


## Cancellation of SGT teacher posts should be stopped

“Feb8. Indian chronicle.” Go 25 should be revised, the leaders of the secondary grade teachers’ association who met the Telangana state government chief secretary Ramakrishna Rao on the issues asked the leaders of the secondary grade teachers’ union to revise the GO number 25 and take up the rationalization process and also granted secondary school principal poats. In this program participated sgtu state president mahipalu reddy, general secretary arikela venkatesham, yadadri bhuvanagiri district president vanam venkateswarlu participated.



## Revanth inaugurates reconsecration works at Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy temple



Kumuram Bheem Asifabad: Chief Minister Revanth Reddy on Sunday ceremonially inaugurated the reconsecration works of the Sri Lakshmi Narasimha

## ‘No Due’ cert rule rakes in over Rs 20 cr for ULBs in three days

Hyderabad: The elections to the civic bodies are filling in coffers of the municipalities and corporations in the state as the municipal administration department has received over Rs 20 crore in the form of property tax dues



in the span of just three days including a whopping Rs 8 crore from one individual in Nizamabad Corporation.

Though the urban local bodies take up drives to encourage the citizens to pay their property taxes offering discounts but it was ultimately one election clause which made the people with over dues to line up before the offices to clear. As per rules, candidates aspiring to contest the polls and individuals proposing their nominations should not have any pending dues to the municipality, including property tax, tap water tax, or any other municipal taxes. This rule proved beneficial to the municipalities as the candidates along with their proposers were lined up before the civic bodies to clear their dues.

According to a senior official in the Commissioner and Director of Municipal Administration (CDMA), during the three days of nomination spree from January 28 to 30, the urban local bodies got Rs 20.15 crore. In Nizamabad Corporation alone one candidate had to shell out Rs 8 crore to get the no due certificate for getting the nomination accepted.

## Karimnagar’s progress hinges on Congress victory: Ponnam

Karimnagar: Minister for BC Welfare and Transport Ponnam Prabhakar on Sunday appealed to voters to ensure a Congress victory in the Karimnagar Municipal Corporation elections, asserting that meaningful and sustainable development of the city would be possible only under Congress rule.

Addressing gatherings while campaigning in support of Congress candidates, the Minister said that a decisive mandate in favour of the party would allow him to demonstrate what “real development” truly means. He urged voters to elect Congress candidates with a clear majority to enable smooth governance and accelerated progress.

Ponnam Prabhakar said the Congress government had already fulfilled most of the guarantees promised to the people. He highlighted the free bus travel scheme, stating that it had instilled a sense of confidence and security among women across the state. He also pointed out that Telangana was the only state in the country providing fine-quality rice to the poor through the public distribution system.

Criticising the previous governments, the Minister noted that the BRS had ruled Telangana from 2014 to 2023, while the BJP had been in power at the Centre for the past 12 years. He challenged both parties to explain the development initiatives undertaken in Karimnagar during that period. “What they could not achieve in ten years, we have accomplished within two years,” he said.

Referring to Congress city president Anjan Kumar, Ponnam Prabhakar urged voters to elect him, stating that he would ensure comprehensive development of the city. He recalled that several basic infrastructure facilities were

Swamy Temple at Kodavatanch village in Regonda mandal. The temple works are being taken up at an estimated cost of Rs 12.15 crore, while additional development works, including construction of guest houses and internal roads, are being undertaken at a cost of Rs 74.15 crore. During the programme, the Chief Minister planted a sapling in the temple premises and conveyed a strong message on environmental protection.

He said that the restoration of temples, coupled with the development of basic infrastructure, would play a crucial role in boosting economic growth and creating tourism opportunities in rural areas. The CM assured that Kodavatanch village would be developed into a prominent spiritual centre.

He stated that improved facilities for devotees, along with guest houses and better internal road connectivity after the reconsecration, would provide a new direction to the village’s overall development.

The candidate from Congress Katipalli Shamantha Reddy and her husband K Narender Reddy in Division 19 had to pay about Rs 8 crore in pending municipal tax dues to the no due certificate. She had cleared dues for a hotel property. The dues had reportedly accumulated due to a long-standing dispute over property tax assessment that was pending in the High Court.

As many as 12,944 candidates are in fray for the 2,996 wards in the 123 urban local bodies and because of the no due certificate rule, each and every ULB had received Rs 6 to 8 lakh in the form of property tax from the candidates.

While the Nizamabad Municipal Corporation got highest tax dues of Rs 8.68 crore, the other municipalities like Greater Warangal Municipal Corporation got Rs 89.10 lakhs, Kothagudem Corporation got Rs 69.24 lakhs, Karimnagar Corporation Rs 59.25 lakhs, Khammam Corporation Rs 56.02 lakhs, Siddipet Rs 45.08 lakhs, Mancherial Corporation rs 37.66 lakhs, Gaddapotharam Rs 31.39 lakhs and Mahabubnagar Corporation got Rs 29.70 lakhs.

There were at least 20 Municipalities received money ranging from Rs 10 lakhs to Rs 30 lakhs. There were 38 municipalities which got money ranging between Rs 5 lakhs to 10 lakhs. There were 61 municipalities which got between Rs one lakh to Rs 5 lakh.

The officials said that they were also surprised to see the huge response to pay the property tax by the candidates. However, they wanted the citizens to utilize the facilities provided by the government like early bird incentive and other facilities like waiver of interest on property tax etc. and help the ULBs to provide better services to citizens.




created during earlier Congress regimes and alleged that the past decade witnessed neglect and lack of focus on urban development.

The Minister said that under the present Congress-led Praja Palana government, a range of welfare schemes and development programmes were being implemented. These include Indiramma housing, issuance of ration cards to all eligible beneficiaries, distribution of fine rice, 200 units of free electricity, gas subsidy and free bus travel for women and interest-free loans to women self-help groups.He added that Telangana was making rapid progress in education, healthcare, and other key sectors, and appealed to voters to support Congress candidates in the municipal elections.

Stating that development would be possible only if the ruling party held the Mayor’s post, Ponnam Prabhakar expressed confidence that Congress would secure the mayoral seat in Karimnagar. He also announced that the party would declare its Mayor candidate in ad

## Congress candidate Kondapalli Saritha

“Yellandu, February 8 (Indian chronicle):”Congress candidate Kondapalli Saritha is leading in 23 wards. A large number of leaders, workers and people participated in the campaign in the ward on Sunday. Speaking on the occasion, the Congress candidate said that every problem prevailing in the ward will be solved and developed and urged everyone to support the daughters of their house and cast their valuable vote and win.



## India, Malaysia sign agreements on semiconductors, digital payments

New Delhi, FEB 8  
India and Malaysia on Sunday announced separate agreements to cooperate in semiconductor manufacturing and enable digital payment linkages.

The announcements were made after Prime Minister Narendra Modi met his Malaysian counterpart, Dato’ Seri Anwar Ibrahim, for a bilateral meeting. The two Prime Ministers unequivocally and strongly condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, including cross-border terrorism — an apparent reference to Pakistan-sponsored terror.

Both leaders called for zero tolerance towards terrorism and for concerted international efforts to combat it in a comprehensive and sustained manner.

Secretary (East) in the Ministry of External Affairs P Kumaran told mediapersons after the meeting that the two sides also discussed the possible sale of India-made Dornier aircraft and the maintenance of Sukhoi-30 fighter jets. The Malaysian Air Force and the Indian Air Force operate the same Russian-origin aircraft. Malaysia is also among the five countries involved in maritime territorial disputes with China in the South China Sea.

In his opening remarks, Modi said the core message of his visit was that India wants to take relations with Malaysia “to a new level” and expand cooperation “in every field”.

India also announced the establishment of a Consulate General in Malaysia. In addition, a dedicated ‘Thiruvalluvar Centre’ will be set up at University Malaya in Kuala Lumpur. Malaysia is home to nearly three million people of Indian origin.

An agreement was signed between India’s NPCI International Limited (NIPL) and Malaysia’s PayNet to establish bilateral payment linkages. The integration is expected to enhance ease of doing business and provide seamless, low-cost remittance and payment solutions for tourists, students and small businesses. Bilateral trade between the two countries stands at around \$20 billion.

Further strengthening fintech cooperation, the two sides formalised the Malaysia-India Digital Council (MIDC), envisaged as a key platform to advance digital collaboration, foster innovation and explore projects in areas such as fintech, e-governance, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, digital public infrastructure (DPI) and other emerging technologies.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said India and Malaysia are connected by a shared affection for the Tamil, underlining the strong presence of the language in education, media and cultural life in the coun-



try. Earlier in the day, PM Modi pointed out that his Malaysian counterpart Anwar Ibrahim is a “big fan” of MGR, just like “several of us in India”, as a song from the Tamil actor’s movie ‘Naalai Namathe’ was presented during a lunch hosted for the Indian leader.

The Prime Ministers commended ongoing cooperation initiatives, including partnerships between IIT-Madras Global and the Advanced Semiconductor Academy of Malaysia, and between the Indian Electronics and Semiconductor Association (IESA) and the Malaysia Semiconductor Industry Association (MSIA).

Malaysia is a key player in the global semiconductor industry, accounting for about 13 per cent of global trade. India, meanwhile, is seeking to emerge as an international producer of semiconductors for commercial applications.

The two leaders also said the Reserve Bank of India and Bank Negara Malaysia would work towards promoting the use of local currency settlement in bilateral trade and investments. Industries on both sides were encouraged to facilitate invoicing and settlement in Indian Rupees and Malaysian Ringgit.

A joint statement said the two sides reaffirmed their commitment to further consolidate and expand the India-Malaysia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.

The leaders held discussions covering the full spectrum of bilateral relations, including political engagement, defence and security cooperation, maritime cooperation, trade and investment, the digital economy, science and technology, energy, agriculture, health, education, culture and tourism

## 165% rise in Naxal surrenders between 2024 & 2025: Home Ministry



NEW DELHI, FEB 8

There has been a 165 per cent jump in the number of Naxals who have surrendered between 2024 and 2025.According to the Ministry of Home Affairs, 881 Naxals surrendered in 2024, while this number rose to 2,337 in 2025. Similarly, there was a 134 per cent rise in the number of surrenders between 2023, when 376 Naxals gave up arms, and 2024.

Meanwhile, 290 ultras were killed in 2024, and 317 in 2025. More importantly, last year also witnessed the killing of several top commanders of the outlawed CPI (Maoist).

According to the Union Home Ministry, the number of LWE-affected districts have also reduced from 126 in 2018 to only eight in December 2025, with only three districts now under the ‘most LWE affected’ category.

The number of incidents involving violence perpetrated by LWE elements also come down by 88 per cent in five years, from 1,936 in 2010 to 234 in 2025, said the official sources.

During the security review meeting held by Union

Home Minister Amit Shah in Raipur on Sunday, the security and police personnel of all Naxal-affected states like Chhattigarh, Telangana, Jharkhand, Odisha and Maharashtra were asked to ensure that no surviving Naxals are allowed to escape to other states.

Incidentally while addressing a conclave later in the day, Shah urged upon all Naxals to surrender, especially women cadre of the CPI(Maoist), reminding that before the March 31 deadline, the country will be made completely Naxal-free

However as has been reported by The Tribune earlier, sources have pointed out that it would not be an easy task to eliminate all the Naxals as around six top commanders or the Central Committee members of the outlawed CPI (Maoist) still remain at large, and might remain underground till the March 31 deadline, simply to bely the claims of the Centre of making the country Naxal-free by the said date.

Also security personnel have flagged to the Centre the problems being faced in penetrating several pockets of South Bastar, where many surviving commanders of Naxals are currently in hiding.



# Indian Chronicle

English Daily

## Defence modernisation brooks no delay

Faced with a two-front threat from Pakistan and China, India cannot afford to be lax in modernising its military forces. 'Operation Sindoor' highlighted the urgency of maintaining battle-readiness in an ever-changing geopolitical environment. However, delays in defence production and delivery remain a major concern for the armed forces, whose valour and professionalism were on display during the recent operation against Pakistan. Air Chief Marshal AP Singh was spot on when he flagged constant delays in defence projects and failure to stick to delivery schedules, especially of fighter jets. While speaking at the CII's Annual Business Summit recently — his first public interaction post-Operation Sindoor — the Air Chief questioned why those involved in developing military hardware, particularly fighter jets, "promise something which can't be achieved". This is particularly relevant because the Indian Air Force (IAF) is now committed to the policy of "atmanirbharta". There is no denial of the fact that air power is most crucial in contemporary warfare and expeditionary missions. It is time for the Defence Ministry to take urgent measures to reduce procurement delays and implement structural reforms aimed at boosting private sector participation in the defence economy. Key components of these reforms are the removal of outdated practices such as product reservation for defence PSUs and streamlining of procedural bottlenecks that have historically slowed defence acquisitions. The Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP), 2020, also needs to be reviewed to better align with operational realities and expedite decision-making.

Inordinate delays in the acquisition of modern weapons can be very frustrating. The excruciating delays in the delivery of the Tejas fighter aircraft into service is one such concern. The first batch of 40 'Tejas' Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) ordered in 2009-10 is yet to be fully delivered by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL). The LCA saga holds hard lessons for the defence PSUs, which need to pull up their socks and step up their efficiency levels to meet the growing requirements of the armed forces. There is also an urgent need for an increased role for private partnership in developing defence products and providing more funds for Research & Development (R&D). Currently, the IAF operates 31 combat squadrons against an authorised strength of 42, with Rafale being the most advanced combat jets in its inventory. The air power deficit stands aggravated by an ageing fleet and delays in key indigenous projects, particularly the Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA), and the LCA, at a time when China already has two variants of fifth-generation fighters in service and is trialling two new sixth-generation fighters, and Pakistan is fast-tracking acquisition of 40 Chinese J-35 stealth fighters. Unfortunately, in India, not a single indigenous defence project has been completed on time. At \$71 billion, the defence R&D spending

## Grand Felicitation to the Newly Elected Uppal Press Club Committee under the Leadership of Gaddam Ravikumar

\*\*\*\*\*KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 8 (Indian Chronicle):\*\*\*\*\*Senior Congress leader of the Uppal constituency, Gaddam Ravikumar, led a grand felicitation ceremony honoring the newly formed committee of the Uppal Print and Electronic Media Club. The event



was held on Sunday, where the newly elected President Vaddepalli Kishore and the committee members were felicitated. "The program took place at the office of Tavideboyina Giribabu, Congress Party In-charge of Ramanthapur. On this occasion, the newly elected President of the Uppal Press Club (Print and Electronic Media), Kishore, along with the executive committee members, were felicitated under the leadership of senior Congress leader Gaddam Ravikumar. Speakers praised the initiative of senior journalists in establishing the first-ever Print and Electronic Media Press Club in Uppal, calling it a commendable and noteworthy step. The event was attended by Tavideboyina Giribabu, Congress Party Ramanthapur In-charge (Contested Corporator), and Pabboju Bikshapathi Chary, President of the Viswabrahmana Greater Hyderabad, among others.

