speaking on the occasion, organizer Rachakonda Shiva Kumar said that protecting public health should be demonstrated through action, not just words. He reiterated his commitment to work for the development of Beerappagadda and the welfare of its people.

“Your Leadership Our Trust”: Qasim Goud Wins with Arun Patel’s Support

Qasim Goud elected President of Balakrishna Nagar Colony with a massive majority of 421 votes

KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 22 (Indian Chronicle): In the Balakrishna Nagar Colony Association elections under Venkat Reddy Nagar Division, Qasim Goud, the candidate backed by Uppal Youth Congress President Akarapu Arun Patel, secured a resounding victory by a margin of 421 votes and was elected as President. Speaking on the occasion, Arun Patel stated that this victory belongs to the colony residents and represents a mandate for development. He expressed heartfelt gratitude to all the residents who supported and ensured



Qasim Goud's victory. Newly elected President Qasim Goud said that, under the leadership of Uppal Constituency In-charge Mandamula Parameshwar Reddy and Arun Patel, the colony will move forward on the path of further development. [6:34 PM, 2/22/2026] +91 93911 09207: End



Annamayya Keerthana Dance Ballet Enthralls at Uppal Mini Shilparamam



“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 22 (Indian Chronicle):“As part of the weekend cultural programs at Uppal Mini Shilparamam, an “Annamayya Keerthana Dance Ballet” was presented on Sunday evening, captivating the audience with devotional fervor and artistic grace. The performance featured sacred compositions of Saint Tallapaka Annamacharya, offered as a musical and dance tribute to Lord Sri Venkateswara Swamy. The ballet was presented by the disciples of dance

gurus Nalini Shesham, Renuka Prasad, and Revathi Prasad, under the spiritual blessings and divine benedictions of Sriman Sri Sri Sri Tallapaka Swamiji. “Distinguished guest Meenakshi Srinivas attended the program as the chief guest and appreciated the artists for their devotional expression and refined performance. The participants included Devika, Srihita, Pradeepta, Mithusha, Aneka, Ira, Shanvi, Tanushree, Neetiksha, Arya, Veerinda, Varsha Tanvi, Harshita, Kanishka, and Aaradhyaa, among others, who presented the devotional dance pieces with dedication and grace. The performance offered a spiritually uplifting experience and was well received by the audience.

Vemulakonda Abhishek Goud won the gold medal in the state level CM cup ooshu games competition



“Arvapalli Nagesh, Khammam Staff Reporter, February 22 (Indian Chronicle)“Vemulakonda Abhishek Goud of Pedda Munagala village of Konijerla Mandal organized the CM Cup Telangana state level ooshu competition held at Hyderabad Gachibowli Stadium on February 20 and 21 in Telangana state. As part of that, Vemulakonda Abhishek Goud of Pedda Munagala village, Konijerla mandal, Khammam district won the first prize (gold medal) in the sub-junior category in the 48 kg category and a cash prize of 20,000 rupees. Abhishek Goud is being trained in the sport of Ushoo by P Privnachari, the national trainer at Khammam’s Sardar Patel Stadium. “Abhishek Goud is studying in 8th standard in Khammam Public School in Khammam Rotary Nagar. Abhishek Goud won the first position in the state level competition. School Correspondent, Principal, and Teacher’s teachers and Khammam District Device O Officer Sunil Kumar, sportsmen, village elders and officials who are training in Oshu sport congratulated.

Devaki Vasudeva Rao and Nelluri Koteswara Rao strongly condemned the attack on the MLA



“Arvapalli Nagesh, Khammam Staff Reporter, February 22 (Indian Chronicle)“Bharatiya Janata Party State Treasurer Devaki Vasudeva Rao and Khammam District President Nelluri Koteswara Rao have strongly flagged that if the Congress party is given power, it will be like laying a red carpet for the grabbers and mafia gangs. The chaos created by the Congress goons on the Kamareddy platform and the land thirst of the government advisor Shabbir Ali was dried up along with his credentials. In a press meet held at BJP’s Khammam district office on Sunday, he lashed out at the Congress government. “He warned that if BJP MLA Katipalli Venkataramana Reddy is getting popularity in Kamareddy and tries to stop him at every step, then the downfall of Congress will start in the state. “If you want to discuss.. will you punch with a car? “They alleged that the Congress vultures were eyeing 263 acres of government degree college land, Saraswati Shishu Mandir and Arora Engineering College properties in Kamareddy. “Our BJP MLA challenged like a lion to the Congress leaders who were slandering that illegal activities were taking place in those lands. If Ramana Reddy called ‘If corruption is proved, he will resign in the speaker’s format. Instead of discussing, former Sarpanch Mahender Reddy sent a Congress goon and tried to stab him with a car straight into the MLA’s camp office. Our vigilant BJP workers stopped the car, saved the MLA’s life and thwarted the Congress conspiracies. Is it democracy? Or Goonda Kingdom?” Koteswara Rao burst out. “The BJP was furious that the Revanth Reddy government was using the police to cover up its mistakes. Ramana Reddy, as well as BJP state president N. Ramchandra Rao. The House strongly condemned the arrest of Ramachander Rao. “It’s just a trailer... the actual movie is ahead. If we touch our MLA, we will see how we can turn the Congress leaders

into the villages from tomorrow. The entire state BJP will stand by Ramana Reddy’s Sankha Rao saying that whatever happens to us, CM Revanth Reddy is responsible,” he clarified. “They explained on this occasion that all the people of the state know how the political rise of the original government advisor Shabbir Ali started. “Shabbir Ali is a man who survives by selling firewood and firewood. There are still cases against him in the forest office. He has a history of cheating big men like Battu Pochaiah who brought him to the top. This gentleman, who built a 5-storey building without municipal permission... is he now speaking morals?” he said. “Earlier, 100 acres of KR Raja Reddy’s land was grabbed by obstructing gangster Naeem. They grabbed the lands of innocent people like Muralidhar Reddy and Kasharam. 1500 yards of land was registered by threatening the RDOs. Until yesterday, the master plan was scammed to make the farmers suffer. Chandrasekhar Reddy has Rs 1 crore, Kailash Srinivas has Rs 18 lakhs, and the broker Shabbir Ali, who sold the posts of municipal chairman, has no level of criticizing Katipalli Venkataramana Reddy, who is serving the public honestly,” they emphasized. “They warned that this great struggle against the Congress anarchies at Kamareddy will spread across the state tomorrow. MLA Ramana Reddy on one side and Bharatiya Janata Party on the other will fight hard to protect public property and government lands. They made a sensational announcement that the downfall of the Congress usurpers started at Kamareddy Gadda. State leaders Vakkalanka Subramaniam, Sunny Udaya Pratap, District General Secretary Gutta Venkateshwarlu, leaders Allika Anjaiah, Ravi Rathore, Ravi Goud, Tajmanoth Bhadraram, Sanshala Sai Ram and others participated in this meeting. [6:53 PM, 2/22/2026] +91 96187 88997: End

CM Cup State-Level Skating Competitions Inaugurated



“Enthusiastic Atmosphere at Saroornagar“Hyderabad (LB Nagar), February 23 The second edition of the CM Cup 2025–26 State-Level Roller Skating Championships was inaugurated in a grand manner at the bank track of Saroornagar Indoor Stadium. A large number of children and young skaters from across the state participated, showcasing their talent. The stadium premises buzzed with sporting enthusiasm. “The event was inaugurated by chief guest Dr. Bhagirath, Secretary General of the Roller Skating Federation of India. Speaking on the occasion, he praised the talent and discipline displayed by the young skaters. He stated that platforms like the CM Cup help bring forward talented players from both rural and urban areas. “He also expressed special gratitude to Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy for supporting the organization of the CM Cup to promote roller skating in the state. “Among those present were Raj Gopal, President of the Telangana Roller Skating Association, and Ajay, Joint Secretary. Senior coaches Srinu and Abudh encouraged the participants.

Kusumanchi Police crack the murder case of Boggula Srinivas



“Arvapalli Nagesh, Khammam Staff Reporter, February 22 (Indian Chronicle)“Khammam district Kusumanchi police have solved the murder case of writer and YouTuber Boggula Srinivas. Khammam Rural ACP Tirupathi Reddy disclosed the circumstances and consequences that led to the murder of Srinivas to the media on Sunday. Srinivas said that it was the dispute over financial transactions that led to the gruesome murder. ACP said Srinivas was stabbed to death by Supari gang from Ashwarapet and beaten with iron bars. He said that this murder has nothing to do with the book written by Srinivas on Pawan Kalyan. According to the story of ACP Tirupathi Reddy.. If we go into the full details that led to the murder of Boggula Srinivas.. “Boggula Srinivas lives in Hyderabad and is popular as a YouTuber and writer. He used to make videos on YouTube and Instagram. Along with Srinivas, Mekala Venumadhav Reddy studied at Silver Jubilee College. They were introduced to each other while attending a college alumni gathering. While Boggula Srinivas has a GST license under the name BOGGULA BBQ, Venumadhav Reddy has established a company named ‘Meka Projects’ and is working as a sub-contractor. “Boggula Srinivas lives in Hyderabad and is popular as a YouTuber and writer. He used to make videos on YouTube and Instagram. Along with Srinivas, Mekala Venumadhav Reddy studied at Silver Jubilee College. They were introduced to each other while attending a college alumni gathering. While Boggula Srinivas has a GST license under the name BOGGULA BBQ, Venumadhav Reddy has established a company named ‘Meka Projects’ and is working as a sub-contractor. “But for this Rs. 1 Cr Serious differences and disputes arose between Srinivas and Venumadhav Reddy due to the circumstances of having to pay a GST penalty of Rs. 1 Cr Due to the financial pressure of reactivating the GST license of BOGGULA BBQ Company, the burden of a fine of Rs. Venumadhav Reddy, who hatched a conspiracy, conspired with Pokala Koteswara Rao, Sheikh Abdul Hafeez and Mohammad Azmat Ali Khan of Ashwarapet to kill Srinivas. “As part of the execution of the conspiracy,

the gang of Pokala Venkateswar Rao, Abdul Hapeez and Azmat Ali Khan were paid Rs. 5.00 lakhs was paid by Venumadhav Reddy as supari. On the night of the 13th of this month, Venumadhav Reddy along with the gang convinced Srinivas that they would give the money to be paid. They took Srinivas in the car and told him not to go to Vijayawada for money. The next day on the 14th, in the early morning on the way from Nakirekal to Janagama, the accused beat Srinivas on the head with knives and iron rods and stabbed him to death. “After Srinivas was killed in this way, plans were made to portray it as a road accident. As part of this, they took the dead body in a car and threw it into the Paleru reservoir and tried to make it look like a car accident. But the twist in the whole incident is that the Supari gang, who pushed the car into the reservoir and tried to portray it as an accident, could not escape from the police investigation. “ACP Tirupathi Reddy congratulated Kusumanchi CI Sanjeev, Kusumanchi, Nelakonda palli, Tirumalaya palem SIs Nagaraju, Santhosh, Jagadish and probationary SI Divya for successfully investigating this case. Similarly, ACP praised Srikanth, Satish, Vinay, Uday, Purnachander Rao, Srisailam, Srilatha, Syed, Shobhan, Sitaramulu and Home Guard Rambabu who cooperated in this case. ACP also gave rewards to the officers and staff who successfully completed the investigation in four teams and arrested the accused.

Broker Arrested for Rs 17 Lakh Land Scam in Kagaznagar



“Indian Chronicle (Taj Khan), February 22, “Accused Held for Cheating in Fake Land Deal“Kagaznagar Rural Police Station Date: 22/02/2026“A man who allegedly acted as a broker and cheated a buyer of ?17 lakh by promising to sell non-existent land has been arrested and remanded to judicial custody for 14 days, said Kagaznagar Rural Sub-Inspector Sandeep Kumar. “According to police, the accused, Ramatengi Prakash (son of Durgayya), a resident of Bodhanpalli village in Koutala mandal, allegedly misled Krishna, a resident of Kagaznagar, by claiming ownership of five acres of patta land located in the limits of Malini

village. “The accused reportedly showed the complainant land that did not physically exist and convinced him to pay ?17 lakh towards the proposed sale. When the complainant later demanded that the land be formally shown and verified, it was discovered that no such land existed. During the course of inquiry, it also emerged that the accused had allegedly threatened the complainant. “Based on the complaint, a case was registered against the accused. He was arrested and, as per court orders, remanded to judicial custody for 14 days, the Sub-Inspector stated.

Massive Rally for Restoration of Registration Rights

BJP Demands Government to Fulfil Election Promise



“NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, February 22, (INDIAN CHRONICLE):“A massive protest rally demanding the restoration of property registration rights was success-

fully conducted under the banner of the Registration Restoration Struggle Committee in Boduppal. The rally began at the Dr. B.R. Ambedkar statue in RNS Colony and proceeded to the Nandamuri Taraka Rama Rao statue in Boduppal. A large number of affected families and local residents participated. Enugu Sudarshan Reddy, BJP in-charge of Medchal constituency and former MPP, attended the programme as the chief guest. He alleged that the Chief Minister had failed to honour the election promise made to the people of Jawahar Nagar regarding the resolution of the registration issue after assuming office. He stated that despite assurances to resolve the registration problem at the earliest, the government has not taken concrete steps so far. He pointed out that affected families have been facing hardships for several years and asserted that protecting their property rights is the responsibility of the government. He warned that if the government does not immediately restore the registration process, the agitation would be intensified. He made it clear that the struggle would continue until justice is delivered to the affected families. Our rights are non-negotiable. The movement will continue until justice is achieved, he said.

Attack on Kamareddy MLA’s Residence Condemned: BJP Leader Singireddy Venkat Reddy

“NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, February 22, (INDIAN CHRONICLE):“Kamareddy MLA Venkata Ramana Reddy’s residence was attacked in an incident that has drawn sharp criticism from BJP leaders. BJP state leader and former Bogaram MPTC Singireddy Venkat Reddy strongly condemned the attack, describing it as a serious threat to democratic values. He stated that such incidents reflect a deteriorating law and order situation in Telangana and alleged that the attack was politically motivated. According to him, the assault was carried out because the MLA had been questioning corruption issues related to the Congress party. Venkat Reddy also referred to the alleged unlawful arrest of BJP state president Ramachandra Rao, calling it further evidence of what he described as a pattern of political targeting. He said the detention of BJP leaders and party workers without justification was unacceptable. He warned that if political harassment continues, the Congress party could face consequences similar to those experienced by the previous TRS government. He urged the state government to safeguard democratic principles, refrain from suppressing dissent, and focus on addressing public issues rather than targeting political opponents.

SOUTHERN POWER DISTRIBUTION COMPANY OF TELANGANA LIMITED
METRO ZONE, MINT COMPOUND HYDERABAD - 63
 e-procurement Extension: Tender Spec No. eMZ-44, eMZ-45 & eMZ-47/25-26
 Tender Notice No. 39/25-26 (Paper Notification)
 Bidders are invited from eligible agencies for extension of e-Tender for: Construction of a) Division office for Lines/ South at 33/11 KV Hyderabad SS under General Category of eMZ-44/25-26 (Ext-1), b) Sub-Division office at 33/11 KV SS Madhapur under General Category of eMZ-45/25-26 (Ext-1) in SCADA Circle under T&D Civil works c) Bifurcation of 11KV Hussainiaram Feeder emanating from 33/11KV Pettaburg SS under General Category of eMZ-47/25-26 (Ext-1) of Hyd South Circle under T&D Improvements to original works and d) Procurement of Self supporting ALI. Extn. Ladder 20/21.5 ft (Telescopic ladder) under Open Tenders (01/34/25-26). Any further information in this regard can be viewed from the website of www.tender.telangana.gov.in and www.spsouthernpower.org.
 Sd/- Chief Engineer, Operation, Metro Zone, Hyderabad
 R.O.No.:15776-PPCL/ADVT/1/2025-26, Dt.21-02-2026

Three arrested for murder of 25-year-old in Dhanas: Chandigarh Police



The Chandigarh Police claimed to have solved the murder case of a 25-year-old man by arresting three persons, including the main conspirator. The case came to light after Neha, a resident of Milk Colony, Dhanas, reported her brother Akash missing on October 18, three days after he failed to return home. On October 19, Akash's decomposed body was found in Patiala Ki Rao drain near the Dhanas bridge. The post-mortem examination was conducted at Government Multi-Specialty Hospital (GMSH), Sector 16, on October 21. Taking note of the crime, police teams were constituted under the supervision of senior officers to trace the culprits. The investigation involved examination of CCTV footage from nearby areas, analysis of call detail records, and raids at multiple suspected hideouts. During the course of the investigation, the police arrested Sonu, alias Bunty (19), and Suraj, alias

Kancha (20), both residents of Dhanas. The accused were produced before the court on October 23, which granted their police remand. During their interrogation, a third accused, Harsh, alias Chunni Lal (19), also a resident of Dhanas, was arrested on the disclosure of Suraj, police said. Police said during the investigation, they recovered crucial evidence linking the accused to the crime, including blood-stained glass pieces, stones, clothes and the mobile phone of the deceased. The forensic analysis of these exhibits is expected to further strengthen the case, police said. Police said that investigations revealed that Suraj, alias Kancha, was the kingpin behind the murder. The trio had initially attempted to snatch Akash's mobile phone, but when they failed in their attempt, they forced him to consume alcohol, police said, adding that after Akash became intoxicated, "the accused assaulted him and later brutally killed him using sharp glass pieces and stones". Police said Suraj, who is already facing another criminal case registered under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) at the Sarangpur police station, had a history of criminal activity. The other two accused, Sonu and Harsh, are school dropouts and residents of the same locality, police said. A senior police officer said, "The case was solved through coordinated fieldwork and technical surveillance. Further investigation is in progress to establish the complete sequence of events and gather additional forensic and digital evidence."

Now, CBI searches IPS officer Punjab DIG Harcharan Singh Bhullar's Machhiwara property

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) Friday carried out searches at another property of suspended Punjab Police DIG Harcharan Singh Bhullar, held in an alleged bribery case. The CBI sleuths raided his 55-acre farm house cum agricultural land at Mand Sherian village of Machhiwara in Ludhiana district.

The IPS officer, who was posted as DIG Ropar range, was arrested by the CBI on October 16 after the alleged recovery of Rs 7.50 crore cash, 2.5 kg gold, 26 luxury watches, documents of at least 50 immovable properties etc from his Chandigarh residence. He was subsequently suspended. Sources said the search at Machhiwara property started early morning during which CBI officials scrutinised documents and inspected the premises. Speaking to the local reporters outside the premises, a CBI sleuth confirmed that the raid was the part of ongoing investigation against Bhullar in the bribery case. Earlier, the CBI had also claimed recovery of 108 liquor bottles and Rs 2.89 lakh in cash from his another farmhouse in Bondli village of Samrala, also in Ludhiana district. A separate FIR was registered against Bhullar by Khanna Police under the Excise Act at Samrala police station for the recovery of li-



quor bottles. At least 17 live cartridges were also recovered from Samrala farm house for which a separate probe has been initiated as mentioned in the FIR. A 2009-batch IPS officer, Bhullar was arrested by the CBI in a bribery case. The investigation agency said in a statement that "the officer was caught while demanding and accepting illegal gratification from a businessman through his associate for settling an FIR registered against the complainant".

Punjab State Commission for Protection of Child Rights takes suo motu cognisance of 'stripping and assault' on minors in Zirakpur

Meanwhile, Zirakpur police said that they arrested one of the accused, identified as Ajay, while efforts were underway to nab the remaining suspects. Meanwhile, Zirakpur police said that they arrested one of the accused, identified as Ajay, while efforts were underway to nab the remaining suspects. The Punjab State Commission for Protection of Child Rights has taken suo motu cognisance of the alleged stripping and beating of five minor boys on the VIP road in Zirakpur, and summoned the investigating officer to the Commission's office at 11 am on October 27, along with the entire case file. Commission Chairperson Kanwardeep Singh issued a summons under Section 17 of the Commission for Protection of Child Rights Act, 2005. Meanwhile, Zirakpur police said that they arrested one of the accused, identified as Ajay, while efforts were underway to nab the remaining suspects.