## BRS councilor ticket to Madhavareddy who blocked BC reservation..

BC leaders in BRS should still open their eyes  
In municipal elections people will sure questioning to KTR and Harish Rao



...."Feb 8.indian chronicle.medak." Jagruti State Vice President Kottala Yadagiri Mudiraj expressed his anger that it was a shame that the TRS party gave Madhavareddy a Keshavapur (10 Ward) councilor ticket under Medchal Constituency Three Chintalapalli Municipality, which blocked 42 percent reservation in the state. While Jagruti President Kavitha has been saying that BRS is against the development of the weaker sections from the beginning, she made it clear by giving councilor ticket to Madhava Reddy. He said that it is unfortunate that the BRS leaders stood by Buttengari Madhava Reddy, who attacked the stomach of the weaker sections who stayed away from development, but this incident shows that cases were filed in the courts with their cooperation. He complained that BRS's true identity has been revealed as it made false statements about its support for BC reservations. He suggested that BRS party is the real traitor of more than 60 percent of the BCs, keeping this in mind, the people of the weaker sections should take note. He warned that if Madhav Reddy, who blocked BC reservations, was not expelled immediately, agitations would be taken up under the leadership of Jagruti. While the BRS party was believing and cutting its throat, the leaders of the weaker sections of the party opened their eyes and explained that KTR and Harish Rao should be deposed.

## Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy and Corporator Bannala Geetha Praveen Lay Foundation Stone for Development Works Worth Rs 4.34 Crore in Chilkanagar Division



\*\*\*\*\*KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 8 (Indian Chronicle):\*\*\*\*\*Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy laid the foundation stone for development works worth ₹4 crore 34 lakh 50 thousand in various colonies and bastis of the Chilkanagar Division. The program was conducted in the presence of Chilkanagar Division Corporator and former GHMC Standing Committee member Bannala Geetha Praveen. "The development works include construction of CC roads and new storm water drain trunk lines. Key projects inaugurated and foundation stones laid include: "CC road works from Chilkanagar Hanuman Temple via Marla Maisamma Temple and Nagadevatha Temple to Chilkanagar Grand Masjid, with an estimated cost of ₹54 lakh" CC roads and storm water drain works in Raghavender Nagar Colony "Construction of a Community Hall in Raghavender Nagar Colony" CC road works in Kalyanpuri Colony "Installation of gym and play equipment in the park at East Kalyanpuri "Inauguration of the first floor of East Kalyanpuri Community Hall" CC roads and storm water drain pipeline works in Bank Colony "CC road construction from Beerappa Gadda Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy Temple to Prashanth Nagar Water Tank" CC road works from Jahid



Nagar Pista House to Vignan School "CC road works in Indira Nagar, Kalyanpuri "Community Hall works and storm water drain pipeline works in Srinagar Colony "Speaking on the occasion, MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy stated that development works worth ₹119.34 crore have been carried out in Chilkanagar Division over the last five years. He noted that Chilkanagar Division has received the highest funds in the constituency and appreciated Corporator Geetha Praveen for her continuous engagement with the public and for addressing division-level issues in a planned manner. Later, Corporator Bannala Geetha Praveen thanked MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy and Mayor Gadwal Vijayalakshmi for their support in securing substantial funds for the development of the division. She stated that development is being carried out with equal priority across all three areas of the division and assured that all promises made during elections are being fulfilled. She added that around 90% of works worth ₹119.34 crore have already been completed, and the remaining 10% will be completed soon. The program was attended by BRS party Chilkanagar Division members, presidents and secretaries of various colonies and bastis, and a large number of women residents.

## Congress party is certain to lose in the next two years."

BRS Party State Working President KTR, who made allegations during the corner meeting as part of Tandur Municipal Elections

...."Indian Chronicle, Tandur (Feb,8)"The election campaign in Tandur is heating up. On Sunday, under the leadership of former Tandur MLA Pilot Rohith Reddy, BRS Working President KTR held a corner meeting at Indira Chowk — turning the entire junction pink with BRS flags and supporters. "Addressing Tandur's BRS cadre and the party's 36 councillor candidates across all wards, KTR said: "Two years ago, you voted once hoping the six guarantees would be delivered... now you're paying the price for five years." "Getting fooled once is a mistake. Getting fooled twice makes you a fool." "He reminded voters: " "We were cheated two years ago. Now let's show wisdom — as the proverb says: 'Thorns are removed with thorns.' The municipal elections give us the chance to expose deceit with deceit itself." "He mocked Tandur MLA Buyyani Manohar Reddy: " "He promised six guarantees... blew them away like dust in the wind. He's a leader who comes and goes — call him, he won't answer." "KTR praised Pilot Rohith Reddy: A young, accessible leader who stayed close to the people. He secured Rs 1680 crores for Tandur's development and worked tirelessly for its progress. " "Even after losing narrowly in the 2023 Assembly elections due to 'evil forces', Rohith Reddy continues serving the people daily under KCR's leadership. " "In coming days, Tandur will become Rohith Reddy's stronghold." KTR declared confidently. " "Promises Are Mountains... Delivery Is Grains" "KTR slammed Congress: " "In 2023, Congress leaders paraded 'Six Guarantees' like magic cards, fooled 4 crore Telangana people — now Revanth Reddy sits on the CM seat. " "He criticized Manohar Reddy for failing to pressure Revanth Reddy to deliver. " "If Congress gave Rs 2500 to women or tulam bungaram — then vote for Hand. Otherwise, vote for Car. " "He highlighted failures: "No Ramzan Toffah, Christmas gift, or Batukamma sarees distributed. " "KCR's welfare schemes — Rs 12,000 for baby boys, ₹13,000 for girls, nutritious food for pregnant women — were scrapped. " Farmer's Bond money still unpaid after 6 months. " Bonus of ₹500 promised for



fine rice growers — never paid. " "People lost faith in Congress. In recent Sarpanch elections, BRS won 70 seats — proving our strength. In municipal polls, we'll win maximum seats, hoist pink flag and Congress will be finished in Tandur!" " "Do You Have Courage to Issue GO" "KTR reminded: " "Under BRS rule, Pilot Rohith Reddy got Medical College approved for Tandur under KCR's leadership. " "But Revanth Reddy: " "Shifted it to Kodangal — betraying Tandur's educated youth and people. Not just cheating state — he's bullying his own constituency!" "KTR challenged Revanth Reddy: " "Before Feb 11 elections — issue a GO confirming Medical College belongs to Tandur. Show courage!" " "BRS will stand with Rohith Reddy in fighting for Tandur's rights. " "Pilot Is Purely Local Son" "KTR attacked Manohar Reddy: " "He won using Congress's six-guarantee card — now he'll vanish the same way he came. " "He assured: " "Pilot Rohith Reddy — your son, your elder brother — will always serve Tandur, push its development. " " "Tandur's base will become Rohith Reddy's fortress in days to come. " "Attendees Included: " TRS State Leader Shishail Reddy " Former Vikarabad Library Chairman Raju Goud " Senior BRS Leaders Dr. Sampath Kumar, Srinivas Chary " Working President Narukul Narender Goud " All 36 BRS Councillor Candidates.

## Uppal Corporator Mandumula Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy Attends Renuka Yellamma Kalyanam

\*\*\*\*\*KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 8 (Indian Chronicle):\*\*\*\*\*Uppal Corporator Mandumula Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy attended the Renuka Yellamma



Kalyanam organized under the leadership of Chandrasekhar Reddy at New Bharat Nagar, Uppal. The Renuka Yellamma Kalyanam was celebrated with great devotion and grandeur on Sunday. "On this occasion, Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy participated in the wedding ceremony along with the colony residents and later performed special prayers. "Those who took part in the program included Salla Prabhakar Reddy, Krishna Reddy, Prashanth Reddy, Hanumanth, Bobby, Ramakrishna, Suresh, Kiran, Raju, Krishna Reddy, Buchi Reddy, along with the local residents of the colony.

## No Municipal Polls in Manuguru Since 2004

\*\*\*\*\*Kranthikumar Dasari | pinapaka constancy | February 08 | Indian chronicle : Manuguru town in Bhadradi Kothagudem district of Telangana has been functioning without municipal elections for nearly two decades, triggering widespread resentment among residents who allege that democratic governance has been denied despite the town being declared a municipality in 2004–05, as no municipal council. ward members or elected public representatives have been in place since then, leaving citizens without a direct forum to raise civic grievances or seek



accountability, even as municipal elections are being held across the state and neighbouring Bhadrachalam, which had witnessed a prolonged delay due to court cases, recently conducted local body elections, prompting people to question why elections could be held there but continue to be denied in Manuguru, where petitions filed in the High Court challenging the applicability of municipal laws on the grounds that the town falls under the Scheduled Area have resulted in prolonged administrative uncertainty, with the government neither dissolving the municipality nor reverting it to a gram panchayat nor conducting elections, effectively leaving the town in administrative limbo, further compounded by the lack of clarity on the applicability of the 1/70 Act in Scheduled Areas, while the prolonged absence of elected local bodies has led to a pile-up of civic issues such as outdated house numbering and unupdated property records, in several cases still standing in the names of deceased persons, thereby depriving rightful heirs of legal recognition and entitlements, with residents alleging that although officials are in place, accountability is missing without an elected council, raising fundamental questions about paying taxes without having a say in local governance and possessing voting rights without representation, which they view as a violation of democratic and constitutional principles, and warning that the continued absence of elections has hampered development, weakened public oversight over public funds and reduced avenues to question corruption, leading them to demand that the government urgently resolve the legal disputes and take a clear decision either to conduct immediate municipal elections by continuing Manuguru as a municipality or to revert it to a panchayat system so that people can finally elect their representatives and restore democratic governance.



# Ramanthapur Division Congress Leaders Organize Alms Distribution for Shiva Swamis



“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 8 (Indian Chronicle):”“Under the leadership of Ramanthapur Division Congress Party President Mohammed Rafiq, an alms distribution program was organized for Shiva Swamis at the Satyanarayana Swamy Temple. The program was conducted for Shiva Swamis who had undertaken the sacred Shiva Mala Deeksha. Speaking on the occasion, Mohammed Rafiq said that offering alms to Shiva Swamis, irrespective of caste and religion, is a truly joyous and noble act. He emphasized that those who are observing rigorous spiritual discipline deserve such support, and everyone should contribute in their own way by organizing at least a one-day alms distribution program. He expressed happiness over conducting such inclusive programs that promote harmony beyond caste and religious boundaries. Rajesh Shiva Swami, Poosa Satyaiah, Gangaputra Bhaskar, Adinarayana Goud, Gayatri Goud, Ambika, Mahesh, Cable Ashok, Mohammed Nayeem, Abdul, Madeen, Madhu, Balu, and others participated in the program.

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# BJP Flag Unveiled Under the Leadership of BJP Leader Puppala Venkateshwarulu

— Former Councillor Bongulurui Srinivas Sharma Participated



“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 8 (Indian Chronicle):”“Under the leadership of senior BJP leader Puppala Venkateshwarulu, the Bharatiya Janata Party flag was formally unveiled at Adarshanagar Colony in Chilukanagar Division. The programme was attended by former councillor Bongulurui Srinivas Sharma and BJYM State leader Telangana Sampath, who jointly unveiled the BJP flag. “Speaking on the occasion, the leaders stated that people across the country are highly appreciative of the public welfare programmes being implemented by

Prime Minister Narendra Modi. They expressed confidence that BJP candidates are certain to achieve victory in the forthcoming Municipal Corporation elections. The leaders called upon party workers and residents to ensure the victory of BJP candidates in the municipal elections. Senior leaders Palugula Yadagiri, Akula Anjaneyulu, Ajay Gupta, Ashok Reddy, Nallu Purushottam Reddy, Srinivas, Nagu Narasimha, Palugula Venkatesh, Amar, Venkateshwarulu, Sudhakar Reddy, Mahender, Prashanth, Sai, Sriram, and several others participated in the programme.

# People should take advantage of the services of the postal department, a check of fifteen lakhs will be handed over to victims family at Veldurthi mandal center

“Feb8.indian chronicle.medak”“ Pampari Satyanarayana in Veldurthi mandal center of Medak district received fifteen lakh check from the post office today for their family due to taking accident insurance for 799 rupees. Sandeep Kulkarni, inspector of postal department, Medak North sub division, informed that the post office to services are continuing as a bridge to the people as the most efficient department in India. He informed that the rural people should take advantage of this opportunity Pampari Satyanarayana's wife Kalavathi handed over the key cheque, Sarpanch Dandem Adarsh, Upasarpanch Kammaru Shrivani, senior postal employees MD Mazar, angadipet ashok goud, veldurthy people attended.



# Urban progress is possible only with Congress.

Malli Babu Yadav to campaign in wards 11, 12 and 13



“Yellandu, February 8(indian chronicle):”“Addressing the voters, former ZPTC DCCB Director Mekala Mallibabu Yadav said that the development of villages and urban development was possible only with the Congress party. “Since the completion of the nomination process in Yellandu municipality, political parties are trying to attract voters with innovative campaigns. On Sunday, district Congress leaders Mallibabu Yadav raided the houses of

potters. “Campaigning was intensified by attracting voters through activities such as hammering and axe-throwing near the bunds. During the campaign, Mallibabu Yadav said that during the Congress government, the caste workers were given high priority, when the corporate parties were ruling, the caste workers were neglected, they were forced to work in big companies without proper livelihood. The party's 11 ward candidate Venkata Lakshmi, 12 ward candidate Rampa Ramya, 13 ward candidate Madugu Sai Sudha, district Congress leaders Shaik Fateh Mohammed, Dhaniya Kula Hanumantha Rao and others were present. “Among those present on the occasion were Ramesh Joshi, Shyam Sunder Malhotra, Palwinder Taggar, Raj Kumar Sood, Sunny Kainth, Rohit Pahwa, Navneesh Malhotra and Sanjay Sharma.

# Pan-India Support Extended to Shantinagar-2 Anganwadi Centre



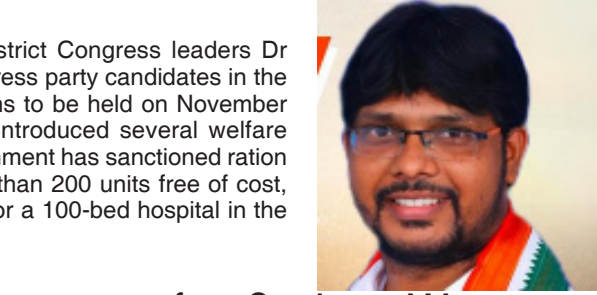
“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 8 (Indian Chronicle):”“Under the State Bank of India (SBI) Pan-India Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative, support was extended to the Shantinagar-2 Anganwadi Centre in Uppal. As part of this initiative, essential items including a television, toys, study material, a water filter, a rice cooker, and other necessary equipment were provided to the Anganwadi centre. Anganwadi

teacher Tirumala expressed her appreciation for the support extended through SBI CSR funds. She stated that the donated items would be highly beneficial for the Anganwadi centre and pre-school children, and conveyed her heartfelt gratitude to SBI for their commendable initiative. The programme was attended by SBI Chief Manager Sudhakar from Hyderabad Circle, Telangana Gandhi Road, Uppal Branch; Mitra Holistic Health Society Chairman Lakshmi Reddy; ICDS Alwal CDPO Swathi; Supervisor Venkataramana; and others.

# Congress candidates will win

Senior Congress leader Dr Gugulothu Ravi

“Yellandu, February 8 (indian chronicle):”“Senior district Congress leaders Dr Gugulothu Ravi appealed to the people to vote for the Congress party candidates in the 24 wards of Yellandu municipality in the municipal elections to be held on November 11. He said the Congress government in the state had introduced several welfare schemes. He said that for many years, the Congress government has sanctioned ration cards with Andani grapes, provided electricity bills of less than 200 units free of cost, brought bus facilities free of cost for women, and worked for a 100-bed hospital in the town. The Congress has fielded candidates in 24 wards.



# Collective Baby Shower Ceremony for Orphan Women Organised by Bhagyanagar Women's Association

LB Nagar MLA Devi Reddy Sudheer Reddy Attends as Chief Guest



“Kishore Vaddepalli, Hyderabad, February 8 (Indian Chronicle):”“On the occasion of completing eight years of service, the Bhagyanagar Women's Association organised a grand collective Seemantham (traditional baby shower ceremony) for orphan women, following age-old traditions. On the same occasion, the new team was formally sworn in. “The programme was graced by LB Nagar MLA Devi Reddy Sudheer Reddy as the chief guest. Speaking on the occasion, the MLA appreciated the commendable service activities carried out by the Bhagyanagar Women's Association over the past eight years. He assured that he would extend his full support and cooperation to all the initiatives undertaken by the

Association to empower women and help them excel in all fields. “Several office bearers and members of the Bhagyanagar Women's Association participated in the programme, including Founder and President Uppala Nirmala, General Secretary Prasanthi Gupta, Treasurer Pavani, Vice President Srivani, Additional Secretary P.R. Sridevi, VRO Sailaja, Organizer Jayalakshmi, Organising Secretary Nagalakshmi, Tour Committee Member Saroja, Coordinator Sathya, Programme Chairperson Guntha Bharathi, Media Chairperson Vijay Gupta, Membership Development In-charge Sarada, Devotional Chairperson H. Sridevi, Cultural Chairperson Vanaja, and Tour Committee Member Samudrala Lakshmi, among others.

# RSP and Konappa Reunite on One Stage



high command. The development has sparked considerable discussion in political circles. “At a municipal election campaign meeting held on Saturday night at Ram Mandir Chowrasta in Kagaznagar town, former MLA Koneru Konappa and TRS State General Secretary Dr. R.S. Praveen Kumar shared the stage. Until just two days ago, the two leaders were known to hold differing views. Their joint appearance and coordinated campaign came as a surprise to many locals. “Addressing the gathering, the leaders stated that they are working together in accordance with the instructions of TRS chief K. Chandrashekar Rao (KCR) and former Minister K.T. Rama Rao (KTR). They expressed confidence in securing a majority of seats in the Kagaznagar Municipality and winning the Chairman's post. “They further asserted that their collective goal is to strengthen the party and work towards reinstating KCR as Chief Minister in the coming days. “TRS councillor candidates were also present at the event. The leaders appealed to voters to cast their votes in favour of the party's symbol, the ‘Car’, in the upcoming municipal elections.



“Indian Chronicle (Taj Khan), February 8, “Kagaznagar: Two key leaders from the same political party, who had recently been at odds due to internal differences, have reunited following directions from the party



# Bhongir MLA Kumbham Anil Kumar Reddy actively campaigned, seeking victory for the Congress party candidate in Ward 31



....(Mandava Srisailem... Yadadri Bhongir District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... February 8): A campaign program was conducted by the Congress party in Banjara Hills, Ward 31 of Bhongir town. During this program, DCC General Secretary MD Mazhar conducted door-to-

door campaigning. On this occasion, it was stated that under the leadership of Bhongir MLA Kumbham Anil Kumar Reddy, the development of Bhongir Municipality would address the ward's problems. Ward residents and others participated in this program.

## On the occasion of Bhongir MLA Kumbham Anil Kumar Reddy's birthday, Kumbham Keerthi Reddy visited the Someshwara Temple in Pachala Katta, offered prayers, and performed special rituals



....(Mandava Srisailem... Yadadri Bhongir District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... February 8):- At the Pachala Katta Someshwara Temple, on the occasion of Bhongir MLA Kumbham Anil Kumar Reddy's birthday, Kumbham Keerthi Reddy and others visited the deity and performed special prayers. On the occasion of the birthday of Bhongir MLA Kumbham Anil Kumar Reddy, special prayers were offered to the deity at the Sri Pachalakatta Someshwara Temple under the leadership of the temple chairman Kolluri Raju. The temple priests blessed MLA Kumbham Anil Kumar Reddy with Vedic chants. Speaking on the occasion, MLA Anil Kumar Reddy said that he has completed two years as an MLA with the blessings of the people of the Bhongir constituency. He said that with the help of the Chief Minister, he has secured Rs. 57 crore in

HMDA funds and is undertaking development programs in every village of the constituency. He mentioned that the construction and widening of a CC road from the main road to the Pachalakatta Someshwara Temple has been undertaken for the convenience of devotees. He also stated that CC roads, streetlights, and basic amenities have been provided around the temple premises. He further appealed to the people of Bhongir town to elect Congress party candidates in all 35 wards during the upcoming municipal elections. He emphasized that with a Congress MLA, a Congress MP, and a Congress Chief Minister in the state, government welfare programs will be effectively implemented in all 35 wards of Bhongir town. He highlighted the government's focus on both welfare and development, mentioning the implementation of the six guarantee schemes, including free bus travel for women, cooking gas cylinders at Rs. 500, 200 units of free electricity for every household, the Aarogya Sri scheme providing medical treatment up to Rs. 10 lakhs for the poor in private hospitals, loan waivers for farmers, a Rs. 500 bonus for fine paddy, and the Rythu Bharosa scheme, among many other programs of the Congress government. The government is undertaking numerous development programs for the urban residents, providing drinking water, streetlights, CC roads, and drainage systems on an unprecedented scale. On this occasion, the people of Bhongir town were requested to extend their blessings to the Congress party candidates."Former Market Committee Chairman and TPCC General Secretary Pothunna Pramod Kumar, former Municipal Chairman Pothamshetty Venkateshwarlu, Bhongir Town Congress Party President Koora Venkatesh, former councillor Padagala Renuka Pradeep, Gurrala Srinu, Sai, temple chief priest Kappa Ganthula Nagaraju Sharma, Puttapaka Bhishma, former temple chairman Devarakonda Narasimha Chari, and other prominent figures from the Bhongir constituency participated in this program.



"(Mandava Srisailem... Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... February 8):- A scene of State Panchayat Raj Minister Seethakka, along with Bhuvanagiri MLA Kumbham Anil Kumar Reddy and others, participating in a door-to-door campaign in Bhuvanagiri town, seeking victory for the Congress party's councilor candidates.

## Elect Vadepalli Yadagiri, the CPM candidate who works tirelessly for public movements: - CPM State Committee Member Kondamadu Narasimha



" ( M a n d a v a Srisailem... Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... February 8):- CPM State Committee member K o n d a m a d u g u Narasimha appealed to all the people to vote for and elect Vadepalli Yadagiri, the CPM candidate for Pochampally's 4th ward, who constantly works for the resolution of public issues under the banner of the red flag, using the hammer, sickle, and star symbol."On Sunday, a door-to-door campaign was conducted in Pochampally town's 4th ward, urging people to elect CPM candidate Vadepalli Yadagiri. Speaking on this occasion, Narasimha criticized the BJP, Congress, and BRS parties for making numerous promises to gain people's votes, but lacking sincerity in implementing them after winning the elections. He criticized the BJP for breaking its promise of creating one crore jobs annually and for looting the country by handing it over to foreign and domestic corporate forces under the guise of 'Swadeshi' (self-reliance). He said that they have burdened the people and disrupted their lives. He criticized the Congress government, which came to power in the state, for giving numerous promises but lacking sincerity in their implementation. He said that they have cheated the poor by not implementing a single welfare scheme. Narasimha stated that the BRS party, having neglected people's welfare and urban development during its ten-year rule, received a fitting lesson from the people. He urged the public to defeat these parties, which are still trying to deceive the people in these elections. Narasimha appealed to the people to support and elect the CPM party, which considers people's problems as its agenda and continuously conducts movements for the development of workers, farmers, agricultural laborers, professionals, women, students, youth, and all sections of society, and its candidate, Waddepalli Yadagiri. Also participating in this program were district committee members Komatireddy Chandrareddy, Kota Ramachandra Reddy, CPM mandal committee members Manchala Madhu, Prasadam Vishnu, Guduru Buchireddy, town and mandal committee members Bugga Laxmaiah, Ponnemoni Krishna, Patti Bhikshapathi, and leaders Pothagalla Ramachandram, Gurra Balayya, Nallagari Narasimha, Badugu Rajan Babu, Chandupatla Srinu, Nalla Mallesh, Repaka Naveen, Repaka Manoj, and others.



# Decoding brain bleeds: evolving treatments promise encouraging results



A stroke takes place when the brain suffers irreversible damage due to a sudden interruption of blood flow. Strokes are predominantly of three types – ischemic strokes, intracerebral haemorrhages and subarachnoid haemorrhages. An ischemic stroke is the blockage of blood vessels causing brain damage due to lack of blood flow. An intracerebral haemorrhage refers to bleeding inside the brain, usually resulting from the rupture of very small blood vessels due to high blood pressure. A subarachnoid haemorrhage refers to bleeding over the surface of the brain. A subarachnoid haemorrhage (SAH) is probably the least known stroke type because of its lower incidence compared to the other two, but it is also possibly the most devastating type of stroke. One of the most common reasons for a subarachnoid haemorrhage is a brain aneurysm occurring in the absence of any head injury. Before modern medical management, the mortality rates for an SAH were as high as 45% and many patients would remain disabled for life after experiencing one.

This condition gained a lot of attention recently when Game of Thrones star Emilia Clarke revealed that she suffered an SAH twice during the initial seasons of the popular show. She made a remarkable recovery both times and successfully completed all eight seasons of the show. Basic Instinct star Sharon Stone in her memoir 'The Beauty of Living Twice', has also written about her near-death experience when she suffered a subarachnoid haemorrhage in 2001. She recovered fully, but it took seven years, she revealed in her memoir.

A brain aneurysm is a balloon-like outpouching or protrusion affecting the blood vessels of the brain. A haemorrhage happens when the wall of the balloon becomes weak and ruptures. Brain aneurysms usually go undetected until they rupture and cause a subarachnoid haemorrhage. When the haemorrhage occurs, patients develop sudden severe headaches often termed as “thunderclap headaches” or “the worst headache of life”. This is usually accompanied by nausea or vomiting. In most cases, the point of rupture becomes sealed temporarily after some blood leakage. However, in such cases, there is a high chance that the blood vessel may rupture again. When the amount of blood leakage is high, patients become unconscious and many unfortunately succumb even before reaching the hospital. Aneurysms can also produce less intense symptoms such as vision problems, drooping of

eyelids, mild headaches, etc. According to data from a large study published in The Lancet involving patients from multiple countries, the prevalence of unruptured aneurysm in the group was 3.2% without any other known diseases. The average age at aneurysm diagnosis is 50 years, and overall, it is more common in women. Causes and diagnosis

The precise reasons behind aneurysm formations are still not fully clear. However, uncontrolled high blood pressure and smoking are known to be prominent risk factors for aneurysm development and rupture. In some cases, a family history of brain aneurysm also plays a significant role. Patients with polycystic kidneys or connective tissue disorders are prone to aneurysm development too. When symptoms point to an aneurysm, the diagnosis is usually confirmed by a CT or MRI scan with an angiography. In high-risk patients such as those with a family history, periodic brain scans are recommended even in the absence of symptoms. Once the diagnosis is established, a catheter angiography is often required for treatment planning. Here, interventionists introduce a catheter (thin tube) into the blood vessels of the neck through a pinhole made in the leg artery or artery at the wrist. Detailed images of the aneurysm are then acquired in the specialised X-ray machine (cath-lab/angio-suite) after an injection of radio-opaque dye through the catheter. Treating brain aneurysms

The treatment of an aneurysm depends on whether it was detected after minor symptoms, it ruptured or if it was a subarachnoid haemorrhage. In the case of a subarachnoid haemorrhage, treatment is done on an emergency basis. In other cases, it can be planned or elective treatment. Unfortunately, there is no medicine that can dissolve the aneurysm and heal the abnormal blood vessels. Broadly, there are two ways in which an aneurysm can be treated: one, via opening the skull surgically and two, via a minimally invasive or endovascular route through a pinhole in the leg artery. In open neurosurgical procedures, a metal clip is placed at the base of the aneurysm to prevent the blood from flowing inside the aneurysm. The most common endovascular option is coiling, where soft platinum coils are placed and aneurysm is packed. While the first open surgical clipping dates back to 1938, it has only been three decades since coiling was used. Now however, coiling has been established as an option as well. The choice of whether clipping or coiling is better in a given case is decided based on the location and shape of the aneurysm. The science of aneurysm treatment is changing rapidly now. Newer endovascular treatment options such as flow-diverters or flow-disrupters are emerging as promising treatment modalities with very high cure rates in difficult-to-treat aneurysms. A subarachnoid haemorrhage due to a brain aneurysm used to be challenging for surgeons. However, medical science is advancing by leaps and bounds and minimally invasive procedures and sophisticated devices are now available to help doctors take on these conditions and treat them with encouraging results. What this means for patients who suffer from strokes, is that there is hope. Getting help at the earliest through a proper diagnosis and right treatment is crucial.

# Louvre director acknowledges failure after jewel heist and says she offered to resign

GNS News Agency, Feb 8

The Louvre's director acknowledged a “terrible failure” at the Paris tourist attraction after a daylight crown jewel heist over the weekend, and said that she offered to resign but it was refused. The world's most-visited museum reopened earlier in the day to long lines beneath its landmark glass pyramid for the first time since one of the highest-profile museum thefts of the century stunned the world with its audacity and scale.

In testimony to the French Senate, Louvre director Laurence des Cars said that the museum had a shortage of security cameras outside the monument and other “weaknesses” exposed by Sunday's theft. Under heavy pressure over a heist that stained France's global image, she testified to a Senate committee that she submitted her resignation, but that the culture minister refused to accept it. “Today we are experiencing a terrible failure at the Louvre, which I take my share of responsibility in,” she said. The thieves slipped in and out, making off with eight pieces from France's Crown Jewels — a cultural wound that some compared to the burning of Notre Dame Cathedral in 2019. Late detection The theft — steps away from the “Mona Lisa” and valued at more than \$100 million — has put embattled President Emmanuel Macron, Culture Minister Rachida Dati, des Cars and others under new scrutiny. It comes just months after employees went on strike, warning of chronic understaffing and not enough resources for protection, with too few eyes on too many rooms. “We did not detect the arrival of the thieves soon enough,” des Cars said.