On October 20, five minor labourers from Bhudda Sahib village were allegedly stripped naked and beaten by a group of shopkeepers, accusing them of "theft", on the VIP road. A video of the assault went viral on social media. The minors, however, denied the allegations, claiming they were innocent, daily-waged labourers who came



to the area for work. The boys alleged that, apart from the physical assault, they were forcibly fed chillies and denied water when they pleaded. According to the victims, around 9-10 men from Block-B and VIP Road suddenly attacked them without any explanation when they were working. "We were beaten, abused, stripped and even threatened with death," they alleged. Police reached the spot, provided medical aid to the injured minors, and registered a case based on their complaint.

Bizman robbed of Rs 8.50L; 4 held in separate dacoity case: police

panchkula policeA police officer said, "Both cases are being investigated on priority. Teams have been deployed to track down the robbers involved in the businessman's case, while further arrests are likely in the Manimajra dacoity."

A Panchkula businessman was allegedly robbed of Rs 8.50 lakh in cash by a group of unidentified assailants near the Hallo Majra light point on Tuesday evening, police said on Friday. In a separate incident the same day, the Chandigarh Police arrested four accused for attacking and looting a woman in Manimajra, as part of their ongoing crackdown on street crimes and robberies across the city. In the first case, registered at the Mauli Jagran police station, complainant Ankush Goyal, a businessman from Panchkula, reported that around 7.30 pm on October 22, while driving towards Mauli Jagran, his car was hit by a black Thar vehicle with 3-4 unidentified occupants. The assailants allegedly got down, assaulted him, and snatched Rs 8.50 lakh in cash before fleeing the scene, he alleged. The injured complainant was later admitted to GMCH-32, Chandigarh, for treatment.

Police teams are analysing CCTV footage and technical evidence to trace the vehicle and identify the suspects. Meanwhile, another case was registered at the IT park police station, following a complaint from a 38-year-old woman from New Indra Colony, Manimajra, alleging that on October 22, a group of men, identified as Hunny, Aashu, Chatu, Labbu, Kaku, Naveen, Kalu, Rajan and others, attacked her near House No. 148, New Indra Colony, with rods and batons. The accused allegedly robbed her purse containing Rs 10,000, a mobile phone, and important documents before escaping. During the investigation, the police



Police teams are analysing CCTV footage and technical evidence to trace the vehicle and identify the suspects.

arrested four accused: Naveen (30), Ansul alias Kalu (21), Vijay alias Labbu (33), and Harpal Singh (24), all residents of New Indra Colony, Manimajra. They are currently under interrogation to identify their accomplices and recover the stolen items, police said. A police officer said, "Both cases are being investigated on priority. Teams have been deployed to track down the robbers involved in the businessman's case, while further arrests are likely in the Manimajra dacoity."

'We won't run, haven't done anything wrong': Assam workers in UP deny BJP MP's 'Bangladeshi' label



On Friday, a worried Rupachan Ali (33) and his wife Bimala Khatoon sat in their rented under-construction house, clutching their government IDs — Aadhaar card, voter ID, National Register of Citizens (NRC) certificate — afraid that someone might question their identity. The couple from Assam lived in Malesamau, barely one-and-a-half kilometres from the upscale Gomti Nagar locality in Uttar Pradesh's Lucknow.

A day earlier, they, along with three others from the state, were grilled by BJP Rajya Sabha MP Brij Lal while they were sweeping a road. The MP had uploaded a video of himself stopping the five workers in Gomti Nagar Extension, accusing them of belonging to Bangladesh and labelling them "ghuspathiya (infiltrators)". Asked about the video, Rupachan said, "We were just doing our regular job, when we were suddenly stopped by a sahab. He asked questions and made a video. Someone showed the video to my mother back in the village, who called me and asked me to come back as she was worried about us."

Asked if he would go back, he said, "No, we will not run. We have all the documents and we have not done anything wrong. I have a loan to pay. We tried to tell this to the Sahab as well that we have the NRC document but he did not listen. The document has been given to us by the government and we have all the copies with us." In the video, uploaded on his Facebook account on Thursday, Lal grilled them about their identities. The workers said they hail from different villages in Assam. But Lal replied, "Yeh batate Assam ke hain lekin hain yeh sab Bangladeshi... Woh Bangladesh jo aaj Pakistan ki bhasha bolta hai (They say they are from Assam, but they are Bangladeshi. The same Bangladeshi that speaks the language of Pakistan)." Bangladeshi Sanwra Begum and her husband, Mohd Afzal Hussain. Standing at the entrance to his home, Rupachan said he had come to Lucknow about one-and-a-half years ago for work on the advice of a fellow resi-

dent in his village, Numberpara. He said they had to come far from home to pay back a Rs 2.5 lakh loan, which they couldn't do with what they earned from farming. His mother and elder son are living in the village. Husband and wife send half their earnings to them and to pay off the loan. His two other children, an 8-year-old daughter and 6-year-old boy, live with them in Lucknow. They study in a nearby government school Bimala, however, worried about their safety after the video went up. Apart from sweeping roads, she also works as a domestic help in one of the neighbouring colonies and earns about Rs 8,500 a month.

Half a kilometre away, Sanwra Begum — who was also in the video — lived with her husband, Mohd Afzal Hussain. She claimed to have lived in Lucknow for over two decades, working as a cleaner in different localities over the years. "We are from Debradi village in Assam's Barpeta district. I not only have the NRC document but a PAN card, Labour card and an Ayushman Bharat card issued to me in my village," she said, while her husband showed the IDs. "We have been working here for years but it is the first time that we have been questioned like this by someone," she added. Hussain, who said he works with a door-to-door garbage collection agency, added that he had come to the city at the age of 7. He said about a month ago, police had come to verify their identities and they had submitted documents at the local police station. Asked about the viral video, he said their family does not have a "bada phone (smartphone)" and they have not been able to see it, else they would have been worried. "I have worked here all my life. We will show all our documents if anyone asks. But we will not run from here as this is the only work we have known all our life," Hussain said. On Friday, Pankaj Shukla, Lucknow Municipal Corporation's zonal sanitation officer for Zone 4, said, "We tried to trace these sanitation workers, but the agency deployed for sanitation of main roads in the Zone 4 area, where the video concerned was shot, denied that they are their employees. There could be a possibility that the workers were deployed by other local contractors, who have been given the contract of cleaning the sub-lanes..." The Indian Express later spoke to the company that had hired these workers. Ranvir, Director of Lions Security Services, which has the contract for cleaning in the internal lanes, said they were daily-wage labourers and they stopped coming after their permanent employees returned."

2 families, 2 newborns and a 'mix-up' at Udaipur hospital that leaves them with 15-day wait for DNA results

Udaipur hospital newborns mix up, hospital newborns mix up, newborns mix up, Maharana Bhupal government hospital newborns mix up, Indian express news, current affairs While the police have intervened, no FIR was lodged, Vyas said. Maharana Bhupal hospital superintendent Dr R L Suman did not respond to calls. Two families in Udaipur are awaiting DNA results of their newborns after a mix-up at the district's Maharana Bhupal government hospital. Anita Rawat from Udaipur and Rameshwari Soni from Chittorgarh gave birth to a child each three days ago, within a span of about 45 minutes. As per Sunita's husband Sunil, they were initially handed over a boy child, but about an hour later, the staff came and informed them that it's a girl. Sunil said, "My wife was admitted at the hospital the night before and when a baby was delivered (on October 21), they said that a baby boy has been born. However, about an hour later, they said that it's a girl, not a boy. They acted rather irresponsibly; the staff was only interested in collecting reward money (on the childbirth). The doctors also didn't know which woman delivered which child." Blaming the nursing staff, Ashok Rawat, Anita's brother, said that "her delivery time was 12:03 am but was shown as 12:46 am which is incorrect and is someone else's. They are unable to give us a justification for the mix up and have also made 'corrections' in their registers. For 45 minutes they didn't have any clue." Sunil then approached the local police at Hathipol police station and lodged a complaint. Meanwhile, the hospital also initiated a verification process to confirm and link the infants with their respective families. Hathipol SHO Yogendra Vyas said, "Two women were admitted for delivery and a boy and a girl were delivered. However, when they were handed over to their families, there was some confusion and the newborns were apparently mixed up. The hospital later clarified which child belonged to whom but the families protested.



I also went to the spot and verified the necessary records." He said the hospital's records, the blood group details and other test reports helped clear the confusion as to which baby belonged to which family, with the girl child apparently belonging to the Rawats and the boy to the Sonis.

"However, the families said that they don't want any vehem (confusion) about their child and demanded a DNA test. So, the DNA profiling has been initiated to clear the confusion of both the families," he said, adding that while the results are expected in about 15 days from the Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) in Jaipur, they have asked FSL to submit its findings at the earliest. He said that since both the deliveries were back-to-back, it led to some confusion among the staff. Both the children were kept in the hospital, with the Rawats accepting the girl child — for now — while the baby boy is with the other family. While the police have intervened, no FIR was lodged, Vyas said. Maharana Bhupal hospital superintendent Dr R L Suman did not respond to calls. Sunil said, "If the gudiya (baby girl) is ours, we will wholeheartedly accept her and if, on the basis of the DNA test, they say the boy is ours, we will accept him as well."

SIR of Tamil Nadu voter list to begin in 'week or so', EC tells court hearing ex-MLA's 'irregularities' case over 137-vote loss

The Election Commission of India (ECI) on Friday informed the Madras High Court that it will begin a Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Tamil Nadu "in a week or so" as part of a nationwide exercise to update voter lists before the 2026 Assembly elections. Appearing before the First Division Bench of Chief Justice Manindra Mohan Shrivastava and Justice G Arul Murugan, ECI standing counsel Niranjan Rajagopalan said the SIR process would adhere to the Supreme Court's guidelines issued in connection with a similar exercise in Bihar.

The counsel added that the Commission had already held consultations with Chief Electoral Officers across states to ensure uniformity in the process. The submissions came during the hearing of a public interest litigation (PIL) by former AIADMK legislator B Sathyanarayanan, who represented the T Nagar constituency between 2016 and 2021. He alleged widespread irregularities in the electoral rolls of his constituency, including deletions of thousands of names — many of them AIADMK supporters — ahead of the 2021 elections. Sathyanarayanan lost the 2021 election to DMK's J Karunanithi by a narrow margin of 137 votes.

"The extremely narrow margin, compared with the thousands of wrongful deletions and inclusions, clearly es-

establishes the irregularities which materially altered the election result," the petitioner told the court. He argued that the voter list had shown little growth over 25 years — rising from 2,08,349 voters in 1996 to 2,45,005 in 2021 — despite a significant increase in population. Calling this "stagnant growth" a "serious legal and constitutional concern", he sought directions to the ECI for complete re-verification of all 229 polling parts in T Nagar through booth-level officers (BLOs). The petition alleged that BLOs had prepared voter lists "without actual field visits", allowing duplicate entries, the inclusion of non-residents and deceased voters, and wrongful deletions to persist. Sathyanarayanan claimed he had personally verified voter data in 100 of the 229 booths, identifying numerous discrepancies. Despite submitting detailed reports to election authorities, he said, "no corrective measures were taken", describing the inaction as "serious dereliction of duty" that undermined the integrity of the electoral process. His petition also cited a report published in a Tamil daily that over 13,000 names of AIADMK supporters were deleted. He further contended that the lapses violated both the Representation of the People Act, 1950, and the right to vote under Article 326 of the Constitution, arguing that such failures eroded public trust in the democratic process.

Suspect in National Guard attack struggled with 'periods of dark isolation,' community member says



The Afghan man accused of gunning down two National Guard members blocks from the White House last week had been unravelling for years, unable to hold a job and flipping between long, lightless stretches of isolation and taking sudden weeks-long cross-country drives. His behaviour deteriorated so sharply that a community advocate reached out to a refugee organisation for help, fearing he was becoming suicidal. Emails obtained by The Associated Press reveal mounting warnings about the suspect, Rahmanullah Lakanwal, an asylum seeker whose erratic conduct raised alarms long before the attack that jolted the nation's capital on the eve of Thanksgiving. The previously unreported concerns offer the clearest picture yet of how he was struggling in his new life in the United States.

Even so, when the community member who works with Afghan families in Washington State saw on the news that Lakanwal was named as the suspect in the National Guard shooting, they said they were stunned, unable to square the violence with the memory of seeing Lakanwal play with his young sons. The person spoke on the condition of anonymity to share undisclosed details while cooperating with the FBI in its investigation. West Virginia National Guard Specialist Sarah Beckstrom, 20, and Staff Sgt. Andrew Wolfe, 24, were critically wounded in what officials described as an ambush attack on Wednesday (November 26, 2025) afternoon, and Beckstrom died from her injuries the next day. Investigators are still working to estab-

lish a motive for the attack. In Afghanistan, Lakanwal worked in a special Afghan Army unit known as a Zero Unit. The units were backed by the CIA. He entered the U.S. in 2021 through Operation Allies Welcome, a program that evacuated and resettled tens of thousands of Afghans after the U.S. withdrawal from the country, many of whom had worked alongside U.S. troops and diplomats. He resettled with his wife and their five sons, all under the age of 12, in Bellingham, Washington — but struggled, according to the community member, who shared emails that had been sent to the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, a nonprofit group that provides services to refugees.

Rahmanullah has not been functional as a person, father and provider since March of last year, 03/2023. He quit his job that month, and his behaviour has changed greatly," the person wrote in a January 2024 email. The emails described a man who was struggling to assimilate, unable to hold a steady job or commit to his English courses while he alternated between "periods of dark isolation and reckless travel." Sometimes, he spent weeks in his "darkened room, not speaking to anyone, not even his wife or older kids." At one point in 2023, the family faced eviction after months of not paying rent. The community member said in an interview that they became worried that Lakanwal was so depressed that he would end up harming himself, but they did not see any indication that he would commit violence against another person. Lakanwal's family members often resorted to sending his toddler sons into his room to bring him the phone or messages because he would not respond to anyone else, one email stated. A couple of times, when his wife left him with the kids for a week to travel to visit relatives, the children would not be bathed, their clothes would not be changed, and they would not eat well. Their school raised concerns about the situation. But then, there were "interim" weeks where Lakanwal would try to make amends and "do the right things," according to the email, re-engaging with the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services as was mandated by the terms of his entry into the U.S.. "But that has quickly evolved into manic episodes for one or two weeks at a time, where he will take off in the family car, and drive nonstop," the email outlined. Once, he went to Chicago, and another time, to Arizona. Jeanine Pirro, the U.S. attorney in Washington, D.C., said this past week that Lakanwal drove across the country from Bellingham, about 80 miles (130 kilometres) north of Seattle, to the nation's capital to execute his attack. In response to the two emails, the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants or USCRI, visited Bellingham a few weeks later in March 2024

Rubio says 'more work' required after U.S.-Ukraine talks in Florida



The United States and Ukraine on Sunday (November 30, 2025) hailed "productive" talks on Washington's plan to halt Russia's war with its neighbor, but both sides also cautioned that the high-stakes negotiations were far from over. U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said that more work was required, and a source in Kyiv's delegation characterised the discussions as "not easy." The talks in Florida come as Kyiv faces mounting military and political pressure, along with the fallout from a domestic corruption scandal. Washington has put forward a plan to end the nearly four-year conflict and is seeking to finalize it with Moscow and Kyiv's approval.

The negotiations, which follow talks in Geneva, could set the stage for an upcoming visit to Moscow by President Donald Trump's envoy Steve Witkoff, who is expected to discuss Ukraine with Russian President Vladimir Putin. "We had another very productive session, building off Geneva, building off the events of this week," Mr. Rubio told reporters. "But there's more work to be done. This is delicate. It's complicated," he added. "There are a lot of moving parts, and obviously there's another party involved here that will have to be a part of the equation, and that will continue later this week when Mr. Witkoff travels to Moscow." Mr. Witkoff and Mr. Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner also attended the meeting in Hallandale Beach, north of Miami. Ukraine's security council secretary Rustem Umerov led Kyiv's delegation, which also included Andrii Hnatov, the chief of staff of Ukraine's armed forces, and presidential adviser Oleksandr Bezh. Mr. Umerov described the Florida talks as "productive and successful." A source close to the Kyiv delegation, however, told AFP that "the process is not easy because the search for formulations

and solutions continues." Another source briefed on the developments told AFP that "the Americans really want the final points to be agreed upon" ahead of the US talks in Moscow. "The wording is complicated, especially with regard to territories, because they see themselves exclusively as mediators, not as a party" supporting Ukraine, the source added. The U.S. talks come amid turbulence for Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and his government. A blockbuster corruption probe forced him to sack his chief of staff and top negotiator, Andriy Yermak, on Friday (November 28, 2025). Mr. Rubio had met with Mr. Yermak only a week ago in Geneva. Flurry of diplomacy: An initial 28-point U.S. proposal — drafted without input from Ukraine's European allies — would have required Kyiv to withdraw from its eastern Donetsk region, and the United States then would de facto recognise the Donetsk, Crimea and Lugansk regions as Russian.

The United States pared back the original draft following criticism from Kyiv and Europe, but the current contents remain unclear. After the Florida negotiations, French President Emmanuel Macron is set to host Mr. Zelenskyy for talks in Paris on Monday (December 1, 2025). Mr. Rubio is set to skip a meeting of NATO foreign ministers on Wednesday and Thursday in Brussels, despite allies' concerns about the US plan for Ukraine. But Mr. Witkoff is expected in Moscow for talks with Mr. Putin. The flurry of diplomacy comes as the war — which has killed tens of thousands of civilians and military personnel and displaced millions of Ukrainians — shows no sign of easing.

Russian oil terminal hit: Ahead of the Florida talks, Russia's forces targeted Ukraine's capital and the region for two nights in a row as they advanced on the front line. A drone attack in the outskirts of Kyiv killed one person and wounded 11 late Saturday (November 29, 2025), the regional governor said. Hours earlier, a Ukrainian security source said Kyiv was responsible for attacks on two oil tankers in the Black Sea that it believed were covertly transporting sanctioned Russian oil. One of Russia's largest oil terminals halted operations on Saturday (November 29, 2025) following a drone attack. The Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC), a group that includes U.S. oil majors Chevron and ExxonMobil and which owns the terminal, called the strike a "terrorist attack." Ukraine, which did not comment on the incident, regularly targets Russian energy facilities in a bid to sap the country's war chest.

Police comb fire-ravaged Hong Kong apartments, death toll at 146

Hong Kong authorities pressed ahead on Monday (December 1, 2025) with combing the remaining apartment towers destroyed by a massive fire at a housing estate that killed at least 146 people and displaced hundreds, now adjusting to life in temporary housing. Police have completed sweeps of four of the seven towers that were engulfed in the city's deadliest fire in more than 75 years, finding bodies of residents in stairwells and on rooftops, trapped as they tried to flee the flames. Thousands have turned out to pay tribute to the victims, who include at least nine domestic helpers from Indonesia and one from the Philippines, with lines of mourners stretching more than a kilometre (a half-mile) along a canal next to the doomed Wang Fuk Court estate on Sunday. Vigils are also due to take place this week in Tokyo and London. Around 40 people are still missing, authorities said.