She said that the museum's alarms had worked properly, but that it currently doesn't have full video surveillance of the perimeter outside the museum, though there is a plan to provide full coverage of all the Louvre's facades. She also suggested barriers to prevent vehicles from parking directly alongside the museum's buildings, and said that she would push for a police station inside the museum, which welcomes 30,000 visitors a day and 2,300 workers. In Focus podcast | Can the stolen Crown Jewels from the Louvre ever be recovered? Disbelief among visitors Three days on, the jewels remain missing and the thieves are still at large — and reactions are divided. “For a place like the Louvre, it's unfathomable,” said Amanda Lee, 36, an art teacher from Chicago. “I heard it took under four minutes. How is that possible here, with no police in sight?” Others were unperturbed. Claire Martin, a 41-year-old French lawyer from Versailles visiting with her two children during a school holiday, said that “we saw the masterpieces” even though the Apollo Gallery was shut. “We told the kids it's a history lesson. We came for the art,” she said. “The police can deal with the thieves.” France acknowledgedes failings Authorities say the thieves spent less than four minutes inside the Louvre on Sunday morning: a freight lift was wheeled to the Seine-facing facade, a window was forced open and two vitrines were smashed.

Then came the getaway on motorbikes through central Paris. Alarms had gone off, drawing agents to the gallery and forcing the intruders to bolt. As it reopened, the Louvre declined questions from The Associated Press to detail any reinforced protocols. It said that no uniformed police were posted in the corridors. With school holidays swelling demand, the day was fully booked and access limited. “I didn't notice extra security — guards as always, and no police inside. It felt like a normal day,” said Tomás Álvarez, 29, a software engineer from Madrid. The loot The thieves made away with a total of eight objects, including a sapphire diadem, necklace and single earring from a set linked



The Louvre's director acknowledged a “terrible failure” at the Paris tourist attraction after a daylight crown jewel heist over the weekend, and said that she offered to resign but it was refused

to 19th-century Queens Marie-Amélie and Hortense. They also made off with an emerald necklace and earrings tied to Empress Marie-Louise, Napoleon Bonaparte's second wife, as well as a reliquary brooch. Empress Eugénie's diamond diadem and her large corsage-bow brooch — an imperial ensemble of rare craftsmanship — were also part of the loot. One piece — Eugénie's emerald-set imperial crown, with more than 1,300 diamonds — was later found outside the museum, damaged but recoverable. Fears the jewels will be destroyed Prosecutor Laure Beccuau valued the haul at about 88 million euros (\$102 million), a “spectacular” figure that still fails to capture the works' historical weight. She warned that the thieves would be unlikely to realize anything close to that sum if they pry out stones or melt the metals — a fate curators fear would pulverize centuries of meaning into anonymous gems for the black market. Beccuau said that expert analyses are underway; four people have been identified as being present at the scene, and roughly 100 investigators are mapping the crew and any accomplices, in addition to forensics experts. Security overhaul All this comes after Macron announced new measures in January for the Louvre — complete with a new command post and expanded camera grid that the Culture Ministry says is being rolled out. It also raises hard questions, including whether Sunday's breach is tied to staffing levels, and how uniformly the upgrades in the overhaul are being applied. Protection for headline works is airtight — the “Mona Lisa” is behind bulletproof glass in a climate-controlled case — yet the break-in exposed seams elsewhere in a 33,000-object labyrinth. For many French, the contrast is a public embarrassment at the landmark. It touches a raw nerve: the issue of swelling crowds and overstretched staff. In June, a staff walkout over overcrowding and chronic understaffing delayed opening. Unions argue that mass tourism leaves security lacking and creates pressure points where construction zones, freight access and visitor flows intersect. On Wednesday, the Louvre's other star attractions — from the Venus de Milo to the Winged Victory of Samothrace — were open again. But the cordoned-off vitrines in the Apollo Gallery, guarded and empty, told a different story: one of a breach measured not just in minutes and euros, but in the fragility of a nation's patrimony

# We need to talk more about Post-Polio Syndrome



It is common knowledge that poliomyelitis or polio for short, can cause acute paralysis, and fortunately, global vaccination efforts have made the disease vanishingly rare in many places. But what is less talked about is what happens years or even decades after recovery from polio. Survivors of polio may develop an insidious condition known as Post-Polio Syndrome (PPS). A light must be shone on this “long tail” of polio, because for many, the story doesn't end after the immediate recovery. Long-term consequences

The poliovirus attacks motor neurons in the spinal cord, leading to muscle weakness or paralysis in some victims. Many survivors recover significantly, thanks to the nervous system's capacity to “sprout” compensatory connections. However, decades later, that very compensation may start to fail. PPS is typically defined as the appearance of new muscle weakness, fatigue, muscle or joint pain, sometimes breathing or swallowing problems, occurring 15 to 40 years after the original polio infection. Estimates suggest PPS may affect anywhere from 25% to 40% of polio survivors, although depending on the criteria used it could range more widely (some reports say up to 80 %).

Why does PPS happen? There is no clear answer as of yet, but the leading hypothesis is this: after the acute infection, surviving motor neurons expand their innervation territory (they sprout new axonal branches) to pick up the slack for destroyed neurons. Over the years, these “supercharged” neurons get overworked and eventually start to fail. In addition, normal ageing, added stress, disuse or overuse of muscles, may all contribute. Some research shows structural changes such as spinal cord grey matter atrophy in PPS patients that correlate with functional decline. At my clinic, I frequently hear polio survivors say: “I was fine for many years, but now, I am not able to walk as far any more,

# Respect the health rights of India's children

The deaths of 25 children linked to contaminated cough syrup has shocked the conscience of the nation. In a news cycle that often highlights ‘man bites dog’ sensationalism, the general public is largely aware of two things: that 25 children died, and that a paediatrician in Madhya Pradesh who defiantly prescribed the syrup to the children is said to have received a paltry commission of ₹2.54 a bottle; thus the cost of each of those young lives was ₹2.54.

That all this happened despite the Union Health Ministry having banned certain cough syrup formulations for children under the age of four years — as recently as April 2025 — citing the risk of contamination, is shocking. There has also been much discussion on responsibility — which agency failed in its duty to monitor and prevent the distribution of the syrup. The regulatory agencies in India responsible include the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation under the Directorate General of Health Services, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India which handles large manufacturers of drugs and export approvals, and State drug control officers who handle the regulation, care, manufacture, sale and distribution of drugs by small- and medium-scale manufacturers.

Where the focus needs to be Rather than apportion blame, it would be wise to allow the law to take its course. The focus must be on the regulatory framework behind the distribution of paediatric medicines in India, and the challenges India faces in ensuring the protection it has guaranteed to its children in Article 39(f) of the Constitution, which is also listed as an important Directive Principle of State Policy.

Children (the age group under 18 years) make up 39% of India's population. There are a catena of laws and policies in India — approximately 13 — that are specifically designed to protect children, from the seminal National Policy for Children 1974 to the India Newborn Action Plan 2014. There are also about 10 pieces of legislation with special provisions for children such as the Pre-Conception and Prenatal Diagnostic Techniques Act to The Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Act. Significantly, while these are critical interventions, they focus heavily on protecting children in the workforce (labour laws), and preventing and punishing the sexual exploitation of children. There are important initiatives for children in health and education, but the specific area of pharmacovigilance in the dissemination of paediatric drugs requires far more oversight and also the development of robust infrastructure.

In a similar context, Dr. Harry Shirkey called children “therapeutic orphans”. Children are not small adults. The pharmacodynamic responses of children and adults are vastly different due to a spectrum of different physiologies. Further, clinical trials of drugs are usually conducted on adults and for ethical and other reasons almost never on children, resulting in an alarming lack of paediatric guidelines of dosage and administration. All too often, the dosage and administration of drugs for children are extrapolated from guidelines for adults, leaving children in much danger of overdosage and more serious consequences. Special development strategies of drugs for children are a cornerstone of their health-care needs, particularly public health care. Overseas, the regulatory framework for children-related pharmaceuticals is an eye-opener. In the European Union, it is under the Paediatric Use Marketing Authorisation and in the United States, under the Best Pharmaceuticals for Children Act (BCPA). Inter alia, such legislation also provides incentives for research into paediatric drugs. India does not have a specific policy or legislation and operates on general guidelines. Since children are totally dependent on their parents or guardians for their health needs, it is necessary that the government frames clear guidelines. Health-care-related financial burdens often cause many impoverished families to fall into deeper poverty, making it even more vital that the pharmaceutical needs of children are made affordable. The essential medicine concept

Therefore, the introduction of the essential medicine concept in the health-care sector contributes significantly to the greater availability and affordability of life-saving medi-

I am fatigued more easily, my polio leg is weaker again, and I have more joint pain.” These often are the classic symptoms of PPS: continuing weakness may occur in limbs previously affected by the original illness and, at times, in limbs that have never been affected. Fatigue, muscle cramps, joint pain and muscle pain, difficulties sleeping and cold intolerance also occur. While PPS rarely causes loss of life, significant muscle involvement may result in serious complications, such as falls, fractures, or issues with breathing or swallowing. PPS is a growing concern around the world. Since the severe polio epidemics of the 1940-60s led to millions of people surviving polio, many of these people are now older adults experiencing PPS. From a functional perspective, the decline in function can impact mobility, independence, work ability and quality of life. Currently, there is no cure for PPS. Treatment is symptomatic and supportive. Care for post-polio syndrome (PPS) predominantly aims at managing symptoms in order to allow individuals to maintain mobility. Gentle physical therapy and low-stress exercises help maintain muscle function without excessive exertion, because the more a person exerts themselves, the more fatigued they will become. Simple things such as taking breaks, pacing the day's activities, or using a cane or walker will save energy. A combination of physiotherapy, heat, and mild medication usually provides moderate-to-profound relief for pain and improvements in walking ability, offering a glimpse of better options ahead for those living with PPS. As the polio survivor population ages, clinicians and health systems need to be aware of PPS — it is frequently under-diagnosed or mis-labelled as “just ageing” or “arthritis.” Vigilance involves asking about a past history of polio in older patients with new weakness/fatigue; evaluating for other causes, and then implementing a multidisciplinary care plan. From a public health perspective, it is also a reminder of just how powerful—and long-lasting—the benefits of vaccination are: preventing polio in the first place means you avoid not just the acute illness, but the decades-later burden of PPS. Surviving polio doesn't always mean you are done with it. Many people come through the acute phase, recover well and then decades later hit a second curve of new problems. As doctors, we must bring PPS into our radar, treat it with respect, and help our patients adapt their lives rather than suffer passively. For survivors, the message is: if you had polio, and you're noticing new fatigue, weakness or pain — don't just shrug it off as “ageing” — ask your doctor about PPS, get the right rehabilitation and support, and make sure mobility and quality of life remain in your hands.



# There needs to be a holistic framework to monitor medicine use for children

Essential medicines are those which satisfy the priority health-care needs of the population, are intended to be available in all health-care systems and are of quality and affordable. Several years ago, the World Health Organization (WHO) introduced an essential Medicine list for children (EMLc). This is used by policy makers to update the EMLc lists in their own countries. Although EML for adults are periodically revised, the EMLc for children is not addressed regularly. This requires immediate attention of policymakers. Other basic safe practices in the distribution of children's pharmaceuticals include constant education for care-givers and pharmacists, and making it mandatory to read the label, dispense the correct dosage and watch for side-effects particularly when buying over-the-counter medication. Regulation of over-the-counter medication for children especially for cough, cold and fever is an important dimension of public health care. The use of OTC medication varies in rural and urban areas, but is more common in an urban setting.

Public health-care outlets are another area of focus where clear guidelines need to be enforced in dispensing pharmaceuticals to children. A zero tolerance policy must be adopted against substitute or substandard medication. In the case of teenagers, attention must be paid to prevent the misuse of drugs. Over the last three years, WHO has issued several warnings on contaminated cough syrup. Some of these are related to cough syrup made in various places in India. Children have also died in the Gambia, Uzbekistan, Indonesia and Cameroon as a result of these contaminated syrups. India has emerged as the pharmacy to the Global South with huge exports of cough syrups, but this carries with it a responsibility to ensure the absolute safety of the medicines exported. Need for India data India's health policy with regard to paediatric medicines cannot be framed only on the basis of data on children available from other countries. Our genetics are unique to us and our research needs to be based on wholly Indian data. Nor should data on paediatric medicines be extrapolated from data that is related to adults. We owe a fiduciary duty to our children to take care in framing a health policy for them. We expect responsible policymakers to take into account diverse factors including awareness of environmental pitfalls such as how toxicity of a cough syrup may be exacerbated by malnutrition in children. Thus, adult medicines modified during administration to children can only be considered as off label and unlicensed. They should not be used at all since they are contraindicated in terms of formulation, age and indicators. Clearly, monitoring safe medicine use in children is of utmost importance. The use of medicines not proven to be safe for children is a violation of the rights of voiceless children. India urgently needs a robust and holistic infrastructure to monitor and promote awareness of safety protocols with regard to medicines given to children.











# A perfect blend of finesse and power



The frisson of excitement that precedes the announcement of the squad for a major cricket tournament was conspicuously absent this time around. No one expected any surprises, not on the basis of the personnel that were selected to represent the country in the 20-over format over the last few months. The established order, it was believed, would be entrusted with the responsibility of fuelling India's title defence at the T20 World Cup.India won the previous edition of this competition in the Americas in June 2024. Under Rohit Sharma, they mounted a fantastic, unbeaten campaign. They swept every game they played in the league (their match against Canada in Lauderhill was a non-starter owing to an unfit outfield) and Super Eight stages, brushed England aside in the semifinal and overcame a spirited challenge in the title round from an eventually self-destructing South Africa, who somehow went down by seven runs when it appeared a lot easier to wrap their hands around the trophy.

As is inevitable irrespective of the outcome, there was a churn after the last World Cup, with preparations for the next edition beginning almost immediately. Unlike the 50-over iteration which comes about every four years, the T20 World Cup is a biennial affair. Rohit, Virat Kohli and Ravindra Jadeja retired from internationals T20s immediately after the World Cup, which automatically meant alternative resources to fill giant boots had to be identified. There were also exigencies of form that needed to be factored in, alongside the increasingly dynamic demands of the format and the emergence of new talent that could not be overlooked or ignored. There are several common threads to the 15 chosen for the title defence with those that played a year and a half ago – Suryakumar Yadav (now the skipper), Axar Patel (his new old deputy), Hardik Pandya, Shivam Dube, Arshdeep Singh, Jasprit Bumrah, Sanju Samson and Kuldeep Yadav were all part of the side that lifted the trophy in the Americas – and also a host of different, if not new, faces. The seven who figured in 2024 but are missing now are Rohit, Kohli and Jadeja (all retired), reserve opener Yashasvi Jaiswal, wicketkeeper Rishabh Pant, pacer Mohammed Siraj and leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal, who have been replaced (for want of a better word) by Abhishek Sharma, Tilak Varma, Washington Sundar, Ishan Kishan, Harshit Rana, Varun Chakaravarthy and Rinku Singh.

Anyone who doesn't think India boast a formidable, deadly dangerous outfit that is both ranked and is playing like the No. 1 T20 team in the 20-over world needs to think again. And maybe have themselves scrutinised mentally. India have won each of their seven assignments since Suryakumar replaced Rohit on a full-time basis from the tour of Sri Lanka in July last year. Either side of six bilateral conquests, three each at home and away in Sri Lanka, South Africa and Australia, is a flawless 7-0 scoreline stacked up at the Asia Cup in the Emirates in September, when they swatted Pakistan aside thrice in as many Sundays though they were forced to dig deep in the final. India have lost a mere four of their last 29 matches and never more than once in a series; to install them as favourites to go all the way when they will play all matches (except those against Pakistan) at home will appear the most natural thing to do.