The cause of the blaze that started last Wednesday and quickly fanned across the exterior of the apartments under renovation is still being investigated. But amid pockets of public anger over missed fire risk warnings and evidence of unsafe construction practices, Beijing has warned it would crack down on any "anti-China" protests. At least one person involved in a petition calling for an independent probe among other demands has been detained, sources familiar with the matter said. Police have declined to comment on specifics, saying only that they will take action in accordance with the law. Search moves to worst affected buildings: The remaining buildings to be scoured for remains are "the difficult ones", Amy Lam, a senior police official told reporters on Sunday, adding that the final leg of the search may take weeks. Images shared by police showed officers clad in hazmat suits, face masks and helmets, inspecting rooms with blackened walls and furniture reduced to ashes, and wading through water used to douse fires that raged for days. Throngs of officers arrived at the site early on Monday morning to continue their search of the burnt-out buildings. The apartment blocks were home to more than 4000 people, according to census data, and those that escaped must now try to get their lives back on track. More than 1,100 people have been moved out of evacuation centres into temporary housing, with a further 680 put up in youth hostels and hotels, authorities said. With many residents leaving behind belongings as they fled, authorities have offered emergency funds of HK\$10,000 (\$1,284) to each household and provided special assistance for issuing new identity cards, passports and marriage



certificates. Eleven people arrested in fire probe

Hong Kong's deadliest fire since 1948, when 176 people died in a warehouse blaze, has stunned the city, where legislative elections are due to be held this weekend. Authorities have arrested 11 people as part of investigations into possible corruption and the use of unsafe materials during the renovations. The building was wrapped in green mesh and bamboo scaffolding and layered with foam insulation at the time. Fire alarms at the complex were also not working properly, authorities have said. Residents of Wang Fuk Court were told by authorities last year they faced "relatively low fire risks" after complaining about fire hazards posed by the renovations, the city's Labour Department said. The residents raised concerns in September, 2024, including about the potential flammability of the mesh contractors used to cover the scaffolding, a department spokesperson said. Police on Saturday detained Miles Kwan, 24, part of a group that launched a petition demanding an independent probe into possible corruption and a review of construction oversight, two people familiar with the matter said. Reuters could not establish whether he had been arrested. Two others have also since been arrested on suspicion of seditious intent, the South China Morning Post said. The police declined to comment on those reported arrests. China's national security office warned individuals on Saturday against using the disaster to "plunge Hong Kong back into the chaos" of 2019, when massive pro-democracy protests challenged Beijing and triggered a political crisis. "We sternly warn the anti-China disruptors who attempt to 'disrupt Hong Kong through disaster,'" the office said in a statement. "No matter what methods you use, you will certainly be held accountable and strictly punished."

Police search for shooter after four are killed, three of them children, in shooting in California

Authorities in California appealed to the public for tips, even rumours, as they searched Sunday (November 30, 2025) for a suspect in the killing of three children and an adult during a mass shooting at a child's birthday party in Stockton. "It's heartbreaking," said Heather Brent, a spokesperson for the San Joaquin County sheriff's office. She said investigators believe it was a "targeted incident" at a banquet hall where 100 people or more had gathered Saturday night. Ms. Brent said the deceased were ages 8, 9, 14 and 21. Eleven people were also wounded. No one was in custody by Sunday afternoon, and she did not elaborate on why authorities believe it was intentional or who might have been targeted. "If you have surveillance footage, if you're a local business here, if you're in the area, live in the area, or maybe you've heard rumours — please contact the sheriff's office," Ms. Brent said. She said she could not release information about a motive or details about a suspect, noting that it might hinder the investigation. "Finding the person or persons who committed this crime is the No. 1 priority," Ms. Brent said. Faith leaders in Stockton were planning an afternoon vigil to honour the dead and pray for the wounded. The shooting occurred just before 6 pm Saturday inside the hall, which shares a parking lot with other businesses. Stockton is a city of 3,20,000 residents, about 40 miles (65 kilometers) south of Sacramento. "This was a birthday party for a young child, and the fact that this happened is absolutely heartbreaking," Ms. Brent told reporters. District Attorney Ron Freitas urged the shooter



to "turn yourself in immediately." Community leaders expressed anguish. "This is Thanksgiving weekend. This is when families come together, celebrate, share memories, give each other love," Mayor Christina Fugazi said Saturday night. "Unfortunately tonight, heaven is a little bigger with the individuals, children and adults that unfortunately did not make it." In 2024, Stockton had many more homicides — 54 — than other California cities of similar size, but the rate was down through October of this year, according to city data. Ms. Fugazi recalled a shooting several years ago in which "seven people were gunned down" in the city. "Stockton is better than this. ... Families should be together instead of at the hospital, standing next to their loved one, praying that they survive," Ms. Fugazi said.

Trump confirms call with Maduro, Caracas slams U.S. maneuvers

U.S. President Donald Trump confirmed on Sunday (November 30, 2025) he had recently spoken with Venezuelan leader Nicolas Maduro amid soaring tensions between the two countries, while Caracas slammed what it called U.S. preparations for an attack. The United States is piling the pressure on Venezuela, with a major military buildup in the Caribbean, the designation of an alleged drug cartel run by Mr. Maduro as a terrorist group, and an ominous warning from Mr. Trump that Venezuelan airspace is "closed." Washington says the aim of the military deployment launched in September is to curb drug trafficking in the region, but Caracas insists regime change is the ultimate goal. "I wouldn't say it went well or badly. It was a phone call," Mr. Trump told reporters on Sunday (November 30) aboard Air Force One. The New York Times reported on Friday (November 28) that Mr. Trump and Mr. Maduro had discussed a possible meeting, while The Wall Street Journal said on Saturday (November 29) that the conversation also included conditions of amnesty if Mr. Maduro were to step down. Republican Senator Markwayne Mullin said on Sunday (November 30) on CNN's "State of the Union" talk show that the United States has offered Mr. Maduro the chance to leave his country for Russia or elsewhere. The United States accuses Mr. Maduro, the political heir to Venezuela's late leftist leader Hugo Chavez, of heading the "Cartel of the Suns" and has issued a \$50 million reward for his capture. But Venezuela and countries that support it insist no such organisation even exists. Several Venezuela experts say what Washington calls the Cartel of the Suns refers to the corruption of senior officials by criminal gangs. The United States also does not recognise Mr. Maduro as the legitimate winner of last year's presidential election. Though Mr. Trump has not publicly threatened to use force against Mr. Maduro, he said in recent days that efforts to halt Venezuelan drug trafficking "by land" would begin "very soon." Aid from OPEC? Venezuela says it has

requested assistance from the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), of which it is a member, to help "stop this (American) aggression, which is being readied with more and more force." The request came in a letter from Mr. Maduro to the group, read by Vice-President Delcy Rodriguez, who is also Venezuela's oil minister, during a virtual meeting of OPEC ministers. Washington "is trying to seize Venezuela's vast oil reserves, the biggest in the world, by using military force," Mr. Maduro wrote in the letter. Since September, U.S. air strikes have targeted alleged drug-trafficking boats in the Caribbean Sea and the eastern Pacific Ocean, killing at least 83 people. Trump's administration has offered no concrete evidence to back up the allegations behind its campaign, and numerous experts have questioned the legality of the operations. U.S. media reported on Friday (November 28) that in one strike in September, the U.S. military conducted a follow-up strike that killed survivors of an initial attack. The Washington Post and CNN said Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth had issued a directive to "kill everybody," but Mr. Trump said on Sunday (November 30) that Mr. Hegseth had denied giving such an order. "We'll look into it, but no, I wouldn't have wanted that -- not a second strike," Mr. Trump told reporters. "Pete said he did not order the death of those two men." "Extrajudicial executions" The head of Venezuela's legislature, Jorge Rodriguez, said he met on Sunday (November 30) with relatives of Venezuelans killed in the strikes. He would not comment on a possible Trump-Maduro call. But when asked about the report about the Mr. Hegseth order, he said, "If a war had been declared and led to such killings, we would be talking about war crimes." "Given that no war has been declared, what happened... can only be characterised as murder or extrajudicial executions," he added. The steady U.S. military buildup has seen the world's largest aircraft carrier deployed to Caribbean waters, while American fighter jets and bombers have repeatedly flown off the Venezuelan coast in recent days.

Princess Aiko's popularity sparks calls to change Japan's male-only succession law

Tokyo: Japan's beloved Princess Aiko is often cheered like a pop star. During a visit to Nagasaki with Emperor Naruhito and Empress Masako, the sound of her name being screamed by well-wishers along the roads overwhelmed the cheers for her parents. As she turns 24 on Monday, her supporters want to change Japan's male-only succession law, which prohibits Aiko, the emperor's only child, from becoming monarch. Along with frustration that the discussion on succession rules has stalled, there's a sense of urgency. Japan's shrinking monarchy is on the brink of extinction. Naruhito's teenage nephew is the only eligible heir from the younger generation. Experts say the female ban should be lifted before the royal family dies out, but conservative lawmakers, including Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi, oppose the change. Aiko has gained admirers since debuting as an adult royal in 2021, when she impressed the public as intelligent, friendly, caring and funny. Support for Aiko as a future monarch increased following her first solo official overseas trip to Laos in November, representing the emperor. During the six-day visit, she met with top Laotian officials, visited cultural and historical venues and met with locals. Earlier this year, Aiko accompanied her parents to Nagasaki and Okinawa. She has

followed the example set by her father, who places great importance on passing down the tragedy of WWII to younger generations. "I have always been rooting for Princess Aiko to be crowned," said Setsuko Matsuo, an 82-year-old atomic bombing survivor who came to Nagasaki's peace park hours before Aiko and her parents' scheduled arrival in the area. "I like everything about her, especially her smile ... so comforting," she said. Mari Maehira, a 58-year-old office worker who waited to cheer Aiko in Nagasaki, said she has seen Aiko grow up and "now we want to see her become a future monarch." The princess' popularity has triggered some to pressure legislators to change the law. Cartoonist Yoshinori Kobayashi has written comic books that push for a legal change to allow Aiko to become monarch, which supporters keep sending to parliamentarians to raise awareness and get their backing for the cause. Others have set up YouTube channels and distributed leaflets to gain public attention on the issue. Ikuko Yamazaki, 62, has been using social media to advocate for the succession of the emperor's first child regardless of gender. She says not having Aiko as a successor and the insistence on male-only monarchs will cause the monarchy to die out.

‘Pehli baar laga ki ghar se bahar kaam karna theek hai’: BluSmart is gone, but for its women drivers, hardships remain



Early this year, on a cool February morning, Asha, a 37-year-old widow from East Delhi, walked into a modest Driver Training Centre run by the Automotive Skills Development Council (ASDC) in Burari. She was unsure of what she was stepping into. She had never been behind the wheel of a car. Most of the women seated beside her hadn't either. Yet, they had all arrived for the first day of BluSmart's 'Sakhi Programme', an initiative that promised something the city's gig economy rarely offers women: the chance to learn a new skill and secure stable work in a field overwhelmingly dominated by men. Asha had never imagined herself becoming a driver. The programme came into her life almost by accident. A friend mentioned it in passing, and the idea lodged somewhere between curiosity and necessity. Years earlier, Asha had worked at the Delhi Heart and Lung Institute, juggling a young family with the demands of her shifts. Then, in 2018, her husband died of kidney complications. Her life unraveled. She quit her job to raise her two young children. Returning to work was impossible — most jobs demanded fixed hours, long commutes, and support she no longer had. What pushed her back was something small, almost petty.

Earlier this year, as relatives prepared to attend a family wedding, her sister-in-law refused to let Asha and her children join them in a shared auto-rickshaw. Asha remembers the sting vividly. "Fine," she thought. "I'll learn to drive a car. I'll show her." What followed felt transformative. She learned to parallel park, navigate roundabouts, and handle peak-hour traffic. When she completed the programme, she joined BluSmart's fleet. Asha began working an eight-hour shift from 7.30 am to 3.30 pm — a schedule that, surprisingly, fit neatly around the rhythms of her home life. Her children, a 15-year-old son and a 13-year-old daughter, left for school early. "By 7 am, I would get them ready, pack their lunch, and then head to the hub," she recalled. How BluSmart's Collapse Halted Women Drivers' Dreams For Tarisha (21), the job had transformed her life. Earning Rs 30,000 a month felt almost unreal. (Image: Special Arrangement) It helped that the hub was only a few minutes from her house. "By 7.11 am, I'd be there — pick up the keys, wipe down the car, and get on the road," she said. When her shift ended, she returned home, finished the household chores and waited for her children to come back from school. Her earnings — between Rs 20,000 and 30,000 a month — offered something she had not felt in years: a measure of stability. But what the job returned to her was something more elusive. For the first time in years, she could move through Delhi on her own terms. Between rides, she would stop at places she had only heard of: India Gate glowing at sunrise, the crowds circling Qutub Minar, the bustle around Jantar Mantar. When she wanted to explore the city, she slipped out of her uniform and into a salwar suit. "Jisko cycle chalani bhi nahi aati, vo ab gaadi be-dhadak chalati thi (Someone who didn't even know how to ride a bicycle is now driving a car fearlessly)," she said, half laughing, half claiming the victory outright. That sense of hard-won confidence ended abruptly on April 16.

That morning, India's market regulator accused BluSmart's founders — brothers Anmol and Puneet Jaggi — of diverting funds meant for the purchase of 1,700 electric cars. Instead of expanding the fleet, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) alleged, the money was routed into personal expenses and related-party transactions: a luxury apartment in DLF's The Camellias valued at Rs 43 crore, a TaylorMade golf set priced at Rs 26 lakh, and other purchases. Within hours, BluSmart's fleet of around 8,000 electric cabs disappeared from Delhi-NCR and Bengaluru's roads. A service known for clean vehicles, punctual drivers, and a rare sense of reliability in the Capital's cab service evaporated overnight. Commuters scrambled, and drivers watched their livelihoods dissolve with a single notification. For the women trained under the Sakhi Programme, the collapse struck deeper. Many had joined BluSmart because it offered something other gig-economy jobs did not: flexibility and a predictable salary. These women had walked into a futuristic mobility company expecting a foothold; they emerged months later wondering whether they had miscalculated the future entirely. Seven months after the shutdown, when The Indian Express checked in with the women who had trained under the Sakhi Programme, many were struggling to stay afloat. "BluSmart sirf naukri nahi thi. Pehli baar laga ki ghar se bahar kaam karna theek hai. Jab band hua na, toh hamare paas waisi flexibility aur ghar ke paas kaam ka koi option hi nahi bacha (BluSmart wasn't just a job — for the first time, it felt okay for us to work outside the home. After it shut down, we had no other options with that kind of flexibility or closeness to home)," says Asha. Roughly 30 km away in Ghitorni — a village located between Gurgaon's glass towers and the older lanes of Vasant Kunj — Sonika had her own version of that story. At 30, she had never imagined driving a commercial cab. For years, her household survived almost entirely on the income her husband earned through odd jobs and later as an Uber driver. It covered rent, school fees, groceries — barely.

How BluSmart's Collapse Halted Women Drivers' Dreams Jisko cycle chalani bhi nahi aati, vo ab gaadi be-dhadak chalati thi, recounts Asha (37), another former BluSmart driver. (Image: Special Arrangement) When her husband heard that BluSmart was recruiting women drivers, he encouraged her to try. In the evenings, he took her out to the quieter lanes of their neighbourhood, teaching her to shift gears, gauge turns, and handle curves. "I thought, if I can drive through this city, why can't she?" he said. "Uske aane se ghar ki haalat badal gayi thi. (Her income changed our home)." Before BluSmart, Sonika's job options had been narrow. A Class 10 graduate, she worked at a small factory that sprang up during the pandemic to manufacture N95 masks. She earned roughly Rs 9,000 a month. Saving even a few hundred rupees required careful planning. BluSmart changed that almost immediately. By October last year, she was behind the wheel of a blue-and-white electric sedan, completing rides across the city. The shifts were long — 12-hour stretches, often from 8 am to 8 pm, sometimes from 5 am to 5 pm — but the pay was transformative. She brought home at least Rs 40,000 each month, sometimes as much as Rs 55,000. For a brief period, life stabilised in ways her family had never known. With both spouses earning consistently, they felt bold enough to plan ahead. They bought a home, assuming their combined salaries would cover the

EMI. Sonika purchased a Rs 80,000 refrigerator, a new washing machine, and, for herself, a silver anklet — along with matching ones for her three daughters. Small luxuries suddenly felt possible. Nationally, women constitute less than one percent of commercial drivers. BluSmart had briefly nudged that number upward. Then, in April, the company collapsed. The fallout in Sonika's household was immediate. The months after the closure were the hardest, she said. "Bohut hi din kharab dekhe. (We saw very bad days)." With her income gone, their home loan became impossible to keep up with. Her husband withdrew his Provident Fund savings to manage the EMIs.

Across the driver community, similar stories unfolded. "Logon ne uske bharose loan le rakhe the (People took loans based on that income) They built their lives around it," Sonika said.

She spent four months looking for work. "No one wants to hire women," she said. She eventually joined Evera, another electric-cab start-up trying to fill the vacuum left by BluSmart. But she lasted only 10 days. There wasn't enough work; she and other drivers spent hours waiting for bookings in the blistering heat. After quitting, she refused to give up. She borrowed money — from relatives and lenders — and bought a Swift Dzire. The loan now stands at Rs 10 lakh; the monthly EMI is Rs 20,000. She recently attached the vehicle to Refex Mobility, another electric cab company led by Anirudh Arun, BluSmart's former CEO. She is still trying to understand what her monthly income will look like — and how long repayment might take. Sometimes, the uncertainty overwhelms her. Still, she clings to the respect BluSmart once gave her. "BluSmart ke kaam se jitni izzat mili — family se, drivers se, seniors se (The kind of respect I got through BluSmart — from my family, other drivers, and seniors)," she said. "I wouldn't have come this far without it." Each morning, as she adjusts her seat and opens the cab-booking app on her phone, she tries to believe something steady will eventually return. Twenty-one-year-old Tarisha grew up in the narrow lanes of Jahangirpuri, where her father's electrician's salary barely covered the family's expenses. After completing Class 12, she decided to skip college and start earning. "People with degrees were also driving cabs," she said. "I didn't want to keep asking my parents for money." She learned to drive through the Azaad Foundation, a non-profit that partnered with BluSmart to train women from under-resourced communities. In August 2024, she joined the company — one of its youngest recruits. The job transformed her life. Earning Rs 30,000 a month felt almost unreal. For the first time, she had independence at home. Her parents, once cautious, treated her differently, and her voice finally carried weight. "Ghar wale ab pehle se kam taane dete the, jo karna chahti thi karne dete the (My family taunted me less than before; they let me do what I wanted)," she said with a smile. With her savings growing, she began to do something she had always wanted but never imagined possible: she started traveling. Small trips first, planned with a friend from work. They visited the Khatu Shyam temple in Rajasthan, then the riverfronts of Haridwar and Rishikesh, and later the temples of Vrindavan. She speaks with the most pride about a solo trip she took to Muzaffarpur, her ancestral hometown in Bihar. "I took a general train with just a backpack," she said, eyes shining. "Sab log hairaan reh gaye ki yeh ladki akeli kaise aa gayi itni dur (Everyone was shocked — how did this young girl travel so far alone)?" All of that came undone when BluSmart shut down. "We didn't see it coming," she said. One day they were mapping routes; the next, they were stranded. "I was desperately looking for jobs," she recalled. "But nothing worked." For four months, she stayed home, watching her savings drain. Then, a faint sign of recovery appeared. Like Sonika, she found work at Refex Mobility. But the job came with new constraints. She now earns Rs 23,000 for 26 working days. After paying for her commute from Jahangirpuri to the hub, located in a mall in Gurgaon — a one-way metro fare from Jahangirpuri to Gurgaon costs Rs 64 — she brings home barely Rs 18,000. The schedules are harsher. "At BluSmart, I had flexibility," she said. "Now I have to be on the road for 12 hours. You can't take emergency leave. If you take a day off, you lose that day's earnings. They deduct another thousand rupees."

Still, she persists. Driving, she said, brought dignity into her life and her family's. Her younger sister, 20, and out of school since Class 10, has now enrolled at the Azaad Foundation to learn the same skills. "She wants to do what I did," Tarisha said, her voice carrying both pride and caution. "But I hope this time, there is stability. I don't want her to go through another shutdown. It was very hard on us." For many women, BluSmart was never just a job. It combined flexibil-

Civic body sets 10-day deadline for Manyata Tech Park and other companies to begin construction of storm-water drain

The North Corporation in the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) limits has given Manyata Tech Park and surrounding companies 10 days to start building a long-delayed storm-water drain meant to stop the repeated flooding. Until this work is completed, the Karnataka Industrial Areas Development Board (KIADB) has decided not to issue any new building permits to the tech park in key sections or survey areas in Nagavara. Besides, a one-month deadline has been given to the four companies and property owners around the tech park to finish all the pending storm-water drain work meant to stop flooding in the area. Officials have warned that if the companies fail to carry out the work, the civic body would demolish whatever portions are necessary to restore the waterflow and recover the entire cost from the companies. To fix this, the Disaster Management Department has ordered three key drain links to be built, including an additional connection through the internal road network inside the Manyata Tech Park. The officials, however, claimed that "rivalry between the companies" has slowed progress, with each group accusing the other, while residents continue to suffer flooding every monsoon. The officials have also proposed a new canal running from the south of the tech park to the north, passing between Manyata and Karle Town Centre before joining the main canal. Measurements were being taken for this, and designs would be finalised accordingly, the officials added. These directions form part of a report the North Corporation has submitted to the Lokayukta, which had taken up the issue suo motu after years of complaints from residents.

AIDS and TB fight — Tamil Nadu shows the way again



On World AIDS Day today let us rewind to the mid-1980s, when Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) caused by the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) was devastating a whole generation of young adults in southern and eastern African nations. Many countries in this region had prevalence rates that were in double digits. With no treatment at that time, almost everyone infected with HIV developed AIDS in a few years and "opportunistic infections" such as tuberculosis (TB) or diarrhoea, which resulted in high levels of mortality.

By the early 1990s, India was in a similar situation, with HIV prevalent in almost all parts of the country — though below 1% of the adult population, mainly transmitted through unprotected heterosexual sex, except in a few north-eastern States where it was transmitted through the sharing of needles by youngsters addicted to narcotic drugs. The Government of India responded quickly and launched the National AIDS Control Project in 1992 with a soft loan of \$84 million from the World Bank. Every State government set up an AIDS Cell in the respective medical directorates. But fund flow through the Central and then the State government machinery was very slow. A solution was found in 1994 by Tamil Nadu. The State AIDS Cell was converted into a Registered Society named the Tamil Nadu State AIDS Control Society or TNSACS (www.tnsacs.in) under the Societies Registration Act. This facilitated a direct fund flow to TNSACS with a fair degree of autonomy in implementation.

With no cure or even treatment for HIV at that time, quickly raising awareness among the adult population through targeted campaigns was the best strategy. This led to a steep drop in new infections and a plateauing of cumulative infections in Tamil Nadu, once considered a "hot spot" for HIV infections. On witnessing the success of this model, the Government of India and the World Bank mandated the Tamil Nadu model for all the States in the Second National AIDS Control Project (1997-2002). Soon, every State converted its AIDS cell into an AIDS Control Society and launched vigorous awareness campaigns. As a result, India's adult HIV prevalence rate came down from a peak of 0.54% in the year 2000 to a low of 0.22% now. The 2025

Global TB Report of the World Health Organization (WHO) paints a grim picture for India — 25% of the total number of people infected with TB globally (36 million) are in India. Compare this with the numbers for the AIDS epidemic — 7.5% of the global total number of people living with HIV (40 million) are in India. TB is the most common opportunistic infection in HIV-infected people, accounting for 25% of AIDS deaths in India. Further, India also has 25% of the global total number of people infected with multidrug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB).

Response to the AIDS and TB epidemic While the global target date for elimination of TB is 2030, India had set an ambitious target of achieving this by 2025, five years ahead of the global target date. Though this target has not been achieved in India as the year 2025 is coming to a close, the pace of decline in new TB cases is faster in India when compared to the global level. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India has accorded very high priority for the testing and reporting of TB infections in achieving the eradication of TB from India. This is critical, especially in view of the HIV-TB co-infection and high MDR-TB cases in India. The Pradhan Mantri TB Mukta Bharat Abhiyaan (PMTBMA) supports the treatment of TB patients and the support of the community and corporate social responsibility programmes. As in the case of almost all social and economic indicators, there is wide variation among the States of India in TB infections also. Just five States — Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Rajasthan account for 56% of the total TB infections reported in India during 2024. Tamil Nadu has become the first State in the country to integrate a model, which predicts the possibility of TB deaths among patients, with the existing State-wide application which screens them at diagnosis. The model, developed by the Indian Council of Medical Research-National Institute of Epidemiology (ICMR-NIE) will aid the State in bringing down the TB mortality rate. While screening with rapid test kits remains the first step, followed by reporting, starting treatment, nutrition support (in that order), Tamil Nadu has used ICMR-NIE software to reduce the TB burden in the State. The State National Health Mission team and the Central government's State TB Office work closely as partners with the same goal. Such rapid adoption of technologies and an efficient government delivery system of Tamil Nadu are the best model for eradication of TB in India in the next few years, just as the AIDS epidemic was controlled in India in the late 1990s and early 2000s, by adopting the TNSACS model. S. Ramasundaram is a retired Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer, Tamil Nadu, and formerly Project Director, TN State AIDS Control Society (1996-98) and Consultant, The World Bank for India's National AIDS Control Project (1998-99). His article, The Spectre of AIDS, appeared in The Hindu on World AIDS Day, December 1, 1996. The views expressed are personal

Motor insurance: When service ends after sales



Have you noticed how an insurance agent or call-centre executive never lets go when they want to sell you a policy or renewal? The calls are relentless, the persuasion tireless, and the promises glowing. But sign up for the policy — and suddenly, you are in a communication black hole. Phones don't get picked. Emails disappear into the void. That may sound harsh, but the frustration is widespread — and growing. Recently, a senior retired insurance executive wrote on LinkedIn about his experience as a motor insurance customer. His two cars were insured through a broker belonging to the same conglomerate that manufactures and sells that brand of vehicle. Everything should have been seamless, smooth and professional. Instead, it unfolded like an existential satire.

He emailed them regarding a requirement related to the issuance of the policy as there was no direct line to speak to anyone. He did receive a response — but before he could even read the email, another message arrived declaring that his service request had been "resolved" and closed. When he responded with the information they had asked for, a second service ticket was opened saying the "concerned team was working on it", and the ticket was closed within 24 hours. Rinse and repeat, and the issue itself remained untouched after a week. Even his car dealer couldn't call the company and the website was an endless spiral with the captcha repeatedly declared invalid. Stonewalling by technology! I sympathised fully because I was simultaneously living through my own week of motor-insurance mayhem. A damaged tyre at dawn on a highway journey was frightening but I must acknowledge the engineer in the car dealer's

workshop who took my call at 6 a.m. and patiently guided me through how to drive the last 300 kilometres. The next morning the car was collected for repairs. With some anxiety, I opened the insurance policy document. To my relief, I had opted for a tyre-protection add-on. I got back to my workplace confident the process would be smooth. For the next three days, the garage simply parked the car and forgot about it. No updates. No communication. After countless calls someone finally sent me a claim form which I submitted within the hour. And, silence resumed its reign. Why the three-day hiatus? They were checking on the car's warranty status. I could have clarified that in minutes!

Two days later — after quoting IRDAI's turnaround timelines which are measured in hours, not weeks — a response emerged. The tyre, they said, was 50% worn, so only half the cost would be approved. The car is barely three years old and sparingly driven. Exhausted by then I simply said, "Please go ahead; I just want my car back." Another silence. Eventually, the garage told me that the tyre had been "ordered" and would arrive in four days, and an SMS landed saying the turnaround time was nine days! Remember, their manufacturer, their garage and their insurance broking outfit. Oh yes, and a call came from an unknown number demanding in an unpleasant and aggressive tone that I "verify details". I requested for her identity verification and to speak politely in a language I understood, and she simply hung up. I am not even dwelling on lectures on how surveyors are very busy to visit and verify and reverify details, how submitting their report is not in the garage's hands... What mysterious facts require days of investigation for a damaged tyre? Buying insurance is easy, but claiming should not test psychological endurance. Yet here we are. Tips for consumers Customer service in insurance appears designed to avoid the customer. Here are a few practical steps that would help: 1. Communicate in writing — email or WhatsApp proof is essential. 2. Quote IRDAI turnaround times for claims. Their websites and your policy copy will have them. 3. Escalate delays or non-response to the insurer's Grievance Redressal Officer. Their websites and your policy copy will have them. 4. Use IRDAI's Integrated Grievances Management Portal (IGMS) portal if there's no action within the prescribed time. 5. While buying any policy, carefully evaluate add-ons, exclusions and depreciation clauses.

Over 50,000 citizens write to Supreme Court against stray dogs order

More than 50,000 citizens across India, including nearly 10,000 from Delhi, posted handwritten letters to the Supreme Court on Saturday (November 29, 2025), urging it to reconsider its November 7 order directing authorities to remove community dogs from institutional areas, the organisers said in a release. This was part of a nationwide letter petition campaign urging citizens to write to the apex court in support of animal rights and human experience, it said.

The organisers said that they had asked people across the country to visit their nearest post office on November 29 and mail a letter to the Chief Justice of India seeking a stay, recall and reconsideration of the order. The citizen-driven initiative was led by animal welfare activist Ambika Shukla, the release said. At Lucknow's GPO, people from different walks of life, including students and professionals, lined up to speed-post their petitions, the release claimed.

It further said that people from places ranging from Kashmir to Kanyakumari, including cities such as Imphal, Vadodara, and Chennai, also wrote to the top court in support of the campaign. Kunal, an animal activist, said that they



circulated English and Hindi templates for the letters, and stressed that public participation had been stronger than expected. "This movement shows how deeply people care about animal welfare. A handwritten letter carries sincerity and by now more than 10,000 letters have already been submitted," he said. According to the organisers, more than 50,000 postal receipts had been uploaded on their website by Saturday (November 29, 2025) evening.

Institutionalising animal representation



Any meaningful conversation about the political representation of animals must begin by challenging the deep anthropocentric assumptions embedded in modern political thought. The core issue is not just cruelty but also the structural design of democracy itself, built on a rigid division between "the human" and "the animal". This foundational split, the original political boundary, positions the animal as the non-subject as it is non-rational, non-political, and a being reduced to "mere life". Across history, this single, simplified category of "the animal" has collapsed a vast plurality of non-human worlds into a negative mirror against which human superiority is defined. Language, reason and political agency were claimed for humans by denying these to others. This act of categorical "othering" is what enables the institutionalised exploitation of non-human beings today.

The task, therefore, is to expose the artificiality of this division. Animals are not a homogeneous mass but a heterogeneous multiplicity of beings whose lives impose distinct moral and political obligations. The problem we face is not a deficit of compassion but a structural flaw; democratic institutions treat animals as property, creating an institutional vacuum where their interests are never represented, measured or defended. This legal erasure is the root of systemic violence. Politically, this means that animals cannot remain passive objects of charity. Their lives place a demand on the political community; they make humans morally and politically accountable. Representation is not about granting animals anthropocentric rights such as voting. It is about formalising the representation of absolute vulnerability and unchosen dependency within democratic decision-making. This reframes the human role from benevolent caretaker to responsible political steward, whose decisions about land, food systems, environment and security must be justified in the light of animal interests. The basis for representation, therefore, is sentience and embodiment, not cognitive capacity. This requires creating fiduciary institutions or guardians whose sole democratic mandate is to articulate these interests in legislative and administrative processes. The long-standing strategy of requiring non-human animals to prove that they are "like us" to deserve protection is flawed and discriminatory. It evaluates the worth of species by how closely they mirror human abilities — an impossible and biased standard that would exclude most life forms from political standing. Representation must be grounded in morally relevant capacities shared across species, rather than human-centric criteria. From this foundation follows the need for institutional design. Majoritarian democracy, by its nature, cannot represent animals: they have no electoral power, no lobbying influence, and no economic leverage. Democratic legitimacy, therefore, requires non-majoritarian pathways of representation — fiduciary institutions or guardians whose sole mandate is to articulate animal interests within legislative, administrative, and regulatory processes. This mirrors existing mechanisms that represent humans who cannot represent themselves, including institutions for children's rights, environmental protection, data protection and future generations. The same logic must now extend to animals. This is analogous to the existing fiduciary institutions designed to protect diffuse, vulnerable interests that cannot speak for themselves, such as children's rights, environmental protection agencies, or data protection authorities. The same logic needs to be extended to animals. Institutional representation is necessary because animal interests are systematically overridden by powerful economic and political actors. Animals cannot lobby, mobilise, or litigate without human intermediaries. The current welfare frameworks are reactive, not proactive; political representation must ensure ex ante protection before harm occurs.

Animal representation requires independence because

governments cannot credibly commit to protecting animal interests when those very governments benefit from animal exploitation through tax revenue, agricultural subsidies and political support from agribusiness. Determining animal interests requires scientific expertise in ethology, cognition, and welfare science — domains where majoritarian processes are inadequate. Just as modern democracies create non-majoritarian institutions to protect diffuse, vulnerable interests that cannot represent themselves, children's rights agencies, environmental protection agencies, and data protection authorities, the same logic must extend to animals. Advisory committees controlled by industry representatives cannot protect animal interests. Neither can people appointed through standard political channels. What is needed is structural independence with constitutional protection, enforcement powers and accountability mechanisms that prevent capture by economic interests. Fiduciary institutions for animals should be built on a simple idea, humans act as accountable trustees. Their job is to protect the interests of animals with care, loyalty and prudence. This shifts the model from lobbying to genuine guardianship, where representatives speak impartially for animals' vulnerability-based needs. For this to work, these institutions must be operationally independent — with fixed terms, transparent and diverse appointments, and their own budgets — so that they are insulated from political pressure and cannot be captured by powerful interests. The Supreme Court of India created such an institution for elephants. Having understood that elephants were vulnerable to the extreme and that hundreds were being killed in captivity, the Court created a high-powered committee to look into the well-being and possible rescue of individual animals. The committee is headed by a retired Supreme Court judge and has senior officers in it. It has enormous powers. But, alas, it has degenerated into a committee that meets in different places across India, puts off decisions till it meets again in yet another exotic locale. A year ago, I had sent a list of 19 elephants (with proof), tortured and beaten by their owners. No decision has been taken on even one. Three have died. This is yet another example of a so-called fiduciary institution which does not take itself seriously.

Running the operation Animal-representation bodies should operate at several levels of government. At the executive level, advisory councils can review proposed rules for animal welfare impacts. In Parliament, dedicated committees or subcommittees can examine legislation that affects animals, propose amendments, and demand impact assessments. Non-voting delegates or expert representatives should be integrated into parliamentary processes, ensuring that animal interests are considered at the core of law-making without disrupting democratic voting structures — similar to how fiscal oversight bodies operate. To prevent these systems from becoming dependent on individual personalities, they must run on clear, rule-based procedures. Reviews should be automatically triggered whenever a policy is likely to affect animals. Welfare impacts should be assessed through standard scientific metrics and published transparently. Appointments should be based on expertise, with fixed terms and rotation to avoid capture. This converts goodwill-based advocacy into predictable institutional routines. Strong accountability systems should be in place to ensure that these bodies function with integrity. Horizontal checks should complement vertical oversight by elected bodies. Independent annual audits should evaluate performance against clear welfare benchmarks, such as reductions in preventable harms. Making audit findings should be made public. Transparency is central. All decisions, reasoning and vetoes must be published so that the public and civil society can scrutinise them. To prevent elite capture, institutions should be required to consult diverse stakeholders. Reform must be gradual. Start with pilot projects in manageable areas, such as requiring animal-impact reviews in urban planning. Use these pilots to refine tools, data systems, and protocols. Funding should come from reallocated harmful subsidies or ring-fenced public budgets. Public education campaigns should build citizen support and normalise stewardship of animals as a democratic responsibility. Institutionalising animal representation is not an abstract moral project. It is a practical deepening of democracy — one where vulnerable beings that cannot speak are still accounted for, and where independence, expertise and accountability replace goodwill or personal influence.

How will Meta implement Australia's looming under-16 social media ban?



Story so far: Australia-based users under the age of 16 will be banned from Meta's social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram, and Threads from December 10. This is a direct result of Australia's ban on teens under 16 using social media platforms. To comply with the new rules being enforced this month, Meta will start deactivating user accounts or blocking new sign-up by users under 16, from December 4. What will implementation of the ban look like on Meta's side?

Why are social media platforms like Meta complying?

Meta said it has been sending two-week warnings to thousands of Australian teenagers between ages 13 and 15, notifying them to download their digital history and delete their accounts. The Facebook-parent confirmed that account removals will only be done after the sweeping law takes effect on December 10. However, it is unclear whether the process will be completed on that same day, given verification is a lengthy, multi-step undertaking. The country's internet regulator, the Australian Communications and Media Authority, has noted that there are close to 1,500,000 Facebook users between 13 and 15 years of age, as well as 3,500,000 Instagram users. The law does not currently apply to Meta's Messenger app. Meta's prompt actions are in line with the restrictions imposed by Prime Minister Anthony Albanese's government on multiple social media platforms including TikTok, Snapchat, YouTube, X, Reddit, Twitch and the livestreaming website Kick.

These companies are required to take "reasonable steps" to keep underage users off their platforms, failing which they will be facing fines of up to 49.5 million Australian dollars or around \$32 million. Despite doubts surrounding around how binding the law will be and whether the regulation will lead to better mental health in children, companies are begrudgingly following instructions. A Meta spokesperson said that while they are committed to fulfilling the legal obligations, they have raised their concerns around the regulation, saying a "blanket ban" is hardly the solution. The Mark Zuckerberg-led company claimed the action will

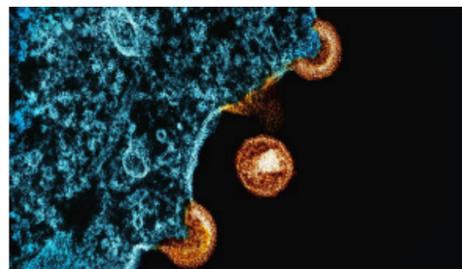
isolate teenagers from online communities and information while also giving "inconsistent protection." Albanese has responded saying that given this is the first time a law like this is being passed, there will be flaws while implementing it. And even though the system maybe imperfect, it will send a strong message to society, according to him. How is Meta verifying children's ages? Meta advised the affected users to update their contact details so the company can SMS or email them once they turn 16 years of age. Once these children cross the cut-off age, users can resume operating their accounts just as they had been left and find the same Reels, posts, messages and short videos. Users can also choose to delete their account completely, if they wish.

However, there is a fair chance that Meta might inaccurately flag a user as being under 16. An Age Estimation report published by the Australian government found that age verification systems using facial recognition showed false rejection rates higher than "acceptable levels" at 8.5% and 2.6% respectively, for users of 16 and 17 years of age. In case accounts are incorrectly flagged, Meta has said that users can verify their age either with a government ID or a video selfie via the third-party facial age-verification platform Yoti. Meta has assured users that the platform deletes personal data once verification is over. Critics have voiced concerns about the surveillance risks of checking children's ages with age-verification technology.

What are the drawbacks?

Meta vice president and global head of safety, Antigone Davis, stated that the company would like the app stores of Apple and Google Play to collect age-related data when users sign up, and verify whether they have reached 16 years — on behalf of Meta. Davis added this would ensure a standard procedure and also maintain user privacy. Presently, Meta hasn't disclosed what methods they will use to determine the ages of users, so that children under 16 don't find a loophole through which to evade the ban. But varied options have been discussed, including government IDs, facial or voice recognition, or age inference methods that consider online user data like interactions to estimate a user's age. The government has encouraged different platforms to look into their own age-verification tools. Gaming platforms like Roblox and Discord have recently been forced to introduce age restrictions for specific features, fearing that they could potentially be targeted next. Other platforms on the list are also expected to follow suit and explain how they plan to proceed. While TikTok and Snapchat have agreed to comply with the law, YouTube has differed with the Australian government's decision to be included in the ban. The video streaming platform hasn't said whether they will comply with the law but hinted at taking legal action against it.

why HIV infections are still so hard to treat



In a landmark paper in Science on May 20, 1983, researchers reported they had isolated a "retrovirus" from a patient at risk of developing AIDS. The work, led by French virologists Françoise Barré-Sinoussi and Luc Montagnier at the Institut Pasteur, was the first glimpse of what would become one of the most devastating pathogens in modern human history. At the time, neither Barré-Sinoussi nor Montagnier knew that they had isolated the emperor of all viruses.

In the years that followed, it became tragically clear the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), as it came to be known, was not ordinary. Patients who acquired HIV did not recover and every attempt to create a vaccine failed. If left untreated, the infection had a near-100% mortality rate, relentlessly destroying the immune system and leaving patients vulnerable to fatal opportunistic infections. Today, more than four decades later, while HIV is no longer a death sentence, it remains far from cured. The virus has merely transitioned from a guarantee of death to a lifelong, tightly managed chronic illness. Survival today depends on strict, uninterrupted antiretroviral therapy — a regimen that comes with side effects and imposes the constant psychological burden of adherence, since any lapse risks viral rebound, with the added danger of the development of drug resistance. Thus after 42 years of unprecedented investment of time, money, and scientific effort, we are left with a rather abysmal report card. There is still no vaccine. And of the estimated 91.4 million people who have ever been infected with HIV, only a handful of individuals have been declared "cured". These rare cases were not cured by drugs but by bone-marrow transplants carried out to treat leukaemia, a form of blood cancer. Bone marrow transplants are risky procedures that are neither safe nor practical for the vast majority of persons living with HIV.