The Gill conundrumIt was leading into the said Asia Cup that those tasked with making the big cricketing decisions in Indian cricket bared their hand. Whether they got carried away by Shubman Gill's inspirational Test display in England, or whether their decision was driven by the necessity to have an all-format captain not too far into the future is debatable. What is not is the selectors throwing most of their eggs in the Gill captaincy basket. In his first outings as the Test captain, Gill was at his subliminal best as a batter, having the connoisseur and the layman eating out of his hand with his command over the England bowling. In the preceding four, Gill had failed to announce himself outside the subcontinent, with a high of just 36 in 18 Test innings in the Caribbean, England, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. But entrusting with leading the side into the future once Rohit called it quits from the five-day game, the real Gill stood up, batting with flair and authority and absolute dominance on his way to 754 wondrous runs. Gill also acquitted himself creditably in the leadership stakes, his exploits rubbing off on his mates as young India came

away with an honourable 2-2 draw against Bazballing England. There is no such thing as a moral victory in sport, but if it was a thing, India would have walked away with that honour.

Did that convince those running Indian cricket that Gill was ready to assume charge as the next poster boy of Indian cricket? Potentially, because immediately after the team returned from Old Blighty with its head held high, Gill replaced Rohit as the 50-over skipper and was brought back in from the cold to occupy the throne of the T20I vice-captain to Suryakumar. It wasn't a warning of sorts to the older Mumbaikar, just a loud and unequivocal assertion that Gill was being readied to follow in the footsteps of Mahendra Singh Dhoni, Kohli and Rohit and become the next captain across formats, most likely after the T20 World Cup at home and in Sri Lanka in February-March. Even at the time, without the luxury, benefit and wisdom of hindsight, it seemed as if Gill was being burdened with too much too soon. As it is, before he spearheaded India's Test challenge in England, he had very little experience of captaincy at the first-class or 50-over levels. His only real tryst with a designated leadership role was in the IPL, where he led Gujarat Titans for the last two seasons after Pandya moved back to Mumbai Indians. Given his hitherto limited scope as a captain, to saddle him with so much responsibility in such a compressed period of time seemed overkill, and particularly so given that India were flitting from continent to continent and back, and from format to format, at the drop of a hat. Predictably, Gill felt the heat, professing to mental more than physical fatigue but not immune to physical setbacks either. First came the neck spasms during the first Test against South Africa in Kolkata last month which forced him to miss the second Test (he batted just three balls at Eden Gardens) and the subsequent ODI series. Then, he sustained a blow to his toe which ruled him out of the final two T20Is last week. By this time, his T20I form had taken a spectacular nosedive. Since making it back to the T20I squad at the Asia Cup after 13 and a half months on the sidelines, his highest in 15 innings was a modest 47 against Pakistan. He had come into the 20-over side at the expense of Samson, in a manner of speaking, slotting in as Abhishek's opening partner and forcing the wicketkeeper to drop down the order. At an unfamiliar position, Samson failed to get going and eventually lost his spot in the XI to Jitesh Sharma, more accomplished and experienced as a middle-order 'keeper-batter.

But as Gill's batting woes continued to mount, it was becoming increasingly difficult for Ajit Agarkar's selection panel and for head coach Gautam Gambhir to reconcile to the new normal where two of the top four batters, both in a leadership role, were delivering practically nothing. Gill alone in poor run-making touch might still have been tempting to overlook if all the other top-order cogs were ticking over smoothly. But Suryakumar has been in an even more prolonged drought. The explosive 35-year-old started his career as captain in his own right with a blazing half-century in Pallekele in July last year but has added only one more 50-plus knock in the last year and a half. In 2025, 19 innings have yielded a highest of 47 not out to go with nine single-digit scores and a mere two efforts of more than 25. These are terribly disappointing numbers, offset somewhat by the stellar record Suryakumar has stacked up as captain, which gives him greater leeway than Gill. It took three and a half months for Agarkar's panel to recognise what was evident to almost everyone else far earlier and axe Gill, if only for the time being. The official line is that team combination exigencies led to Gill's exclusion once the think-tank was convinced that India needed a wicketkeeper-batter to partner dynamic opener Abhishek. How they suddenly came to this conclusion after splitting the extremely successful Abhishek-Samson pair to accommodate Gill is baffling, but no more than what has been the norm in the last few months when questionable calls have pretty much been de rigueur.

A dramatic recall from out of the blue of Ishan Kishan is in keeping with the selectoral mood-swing that has been the flavour of the Agarkar-Gambhir combine. Kishan was put out to pasture when he returned from South Africa midway through an all-format tour in December 2023, citing the need for a break from the game, and then rebuffed suggestions to turn out for Jharkhand in domestic action. Dumped from the central contracts list, he found himself confronted by a rocky road back though to his credit, he has gutsed it out and has now been rewarded with a national call-up, ostensibly at the expense of Jitesh. Apart from being a finisher who is a terrific force of nature in the middle order, Jitesh has done nothing wrong and still finds himself having to watch the World Cup on TV, like the rest of us. And to think that only last week, Jitesh appeared a shoo-in for the mega competition. Most of the rest of the squad has picked itself. Samson for Gill, a belated if forced development, is the right call, though the decision should have been more organic and timely instead of being a last-minute afterthought, almost, with so much at stake.

# U.S. FDA approves Wegovy pill for weight loss

GNS News Agency, Feb 8

U.S. regulators on Monday (December 22, 2025) gave the green light to a pill version of the blockbuster weight-loss drug Wegovy, the first daily oral medication to treat obesity. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration's approval handed drugmaker Novo Nordisk an edge over rival Eli Lilly in the race to market an obesity pill. Lilly's oral drug, orforglipron, is still under review. Both pills are GLP-1 drugs that work like widely used injectables to mimic a natural hormone that controls appetite and feelings of fullness. In recent years, Novo Nordisk's injectable Wegovy and Lilly's Zepbound have revolutionised obesity treatment globally and in the U.S., where 100 million people have the chronic disease. Available within weeks

The Wegovy pills are expected to be available within weeks, company officials said. Availability of oral pills to treat obesity could expand the booming market for obesity treatments by broadening access and reducing costs, experts said. About 1 in 8 Americans have used injectable GLP-1 drugs, according to a survey from KFF, a nonprofit health policy research group. But many more have trouble affording the costly shots.

"There's an entire demographic that can benefit from the pills," said Dr. Fatima Cody Stanford, a Massachusetts General Hospital obesity expert. "For me, it's not just about who gets it across the finish line first. It's about having these options available to patients." The Novo Nordisk obesity pill contains 25 milligrams of semaglutide. That's the same ingredient in injectables Wegovy and Ozempic and in Rybelsus, a lower-dose pill approved to treat diabetes in 2019. Clinical trialsIn a clinical trial, participants who took oral Wegovy lost 13.6% of their total body weight on average over about 15 months, compared with a 2.2% loss if they took a placebo, or dummy pill. That's nearly the same as injectable Wegovy, with an average weight loss of about

15%. Chris Mertens, 35, a pediatric lung doctor in Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin, joined the Novo Nordisk trial in 2022 and lost about 40 pounds using the Wegovy pill. The daily medication worked to decrease his appetite and invasive thoughts of food, he said. "If there were days where I missed a meal, I almost didn't realize it," Dr. Mertens said. Participants in a clinical trial who took the highest dose of Lilly's orforglipron lost 11.2% of their total body weight on average over nearly 17 months, compared with a 2.1% loss in those who took a placebo. Both pills resulted in less weight loss than the average achieved with Lilly's Zepbound, or tirzepatide, which targets two gut hormones, GLP-1 and GIP, and led to a 21% average weight loss. Dosage directions

All the GLP-1 drugs, oral or injectable, have similar side effects, including nausea and diarrhea. Both daily pills promise convenience, but the Wegovy pill must be taken with a sip of water in the morning on an empty stomach, with a 30-minute break before eating or drinking. That's because Novo Nordisk had to design the pill in a way that prevented the drug from being broken down in the stomach before it could be absorbed by the bloodstream. The drugmaker added an ingredient that protects the medication for about 30 minutes in the gut and makes it easier to take effect. By contrast, Lilly's orforglipron has no dosing restrictions. That drug is being considered under the FDA's new priority voucher program aimed at cutting drug approval times. A decision is expected by spring/All about the price/Producing pills is generally cheaper than making drugs delivered via injections, so the cost for the new oral medications could be lower. The Trump administration earlier this year said officials had worked with drugmakers to negotiate lower prices for the GLP-1 drugs, which can cost upwards of \$1,000 a month. The company said the starting dose would be available for \$149 per month from some providers. Additional information on cost will be available in January.

# Death knell for the rural job guarantee



The Viksit Bharat - Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-G RAM G), 2025 Act, which replaces the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), received the President's assent on Sunday. Article 21 of the Constitution guarantees the right to life. The Supreme Court in Olga Tellis v. Bombay Municipal Corporation in 1985 ruled that "if there's an obligation upon the State to secure to the citizens an adequate means of livelihood and right to work, it would be sheer pedantry to exclude the right to livelihood from the content of the right to life."

MGNREGA, arrived at through sustained social movements and passed unanimously in Parliament, envisions the right to work as a necessary condition for the right to life. It is, therefore, a departure from earlier public works programmes as MGNREGA's provisions amount to justiciable rights — the right to work on demand, the right to unemployment allowance if work is not provided within 15 days, the right to payment of wages within 15 days and payment of delay compensation otherwise, gender parity in wages, minimum wages, among others. The Act also envisaged relief from ecological distress through the creation of long-term sustainable assets. As an engine to implement the 73rd Constitutional Amendment, MGNREGA strengthened the panchayat raj institutions.

Five broad positive outcomes of MGNREGA can be identified as (a) it is universal and not targeted, (b) it resulted in an increase in rural incomes, (c) it counters gender and caste inequalities, (d) it creates quality assets and (e) it empowers communities. Within a few years of MGNREGA, studies showed that incomes of workers increased, overall poverty fell and school enrolment increased. According to an India Human Development Survey, reliance on money lenders decreased by 21%. About 45% of female MGNREGA workers were either not working or worked only on family farms before the Act. Women's participation has been around 58% in MGNREGA over the last five years. In the face of mounting evidence, even the World Bank changed from referring to it as a "barrier to development" in 2009 to calling it a "stellar example" of rural development in 2014. MGNREGA's role during the COVID pandemic is widely known. Many issues Perhaps the chronicle

# Biofabri, Bharat Biotech ink tech transfer pact for MTBVAC tuberculosis vaccine



Human vaccine development company Biofabri, which is a part of Spain's Zendal group, and Hyderabad-based vaccine maker Bharat Biotech International (BBIL) announced on Monday (December 22, 2025) signing of a technology transfer agreement for tuberculosis vaccine candidate MTBVAC. The agreement follows the signing of a licensing agreement in 2022 and reinforces their partnership. The technology transfer process has already begun to ensure BBIL's manufacturing readiness by the time of MTBVAC licensure in India, they said in a joint release.

Designed by Carlos Martín from the University of Zaragoza (UNIZAR) and Brigitte Gicquel of the Institut Pasteur in Paris and licensed to Biofabri, MTBVAC is the only live, attenuated Mycobacterium TB vaccine in the pipeline. MTBVAC is being developed by Biofabri, in collaboration with BBIL, IAVI, Fundação Aталufo de Paiva (FAP), TB Vaccine Initiative (TBVI) and UNIZAR. The vaccine is being

of death was foretold over the last decade. Chronic underfunding has resulted in persistent wage payment delays, a fact acknowledged by the Ministry of Finance. Budget constraints have meant that officials have resorted to rationing work. Activists and researchers routinely brought up exclusions leading to denial of rights arising from opaque technocratic initiatives such as a photo-based attendance app and complex payment systems. Such initiatives gave new ammunition for corruption as these widened the gulf between workers and officials. Staff shortage exacerbated corruption. Built-in principles to mitigate corruption like social audits have been underfunded.

The VB-G RAM G Act was steamrolled in Parliament in such a scenario. Section 5(1) of this Act gives arbitrary, discretionary powers to the Union government to decide where, what and how public works will happen. According to Section 4(5), the Union government will determine and prescribe "State-wise normative allocations" of funds based on "objective parameters". Instead of demand-driven, as MP Manoj Jha put it, this makes it "command-driven" rendering it to a centrally sponsored allocation based model, putting States at the mercy of the Centre. Local autonomy ideas of MGNREGA stand compromised. In the Swaraj Abhiyan case in 2018, the Supreme Court ordered the Union government to pay compensation for delays in payments caused by it. The new Act places no obligation on the Union government for payment delays. Roughly 90% of the MGNREGA expenditure is borne by the Union government and 10% by the States. As per Section 22 of the new Act, barring some States, the Centre to State ratio of funds has been altered to 60:40. Further, the new Act states that "expenditure by a State in excess of its normative allocation shall be borne by the State government". Taken together, these clauses might lead to political favouritism towards some States and victimisation of others. Forced to be fiscally prudent, States are likely to stifle work demand leading to increased unemployment and distress migration.

The opportunity to work anytime in the year is vital, especially for the landless and women. However, the proposition (Section 6(2)) in the new Act to not provide any employment for 60 days during the agricultural season, will only ossify the entrenched land, caste and gender inequalities. Despite support for MGNREGA from farmers' platforms and evidence pointing to farmers benefiting from MGNREGA, the new Act attempts to legally pit farmers with labourers. The new Act claims to provide 125 days of employment per household per year. However, if in the current funding situation, average days of work per year per household was around 50, the claim of 125 days of employment in a year is a red herring. Finally, the new Act has no new provisions to mitigate corruption. MGNREGA combines Mahatma Gandhi's ideas of local governance with B.R. Ambedkar's spirit of empowering citizens with rights. By formalising the decade-long slow poisoning of the MGNREGA, the new Act undermines both Gandhi and Ambedkar.

targeted for newborns, adolescents and adults—groups for whom there is currently no effective prophylactic vaccine against TB disease. Bharat Biotech will guarantee production and supply of MTBVAC in more than 70 countries across Africa and Southeast Asia, regions with a high disease burden. The signing of the agreement aligns with the WHO Finance and Access Working Group Solution that seeks to accelerate equitable access of novel tuberculosis vaccines for adults and adolescents through licensing and technology transfer to at least one manufacturer in a high burden region. MTBVAC has undergone Phase I and II clinical trials in India. The vaccine candidate has demonstrated safety and immunogenicity. Based on the initial results, BBIL is preparing for a pivotal Phase III vaccine efficacy study, which is expected to begin recruiting participants in the first quarter of 2026. Considering the significant disease burden in India, MTBVAC is poised to be a leading candidate in the TB Mukht Bharat initiative championed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the companies said. The implementation of the technology transfer signifies a crucial progression towards establishing comprehensive manufacturing of MTBVAC at Bharat Biotech, thereby enabling worldwide access and bolstering tuberculosis control initiatives. The forthcoming Phase 3 trial in India, the country with the highest disease burden, constitutes a vital step in enhancing the global response to tuberculosis and its effects, said Bharat Biotech Executive Chairman Krishna Ella. Biofabri CEO Esteban Rodriguez said the agreement represents a decisive step ensuring the vaccine reaches the populations that need it most. Enabling sustainable manufacturing in high-burden countries is essential to improving equitable access.

# Himachal Pradesh needs a financial boost

Growing up in Himachal Pradesh in the eighties, I have often heard my civil engineer father lament about the lack of adequate budget with the State government to make a good hill road while also containing and managing the damage to the mountain slope. He understood the importance of forests but always spoke of the disproportionate burden on the State. He thought that since the forests provide many important services which benefit the entire country, the State should be provided more resources to protect and preserve them. His ideas stayed with me and when the concept of ecosystem services gained currency much later it instantly resonated.

Similar thoughts were expressed in a letter written by the Constitutional Conduct Group, a group of former civil servants, to the chairman of the 16th Finance commission. The letter refers to a 2025 report of the Institute of Forest Management Bhopal. It pegs the total forest wealth of Himachal Pradesh at ₹9.95 lakh crore. It calculated the annual total economic value of Himachal's forests at ₹3.20 lakh crore; this includes ₹1.65 lakh crore for carbon sequestration, ₹68,941 crore for eco system services, ₹32,901 crore as the value of bio-diversity, ₹15,132 crore for water provisioning and ₹3,000 crore for regulatory services such as flood control and sediment retention. These contributions benefit the entire country. The regulatory system understands the importance of forests for the ecological security of the country, and the costs mountain States incur and the support they need to pursue an eco-centric developmental model. Despite the understanding, till date, most regulatory instruments in the country do not comprehensively address these issues or adequately compensate the mountain

States so that they are not unduly encumbered.

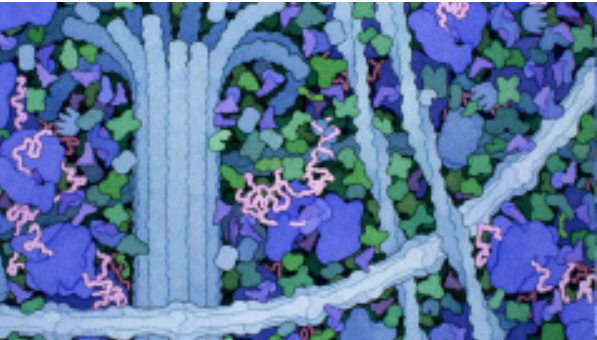
Himachal Pradesh has been a Special Category State since its inception in 1971, because of its geographical and climatic conditions resulting in limited resource generating capacity. This got the State some preferential financial treatment from the Centre till it was abolished by 14th Finance Commission (FC) in 2015 due to increase in allocation from the Central taxes devolved to the State. Himachal Pradesh like other States had to enact the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act in 2005, which imposed limits on its fiscal and revenue deficits, and influenced its expenditure patterns without adequately taking into account the limitations of its largely agrarian economy and higher developmental costs.

Some amends have been made over the years to accommodate the special circumstances of the State. The FCs specifically evolved a mechanism to compensate the States which maintain, protect and preserve forests but the same has fallen short on delivering the intended results in Himachal Pradesh. It started with 12th FC when a total of ₹1,000 crore was allocated as Green Bonus to be distributed among States on the basis of their share of the country's total forest area. This was changed to an incentive-based grant by 13th FC to reward States for maintaining and improving forest covers, focusing on canopy density. The 14th FC went a step ahead and incorporated "forest cover" as a criterion in its formula for horizontal tax devolution, assigning it a weight of 7.5%. The 15th FC increased both the scope and weightage of this criterion to "forest cover and ecology" and 10% respectively, which needs to be further enhanced significantly to make any meaningful contribution.





# Google’s new AI for drug discovery is a win for scientific discovery



Google’s launch of a suite artificial intelligence (AI) tools, which its researchers reported to be successful at not only suggested a new drug combination for cancer therapy but even stood up to early tests in the laboratory, is a signal that research-scientists ought to be integrating AI into the process of scientific discovery. Built on the Gemma family of open models, the Cell2Sentence-Scale 27B (C2S-Scale) is a 27-billion-parameter foundation model designed to “understand” the language of individual cells. “This announcement marks a milestone for AI in science,” Shekoofeh Azizi and Brian Perozzi, staff scientists at Google DeepMind and Google Research respectively, in a post accompanying the announcement. “C2S-Scale generated a novel hypothesis about cancer cellular behaviour and we have since confirmed its prediction with experimental validation in living cells. This discovery reveals a promising new pathway for developing therapies to fight cancer,” they added.

The C2S-Scale model was trained on a large dataset of real-world patients and cell-line data, based on which it suggested a drug called silmitasertib could be used to improve the immune system’s ability to identify cancerous tumours when they were nascent. To be sure, silmitasertib (CX-4945) is currently in several clinical trials to treat multiple myeloma, kidney cancer, medulloblastoma, and advanced solid tumours. In January 2017, the US Food and Drug Administration granted it orphan drug status for advanced cholangiocarcinoma. However, the novelty of Google’s effort was not in (re)discovering the drug but that it had scanned the vast cancer biology literature to suggest a novel use for a drug candidate. Pharmaceutical companies in their usual course spend billions of dollars and employ highly trained personnel to reveal similar insights. “It’s a nice result and was a well-chosen problem to test the capabilities of an LLM [large language model],” Sunil Laxman, systems biologist at the Institute for Stem Cell Science and Regenerative Medicine, Bengaluru, told The Hindu. “This would, in the usual course, have taken a focussed team of dedicated researchers several months to suggest such a use of the drug.” It’s very good’ Dr. Laxman however underlined that the model hadn’t suggested something that couldn’t have occurred to a trained biologist nor had discovered some-

thing new about cancer biology.

“It’s very good. Not great. The average laboratory in India will not have access to a vast library of chemical compounds where they can be tested. This one had, and while it has certainly shortened the time [in this case] for a potential discovery, it isn’t a path-breaking discovery.” LLMs are at the core of AI and are trained on human-annotated data to understand human language and solve problems. Drs. Azizi and Perozzi have contended that their results demonstrate that it’s possible to create LLMs that don’t have to be trained on the rules of biological systems. Instead, they wrote, the models can be encouraged to figure the rules out just by having their successes ‘rewarded’ and failures ‘punished’. This is how some of the most powerful chess-playing LLMs were trained. Good reasoning Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru, mathematics professor Siddhartha Gadgil interpreted the findings as significant and reckoned that the best AI models in mathematics were today at the level of a “skilled mathematician but not at genius-human levels”. He said there were “no reasons” to suppose that AI development would one day not be able to solve the most challenging maths problems. “We can’t say when an AI model will solve the Riemann Hypothesis but there’s no reason to suppose it never can. Already there are several initiatives and even companies that are tackling unsolved mathematical problems and they do come up with novel hypotheses.” Dr. Gadgil cited the International Mathematical Olympiad 2025, where OpenAI, the maker of ChatGPT, said an “experimental reasoning model” had figured out answers to the questions, which, if it were a human, would have won it a gold medal. The model followed the same time limits as human participants. Significantly, this model wasn’t trained for the Olympiad but was a general-purpose reasoning model with sufficiently good reasoning powers. This said, the Olympiad’s problems aren’t representative examples of the problems professional mathematicians work on; they’re intended for talented high-schoolers and constitute a gold standard test of mathematical talent. The Riemann hypothesis on the other hand is a problem many mathematicians are working on. It’s a statement about the nature of prime numbers whose proof has eluded mathematicians for over a century. The Clay Mathematical Institute in the US has promised to reward its solver with \$1 million. ‘Still divided’ Given the vast literature to which these LLM are exposed, they’re expected to come up with novel and useful ideas about how to approach a mathematical problem an equivalent human expert wouldn’t always immediately see, he added. Prof. Gadgil, who embraces LLM tools in his own research, added that his field is “still divided” on incorporating them. According to him, there were several good models that “showed no signs of plateauing and had a lot of latent capabilities that still weren’t fully explored”, and therefore ought to be encouraged as tools that a working researcher ought to be incorporating.

# Gogji for a broken heart

It was a late September afternoon. Autumn had taken hold; the earth had shed her vibrant costumes from spring and summer, and was getting ready for some much needed rest. I was sitting on the verandah watching Phuphee pottering about in her kitchen garden. She walked towards me with a small kraenjul (wicker basket) full of turnips and a big smile on her face. ‘Walle, gogji rogan josh rannao [come, let’s cook turnip rogan josh],’ she said, walking towards the kitchen. Inside, I watched her perform her magic and turn the humble turnip into a dish fit for a wedding feast. She was nearly done when one of the helpers came in to inform her that a lady was waiting for her. She motioned for me to join her and directed the helper to cook extra rice for lunch.

In Phuphee’s room, a woman was waiting. She lived locally. Her name was Asma. She was the headmistress of a small girls school on the outskirts of the village. After greeting her, Phuphee asked her how she could help. For a while the woman was quiet, but you could see the storm clouds gather in the corners of her eyes until they could no longer be held back and they fell in reams. Phuphee watched her for a while and then slowly got up and went to sit next to her. She put her arm around her and held her close while she cried.

When Asma had exhausted all her tears she spoke. She was married and lived with her husband and two children. She had two brothers whom she loved dearly, but for the past decade or so everything had gone wrong in her relationship with them. She still spoke to the elder one, though he had stopped making any effort to be in her life. While the younger one, whom she had been very close to, had not only stopped speaking to her, but had at different points in time abused her trust and broken her heart. She told Phuphee it had happened when he got married. She was sure his wife had cast some spell on him or poisoned his ears. Phuphee listened as Asma continued to speak about how she sometimes dreamt about the happier times they had when they were children and how much her heart ached for her brother. She asked Phuphee if she could give her a taaveez (talisman) to undo whatever spell had been cast on her brother. Or, if that wasn’t possible, could she be given something to make the pain stop.

When Asma had finished, Phuphee called out for the helper and asked her to serve lunch for everyone. Spells could not be broken and hearts cannot be mended on an empty stomach, she said. The helper served the gogji rogan josh with hot rice and all of us had a second helping. As we ate, Phuphee talked about random things — the state of the



roads, the weather, and everything that was happening in the world. When we were done, she turned to Asma and said, ‘When someone very dear to us does cruel things, unthinkable things, it is natural to look for reasons why. After all, we are not supposed to hurt the people we love, at least not intentionally.’ “You know my dearest Asma, of course it is possible that some of the blame can be laid at your sister-in-law’s door, but not all of it. Your brother is not a child. He is a grown man with a will of his own. And while you hold your sister-in-law responsible, you must not absolve him of the accountability he has in his actions. Your heart hurts because you have lost your brother. You know, it sometimes happens that people die before they actually die. The brother you had, who was loving and kind, has gone. The person he is now is not your brother in any real sense. The memories you have, hold them close and honour them. Do not ever feel yourself to be weak because you feel hurt or you still feel the love, because it stems from a reality you once lived.

You are not deluded, you are human. We sat quietly. I had so many questions, but I didn’t ask. I hoped Asma would ask Phuphee some more questions, but she didn’t. After lunch, they walked to the gate while I watched from the window. Phuphee handed her a small bag and bid her goodbye. Later that day, I sat thinking about what Phuphee had told Asma and I struggled to make sense of it. Twenty years later, on an autumn day, I too would come to understand that sometimes you can lose people without them dying. In that moment all you could do was acknowledge and honour the love you once felt for a person who, though still physically alive, was dead in every other way. And despite the confusion that ensued this terrible situation, you had to honour the person you once loved and grieve the person no longer present.

# Apple foldable iPhone expected in 2026 could make foldables mainstream

New Delhi: Apple’s foldable, expected around late 2026, could redefine consumer expectations and push foldables into a new mainstream adoption phase, according to a new report. The biggest structural shift is expected in late 2026, when Apple’s first foldable iPhone is expected to debut. According to the Counterpoint Research report, Apple’s entry would instantly expand consumer awareness and accelerate replacement demand across high-income segments. Given Apple’s ecosystem influence, its launch year could dramatically reshape brand dynamics, lifting total market volumes.

The report predicts the US foldable smartphone market to grow 68 per cent (on-year) in 2025, as it enters a period of solid growth after several years of experimentation. The growth is being driven by broader form factor adoption, improved durability of foldable designs and more diversified portfolios from multiple brands. This year,

portfolio expansion and ecosystem readiness are defining the market. Samsung is set to maintain its leadership with the refreshed Galaxy Z Fold and Flip lineup, having added an FE variant to broaden accessibility, while also preparing to unveil its long-awaited tri-fold device later in the year. Meanwhile, Motorola is rapidly scaling its Razr series through wider carrier partnerships in the prepaid market, narrowing the share gap with Samsung faster than in prior cycles. According to the report, Google’s Pixel 10 Pro Fold, launched in October 2025, sits between Samsung’s premium offerings and Motorola’s lifestyle-driven designs, testing how effectively the brand can turn its AI-first Android experiences into tangible hardware differentiation. Liz Lee, Associate Director at Counterpoint Research said that while Samsung continues to lead in maturity and ecosystem strength in 2025, Motorola’s rapid expansion in the clamshell segment and Google’s AI-driven approach are reshaping competition.

# If you really must protest



As a nationalist who loves his country like crazy, I ponder the same question as I go to bed every night: how to improve Indian democracy. One epiphany I got: ban all protests. Be ‘One Nation, One Opinion’. Why can’t we simply lock up any and all dissenters? I know most of you feel this way. And yet, we patriots are helpless, faced with the pseudo-democratic posturing that even certified autocrats can’t seem to do without. The older I get, lesser the patience I have for imported, zero-tariff luxury items like dissent, privacy, and human rights. If I ever become the Supreme Leader of any country, I will give two options to anyone who thinks I’m wrong and they are right. One, agree with me publicly and unequivocally; two, keep applying for bail. People at protest sites are typically on a journey towards option 2, and I’m sorry to say I’ve known a few in my lifetime. The other day, I got a call from Balu, an anarcho-syndicalist-turned-Trotskyist-turned-corporate honcho-turned-reptile rights activist. “Which is the best place in Delhi to stage a protest,” he wanted to know. “It should be centrally located,” he said. “With ample parking, easy access to cholera-free drinking water, and clean washrooms, preferably stocked with Charmin Ultra Soft toilet paper.” “Well,” he paused to think. “It would be good if there are decent pubs within walking distance, so we can unwind with a drink or two after a long day of protesting.” “I see,” he said. “I once did a major anti-corruption protest there back in 2013, with someone called Thambi Hazare.” “For some reason, I always thought it was Anna Hazare,” I said. “How did it go?” “We won,” Balu said. “People became aware. They

# Navi Mumbai airport and the making of a city

Like greenfield airports around the world that created tremendous opportunities for their regions and led to the making of global cities around them, the recently inaugurated and soon-to-open Navi Mumbai International Airport (NMIA) is poised to have a similar impact. Set up by Adani Airports and state entity CIDCO, it is expected to transform the Ulwe-Panvel corridor into an emerging global city and a real estate gold mine.