What makes HIV so resistant to a cure?

The answer lies in two unique properties of the virus. First, HIV belongs to a family of viruses called retroviruses. These viruses are unusual because, as part of their life cycle, they convert their genetic material from RNA to DNA, then integrate this DNA into the host's own DNA. Once this happens, the viral DNA becomes, for all practical purposes, indistinguishable from your own. The virus becomes a part of you. The only definitive way to eliminate it would be to eliminate every single infected cell. This challenge might still have been manageable were it not for the second property that makes HIV so formidable. After integrating its DNA into the host genome, HIV can enter a dormant state known as viral latency. In this state, an infected cell carries HIV's genetic material but produces no new virus particles. The virus persists silently, invisible to the immune system. At any given time, some infected cells churn out new viruses while others slip into latency, creating a shifting, hidden reservoir that has so far made a true cure impossible. This is also why antiretroviral therapy must be taken for life. The medicines merely prevent the virus from infecting new cells — but they do nothing against the silent, latent reservoir. They can't. Once therapy is stopped, a portion of these dormant infected cells will inevitably reactivate, reigniting viral replication. Together, these two properties make HIV uniquely difficult to cure. There are viruses that can integrate into the host genome: other retroviruses like HTLV-1

do this; even the hepatitis B virus sometimes leaves behind a stable DNA form in liver cells. There are also viruses that establish long-term latency: the herpes simplex and varicella-zoster viruses hide in nerve cells while the Epstein-Barr virus can persist silently in B-cells. And while a few viruses can even do both, none can do so with the efficiency observed in HIV. Moving target

Despite HIV possessing several other traits that add to its resilience, none compare to the consequences of its integration and latency. HIV's extraordinary sequence diversity, for example, is a hallmark of many RNA viruses. The hepatitis C, influenza, and some other viruses also mutate rapidly. But in HIV's case, this diversity becomes far more dangerous because it operates on top of permanent genomic integration and deep latency. That is, the virus constantly changes its appearance while simultaneously hiding inside long-lived cells, creating a moving target that the immune system can neither fully recognise nor completely eliminate. Over time, this relentless battle leads to immune exhaustion: the immune system becomes overwhelmed, depleted, and unable to keep up. This combination of rapid mutation layered onto integration and latency makes HIV one of the toughest pathogens humankind has ever encountered. Fall as it lived

Yet even in this difficult battle, there are reasons for cautious optimism. Decades of public-health efforts ranging from information and education campaigns to widespread testing and the expansion of antiretroviral therapy have transformed the global response to HIV. Today, more people than ever before are on treatment, and with consistent use antiretroviral therapy not only keeps individuals healthy but also reduces the amount of virus in the blood to levels so low that transmission becomes virtually impossible. Awareness is also higher than ever, people are getting diagnosed earlier, and treatment coverage continues to rise. As a result, the incidence of infections is falling year on year in many parts of the world, making room for hope against hope that an end to one of the worst pandemics to afflict humans may well be on the horizon. From the very beginning, HIV has been exceptional. It defied every pattern we knew. It was a virus that destroyed the very immune cells meant to fight it, that integrated permanently into our DNA, and hid in silent reservoirs for decades, that resisted vaccines despite enormous global scientific mobilisation. Where other pathogens bent to human ingenuity, HIV forced us to rethink everything: diagnosis, therapy, prevention, even the limits of biomedical ambition. Yet it may well be that the emperor of all viruses will finally fall — not to a cure but to awareness, prevention, and the steady narrowing of its paths of transmission. And in that fall, HIV may die as it lived, as the exception, as the one virus science could not conquer, but which was ultimately rendered powerless by humanity's collective will.

Yakutpura youth loses over Rs 1 lakh in Telegram honeytrap scam

Hyderabad: A 20-year-old resident of Yakutpura was duped of over Rs 1 lakh in a Telegram-based impersonation and extortion scam, where a fraudster posed as a woman offering paid companionship. According to the Cybercrime Police, the scammer used stolen photos, fabricated feedback, and scripted chats to appear genuine before collecting multiple payments on the pretext of advance booking, security deposit, and room reservation. Believing the claims, the victim transferred money through UPI and bank accounts.

Trump invites families of slain and injured National Guard members to White House

Washington: US President Donald Trump on Sunday said he's invited the family of a National Guard member fatally shot last week to the White House, saying he spoke to her parents and they were "devastated." US Army Spc. Sarah Beckstrom died after the Wednesday shooting in Washington, DC, while her seriously injured colleague, US Air Force Staff Sgt. Andrew Wolfe, remained in critical condition. The president said he's discussed a White House visit for the parents of both members of the West Virginia National Guard.

"I said, When you're ready, because that's a tough thing, come to the White House. We're going to honor Sarah," Trump told reporters. "And likewise with Andrew, recover or not." In recent days, local vigils in West Virginia have honoured the soldiers, including one Saturday evening at Webster County High School, where Beckstrom attended classes. "Sarah was the kind of student that teachers hoped for, she carried herself with quiet strength, a contagious smile and a positive energy that lifted people around her," said Gabriel Markle, the school's principal. "She was sweet, caring and always willing to help others." Beckstrom, 20, and Wolfe, 24 were deployed with the West Virginia National Guard as part of Trump's aggressive crime-fighting plan that federalised the DC police force. A 29-year-old Afghan national faces one count of first-degree murder and two counts of assault with intent to kill while armed in the shooting, which prompted the Trump administration to halt all asylum decisions and pause issuing visas for people travelling on Afghan passports.

Funeral arrangements had not been finalised for Beckstrom, according to Cathy Pettry, the owner of Dodd & Reed Funeral Home in Webster Springs. Pettry said Saturday the home has been in contact with Beckstrom's family about services. The hometown crowd, seated in bleachers and folding chairs, lit candles as they heard from clergy and Gov. Patrick Morrisey, who said he had visited Wolfe's family earlier in the day. Wolfe, of Martinsburg, entered service in February 2019. He had graduated from Musselman High School in 2019, according to Berkeley County Schools. He remained hospitalised and "fighting for his life," Morrisey said the following day during an interview with Fox News Channel's "The Sunday Briefing." US Attorney Gen-

eral Pam Bondi told "Fox News Sunday" that she also planned to meet with Wolfe's family. Morrisey called it a challenging time for the state. Calling Beckstrom a "favourite daughter of Webster County," he said he quickly learned about her reputation as someone with a big heart who loved to serve others. Beckstrom, of Summersville, graduated in June 2023 and enlisted that month. She served with distinction as a military police officer, according to the West Virginia National Guard. "She had a lot of kindness and she certainly had courage," Morrisey told the crowd during Saturday's vigil. "Though her life lasted far too short, she has left a mark that's going to last forever."

Bangladesh ex-PM Hasina ordered 2009 killings: commission

A commission set up to investigate a violent mutiny that saw dozens of senior army officers massacred 16 years ago on Sunday (November 30, 2025) said former premier Sheikh Hasina had ordered the killings. Rampaging troops from the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) murdered 74 people, including military officers, during the two-day revolt that began in Dhaka and spread across the country in 2009, destabilising the government of then-premier Ms. Hasina, weeks after she took office. After Ms. Hasina was ousted last year following a student-led uprising, the interim government led by Muhammad Yunus formed a commission to investigate the incident. Ms. Hasina, 78, has since sought refuge in India, defying court orders that she return to Bangladesh. According to the commission's report submitted on Sunday (November 30), the then-Awami League government led by Ms. Hasina was directly involved in the mutiny. Former member of parliament Fazle Noor Taposh acted as the "principal coordinator" and at the behest of Ms. Hasina who gave the "green signal" to carry out the killings,

A new online game helps imagine life on Earth in 2100



York: What will the world look like in 2100? This question is central to a new free online game called FutureGuessr. Launched in June 2025, this new form of climate communication combines gameplay with visual climate imagery and encourages players to explore future scenarios. Players are shown an image from the future and asked to guess the location. Information is revealed about how close they are, what the climate change consequences would be, what will happen if no action is taken and how things could be different. Available to play in English and French, the game takes inspiration from GeoGuessr, the online geography game that has enabled millions of people to travel virtually from their phone and guess where they are.

FutureGuessr uses pictures to give users a visual representation of how familiar landscapes will look in 2100 as a result of climate change. FutureGuessr is part of a broader trend in the use of games in climate communication. Creative board games and video games can reach diverse audiences and communicate climate change in serious, playful, thought-provoking and surprising ways. Games played for pleasure, like Game Changers (an online story-based game produced by Megaverse) can generate conversations on climate actions by creating an innovative visual game world and integrating climate change into the plot. Collective decision making in the game allows players to learn and discuss climate change with others. Our research suggests that this helps players critique corporate power, learn about greenwashing and enjoy an aesthetic experience. In the world of board games, Daybreak challenges players to cooperate and stop climate change by trying out different technical, social and economic projects. Serious games go beyond entertainment to connect with real-world problems. The most successful ones are fun while engaging with social, environmental and economic issues that players really care about. Games can support players in thinking about becoming disaster ready and building disaster resilience. A game called The Flood Recovery Game is being used by researchers to identify disaster recovery gaps. It can also help policymakers create more comprehensive strategies to address flooding. In terms of climate education, interactive in-person game-

based workshops like the Climate Fresk already connects millions of people with science from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the UN body that assesses the science on climate change. These three-hour workshops also enable people to consider how they might act to create positive climate solutions. FutureGuessr is a game for pleasure with a serious purpose: to make climate change data visible. Produced in partnership with Réseau Action Climat, a network of non-governmental organisations, it shows the negative effects of climate change in familiar locations such as Antarctica and Easter Island. Research on visual climate communication found that images showing climate impacts such as extreme weather and floods moved people, especially when it featured localised impacts.

There is a balance to be struck between highlighting local relevance and linking to the bigger picture. Showing the future of recognisable places we care about might be powerful in building support for climate action. But photographs from the future don't exist. FutureGuessr uses images generated from a bespoke AI model which combines maps with photographs of locations and data from IPCC reports.

This has a cost. The climate cost of the AI revolution is increasingly measured and documented, and image generation is one of the most energy intensive tasks you can do with AI. Experts in computing have called for "frugal AI": to treat AI as finite, only to be used when necessary, and even then, as effectively as possible. It is important to consider not just the message, but the medium, and the environmental effects of game production. The Playing for the Planet Alliance has produced a carbon calculator for the industry and offers awards and game jams to support the video game industry to take climate action. Now that the images have been created, an effective use of FutureGuessr might be to generate conversations about the effects of climate change, and about how research, game design and communication can be carried out in the most environmentally sensitive way.

People won't act just based on facts alone. The development of creative ways to communicate the climate emergency that connect people with why this matters is essential for people and communities. Already, some games are making an increasingly visible contribution to the conversation but we need greater transparency in the environmental impacts of game production, and consideration of how to minimise these impacts through visible commitments to sustainability as modelled by Daybreak. FutureGuessr demonstrates value of bringing games and visual climate communication together to raise awareness of how climate change affects landscapes everywhere on the planet. We all need to play for the planet. Our research shows that whether played for purpose or pleasure, games can create space for serious conversations about how to tackle climate change.

Piyush Goyal to visit Brussels as India-EU trade talks reach decisive stage

New Delhi: As the ongoing India-EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations enter a crucial stage, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal is set to visit Brussels, Belgium, on October 27-28, the government said on Sunday. Minister Goyal will hold high-level discussions with Maros Sefcovic, Executive Vice-President and European Commissioner for Trade of the European Union. Both sides have intensified efforts to conclude a comprehensive, balanced, and mutually beneficial trade agreement at the earliest. It reflects India's steadfast commitment to deepening engagement with the European Union, one of its largest trading partners, and to advancing an agreement that contributes to resilient supply chains, sustainable growth, and a rules-based global trading system.

"Building on the momentum generated by the 14th round of negotiations held earlier this month, the Minister's visit aims to provide strategic direction and political impetus to the talks," said the Commerce Ministry in a statement. According to the ministry, discussions are expected to cover key areas of the proposed FTA, including market access, non-tariff measures, and regulatory cooperation. The visit will also serve to review progress achieved so far and to identify areas requiring further convergence. Piyush Goyal's engagements in Brussels will include a bilateral meeting with Commissioner Sefcovic, followed by a working dinner, where both leaders are expected



to reaffirm the shared ambition to strengthen the India-EU trade and economic partnership.

This visit takes place against the backdrop of the India-EU partnership gaining renewed strategic depth following the meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen earlier this year. The two leaders had underscored the importance of a future-ready trade relationship that advances prosperity, sustainability, and innovation on both sides. According to the ministry, the minister's visit to Brussels marks an important step in translating that shared vision into concrete outcomes.

No short-term impact of H-1B visa fee hike, future resourcing plans will change: Tata Tech CEO



New Delhi: The fee hike for the US H-1B visa by the Donald Trump administration has no short-term impact on Tata Technologies Ltd, although it will change resourcing plans for the future, according to its CEO and Managing Director, Warren Harris. The global product engineering and digital services firm, by virtue of its staffing architecture, which has about 70 per cent of its employees in any country coming from that nationality, is less exposed to visa issues than other "Indian competitors that are India out", Harris said.

"We are not an India-out company. We were very much a global company, with the majority of our employees in different territories who were nationals of those countries. We have Americans running our US operation. We have the Chinese team running our China operation, unlike many of our Indian competitors that are India-out. They are much more exposed to visas," he said. Harris was responding to a query on the implications of the hike in the annual H-1B visa fees to US\$ 100,000 announced in September by Trump. "We are cognizant of the challenge," he added.

Harris further said, "It will certainly change our resourcing plans for the future, but there is no short-term

impact associated with the H-1B decisions that the United States has made." As of the September quarter of this fiscal year, Tata Technologies had a global workforce of 12,402. "We are present in 18 different geographies. One of the principles around which we've architected the company is that we want about 70 per cent of employees in any country to come from that nationality or region. That is what underpins the type of special relationship that we have with our customers, and it is through that we leverage the engine that we built here in India," he noted.

When asked about the US tariff situation and its impact, he said, "At the beginning of the fiscal year, when the tariffs were announced, it prompted many of our customers to revisit their product plans. 'Not only did they need to look at the products themselves and the viability of the products against the backdrop of the tariffs, but they also needed to look at their supply chains. I think what we've seen is that reset of strategies and plans is now largely played out.'"

He further said, "The customers that we were expecting to work to make decisions at the beginning of the fiscal year are now making those decisions." It has helped improve the company's performance in the second quarter, Harris said, adding that its aerospace vertical has been essentially immune to the slowdown in automotive and the tariffs, and has thereby continued to grow. "We expect another year where our aerospace business will double in size this year, and we've seen that continue to play out in the second quarter, and we fully expect that will continue in Q3 and Q4," he said without elaborating on the current size of the aerospace business. Tata Technologies had reported a 5.14 per cent rise in consolidated profit after tax to Rs 165.5 crore in the second quarter ended September 30, 2025, compared to Rs 157.41 crore in the corresponding period last fiscal. Its consolidated revenue from operations in the quarter stood at Rs 1,323.33 crore, as against Rs 1,296.45 crore in the year-ago period.

Doctor's death in Maharashtra's Satara sparks Statewide outrage over police misconduct



A 28-year-old woman medical officer was found dead in a hotel room in Maharashtra's Phaltan town late on Thursday (October 23, 2025) night with a note scribbled in her palm accusing a police officer of rape and her landlord of harassment. Hailing from Beed district, she had been serving as a medical officer at the Sub-District Hospital in Satara for the past two years. Police have registered a case of accidental death and are investigating the matter. The Maharashtra Association of Resident Doctors (Central MARD) has announced a Statewide black ribbon protest on Saturday (October 25) condemning the death of the young doctor.

Two men, named by the doctor in a note, remain absconding, said Dr. Swapnil Kendre, General Secretary of MARD. "Despite directives from the Chief Minister for immediate action, no arrests have been made so far. Central MARD has demanded the immediate arrest of the accused and a CID or SIT-led judicial inquiry into the case." "The association has also called for systemic reforms to protect doctors from workplace harassment and ensure mental health support. Doctors across Maharashtra will wear black ribbons while on duty to express solidarity and demand justice. The association warned that if action is not taken promptly, it will escalate its agitation through Statewide protests and non-cooperation movements," Dr. Kendre further said.

Police found a note written on her palm, naming Sub-Inspector Gopal Badane and her landlord, Prashant Bankar, as responsible for her ordeal. The note alleged that Badane raped her multiple times over five months, while Bankar subjected her to relentless mental harassment. Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis, who also holds the Home portfolio, spoke to the Satara Superintendent of Police and ordered immediate suspension of the officer named in the note. He directed the SP to take strict action against all accused, emphasising zero tolerance for such crimes within law enforcement. Satara SP Tushar Doshi said, "The woman doctor died by suicide and a note was found written on her palm naming two people, including a police official. A case has been registered against them under charges of rape and abetment to suicide. The accused SI has been suspended from duty. Our teams are trying to locate both the accused. A thorough probe and stringent action will be

taken."

The victim's cousin alleged that the doctor faced extreme pressure from the police and politicians to falsify post-mortem reports. He said, "There was a lot of police and political pressure on her to make wrong post-mortem reports. She had complained about it multiple times, but it was not taken seriously. The accused should get the strictest punishment, and my sister should get justice." Maharashtra State Commission for Women issued directions to the State police in the case. Rupali Chakankar, chairperson of the commission, said: "Maharashtra State Commission for Women has taken cognisance of the case. We have directed the police to search for the absconding accused immediately and conduct a thorough probe in the matter. We have also asked the police if the woman had given any previous complaint about the torture faced by her. If yes, an inquiry should be conducted on why she did not get help, and strict action should be taken against those responsible." Assuring a detailed probe into the incident, Maharashtra Minister Pankaja Munde said, "Justice must be served. If an educated doctor who saves lives had to go through this, it is deeply unfortunate." Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Anand Dubey called it "heart-wrenching." "Are we moving towards 'Jungle Raj'? We request Devendra Fadnis to question his Ministers about the deteriorating state of law and order. Such incidents should not take place in the future. The accused should be put behind bars," he said. Mumbai Congress President Varsha Gaikwad slammed the Mahayuti government, stating: "The Maharashtra Mahayuti has totally failed when it comes to protecting women against crime. Today, a doctor died by suicide in Satara and named a policeman as having harassed her. If women cannot trust law enforcement officials, what hope is left? Mumbai and Maharashtra, generally considered safe for women, are now witnessing daily violence against women. Criminals don't fear the law. The State machinery has collapsed. The Chief Minister needs to hand over the Home Department to someone else."

Maharashtra Congress spokesperson Sachin Sawant said the case reflects a complete breakdown of law and order: "This incident raises grave concerns about the safety of women when those entrusted with their protection reportedly turn perpetrators. If an educated professional felt compelled to take such an extreme step, the plight of ordinary women is even more vulnerable. Authorities must ensure swift justice. The accused should face the severest punishment, and the case must be fast-tracked to restore public confidence." The Association of Medical Officers (AMO), Maharashtra, in a letter to the Chief Minister, expressed "deep anguish" over the incident and demanded a high-level inquiry, immediate suspension and criminal proceedings against the accused, and a protective mechanism for medical officers. Similarly, the Federation of All India Medical Association (FAIMA) condemned the incident as a "grim reminder of systemic apathy", demanding a time-bound investigation, accountability for negligence, support for the victim's family, and mental health safeguards for doctors.

Liver cancer is a silent disease: awareness and early diagnosis can make a world of difference

It may be surprising to know that many patients diagnosed with liver cancer say they feel fine. And they probably do: this is because the liver is a resilient organ, it continues to work even when a large portion of it is compromised, and tries to compensate for the damage. And it is because of this that liver cancer, and other liver conditions can often remain 'silent' for long periods, going undetected. That is why regular scans and blood tests in high-risk patients can make a significant difference for early detection and treatment.

A diagnosis of liver cancer can be difficult to accept when you feel healthy. Fear takes over when patients hear the words 'liver surgery'. Patients often imagine that the procedure is extremely risky, but medicine has taken great strides in this field. With meticulous planning and using simple imaging techniques such as MRI and CT scans to map the liver in advance, and in some cases, deliberately blocking a small portion of its blood supply ahead of time so that the rest of the liver is strengthened before surgery, and with the deployment of state-of-the-art tools in the operating room, the procedure now is straightforward and safe, with minimal blood loss. Is minimally invasive surgery possible with liver cancer? The answer is yes. In many cases, a minimally invasive approach with laparoscopic or robotic surgery may be suitable. This involves minor cuts and the use of a tiny camera to give a clear view of deep parts of the liver. These procedures involve less pain, faster recoveries, and importantly, shorter hospital stays. However, these procedures are not for everyone. Factors including size, location and type of tumour defines what mode of surgery is appropriate, as the priority is safe and complete removal of the tumour. Any surgery demands patience, timing and the right judgement. For a surgeon, the hardest part is balance. A surgeon must decide how much of the liver is to be removed and how much of it must be left behind. If too little is removed, the cancer can recur; if too much is removed, liver may fail. Each case is unique and requires detailed planning. In some cases, quick decisions may have to be taken while at surgery, if the liver appears weaker than ex-



pected.

Liver cancer does not always require a surgery. It is not always the first best option, especially if a large part of the liver is damaged or the cancer has spread. In such cases, treatments such as ablation, chemo-embolisation, radio embolisation, targeted therapy or immunotherapy may be used first to control the disease. If the liver's condition improves, then surgery may be considered later. The goal is to tailor-make the best chance for a longer, better life for the liver and thereby the patient. In many cases, liver cancer is preventable. Many cases arise from long-term issues such as viral hepatitis B and C, fatty liver or heavy alcohol use, but these factors can often be prevented. Vaccination against hepatitis B, timely treatment of infections, a healthy diet, controlling one's weight and avoiding excessive alcohol all protect the liver. People with diabetes or obesity should also undertake periodic liver-function tests. Prevention may not sound dramatic, but it saves lives, quietly. Survivors teach me strength. I've seen patients arrive very ill, undergo surgery, change their lifestyles completely and go on to live for many years. Some begin exercising, stop drinking, eat carefully and embrace life with increased positivity. Their courage inspires us. Medicine and surgery can treat the disease but a patient's mindset can go a long way towards keeping them well.

Can the higher education ecosystem catch up with and support India's student founders?

Sixty-six billion-dollar companies in the U.S. trace their roots to India-born founders. While the world continues to benefit from India's innovators, it's worth asking: how are we nurturing that talent at home, especially among students dreaming of building something big? A recent report by the Campus Fund revealed that 35 out of India's 109 unicorns were started by students during college or within three years of graduating. These young founders often see problems with fresh eyes. They're not burdened by 'how things have always been done.' Instead, they imagine freely and often pursue ideas that more experienced entrepreneurs might overlook. Even so, student startups are often an exception, not the rule. They are born not out of a supportive infrastructure, but despite the lack of one. Despite more student-focused incubation programmes, entrepreneurship-embedded educational courses, and youth-centred investment funds, our mainstream education system is still designed to create 'knowledge workers' rather than 'business leaders'.

In the past decade, top Indian academic institutions have produced around 550 startup founders. In comparison, leading global universities have launched two to three times as many. Subsequently, startups in India only con-

tribute to 5-8% of our GDP, much lower than most developed countries. We are 39th in the Global Innovation Index. Not because Indian students lack ambition or ideas. What's missing is the right kind of support and backing, especially in the critical early stages when there's still peer pressure and parental pressure to seek a stable job instead of pursuing entrepreneurship. Consider this: over the past two years, a student-focused incubation programme received nearly 800 applications from across 26 states and 150 towns. This shows that entrepreneurial energy isn't just concentrated in big cities, it's everywhere. However, while talent is widely distributed, opportunities are not. Take two students: one from Mumbai and one from Jaipur. Their ideas may be equally strong, but the student from Mumbai is twice as likely to be able to access to an entrepreneurship cell or early-stage funding. Geography shouldn't determine destiny, but, in India's startup ecosystem, it often does. Proximity and exposure Beyond formal and structured support, just proximity and exposure to entrepreneurial mindsets and action matter. Academics and researchers like Prof. Saras Sarasvathy have proposed that, while our education teaches us to 'predict the future' (causal logic), entrepreneurs often need to 'control the future' (effectual logic).

Nitish-niti: What this moment means for the Bihar CM, his party



It was an uncharacteristic sop, considering Nitish Kumar, while a proponent of state-led welfare schemes, has in the past publicly opposed the language of freebies and direct doles, making it clear that he preferred the subsidy model instead. Critics of the government saw in the announcement a sign of desperation — that the Chief Minister, after almost two decades in power, was no longer his own man. His health, after all, has been the topic of conversation, anti-incumbency was a real fear, and his alliance partner, the BJP, after years of snapping at his heels, seemed to be catching up. Yet, those close to him cite the free electricity announcement to say that Nitish is very much in control. A source close to the CM House explains, "The scheme was, in fact, the BJP's idea, which his bureaucrats too backed. The CM agreed, but gave his own value-addition to the scheme — that consumers can also opt to install solar panels on their rooftops. For extremely poor families, the government will bear the entire cost, and for the rest, the government will provide appropriate support. He insisted on the solar panel idea so that the burden of the free scheme on the state exchequer would be eased over time."

Over the past two decades, Nitish has led the JD(U) in four Lok Sabha elections and as many in the state. Irrespective of which way the results went, there has been one constant: Nitish as Chief Minister. He has walked between alliances with the ease of a man crossing a familiar path, each time underlining his worth to his allies and rivals. But this time could be different. At 74, Nitish is visibly slowing down. The man, known to be alert and cautious and with an enviable grasp on facts and figures, often trails off mid-sentence. His interactions with journalists at his Vidhan Sabha office, a regular feature during Assembly sessions, have been curtailed since 2019, and he has shunned media interviews. Two decades is a long time by any measure, but most certainly for politics. As Nitish Kumar prepares to take the field for another campaign, around him, much has changed. A generational shift when Nitish began his first big term in 2005, he was up against Lalu Prasad and his quintessential family politics that had come to define Bihar. Law-and-order and patronage in governance were the biggest talking points. So Nitish, who had positioned himself as an antidote, put his head down and worked on getting the basics right: roads, schools and hospitals, law and order. The state budget rose from Rs 25,000 crore under the RJD rule to over Rs 1 lakh crore in a matter of few years and now stands at Rs 3.17 lakh crore. The road network in the state went up from 14,468 km in 2005 to 26,000 km in 2025.

But now, as Bihar votes on November 6 and 11, he will have to convince an entire generation of young voters, who have never seen or would have no memory of the Lalu-Rabri regime, that he continues to be their best bet. He will have to work hard to dial down the hope that his opponent Tejashwi Yadav's employment promises may have stirred in this segment, explain to them how he once redefined the state's politics, how he moved away from the RJD's politics that revolved around identity and the lantern (lantern, the RJD's symbol) to a strong welfare model that focused on

education for girls, women's empowerment and grassroots governance. This generation of young voters, those in the 20-29 age group, has gone up from 15.5% of the population in 2006 to 18.9% in 2026 (based on Census projection data). Meanwhile, there has been a generational shift in Nitish's rival camp too, with his old foe's son Tejashwi Yadav projecting himself and the RJD-led Opposition bloc as a youth-led alternative. The Leader of the Opposition has promised that if the Mahagathbandhan came to power, it would ensure a government job for a member of every family in the state. As Nitish Kumar prepares to take the field for another campaign, around him, much has changed. As Nitish Kumar prepares to take the field for another campaign, around him, much has changed. JD (U) chief spokesperson Neeraj Kumar says the party, too, has been reaching out to the youth. "We opened an engineering college in each of the 38 districts. We set up a Youth Commission to identify the problems of the youth and suggest measures to resolve those. We are also giving a monthly allowance of Rs 1,000 to those between 18 and 25 years for two years, besides running a credit card scheme for students of professional courses by giving them loans of up to Rs 4 lakh on a 4% interest rate," he says.

Ashwani Kumar, leading social scientist and professor at Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, says whether this generational shift works for or against Nitish remains to be seen. "Indeed, Bihar has changed beyond recognition. Yet, Nitish Kumar's political dilemma in 2025 remains as much generational as ideological. The development-centric Vikas model that transformed Bihar in 2005 now demands an upgrade — a shift from vernacular modernity to an aspirational, cosmopolitan Vikas Plus. He will have to meet the aspirations of a state with one of India's largest millennial and Gen Z populations. Nitish, the most unusual socialist and Mandal-era wizard, is making a careful effort to emotionally reconnect with this restless generation." RJD national spokesperson Subodh Kumar Mehta says it was Lalu's "social investments, which led to a greater participation of the weaker sections in the decision-making processes, that paved the way for Nitish Kumar." "People expected Nitish to carry forward the idea of social empowerment and economic development. Nitish peaked in 2010 but post 2010, his image as a pan-India leader got dented on various fronts," he says. When Nitish came in, he was a leader without a caste bloc while Lalu's politics coalesced around his unbeatable Muslim-Yadav social base. Nitish sensed an opportunity. With some deft calculations, he rearranged the existing pieces of the caste puzzle to carve out a new base for himself — the Extremely Backward Classes as a subset of non-Yadav OBCs, Mahadalits and women.

Through a mix of political messaging and targeted welfare schemes such as 50% reservation in panchayats, the free bicycle scheme and prohibition, Nitish assiduously cultivated the women vote — an effort that paid off as women came out in huge numbers to vote. From 2010 onwards, in a reversal of voting trends until then, female voter turnout in Bihar has consistently outstripped the male turnout. According to Election Commission data, in 2015, for example, 60.5% of women voted compared to 53.6% of men. "Nitish Kumar's strength is his caste-neutral constituency of women, consolidated through 50% quota in panchayats, the formation of 11 lakh self-help groups with 1.4 crore Jeevika workers, and the Rs-10,000 assistance to 1.21 crore women entrepreneurs. Plus, girls from Class 1 to postgraduate levels get free education in the state; we give Class 9 girls — now also to boys — free bicycles. Tejashwi envies this constituency, cultivated very meticulously by Nitish," says another JD (U) leader. While the JD(U) may be confident about the women vote, it's the EBC plank that has chipped away since the 2010 Assembly elections,

when the NDA ended up with 206 of 243 seats — the first vindication of Nitish's social engineering project.

Since then, several top EBC and Mahadalit leaders have left his ranks — from top EBC leader and former MP Mangani Lal Mandal, who is now RJD state president, to prominent Dalit leaders Uday Narayan Choudhary and former minister Shyam Rajak (now in the RJD). While the JD(U) has worked to retain the EBCs and Mahadalits, who together form around 20% of the population, with land and vocational training schemes, the Opposition camp, too, has been wooing them. In the 2020 polls, when the JD(U) won only 43 out of the 115 seats it contested, it lost from over three dozen seats that had a substantial EBC and SC population. A JD(U) leader explains: "

Till the 2010 Assembly elections, JD(U) was the main stakeholder of EBC votes. But with the rise of Narendra Modi since the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, the BJP has also been getting a substantial chunk of EBC votes. Nitish's core constituency of OBC Luv-Kush (Kurmi-Koeri) also saw cracks in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls when the Mahagathbandhan cut away Koeri votes by fielding seven candidates from the social group." Besides, his old team of political advisors — former bureaucrat N K Singh, former MP Shivanand Tiwari (now in the RJD), and veteran socialists such as K C Tyagi and the late Sharad Yadav — has made way for a different set of people. Many old-timers in the party point to the appointment of Sanjay Kumar Jha, a former BJP man who is now the JD(U)'s national working president, as evidence of how far the party has left its socialist background behind. Kartikeya Batra, Assistant Professor (Economics) at Azim Premji University who is currently researching Bihar election trends, says, "It is a fair point that EBCs and Mahadalits may not have received fair representation in jobs, politics and other positions of power (during Nitish's terms). For instance, as per one analysis, in Bihar's current Assembly, a little over 10% MLAs belong to the (non-Muslim) EBC category, which is much lower than their population share. However, does that mean that JD(U)'s pro-EBC and pro-Mahadalit politics has failed? I would say that ensuring empowerment among marginalised communities is an incremental process. The first step was to ensure basic public goods such as law and order, education and healthcare. Maybe not fully, but that has happened over the last two decades." On whether the current set of policy priorities have reached a point of saturation, Batra says: "The next obvious aspiration among these social groups will be to occupy positions of power. This does give other parties an opening, but cannot negate what CM Nitish Kumar has done for them in the past."

The indispensable Mr Kumar Nitish Kumar's JD(U) was the number one party in 2010 (115 seats), number two in 2015 (71 seats, when he was part of the Mahagathbandhan) and number three party in 2020. Despite this apparent slide, Nitish went on to become CM each time. His numbers did not matter, what mattered was which side he chose. The BJP tried its best to decode this "Nitish factor", but failed. In 2015, with Nitish out of the NDA, the BJP in Bihar had hoped to ride on the Modi wave that brought it to power in the 2014 general elections. But despite a high-pitched campaign by PM Modi, the Mahagathbandhan, of which Nitish was a part then, won 178 of 243 seats and rode to power. Nitish had proved that he held the key to the power cabinet. Nitish walked in and out of the NDA some more, before finally coming back in January 2024. "After Nitish made sure that the BJP had learnt its lesson — that they had no life without him — we returned to the NDA fold on our terms, getting the best ministries," says a JD (U) source. But with the BJP on a much surer footing since then, Nitish has been looking increasingly vulnerable within the alliance. In the 2020 elections, the JD(U) contested on 115 seats, but won only 43,

Late-career impasse: making sense of the Shami situation



Very few fast-bowlers age successfully. Their wicket-taking nous and cognitive abilities may remain intact, but so extreme are the fitness demands that once they are on the wrong side of 30, bodies tend to fragment and physical frailties become all the more evident. It is no surprise then that in the list of the top-15 cricketers with the longest Test careers, there are only two out-and-out pacemen — James Anderson and Imran Khan. Challenging period

Mohammed Shami, 35, will not join those two illustrious men, with more than 1,000 wickets between them, in that roll of honour, but ever since he made his much-awaited comeback last November after a year-long absence because of an ankle injury, his main focus has been to successfully age. There appears to be a consistent desire to create meaning from whatever is left of his cricketing life even as he comes to terms with the inevitable bodily vulnerabilities.

There has, however, been one major obstacle — India's selectors are unmoved. While the T20I boat has admittedly sailed past Shami after a below-par IPL (six wickets from nine matches at an economy-rate of 11.23 for Sunrisers Hyderabad), the Bengal quick's non-inclusion in the touring party to Australia for the ongoing three-match ODI series, despite his prominent role in India's 2025 Champions Trophy-winning side, would have hurt. His fortunes in Test whites were dealt body blows when he was selected neither for the two multi-day matches India-A played against Australia-A in September nor for the upcoming twin fixtures against South Africa-A. The opening Test of India's two-match series against South Africa at his beloved Eden Gardens on November 14 thus looks like an unattainable dream. All of which has now given rise to the question of whether Shami still has something to offer the Indian team and if the think-tank still sees value in the speed merchant who, not so long ago, bamboozled batters with his skiddy pace, impeccable skill and inch-perfect control. For one, Shami seems to be suffering from a lack of game-time in red-ball cricket, something chief selector Ajit Agarkar pointed out when the squad for the two-Test series against the West Indies was announced. Since the World Test Championship final against Australia in June 2023, Shami has played one Ranji Trophy match versus Madhya Pradesh in November 2024, one Duleep Trophy encounter for East Zone versus North in August and last week's Ranji game versus Uttarakhand. "He has not played a lot of cricket," Agarkar said. "In the last two-three years, I think he has played one match for Bengal and one match in the Duleep Trophy. So, as a performer, we know what he can do. But, he will need to play something." But it is equally true that he has been a victim of circumstances. After the successful Champions Trophy sojourn, Shami played a full IPL. The Duleep Trophy was his next stop but the tournament's knockout format meant that the pacer could play just one tie as East Zone crashed out in the quarterfinal. In fact, in that one outing, Shami, watched by selectors Shiv Sunder Das, and Subroto Banerjee and S. Sharath (both of whom have since vacated their positions), gave a decent account of himself despite not bowling at full throttle. He sent down 34 overs in all, troubled batters with his seam movement and lift, and, in a throwback to his menacing past, struck Kanhaiya Wadhawan once on the glove and then on the helmet, off back-to-back deliveries. In the recent eight-wicket win over Uttarakhand, he was the Player of the Match (3/37 in 14.5 overs & 4/38 in 24.4 overs). Handbrake off

For Shami to attract the selectors' gaze, he perhaps needs to do more than this. It may help — and even liberate — him that he would not be required to hold himself back in the fear of getting injured again, for this may well be his last roll of the dice. "He is a guy who has performed when he has been provoked, and shown intensity and focused harder if he has been challenged and kind of chided... that's the kind of personality Shami is," former India batter V.V. Raman, who has seen Shami at close quarters during his coaching stints with Bengal, told The Hindu. "So, I think this is perhaps something that he will take as extreme provocation and maybe force his way back into the side and perform extraordinarily." This, in turn, will depend on two things. In the event Shami regains his old magic, would the Indian management like to ration his time as a lead pacer the way it does with Jasprit Bumrah? Does it view Shami's inclusion as a hindrance to the development of a young pace bowler? The decision-makers' thinking, at least in the second matter, is evidently clear. Khaleel Ahmed (27 years), Punjab's Gurnoor Brar (25), who was in the Rest of India team for the Irani Cup, and Vidarbha's Yash Thakur (26), who won the Ranji Trophy last season, all found a place in the India-A squad that played Australia-A and are also part of the roster that will take on South Africa-A. With Bumrah, Mohammed Siraj, Prasidh Krishna and Akash Deep part of the first-choice attack, and the likes of Harshit Rana and Arshdeep Singh already among the back-ups, it does leave Shami with very little room. Moreover, India is pencilled in to play just three Tests in the first nine months of 2026 — one versus Afghanistan at home and two away in Sri Lanka — before it travels to New Zealand for two more. As a result, ODIs might be where Shami finds his opportunities, with the 2027 World Cup in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia a good target to aim at. The 50-over format is where he has left his deepest imprint in recent times, setting the 2023 World Cup on fire with a tournament-high 24 wickets from seven matches at an average of 10.70 and then winning the 2025 Champions Trophy. In the UAE, Shami became the fastest Indian bowler to get to 200 ODI wickets (104 matches) and was the second-quickest internationally, behind Australian left-arm pacer Mitchell Starc (102). It is perhaps instructive that, in August, Shami said that winning the 2027 edition was the "only dream left", and as recently as last week, with reference to his non-selection for the Australia tour, caustically remarked: "If I can play four-dayers [Ranji Trophy], I can also play 50-overs cricket."

Will he, won't he?

"It's all a question of timing," said Raman when asked if 2027 was a realistic target. "A lot of factors will be at play, but it's definitely something that cannot be ruled out. Especially [with respect to] fast-bowling, because, of late, there has been a great need for fast-bowlers." "I'm sure that he will fancy his chances, given that he's done it over a period of time and he knows, perhaps, that he can maintain the fitness that is required. It will be challenging no doubt because beyond a certain stage, every year that passes in your life is going to be challenging."

Jobs, palayan, and the weight of being a Bihari: Aboard a train full of migrants going home for Chhath Puja

The Amrit Bharat Express that leaves Delhi's Anand Vihar station in the afternoon and arrives in Motihari in Bihar the next morning is packed to the brim. Every year, as Chhath Puja nears, trains headed east overflow with migrants returning home. This one is no exception. In the sleeper coach, it takes nearly 15 minutes to push through the narrow aisle to the berth. Sacks, suitcases, plastic buckets, cardboard boxes filled with pressure cookers, and utensils lie strewn around. The only way to move luggage is to balance it on the head and squeeze sideways. In the compartment where this reporter has a reservation, 15 adults and seven children share eight seats. The floor and berths are cluttered with bags and new purchases — mixies, dinner sets, blankets — all gifts to take home. Some passengers have no option but to stand through the night. Yet, there isn't a word of complaint. "Arey kono baat naikhe, sab kehu adjust ho jai. Chhath ba (This is no problem, we can adjust to anything, this is Chhath after all)," a man says cheerfully, giving up his berth for the children.