This airport was first conceived about 35 years ago. It is expected to not only ease the burden on Mumbai’s existing airport but also to emerge as the epicentre of economic and real estate transformation. “We are seeing a pattern of building new airports in India emerging from Navi Mumbai to Noida’s Jewar and earlier in Hyderabad and Bengaluru. It begins with rapid-fire infrastructure upgrades such as expressways and Metro connections, and then proceeds to the development of aerocities,” said Anuj Puri, chairman, Anarock Group.

“These include commercial office spaces, hotels, retail, and logistics hubs within a 5km to 10km radius. Housing demand rises by between 20% and 30%, more or less in tandem with the rate of job generation. Naturally, this results in prices rising by anywhere between 10% and 20% annually in the first few years,” he said. “Such airport-based ecosystems emulate the best practices seen around the world and gradually become self-sustaining economic zones in their own right. They will draw in massive aeronautical and non-aeronautical revenue over the coming years,” he added. Obviously, early investors in micro-markets near airports have a strong first-mover advantage and will turn very decent profits as India’s aviation industry continues to grow, he pointed out. With the NMIA, the second airport in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) is becoming a reality. The real estate price in the airport’s catchment area, which is already galloping, is headed for skyrocketing growth.

As more airport staff and airline crew would soon populate this region, the added demand would be created for residential real estate. Demand for commercial real estate would also see a quantum jump, sending the prices upwards. Earlier this month, the airport was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The flight operations have been scheduled to commence from December. “Navi Mumbai is poised to further elevate its status as a premier global metropolitan destination,” said Karan Singh Sodi, senior managing director (Mumbai MMR & Gujarat) and head-alternatives, India, JLL. He said the integrated infrastructure — encompassing rail, road, and metro connectivity — would unlock unprecedented avenues for growth across all segments of real estate. “The seamless last-mile connectivity and strategic positioning of the airport are setting new benchmarks for urban development, economic opportunity, and global connectivity, reaffirming Navi Mumbai’s emergence on the world stage,” he emphasised. As per recent data released by Magicbricks, a real estate platform, the average property rates have climbed from ₹9,981 per sq.ft. in Q3 2023 to ₹14,299 per sq. ft in Q3 2025, marking a remarkable 43.26% increase. In the last two quarters alone, prices have jumped by 15%, underlining the city’s emergence as a high-growth investment corridor. “During the last quarter, with the news of the new airport starting soon, the buyer demand rose 6.4% quarter-on-quarter (QoQ), while supply declined 10.7% QoQ, underscoring heightened competition in a tightening market,” the platform mentioned. Popular micro-markets such as Panvel (₹14,400 psf), Kharghar (₹16,900 psf), and Talaja (₹9,500 psf) have emerged as top choices, attracting first-time buyers and investors alike, analysts said. Stating that the inauguration of the airport would redefine the growth trajectory of the MMR, real estate developer and president of CREDAI-MCHI, Sukhraj Nahar, said that now with the airport, Navi Mumbai’s stature would be truly realised as a ‘global city.’ According to him, the reduction in travel time between key nodes such as Panvel, Kharghar, Ulwe, Dronagiri and Mumbai’s core business districts, would further strengthen the region’s economic fabric. Tata Realty and Infrastructure, a major player in residential and commercial real estate, is of the view that the airport would be a game-changer for the region, driving an expected 3% capital value appreciation till 2027 specifically for the IT sector. Its aerotropolis-style development, integrating business, housing, retail, and logistics — creates one of India’s most efficient, future-ready, and economically vibrant hubs,” said Sanjay Dutt, MD & CEO, Tata Realty and Infrastructure Ltd. “We are already seeing strong traction across commer-

voted out all corrupt leaders in 2014. Since then India has enjoyed a clean government led by caring politicians who are not at all dynastic or nepotistic.” Exactly,” I said. “So where is the need for protests?” “Still, some harmless protests are needed to maintain the façade that we are a democracy.” Don’t disturb tourists! wasn’t convinced. Even if we do need performative protests, do they have to be in a public place? Jantar Mantar, a tourist attraction, is now listed on Google as a ‘protest site’. Its rating of 4.4/5 would have puzzled Maharaja Jai Singh II. As it is, tourist traffic is falling. Now, even the two-three foreigners who come to see Jantar Mantar will go back thinking injustices are rampant in a great country like India. Is that necessary? History tells us that all bad things — like communism, human rights, MGNREGA — came from protests. That’s why the British banned protests in New Delhi. Now even the British are gone. So why do we need protests at all? But I understand some people are temperamentally protest-prone. They can’t help it. Fine. Protest if you must. But then do it in ways that benefit the nation. Protest by paying more tax, or by donating your EPF money to the government. But don’t occupy a public space and make a nuisance — that’s the old way. There are a thousand new ways that don’t require a protest site. Build your life around injustice For instance, if you are as great as you think you are, you must have won some award by now — return that award in protest. If you have no awards to return, then work hard to win one, then return it. So many people won Nobel Prizes this month. If you’ve won any, you could decline it in protest. Or, if you’re looking for something easier than the Nobel, you could win an Oscar, like Satyajit Ray did, and turn your acceptance speech into a protest speech that will reverberate around the world. But if you can’t win a Nobel or an Oscar or any other return-worthy award, then shut up and sit down, or take a knee, like the Indian cricket team did. If you can’t take a knee because of arthritis, take a boat, like Greta did. And that’s what I told Balu also. “C’m on,” he said. “Have you never been to a Bono concert? Surely you know that protesting against injustice can also be fun, with singing, dancing, catching up with old friends?” “No,” I said. “I am not the protesting type. Injustice is a part and parcel of life. If you’re smart, instead of protesting it, you’ll build your life around injustice.”



cial, residential, retail, and data centre segments. Commercial segment has already witnessed a notable uptick in demand from domestic corporates as well as global players looking to set up GCC units in the market,” Dutt said. Highlighting that commercial demand would likely be fuelled by the development of logistics parks, offices and hotels, Anshuman Magazine, chairman & CEO, South-East Asia, Middle East & Africa, CBRE, said the airport would catalyse transit-oriented development, further amplified by its synergy with other mega-projects like Mumbai Trans Harbour Link (MTHL), and Navi Mumbai Metro Line 1. As per estimates by PropEquity, over 1 lakh units each have been launched and sold in Navi Mumbai in 2022-2025 (till August). Close to 75% of the units launched and 80% of the units sold were priced under ₹1 crore in 2024. The share of the affordable segment is the largest in launch and absorption in 2024. The majority of consumers are more inclined towards affordable segment houses (₹50 lakh). According to the firm, the demand for homes is so high that the inventory overhang reached a historic low of 14 months in 2024, the lowest since 2020. This greenfield airport will further accelerate the growth, driving sustained demand and significant price appreciation, presenting lucrative long-term investment opportunities,” said Vimal Nadar, national director & head of research, Colliers India. “Further, Navi Mumbai’s strategic positioning as a sub-dollar office market [monthly leasing rates below a dollar], coupled with enhanced connectivity and global access offered by the airport, is expected to drive heightened office leasing activity in the area over the next few years,” he added. The proposed aerocity in the vicinity, designed to seamlessly integrate top-notch commercial, residential, and recreational spaces, will foster a new urban ecosystem that blends work and lifestyle, he added. “The market response has been strong, with apartment prices in the Panvel region rising by nearly 74% between FY 2021 and FY 2025, compared to 45% growth across the rest of Navi Mumbai. The airport is set to drive the next wave of value creation, reinforcing Panvel’s position as one of the most promising growth hubs not only within the MMR but beyond,” said Deepak Khandelwal, principal partner and chief sales officer, Square Yards. NMIA’s inauguration comes at a time when Navi Mumbai and its surrounding growth corridors are witnessing unprecedented infrastructure development. Enhanced mobility The Atal Setu (MTHL) — India’s longest sea bridge — has already bridged the gap between South Mumbai and Navi Mumbai, cutting travel time to less than an hour. Complementing this will be the Mumbai Metro Line 8, connecting T2 of the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA) to the Navi Mumbai International Airport (NMIA), offering smooth intra-city mobility. The Panvel-Karjat railway line, currently under advanced development, will strengthen linkages between Navi Mumbai, Raigad, and the hinterland, paving the way for new residential and industrial clusters. Together, these mega infrastructure projects are positioning the Navi Mumbai region as one of the most promising investment destinations in India’s real estate landscape, according to analysts. Big urban centre Among the biggest beneficiaries of this infrastructure wave is Panvel, which has steadily evolved from a peripheral suburb to the next big urban centre. With its proximity to the airport and connectivity via the MTHL, Metro, and rail corridors, Panvel is now emerging as the preferred choice for integrated townships and self-sustained communities. Navin Makhija, managing director of The Wadhwa Group, said, “The inauguration of the Navi Mumbai International Airport marks a transformative moment for Navi Mumbai and the Panvel region. The region’s accessibility, connectivity from the main Mumbai city and infrastructure undertaken within the region have made it an ideal destination for large-scale development, and its growth is inevitable.”



# High capex to sustain growth, private investment also coming: FM Nirmala Sitharaman



High capex to sustain growth, pvt investment also coming: SitharamanUnion Minister for Finance Nirmala Sitharaman poses with her team for a photo op before leaving to present the Budget in New Delhi on Sunday. (Express Photo by Tashi Tobgyal)Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said Thursday the government's primary objective is to sustain growth, and even though the private sector is "moving out of the passive mode to invest", her ministry has continued with the heavy lifting in capital spending in the Budget for 2026-27. In an interview to The Indian Express, Sitharaman said, "At the moment we are looking at sustaining growth and therefore, we will have to do it, so we are doing it. That will be our primary object — sustaining growth." The government has allocated Rs 12.22 lakh crore towards capex for next year, which is more than 11.5 per cent compared with 2025-26.

The Finance Minister, however, said that there is a clear sign that one is able to see the private sector coming out to invest. "Investments earning passive income are now moving to investments in expanding capacities or setting up new businesses. This may be happening more in partnerships with people in the newer, frontier sectors, and prob-

ably less — this is a bit too early — in the usual core manufacturing, old industries. There are signs they are coming forward," she said. Sitharaman also said that the sentiment of global investors is changing. "Countries like Norway, Canada are showing keen interest for their pension funds and large sovereign funds to come here. But there are some in North America, big fund managers, who wait and watch to see which way the trend moves, and then take a call. After the call between the (US) President and (India) Prime Minister, I get the feeling the stock market in India, particularly, the rupee has covered some lost ground," she said.

Union budget, Union Minister for Finance Nirmala Sitharaman poses with her team for a photo op before leaving to present the Budget in New Delhi on Sunday. (Express Photo by Tashi Tobgyal)Responding to a question if she was being conservative in the estimates of the 10 per cent nominal GDP growth rate, Sitharaman said it was a "realistic" estimation. "I think I have been realistic in the way in which I have assessed what kind of growth (rates) are possible. It's not conservative... I've also maintained that I come up with realistic numbers and we are able to also achieve each one of them. Even this year, it was very realistic," she said. The Finance Minister also defended the Budget move to tax capital gains on sovereign gold bonds in the secondary market. "This scheme was for people who take it at the issuance and who will hold it till maturity. But leaving that aside, if you procured or you've taken it from the secondary market, you're not in the same category, are you?" When pressed if the rules were changed midway, she said the Budget announcement was a clarification. On hiking the Securities Transaction Tax on futures and options despite the sharp reduction in trading volumes, Sitharaman said, "Even after (the interventions by Sebi), the market regulator came up with a report that 90 per cent of people who are participating in futures and options were losing money... that study is the answer for your question."

# Profit-booking leading FIIs to sell; investments yielding good returns: FM

foreign institutional investorsFinance secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey said foreign investors keep moving their investments depending upon where they want to park their fundsFinance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday said the current outflows from foreign institutional investors (FIIs) is a result of profit booking by them as their domestic investments have delivered good returns. "FIIs also go out when they are in a position to book profits. The Indian economy today has an environment in which investments are also yielding good returns and profit booking (by overseas investors) is also happening," Sitharaman said during the post Budget interaction with the media. Foreign investors have been relentlessly selling domestic equities since the beginning of 2025. So far (till February 17), they have offloaded Rs 1.04 lakh crore of local shares.

Finance secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey said foreign investors keep moving their investments depending upon where they want to park their funds. He said it was not true that these investors are moving from one emerging market to another. The secretary said whenever there is global uncertainty, foreign investors return to their origin country, which is largely the US. "In terms of resilience, Indian markets have held. The strength of the Indian economy will continue to grow despite global headwinds," Pandey said. He said the country has faced global headwinds in the past and continues to face it but it is in a strong position to handle challenges.

When asked about the tariff wars and the risk of reciprocal tariffs from the US, Sitharaman said India has been taking several measures from the last two years. "This Budget shows that there is a lot of rationalisation happening in terms of basic customs duty and their application, safeguard duties or any anti-dumping duties that we levy are also periodically reviewed. And this Budget shows that there is a major step forward in reforming India's customs duty



and that regime which governs it""We are building to be an investor friendly country and as a result, the duty cuts and the rationalisation that has been announced is a continuing process and we shall keep doing that," she said. To a query on how the government was attempting to manage spill overs of rising inflation due to geopolitical pressures and tariffs wars around the globe, the finance minister said the inflation is being monitored regularly, both from the supply side and from the monetary side by the RBI. She said inflation has been well within a certain band, and the last print showed that it has come down, very close to 4 per cent. Consumer price index (CPI) eased to a five-month low of 4.31 per cent in January from 5.22 per cent in December. "That is one of the reasons why the RBI has chosen to cut the interest rate after nearly 5 years. So inflation related management of supplies and also the monetary policy are working in sink and that is going on in order to favour the growth cycle," she said. Earlier this month, the RBI reduced the repo rate — the key policy rate — by 25 basis points (bps) to 6.25 per cent, after keeping it at 6.5 per cent for almost five years. One basis point (bps) is one-hundredth of a percentage point.

# Raising insurance cover for depositors above Rs 5 lakh under active consideration: Financial Services Secretary M Nagaraju



The government is considering increasing the insurance cover limit on bank deposits from the current Rs 5 lakh per depositor, Financial Services Secretary M Nagaraju said on Monday. The announcement comes in the wake of the recent clampdown on Mumbai-based New India Cooperative Bank by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). The regulator imposed several restrictions on the bank in the wake of certain supervisory concerns, and also superseded its Board of Directors for 12 months, citing "poor governance standards". "...On the point about increasing (deposit) insurance, that is under active consideration. As and when the government approves, we will notify it," Nagaraju said when questioned about the government's action plan in the New India Cooperative Bank case and if there was a possibility of revising the Rs 5 lakh per depositor insurance cover. Noting that the RBI was seized of the New India Cooperative Bank matter, the secretary refused to comment on it. The cooperative bank has a network of 30 branches and a deposit base of Rs 2,436 crore as of March 2024. The bank had posted losses of Rs 22.78 crore in 2023-24 and Rs 30.74 crore in 2022-23. Post the RBI's action, the bank's depositors have been queuing up before its branches to withdraw their money. Currently, each bank depositor is insured up to a maximum of Rs 5 lakh for both principal and interest amount held by him as on the date of liquidation or cancellation of the bank's licence or the date on which the scheme of amalgamation or merger or reconstruction comes into force. The insurance cover to depositors is provided by the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC), a subsidiary of the RBI.