Bihar Assembly elections, Bihar Assembly polls, Amrit Bharat Express, Chhath Puja, train full of migrants going home for Chhath Puja, train of migrants going home for Chhath Puja, Indian express news, current affairs Passengers huddled near the toilet As the train pulls out, the chatter begins: about how impossible it is to get a ticket home, not just during Chhath but through the year. That soon turns into grumbling about the filthy condition of trains. However, the blame falls not on the Railways, but passengers themselves. "Stuff a train with Biharis and they'll make it dirty," a man jokes. "The dirtiest trains are the ones going to Bihar." His friend nods. "And Chirag Paswan keeps saying 'Bihar First, Bihari First'. First teach Biharis some civic sense." The jokes have an edge. They come from a place of shame, not arrogance. Beneath the laughter runs the shared knowledge of palayan, migration, the word that defines modern Bihar and now shapes its politics.

Sitting on the floor near a toilet between a coach and the pantry car are Ramesh Sah, a Bania (OBC) by caste, and Ravikant Pandit, a Kumhar Prajapati (EBC), both in their fifties and both from Chiraiya in Motihari. They work in Haryana and are on their way home for the festival. "What has any government done for people like us?" asks Sah. "If they had, I wouldn't be sitting between two coaches like this. Governments will come and go, and will keep travelling like this." Bihar Assembly elections, Bihar Assembly polls, Amrit Bharat Express, Chhath Puja, train full of migrants going home for Chhath Puja, train of migrants going home for Chhath Puja, Indian express news, current affairs Passengers huddled near the toilet Pandit nods. "Everything in Bihar is good. Only migration is the big problem. No party has solved it, no party will. You need a leader like Yogi Adityanath who does what he says." In another coach, 25-year-old Vijay Thakur, who works as a barber in Gurgaon, sits on the floor near a toilet. For him, migration is not a political failure but a

social one. "My brothers migrated in the 2000s, then I joined them. The problem isn't politicians, it's us. We can't rise above caste, so no leader feels the need to change anything."

Between coaches S2 and S3, two young men stand clutching their bags. Mohammed Jehangir and Saheb Alam, marble polishers in Delhi, are from Awasani in West Champaran. They have been working outside Bihar since 2014. "There are no jobs at home. I have six brothers, all in different cities," says Jehangir. More than the physical hardship, what weighs heavily are the slights they face for being a Bihari in another state. Mukesh Sah, a 30-year-old auto driver from Piprakothi in Motihari, sits in the aisle and is forced to get up every time someone heads to the bathroom. "I live with four others in one small room near Kailash Colony (in Delhi). In my village, I wouldn't tie my buffalo in that space. But the landlord earns lakhs just because he was born in the right place."

Bihar Assembly elections, Bihar Assembly polls, Amrit Bharat Express, Chhath Puja, train full of migrants going home for Chhath Puja, train of migrants going home for Chhath Puja, Indian express news, current affairs Ramesh Sah and Ravikant Pandit He pauses as another passenger squeezes past him. "Ask anyone in this train how we're treated in Delhi. 'Bihari' is used as an abuse. But we bear it for our families." When someone jokes that he can soon go home faster on a bullet train. Mukesh laughs. "Bullet train? We'll still be sitting in the aisle! No one, (PM) Modi or Nitish (CM Nitish Kumar), has done anything for migrants. That's why people want change now. Yogi ji should contest from Bihar." In the adjacent coach, Anil Kumar Yadav, a 26-year-old factory worker in Haryana, has similar complaints. "My supervisor calls me 'Ae Bihari!' I told him, I don't call you 'Ae Haryanvi'. Don't I have dignity? They employ us because we work hard, but still treat us as somehow less." The conversation soon turns towards the elections, as naturally as the train rattling over the tracks. "Only in Bihar do people worship the setting sun," Yadav says, drawing political symbolism from the Chhath Puja rituals. "That's why Nitish keeps winning."

Yadav calls himself a Lalu Prasad loyalist — credits the RJD leader with giving dignity to the lower castes — but adds, "He never developed Chhapra. Modi at least takes all investments to Gujarat." He talks of Bihar's glorious past — Nalanda, Aryabhata — and wonders why no one builds on it. "Look at Haryana. Gurgaon is like Dubai! Cyber Hub shines like pearls. If they can do it there, why can't Bihar? Bihar isn't poor, its governments are."

However, not everyone agrees. Ramesh Mahato and Vijay Sah, both auto drivers in Delhi, argue over Nitish Kumar's record. "He's done good work — roads, electricity, peace," says Mahato, a steady NDA voter. Sah shakes his head. "Not voting for him this time." Why? "Because of



darubandi (liquor ban). "But isn't Prohibition a good thing? "Good? Liquor is available everywhere. Only costlier now. Jan Suraj is saying they'll lift it, and all those who drink will vote for them — 75% of men in Bihar drink," Sah says. Jehangir, the marble polisher, is impressed with Jan Suraj because of its founder Prashant Kishor, the strategist-turned-politician. "He talks sense. Very sharp, no journalist can stand before him. He's quick with replies, like Owaisi (AIMIM chief)." Still, he says he'll vote for RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav, not Kishor. Yet, Kishor's shadow looms large on the train. Byas Sah and Luv Kumar, painters from Bettiah who are returning from Panipat, say people in their village discuss Kishor often. "We watch his speeches on YouTube. People like the issues he raises," says Byas. The two debate his promise to end Prohibition and generate jobs. "Maybe that'll help," hopes Luv, who says he will vote for the BJP. But their fellow traveller Jeetendra Kumar, 21, interrupts: "That will destroy Bihar!" Byas shrugs. "At least he's talking about migration. He says every youth will earn Rs 10-12,000 in Bihar itself. Maybe then this tyranny — travelling like packed sardines — and the humiliation we face in cities will end." In the next coach, Ravi Jha, a young man from Sitamarhi, says his family has always voted for the BJP, but adds he will vote for the RJD. Not because he sees great promise in Tejashwi, but because he does not like the BJP candidate who is a Teli (OBC), while the RJD candidate is a Rajput. Further down, carpenters Ram Avtar Paswan from Ramnagar and Imamul Hussain from Bagaha share a single berth. Paswan, a Dalit, supports the BJP. "It's a dabang (fearless) party," he says with pride. Hussain, who backs the RJD, bursts out laughing. "Dabang? What will they do, beat up those who don't vote for them? Power doesn't win votes; money does. The Rs 10,000 given to women will decide the election." "Paswan grins. "Why? Won't Hindu-Muslim politics help the BJP win? Soon, the polls will be polarised and all Hindus will vote in favour of the BJP." At that moment, the train jerks violently and halts. "Puncture to nahi ho gayi? Ja ke check karna. Tumko to aata hai (Has there been a puncture? Go check, you know how to do it)," Paswan jokes, nudging Hussain.

India and US begin work on trade draft; Goyal underlines: No deal with a 'gun to the head'



The India-US trade talks, marked by twists and turns, seems to be moving closer towards a conclusion as negotiators from both sides are said to have begun working on the language of the text but a final announcement will require "political convergence," a senior government official said here Friday. Indicating as much while strongly reiterating the red lines, Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal, at a conference in Berlin Friday, said that India doesn't do deals with a deadline or with a "gun to the head." He framed the negotiations as a process in which India will look at its long-term implications and how it secures the national interest for a country with a young, aspirational population.

In New Delhi, explaining the course of the talks, the senior official said: "There are some non-tariff barriers that are being discussed. Teams had virtual sessions yesterday, and some more virtual talks will happen on Monday. In principle, we have agreed and are finalising the language (of the deal text). As far as the deal is concerned, there is more or less convergence from both sides."

The official added that "this time" US negotiators could arrive in India for talks. On a question regarding past differences over oil and agriculture, the official said, "We are finding some common ground (on agriculture). As negotiators, we know there aren't many differences. We are negotiating positively. Engagement is going well. Having said that, the deal has not been announced. It could happen in the future. Deals are announced at a political level. As negotiators, we know we are close," the official said. The official further said that the India-US trade deal, like other deals announced between the US and other countries, won't be a conventional free trade agreement (FTA). "It won't be a conventional FTA because there are reciprocal tariffs which are not WTO most-favoured-nation (MFN) tariffs. Normally, deals are negotiated MFN vs MFN. In that context, this will be a different kind of deal," the official said. As the US has begun adding more and more items under the Section 232 tariffs net, the official said, "In some of the areas, our efforts will be to ad-

dress them." Underlining the red lines, Goyal said Friday during the Berlin Global Dialogue in Germany that India does not do trade agreements in a hurry or with a "gun to our head". The minister was in Berlin to participate in the dialogue, a meeting of leaders and German businesses to discuss ways to boost bilateral trade and investments. "We are in active dialogue with the EU. We are talking to the US, but we do not do deals in a hurry and we do not do deals with deadlines or with a gun to our head," he said. He added that trade deals should be viewed with a long-term perspective. "India looks long-term, India never takes decision in a rush or on the pressure of the moment. And we have accepted if there is a tariff on us, there is a tariff on us. We are looking how to overcome that, we are looking at newer markets, we are looking at a stronger demand impetus within the Indian economy, so we have a very resilient structure. (We are) 1.4 billion people, we are young. So they are not in a situation where they want to do sub-optimal deals, we would like to really look at long term. We recognise that 20-25 years from now, we will be a \$30-trillion economy and, accordingly, we will negotiate based on the future. Trade deal is for the long run, to recognise the future and to get the best deal for the country," Goyal said. When a panelist remarked that India was being asked to rethink its friendship with Russia, Goyal said: "I do not think India has ever decided who its friends will be based on any other considerations other than national interest... and if somebody tells me you can't be friends with the EU, I won't accept that, or if somebody tells me tomorrow I can't work with Kenya, it's not acceptable." The decision to buy a particular product from a country is something that the entire world will have to take a call on, he said. "I was reading in today's paper that Germany is asking for an exemption from US sanctions on oil... The UK has already sorted or probably got an exemption for procuring oil from the US... so then why single out India?" he said. Goyal's remarks come as the US has imposed additional tariffs on India over its imports of Russian oil. On October 22, the US also imposed sanctions on Russia's two largest crude oil producers, Rosneft and Lukoil, barring all American entities and individuals from conducting business with them. "Trade deals are for a longer duration. It is not only about tariffs or access to goods and services; it is also about trust and relationships... Trade deals, in a longer context, are far more than just tariffs, and we are too focused on current issues and tariffs," he added. India and the US have been negotiating a bilateral trade agreement since March this year. So far, five rounds of talks have been completed. Goyal on Thursday stated that these negotiations are progressing and expressed hope that both sides would work towards a fair and equitable agreement in the near future.

Know your ORS: Why sugary drinks may be worsening your diarrhoea and WHO formula holds the key



Watching children come to her clinic severely dehydrated despite taking ORS (oral rehydration solution) prompted Hyderabad-based paediatrician Dr Sivaranjini Santhosh to look into what they were having. She found that these tetrapacks often did not have the right sugar-salt ratio. In fact, they had added sugar that made them no different from other flavoured drinks. "A true ORS formulation uses a specific, low amount of glucose to help the body absorb sodium and water. Excessive sugar in drinks disrupts this process, creating a high concentration in the gut that pulls water from the body. The excess sugar can draw more water into the bowels, leading to a severe kind of diarrhoea and fluid loss," she says. The problem? It leads to more dehydration and diarrhoea in already sick children — something that can turn fatal in the absence of timely medical care. That's why she decided to begin her campaign against flavoured drinks posing as ORS. What genuine packet of ORS looks like. What genuine packet of ORS looks like.

It took eight years for the country's apex food regulator (Food Safety and Standards Authority of India [FSSAI]) to stop all fruit-based, non-carbonated, ready-to-drink beverages from using the term ORS in their trademarked name. But her battle continues as the Delhi High Court has stayed the operation of the order after the Johnson & Johnson subsidiary, JNTL Consumer Health, submitted that products worth Rs 155-180 crore have already been manufactured or are in the supply chain. Dr Santhosh says over the last decade or so, many fake products had entered the Indian market. "Even if a product carries the warning 'not ORS', people still think that it is an ORS solution because that's what the brand name suggests," she says. So, what exactly is ORS and why is it so important to maintain the sugar and salt proportion in the formulation?

The oral rehydration solution — a simple glucose-electrolyte mixture — can reduce deaths and hospitalisation due to acute diarrhoeal diseases, especially in children under the age of five. The glucose in ORS helps the small intestine absorb sodium and water more effectively and offset fluid loss. This is possible because a specific transport mechanism for sodium and glucose remains intact even during diarrhoea. By facilitating rehydration, ORS can prevent serious complications such as dizziness, low blood pressure and organ damage. Its timely use is especially critical for children and the elderly who are more vulnerable to rapid fluid loss. ORS is the result of ground-breaking work by Indian paediatrician Dr Dilip Mahalanabis during the Bangladesh liberation war of 1971. It helped save millions of lives in the following decades. With a deficiency of saline to treat cholera patients in the refugee camps during the war, Dr Mahalanabis started administering patients with the simple salt, water and sugar solution, asking them to consume it till their condition improved. This reduced the case fatality in the refugee camps from 30 per cent to just one per cent. That's why it was hailed as "the most important medical advancement of the 20th century." "The composition of the ORS is based on the daily sodium and potassium requirement and what is lost in the stool — earlier for cholera and now for the more common diarrhoeal diseases. The glucose in the solution facilitates the absorption of salts in the ORS, which in turn pull in the water, helping in quick rehydration," says Dr Harish Chellani, former head of the department of paediatrics at Safdarjung hospital. "However, any additional glucose and the change in concentration shifts

the osmotic pressure. So, the water gets drawn out of the cells and into the gastrointestinal tract. This actually worsens the diarrhoea. This is the reason the ORS has to stick to the WHO formulation."

Nearly eight per cent of children under the age of five globally die due to diarrhoea. In India, the prevalence of diarrhoea in this age group is at 9.2 per cent, according to data from the National Family Health Survey. Dr Sisir Paul, clinical director at Madhukar Rainbow Hospital, says, "For most cases of diarrhoea, you do not need antibiotic therapy. It is the resulting dehydration that has to be managed as it can lead to hypertension, kidney failure and death. Providing ORS solution is an effective way to prevent complications, especially in remote areas where access to health facilities can be limited." All the more reason why these life-saving packets cannot have too much sugar. "The absorption of the water will not happen properly if the WHO formula is not followed," says Dr Ramesh Aggarwal, professor of neonatology at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Delhi. Dr Chellani argues that high sugar drinks may prompt children to drink more. "People say that the WHO formulation is not tasty and children might not drink it even when they have diarrhoea but that is not true. The use of ORS is actually self-limiting — children will continue to drink it as long as they are dehydrated. The problem with a sweetened, flavoured drink is that children may continue to drink it beyond their requirement. This can not only be dehydrating, it also exposes the children unnecessarily to more salts and sugars." He says people should avoid giving children aerated beverages during such an episode. "Many believe that lemon-aerated beverages can help when the stomach is tender but in reality, they can distend the stomach and increase the risk of vomiting, leading to further fluid loss."

The WHO had an older high osmolarity formulation — meant for those with cholera that causes higher sodium loss — and a new low osmolarity formula. Studies have shown that the low osmolarity formula can reduce unscheduled requirement for IV by 33 per cent, stool output by 20 per cent and vomiting by 30 per cent in children. WHO has recommended the use of this formula since 2003. For this solution, you need 2.6 grams of sodium chloride, 13.5 grams of glucose, 1.5 grams of potassium chloride and 2.9 grams of trisodium citrate. This is usually available as a packet of powder that has to be mixed in a litre of water. Such packets are available across all government healthcare centres and with ASHA workers for free. Similar products can be purchased at any neighbourhood medical store. Smaller packets meant for a glass of solution and reconstituted solution in tetra packs are also available but one has to ensure that it is the WHO recommended formulation. Once made, the solution can be used for up to 24 hours, after which a new solution should be prepared. Dr Aggarwal warns that "the sachets should be mixed with the amount of water specified on the pack — mixing it with too little or too much water can change the concentrations. It is easy to mix the one-litre packs as people usually have one litre bottles available at home."

He cautions people against trying to divide the powder in a sachet on their own to mix two or three batches of solution. "If you divide the powder on your own, then there is no way to tell how much salt and sugar is going in. It is best to mix the entire pack," says Dr Aggarwal. Dr Paul advises against gulping down the powder with water as it changes the composition. All three experts warn against preparing the solution at home. "These packets are easily available everywhere now. Parents should use these salts to ensure that the concentrations are maintained," says Dr Chellani. Experts say it is best to use ORS salt sachets readily available at government health facilities or neighbourhood stores instead of buying tetra packs. Most of these sachets will mention "as per WHO recommended formulation." While not all tetra packs are sweetened drinks, the salt sachets are likely to reduce the risk of ending up with products that do not adhere to the concentrations. Sachets usually cost less than Rs 22 as the price of the ORS in India is capped at Rs 1.11 per gram of salt and a packet usually contains over 20 grams of powder.

RBI to cap bank lending for corporate takeovers at 70% of deal value



This means if the acquisition cost is Rs 10,000 crore, banks can lend up to Rs 7,000 crore to fund the acquirer which should be a listed company with a profit track record for three years

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This means if the acquisition cost is Rs 10,000 crore, banks can lend up to Rs 7,000 crore to fund the acquirer which should be a listed company with a profit track record for three years. "The acquisition value of the target company should be determined by two independent valuations, as prescribed under SEBI regulations," the RBI said in its draft framework. The move follows RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra's announcement during the October 1 monetary policy, in which he said banks would now be permitted to finance corporate takeovers, an area previously off-limits due to regulatory concerns.

For decades, Indian banks were barred from directly funding takeovers amid fears that promoters could misuse borrowed funds to gain control of companies rather than invest in genuine business expansion. Limited exceptions were made in recent years, mainly for acquisitions carried out under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC)

process. The RBI has now asked banks to formulate a comprehensive policy on acquisition financing. This must include clear norms on borrower eligibility, security and margin requirements, risk management, monitoring mechanisms, and overall exposure limits. The move is expected to deepen India's credit market, improve liquidity for mergers and acquisitions, and give banks a greater role in shaping corporate restructuring while maintaining regulatory safeguards against misuse.

The RBI said banks should comply with the rule that the acquiring company and the SPV set up by it, wherever applicable, should be a corporate body and should exclude financial intermediaries such as NBFCs and Alternate Investment Funds (AIF). "The Acquiring company should be a listed entity, having a satisfactory net worth and profit making for the last three years. The annual returns of the target company should be available for at least the previous three financial years," the central bank said in its Draft Reserve Bank of India (Capital Market Exposure) Directions, 2025. The aggregate exposure of a bank towards acquisition finance should not exceed 10 per cent of its Tier 1 capital, the central bank said. Further, the acquiring company and the target company should not be related parties, where a 'related party' is as defined in Section 2 (76) of the Companies Act 2013. The credit assessment should be based on the combined balance sheet of the acquirer company and the target company, it said. Post-acquisition debt-to-equity ratio at the acquiring company level or the SPV/target company level, as applicable, should be within prudential limits set by financing banks, subject to a maximum of 3:1, the RBI said. The acquisition finance should be fully secured by shares of the target company as primary security, the RBI said. Assets of the acquirer and/or target company, or other securities held by the acquiring company, may be taken as collateral security as per the bank's policy. "Banks should put in place rigorous and continuous monitoring of acquisition finance exposures to manage the risks, with early warning systems and regular stress testing to detect and address any signs of stress in the portfolio," it said. Meanwhile, the RBI said the aggregate capital market exposure (CME) of a bank, on a solo basis, should not exceed 40 per cent of its Tier 1 Capital as on March 31 of the previous financial year. "The aggregate CME exposure of a bank, on a consolidated basis, should not exceed 40 per cent of its consolidated Tier 1 Capital as on March 31 of the previous financial year," the RBI said.

Reliance, Meta launch Rs 855 crore joint venture for enterprise AI in India

Mumbai: Reliance Industries on Saturday announced that its subsidiary, Reliance Intelligence Ltd, has established a joint venture with US tech giant Meta's subsidiary to market and distribute enterprise AI in India. A new company, namely Reliance Enterprise Intelligence Limited (REIL), has been formed as a joint venture with Facebook Overseas, Inc., according to an exchange filing. The Mukesh Ambani and Mark Zuckerberg-led companies have committed an initial combined investment of around Rs 855 crore in the unit, aimed at "developing, marketing, and distributing enterprise AI services." Reliance Intelligence will own 70 per cent of REIL, while Facebook Overseas, Inc., a unit of Meta Platforms, will hold 30 per cent, the filing said. The partnership will provide an enterprise AI platform-as-a-service, enabling organisations to customise and deploy generative models, along with a suite of pre-configured solutions for industries including sales, marketing, IT operations, customer service, and finance. RIL's AI arm will invest Rs 2 crore towards the initial subscription of 20 million equity shares of Rs 10 each. The transaction does not fall within a related party transaction, and none of the company's promoters or



promoter group, or group companies have any interest in the above transaction, the filing said. No governmental or regulatory approvals were required for the incorporation of REIL, it added. Reliance announced a joint venture in August that will use Meta's open-source Llama models combined with Reliance's enterprise reach to offer AI tools across sectors. Meta will provide technical expertise for Llama-based models, while Reliance will leverage its digital infrastructure and access to thousands of Indian enterprises and small businesses.

As air pollution eats into your lungs, these exercise routines can strengthen them



Given the challenge posed by air pollution, we need to stimulate our lungs through exercise to improve their functioning. Your heart and lungs work harder when you're exercising to provide the extra oxygen your muscles need.

Your body becomes more adept at delivering oxygen to the working muscles and the bloodstream as your level of physical fitness increases. Your body becomes more adept at delivering oxygen to the working muscles and the bloodstream as your level of physical fitness increases. Given the challenge posed by air pollution, we need to stimulate our lungs through exercise to improve their functioning. Your heart and lungs work harder when you're exercising to provide the extra oxygen your muscles need. Regular exercise strengthens your heart and lungs in the same way that it does your muscles. Your body becomes more adept at delivering oxygen to the working muscles and the bloodstream as your level of physical fitness increases. Over time, this is one of the reasons you are less likely to feel shortness of breath while exercising.

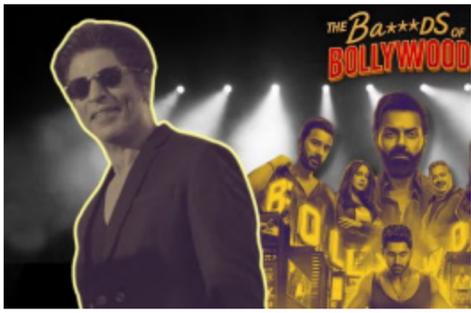
The diaphragm and the muscles between the ribs, which cooperate to power inhalation and exhalation, are two other muscles that can be strengthened by certain forms of exercise. So engaging in both aerobic exercises and muscle-strengthening workouts can enhance the health of your lungs. It all starts with gentle aerobic exercises such as walking and spot jogging. Then you can take to the fol-

lowing routines. Jumping Jacks: Jumping jacks, which involve softly bouncing over the ground and gently landing back down, are an excellent cardiovascular workout. An improved cardiovascular health eases overall respiratory function.

Swimming and water workouts: Swimming in an indoor pool has an impact on lung volume measurements because swimmers' diaphragm and other respiratory muscles must expand to a greater pressure during the respiratory cycle. This can improve the function of these muscles and change the elasticity of the lung, chest wall or ventilatory muscles. Compared to runners, swimmers have better lung capacity. Easy hacks: Climbing up the stairs helps you process oxygen better. Twisting and bending — forward, backward and sideways — and doing soft lunges with low intensity, all done with gradual breathing, make for a good lung workout. Pilates: Pilates strengthens the diaphragm and other muscles involved in breathing, which improve both inhaling and exhaling. Routines build core strength and spinal alignment, which in turn reduce slouching and allow the lungs to expand more fully. By coordinating movement with deep breathing, Pilates exercises have been shown to improve key pulmonary parameters such as forced vital capacity (FVC), peak expiratory flow rate (PEFR) and maximum voluntary ventilation (MVV). Breathing routines: Inhale and exhale through the nose and when extremely exhausted, inhale through the nose and exhale through the mouth with proper recoveries in between if you are panting.

Pranayama routines like Kapalabhati and Anulom Vilom can increase lung capacity and oxygen intake. Practising these for only 5-10 minutes a day will give a burst of energy and freshness. I would also recommend double breathing, which oxygenates the blood and energizes the body. Stand comfortably with feet apart. Begin with inhaling through the nose with a short sharp inhalation followed by a long breath. Exhale twice through the mouth with a short, then long exhalation. While breathing in, stand tall with your spine erect and while exhaling, squat a little. Yoga is best for strengthening and flexing heart and lung muscles. Practise chest opening asanas like Setu Bandhasana, Bhujangasana, Ustrasana and upward stretching Tadasana. Make sure to combine exercise with the right diet and sleep to make sure that you get full benefits.

Aryan Khan's The Ba***ds of Bollywood is his way of honouring the defiance that made Shah Rukh Khan a megastar



Aryan Khan's directorial debut, *The Ba***ds of Bollywood*, is finally out now on Netflix. And it's exactly what everyone expected it to be: pulp, and wildly entertaining. The plot is the MacGuffin. Or more accurately, the plot is a Bollywood Reddit thread mashed into a screenplay. Aryan kicks things off by roasting the one person Bollywood usually avoids: himself. Jail jokes? Check. No-smiling-for-the-paps? Also check. Even Sameer Wankhede (lookalike) gets a cameo. Every superstar makes their presence felt. Aamir Khan appears just long enough to parody his own god-complex of perfection. Emraan Hashmi gets the ultimate on-screen glow-up that will have millennials screaming in group chats. Ranveer Singh and Karan Johar banter like two ageing celebrities

arguing over who saved whose career with Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani. Speaking of Johar, there comes the nepo parade. Ranbir Kapoor exudes his vintage play-boy energy. Arjun Kapoor... also shows up. Ibrahim Ali Khan, Shanaya Kapoor, and all the Fabulous Wives of Bollywood do what they do best: pose for the paparazzi alongside a very committed Disha Patani. The outsiders are also summoned. Rajkumar Rao and Siddhant Chaturvedi arrive like they're at an awards show they weren't invited to, doing their best Akshay Kumar and Abhishek Bachchan impressions from Om Shanti Om. Even Rajat Bedi appears, yes, with the basketball from Koi... Mil Gaya. Somewhere in all of this, Gauri Khan also gets a plug for her interior design biz. Irreverence is the tone Aryan goes for, and he doesn't hold back. He uses every bit of the access he has as a nepo baby, and leans straight into it. Maybe then the only real difference between his style (he co-creates with Bilal Siddiqi and Manav Chauhan) and someone like Zoya Akhtar, whose *Luck By Chance* is still the gold standard for Bollywood-on-Bollywood storytelling — is this: Aryan never drops the mockery. He keeps it skit-like, loose, and loud all the way through. The show never takes itself too seriously, even when it's dropping truth bombs. Maybe that's exactly why the surprisingly disarming twist at the end lands so well. And amidst all the excess, Aryan pulls off something more interesting. He tells the story through the eyes of an outsider, Aasmaan Singh (Lakshya). And in doing that, he taps into the same outsider rage that once belonged to the biggest outsider of them all: his father, Shah Rukh Khan.

Lucky Ali can be credited for indie-pop music, but he cannot be blamed for Anuv Jain

It's tough to make it in music; it always has been. Now more than ever, it's tough to distinguish yourself in the large tapestry that is the music industry, which is both saturated and predictable right now. But the independent singers, rappers and musicians of this day and age have the power of social media and streaming platforms, which is akin to a double-edged sword but has an edge nonetheless. Breaking in the indie scene was not that easy (I sound like my grandfather), and yet some musicians broke through against all odds. Like the fields of Elysium, that space houses many great artists of today and yesteryear, and one of them is Maqsood Mahmood Ali, better known as Lucky Ali.

It's almost impossible to have a conversation with your parents about pop music without his name coming up. His albums like 'Sunoh', 'Sifar', and 'Aks' are incredible projects which give a masterclass in coherence and consistency. Even before he ruled the charts with 'Oh Sanam', his career as an independent artist was one for the ages. Most of the people belonging to Gen Z just know him as a singer and don't even realise that he is the son of the legendary actor Mehmood. For the younger audience reading this, the legendary comic actor went bar to bar with Kishore Kumar in the film *Padosan* (1968) years before Eminem and the Falcon ever took that stage in Detroit. The man became synonymous with the genre he dipped his foot in, and he did it during a time when you needed to know more than just four chords on the guitar to become famous. Let's talk about the kind of music that is being produced and distributed by independent artists of today. Why does every song sound the same, and why have we abandoned musical elements such as the bridge? Look at any of Anuv Jain's songs. When 'Baarishein' came out, it was a refreshing new sound, but then he reiterated the same sound till it lost all its novelty. From there, he moved on to a career which is made up of the same song all over again, and he is not the only one doing this. I love Ed Sheeran, but did I really deserve to wait this long for an album we had already heard before? All of the songs, except some parts of the singles, are songs which he has made multiple times during his career. Ali made a name for himself when he had to rely on his CDs and cassettes to sell in stores. So people had to get out of their homes, travel to the music store, and actually buy a piece of music. Which is a lot harder than staying in your bed and clicking a button and having the option of paying absolutely nothing if you can listen to ads. Also, all this music keeps making the rounds of Instagram 1500 times in a day; 50 reels and 25 collaborations are the standard;



hence, all of this music is reaching millions of people in a second. Ali didn't have that luxury; he had to rely on the music stores to keep his music on the window display or on top of the shelf of new music. Even though there was so much effort and labour involved with the music after it was released, he still put in incredible amounts of work on the music itself, and it shows. There are still people who are pushing the bar with their music, like Sarthak Kalyani, Bombay Bando, The Yellow Diary, and the Anirudh Verma Collective. But are others taking the easy way out because they know that their music will find an audience no matter what? Or is it our fault as the audience? Are we celebrating and rewarding mediocrity more often than it should be? Celebrated bassist Sting once talked about how modern music has changed with YouTube Rick Beato. He talked about the absence of the bridge and how the structure of the music being made today is too simple and easy. When Sting says something, we should all listen (he is still making Diddy pay to this day for not listening closely enough). There is also an argument to be made about the kind of passion Ali's craft inspires. Look at any of the videos on the internet where Ali has shown up at a random cafe and performed for the people there. A man so clearly detached from his own success; a musician so careless about his own fame. He shows up, blesses your day and then leaves, without any expectation of applause. This isn't a piece that wants Anuv to hang up his guitar. This listener wants him to take advantage of the tools he has been given and take inspiration from Ali and his brand of music. There is a reason why our parents can't have a conversation about music without Ali's name coming up. He changed the game and paved the way for so many artists that came after him. So much of it can be tracked back to him, and he needs to be applauded for it.

Zubeen Garg refused to work in Mumbai because of Bollywood's 'attitude', told them to come to Assam if they wanted him: 'I don't like the chaos'



When Zubeen Garg began his music career in the 1990s, he moved to Mumbai to explore some opportunities in Bollywood. There, he lent his voice to songs like 'Ya Ali' from *Gangster*, 'Dilruba' from *Namaste London*, 'Dil Tu Hi Bata' from *Krish 3* among others. But despite his success, the singer-actor eventually returned to Assam, citing disillusionment with the attitude of the mainstream Hindi film industry. In an interview with POP Paveopedia in January, the late singer opened up about his decision to leave Mumbai: "Mumbai has more attitude, and to get rid of

that, I asked them to come here. I will die here [in Assam] like a king. I still have a home in Mumbai, but I don't like the chaos. It's just too much." Zubeen also recalled a turbulent period in his career when he defied the militant group United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA). "I was slapped by the police... by the army... But I told them, 'One day, you'll be in my security.' I've seen bad times—very bad times. For a long time, there was heavy ULFA influence in Assam, and I was the only one who stood up to them. They tried to dictate everything. They told me, 'You can't sing Hindi or Bengali songs.' I replied, 'Who the hell are you? I don't care.' Then they threatened to shoot me. I said, 'Okay, you shoot me, and I'll shoot you.' I am still like that. And now, they say I am like their brother. I live like a mafia here." While his defiance earned him respect, Zubeen admitted that his fearless nature also brought its share of troubles. When asked whether this attitude had been a burden, he was quick to clarify, "I don't have an attitude—it's self-respect. I live here like a king. I always say, 'A king should never leave his kingdom, because when the king leaves, he is no more.'" Zubeen Garg, 52, passed away in Singapore, where he had traveled as the Cultural Brand Ambassador for the North East India Festival, organised by the High Commission of India.

Netflix's The Great Indian Kapil sued for Rs 25 crore by producer Firoz Nadiadwala over Baburao skit: 'No one has the right to misuse it for commercial gain'



The *Great Indian Kapil Show* is set to air its finale tonight, featuring Akshay Kumar as the special guest. Troubles mount for *The Great Indian Kapil Show* over a Rs 25 crore legal notice for unauthorized use of the Baburao character. Just ahead of its much-anticipated finale featuring Akshay Kumar, *The Great Indian Kapil Show* has found itself embroiled in legal controversy. Producer Firoz A. Nadiadwala has issued a Rs 25 crore legal notice to Netflix and the show's creators, alleging unauthorised use of the character Baburao Ganpatrao Apte from *Hera Pheri*. The dispute centers around a promo

where comedian Kiku Sharda appears as Baburao, a role immortalised by Paresh Rawal in the *Hera Pheri* franchise. Nadiadwala, who holds the rights to the character, claims this portrayal was done without consent, accusing the show of copyright infringement under Section 51 of the Copyright Act and trademark infringement under Section 29 of the Trademarks Act. "Baburao is not just a character, but the soul of *Hera Pheri*," Nadiadwala emphasised, as reported by Mint, adding that this legacy should not be exploited for "wrongful commercial gain." In an official statement, Nadiadwala further expressed, "This legacy was built with our sweat, vision, and creativity. Paresh Rawal ji nurtured the role with his heart and soul. No one has the right to misuse it for commercial gain. Culture is not for exploitation; it is for preservation." The legal notice outlines several demands: the immediate removal of the Baburao segment from Netflix, social media, and affiliated platforms; a written assurance that the character will not be used again without explicit permission; a formal apology within 24 hours; and compensation amounting to Rs 25 crore to be paid within two days. The notice warns that failure to comply will result in civil and criminal action. Despite the ongoing dispute, the finale episode featuring Akshay Kumar is still scheduled to stream on September 20. However, should the case escalate, Netflix may be compelled to edit or withdraw the contested skit. Nadiadwala's legal team has made it clear that Baburao is a registered trademark, cautioning that "no one has the liberty to treat a creative legacy as a free-for-all." This controversy comes amid the show's third season, which premiered on Netflix in June, and had Salman Khan as the guest in its premiere episode. Since then, it featured appearances by celebrities such as Sara Ali Khan, Ajay Devgn, Sanjay Dutt, Shilpa Shetty, Suniel Shetty, Pankaj Tripathi, and Jaideep Ahlawat, among others. The season also marked the return of Navjot Singh Sidhu as the judge, alongside Archana Puran Singh.

'Rs 8 lakh was spent to hide Salman Khan's eyebags with VFX in Dabangg', reveals director Abhinav Kashyap: 'He was afraid crowd would laugh at him'

Dabangg director Abhinav Kashyap, who has been speaking about his animosity for Salman Khan, said that the actor once refused to film a stunt sequence that required him to run across a muddy stretch of land. He was afraid of slipping and falling in front of the crowd that had gathered to watch the shoot. Abhinav also revealed that lakhs were spent on visual effects specifically to hide the bags under Salman's eyes. In an interview with *Bollywood Thikana*, the filmmaker said that he racked up debts during the making of the film because Salman delayed his payment, and accused the actor and his family of being 'criminals'. Asked if Salman has a private gym on his film sets, Abhinav scoffed, "Not at all. He just does pushups to pump himself up before shots, and to hide his fat. He's not a very fit man. He has eyebags, or at least he used to during *Dabangg*. I had a Rs 8 lakh bill to digitally clean up his face. I heard later that his abs were fake in some films. During *Dabangg*, his face was worked on digitally. His eyebags were removed. But he was not this fat."

Recalling another anecdote, he said, "There was a chase sequence during *Dabangg*. It was the rainy season, and there was some mud. He refused to shoot because a large crowd had gathered and he was afraid of slipping and making a fool of himself. He can barely run. It's all body doubles. They superimpose his face later." Abhinav said that Salman was in comparatively better

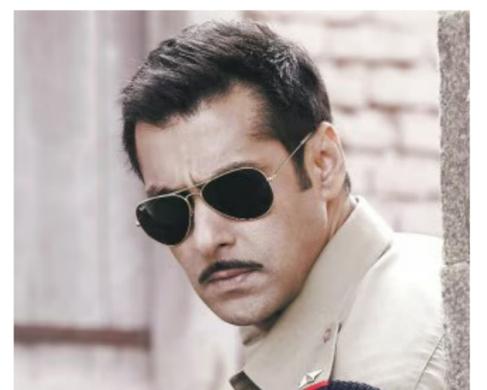


shape during *Dabangg*, as he was in his early 40s. "He could still do some stunts, but barely. He would play it safe. Body doubles would be called in for even slightly risky shots," he said. Years ago, a VFX breakdown reel posted by YRF's digital effects arm mistakenly revealed that Salman's abs in the film *Ek Tha Tiger* were painted on. The video was later taken down, but clips of it occasionally resurface online. During the promotions of his film *Kisi Ka Bhai Kisi Ki Jaan*, Salman unbuttoned his shirt before a crowd, and said, "Tumhare ko lagta hai VFX se hota hai (You think this is done through VFX)?"

'Salman Khan would show up at 5 pm, made entire crew wait for him in hot sun all day; arrived in helicopter and cancelled shoot': Dabangg director Abhinav Kashyap

Dabangg director Abhinav Kashyap, the brother of Anurag Kashyap, has been recounting his unpleasant experience of working with Salman Khan on the blockbuster film, which is celebrating its 15th anniversary this year. After criticising Salman and his family in a recent interview with *SCREEN*, Abhinav doubled down on his dislike for them in a new interview with *Bollywood Thikana*. Making a reference to comments about Salman's habitual tardiness made by his *Sikandar* director AR Murugadoss, Abhinav shared some of his own anecdotes about Salman arriving late to work.

Asked about Murugadoss' comments about Salman coming to the *Sikandar* set at 8 pm, Abhinav said, "He was a little better during *Dabangg*. He would show up at 5 pm, leaving us with about 30 minutes of sunlight to get our shot. That was the only difference. *Sikandar* was shot indoors, so it's easy to recreate daytime. He likes making people wait on him, in the hot sun, tired." Abhinav said that his crew would often wait for Salman to show up, and when he did, he would spend over an hour having coffee outside his vanity van, wasting more time. "We would scramble to get a couple of shots in the can, and that would be it for the day," Abhinav said, recalling one instance where hundreds of crew members were left waiting for Salman to come shoot the film's climax in Panchgani. Abhinav recalled, "This one time, we were shooting in Panchgani, which is over four hours away from Mumbai. We knew that Salman is coming from Mumbai, so it could be a long wait. We assumed that he would not show up by at least 2 or 3 pm. Initially, his people kept lying. They kept saying he's left and is on his way. Then they said that he is coming in his vanity van,



and is sleeping. At around 1 or 2 pm, they said that Salman hasn't left yet, but will come by helicopter. At around 3 or 4 pm, I was told that he has finally left *Galaxy*." Abhinav said that after 5 pm, he was contemplating cancelling the shoot for the day, when he heard a helicopter approaching. There was no place for the helicopter to land on set, so he assumed that it would land somewhere else, and Salman would be driven to the set. But the helicopter came right above the set, descended to within 15 metres of the ground. "Then, Salman stuck his head out, made a gesture with his hand, and left," Abhinav said, explaining that the actor simply decided that he would shoot the next day, and had gone off to his hotel.