According to the RBI, the eligible depositors of the New

mentals remain constructive.

# ‘The body can still be covered a bit’: When Chhaava actor Akshaye Khanna opened up about premature balding at 19-20



Chhaava actor Akshaye Khanna once spoke about how premature balding at a young age affected his self-confidence. "It started happening to me at such a young age. For me, it was like a pianist losing his fingers. It almost felt like that in those days. Till you come to terms with it. It then starts bothering you less. It's heartbreaking," said Khanna. "You might lose a year or two years of your career. Because the way you look as an actor is very important. Especially the face. The body can still be covered a bit. At 19-20, it is devastating. It is heartbreaking. It can mentally kill you," Khanna told Mid Day in 2020, adding that it did "affect my self-confidence a lot as a young actor." "It did affect more than I would like to admit," he expressed. Taking a cue from his admission, let's understand all about premature balding and how it affects one.

Premature balding at 19-20 years of age can be caused

# All about ‘kakeibo’, the Japanese technique to manage your money better

Discover Kakeibo, the Japanese money-saving technique that promotes mindful spending and financial awareness. Learn how this simple budgeting method can help you save more and spend smarter. Discover Kakeibo, the Japanese money-saving technique that promotes mindful spending and financial awareness. Learn how this simple budgeting method can help you save more and spend smarter. Financial mindfulness has become more important than ever in an age of impulsive spending and digital transactions. Enter Kakeibo (pronounced kah-keh-bo), a J that has been around for over a century. Rooted in mindfulness and simplicity, Kakeibo isn't just about tracking expenses—it's about developing a thoughtful, intentional approach to money.

What Is Kakeibo?

Kakeibo (meaning "household finance ledger") was introduced in 1904 by Hani Motoko, Japan's first female journalist. The system encourages individuals to write down their income and expenses manually, promoting a deep awareness of spending habits. Unlike modern budgeting apps, Kakeibo is traditionally practiced with pen and paper, fostering a personal connection to money management. At its core, Kakeibo involves asking yourself four key questions every month: By analysing spending patterns and setting realistic goals, Kakeibo helps you make intentional financial decisions rather than falling into mindless consumption. After each choice or coin flip, participants had to assign money to another person (the same person each time). By integrating Kakeibo into your financial routine, you can cultivate better money habits, reduce unnecessary expenses, and achieve long-term financial stability. Mindful



Spending Unlike automated budget trackers, Kakeibo requires you to physically write down expenses. This act of recording creates an emotional connection to your spending, making you more mindful about where your money is going. Kakeibo encourages financial introspection. Instead of buying something impulsively, it asks you to consider whether the purchase aligns with your financial goals. Over time, this awareness leads to better spending habits. A unique aspect of Kakeibo is its emphasis on saving before spending. Instead of saving what's left after expenses, you allocate savings first, making financial security a priority. Unlike restrictive budgeting methods, Kakeibo is flexible and sustainable. It doesn't rely on apps or complex spreadsheets—just a notebook and a commitment to mindful spending. By integrating Kakeibo into your financial routine, you can cultivate better money habits, reduce unnecessary expenses, and achieve long-term financial stability.

# Gen Z has added a new dating term to their dictionary: Chameleoning

Gen Z-ers, known for their evolving perspectives on relationships, has coined a new term in their ever-growing dating dictionary: 'chameleoning.' The concept captures a familiar yet often overlooked behaviour in modern dating — changing one's personality, interests, or behaviour to blend in with a partner's preferences. This might be a survival strategy for some, while others see it as a red flag that signals a lack of authenticity or self-identity. But what drives this phenomenon? Is it a harmless way to connect with someone or a deeper sign of insecurity and a need for acceptance?

Dr Sneha Sharma, psychiatrist and co-founder, Anvaya Healthcare mentions, "Some individuals mould their personalities according to their partner's expectations and preferences, and this is often referred to as 'chameleoning' or changing colours to blend into the relationship. While compromising and adapting to your partner's preferences and needs can be helpful in building relationships, it can become problematic if it's at the expense of one person's authentic self." Psychological factors behind chameleoning There are several factors behind this behaviour, according to Dr Sharma. These are:—Strong need for external validation and approval can drive individuals to mould themselves to fit in their partners' ideal version. Fear of rejection also leads individuals to hide their true feelings and preferences. They feel that they will only be liked and accepted if they fall within their partners' ideas of them. Low self-esteem and poor sense of self can lead to negative views of self. A partner might not feel worthy of love and affection and hence hide their true self. Some individuals prefer avoiding conflict in a relationship. They either feel incompetent to put across their values and priorities or feel that their voices and concerns will not be heard and addressed correctly. Some individuals also see a relationship without conflict as an ideal relationship and strive to fit in that. Open communication will lead to both partners communicating their point of views and arriving at consensus or agreeing to disagree. Open communication will lead to both partners communicating their point of views and arriving at consensus or agreeing to disagree. (Source: Freepik)

Impact of chameleoning on relationships

Dr Sharma says, "While chameleon might initially help in creating a bond and reducing conflict it can have detrimental consequences in the long run, both individually and for the relationship." The person who is constantly trying to fit in will develop a growing sense of resentment and frustration which will lead to dissatisfaction in the relationship. Lack of authenticity will lead to lack of connection between partners leading to fractures in the relationship. Additionally, increasing distance as both partners cannot connect and don't feel understood or seen. Difference between adapting to a partner's preferences and losing one's sense of self in the process Adapting is healthy behaviour which in-



volves mutual understanding and respect and hence leading to behaviour change which resonates with both partners. This strengthens the values and identity of both individuals and the relationship," explains Dr Sharma. Losing a sense of self means a person suppresses their own authentic identity, feelings, values and preferences and hence can no longer recognise or relate to themselves. Advice for someone who feels they are 'chameleoning' in their relationship Here's what Dr Sharma says you should do: 1. Regular introspection about your own feelings and values can allow you to be aware when you feel inauthentic. 2. Open communication will lead to both partners communicating their point of views and arriving at consensus or agreeing to disagree. 3. ?Boundaries need to be established to protect your own interests and feelings while still being supportive and considerate of your partners needs. 4. Consider talking to a counsellor or psychotherapist if you struggle with expressing yourself in a healthy manner. Work on self-esteem issues and together in a relationship, if necessary.

# Elon Musk launches ‘the smartest AI on earth’

Hyderabad: Elon Musk-owned xAI has launched its AI chatbot Grok-3. The Tesla chief calls it 'the smartest AI on Earth.' At the launch event, Musk explained why he chose the name 'Grok'. "The term comes from Robert Heinlein's novel Stranger in a Strange Land. It's used by a character raised on Mars and means to fully and profoundly understand something." He also stressed that deep understanding and empathy were some of the key aspects of Grok's capabilities. The company claimed that Grok-3 has over 10 times the computing capability of its predecessor. Musk said the AI model completed pre-training in January and is already improving by the day.



## Jemimah Rodrigues named new Delhi Capitals captain ahead of WPL 2026



GNS News Agency, Feb 8

Indian batter Jemimah Rodrigues was announced as the new captain of Delhi Capitals (DC) on Tuesday, ahead of the fourth season of the Women's Premier League (WPL) 2026, which will commence on January 9 in Navi Mumbai. The 25-year-old, who was one of DC's retained players ahead of the WPL mega auction in November, will take over from Meg Lanning, who was released by the three-time finalists before the auction.

"It is an absolute honour to be named captain of the Delhi Capitals, and I am deeply grateful to the owners and the support staff for placing their faith in me to lead this team. It has truly been a dream year for me and my family, winning the World Cup and now being entrusted with this wonderful opportunity at a franchise that has held a very special place in my heart since the very first season of the WPL," said Rodrigues in a DC statement. "I have learned so much over the last three years and have shared some

of my best moments with the Delhi Capitals. This team is my family. While I will miss the players who were part of our journey in the first cycle, I am excited to create new memories with both familiar faces and new teammates. We have a strong group, and I can't wait to get going as we look ahead to what we hope will be a very successful season, and finally cross that line that has eluded us in the last three years."

Franchise owner Parth Jindal had announced on auction day that DC was looking for an Indian player to lead the side, ahead of the new season. "I think we are very clear that we would like to have an Indian as the captain. So, depending on you know, what who else we land. We already have our mind made up, but let's see what happens. Laura (Wolvaardt) will add a lot of leadership into the dressing room, but we are clear that we want to go with an Indian captain," Jindal had said. Rodrigues has scored 507 runs in 27 matches for DC at a strike rate of 139.66 with three half-centuries. She was vice-captain to Lanning for the first three seasons of the league. After her appointment, Rodrigues credited Lanning for the way she had led the side and inspired her with her presence. "We are gonna win this year. That's the change I want to bring. Credit to Meg, too, for the way she has led the team over the last three years and the culture she has set for the team. She has inspired me and I have to owe that credit to her," Rodrigues told Parth Jindal in an interaction. The right-hander was part of India's victorious ODI World Cup campaign and played a central role in her side entering the final with an unbeaten 127 off 134 balls in the semi-final against Australia. Rodrigues made an unbeaten 69 against Sri Lanka in the first T20I at Visakhapatnam, helping India chase down the target of 122 runs with eight wickets in hand and more than five overs to spare.

## Rohit Sharma at Vijay Hazare: Up to 3,000 spectators expected, extra security, a star-struck Sikkim team

GNS News Agency, Feb 8

Leeyong Lepcha, the 34-year-old offspinner from Gangtok, believes Wednesday will be the biggest match he has ever played as captain. What would have otherwise been a nondescript game of the Vijay Hazare Trophy, between domestic cricket minnows Sikkim and giants Mumbai, has been given heavier weightage thanks to the man opening the batting for the latter team. "It is not every day that we get the opportunity to go up against a player of Rohit Sharma's stature," Leeyong told reporters. "It is huge for us to compete against him and just be in his shadow, just be around him. If we can go back home and share this experience, it will definitely help more youngsters take up the sport." Two months ago, as Rohit fended off and narrowly escaped a fiery spell from Josh Hazlewood on a bouncy, seaming track in Adelaide to labour to a 97-ball 73, all sorts of speculation was drawn about his future in international cricket. On a lowkey afternoon at the Sawai Mansingh Stadium here on Tuesday, as he joined dozens of other players in the domestic cricket grind, training on the eve of the opening fixture of India's premier 50-over tournament, a lot of the confusion seems to have settled.

Rohit Sharma VHT Mumbai team player Rohit Sharma during a net practice session ahead of thier Vijay Hazare Trophy Match against Sikkim at Sawai Mansingh Stadium in Jaipur on Tuesday. (Express Photo by Rohit Jain Paras) The 38-year-old batting star, now only playing the ODI format, seemingly wishes to have one last shot at a World Cup title, with cricket's marquee tournament taking place in two years' time in South Africa-Namibia-Zimbabwe. The question over his form has been answered: three of his four innings since the game in Adelaide have been 50+ scores. That includes a match-winning, unbeaten 121 in the third ODI in Australia in Sydney, and two half-centuries in India's 2-1 home series win over South Africa. Determination does not seem to be lacking either. That Rohit has shown up for two league-stage fixtures, the next one is on Friday against Uttarakhand, which are not even going to be televised, says what needs to be said. The BCCI may well have forced his and Virat Kohli's hands; the new diktat does not allow even the glittering stars any reprieve from fine-tuning their games on the domestic circuit. Even more so if they only play one format and have big gaps in between their international schedules. The long debates around that diktat may well continue to rage on. Will Rohit's form improve in any way by facing two teams that don't have a single player who has ever represented



India in their ranks? Does his presence help Mumbai fare better if he just disappears after two games? Is this merely a case of ticking off a box – for the star to prove his motivation and for the board and Indian team management to prove the seriousness of their orders? To the fans who will turn up to catch a glimpse, none of those questions matter.

And unlike in Bengaluru, where Kohli's mad faithful have been denied a chance to watch him play due to orders from the state government to have the games behind closed doors, preparation for a crowd of around 2,000-3,000 strong fans has been made in Jaipur. The East stand, with a capacity of around 5,000, has been opened for the public who can watch the match free of cost, as is the norm in domestic games. More seating can be made available if needed. Security has been beefed up too after Yashasvi Jaiswal faced a scare from over-excited fans here during a Ranji Trophy game last month. After many of them descended upon the dressing room for pictures and autographs, Jaiswal had to make a hushed back-door exit. Local authorities are hoping to avoid that kind of lapse this time around. On Tuesday, a few fans even got the chance to watch Rohit train at the RCA Academy ground, just behind the stadium. His languid hour-long session in the nets, with him seemingly preparing for facing new-ball seamers, playing everything late and under his eyes, was watched by small groups, mostly full of kids, who thronged to him even in the brief windows of opportunity during his entry and exit. The fanfare has extended to the opposition, too. Leeyong hopes that Sikkim's playing group will get to have a chat with Rohit after the game. "We want to ask him about his mindset as a player who has played at the highest level for so long, won so many things. We won't ask him about the pull shot! He's the best, nobody can play it like him," Sikkim's beaming captain says.

## India's Deepti Sharma tops ICC Women's T20I bowling rankings for first time in career



GNS News Agency, Feb 8

India allrounder Deepti Sharma, who was part of the ODI World Cup winning team one and a half months ago, now has another feather in her cap when she became the top-ranked bowler in the T20I ICC rankings for the first time in her career. Deepti took 1 wicket for 20 runs in the 1st T20I match of the ongoing Sri Lanka series which was enough for her to dethrone Australia fast bowler Annabel Sutherland, pipping her by one rating point to sit at the top of the table with 737 points. This was the latest in the spate of good news that have come Deepti's way with the allrounder bought back by UP Warriorz for Rs 3.2 crore at the Women's Premier League (WPL) 2026 auction last month after entering at a base price of Rs 50 lakhs.

The all-rounder was initially bought by Delhi Capitals (DC) for Rs 50 lakh, but the UP Warriorz opted to use the Right-to-Match (RTM) card. DC valued her at Rs 3.2 crore, and the Warriorz accepted the bid to regain the player in their squad. Deepti also had a terrific ODI World Cup becoming the top wicket taker of the tournament with 22 scalps.

Meanwhile, Pacer Arundhati Reddy has climbed up five places to be 36th while spinner Shree Charani is up 19 places to 69th. Jemimah Rodrigues, who was adjudged the player of the match in Visakhapatnam for her unbeaten 69

off 44 balls, moved up five spots to ninth among T20I batters while vice-captain Smriti Mandhana continues to be the top ranked Indian, occupying the third spot. Shefali Verma who has moved down a spot to 10. On the other hand, South Africa skipper Laura Wolvaardt has replaced Mandhana as the No.1 batter in the women's ODI batting rankings. Wolvaardt slammed successive centuries in the second and third matches of their home series against Ireland – 124 and 100 not out – to run up a nine-point lead over the India opener and reach a career-best 820 rating points.

## Iniyar wins Ekagra International Open Rapid Chess Tournament in Hyderabad

Hyderabad: The prize distribution ceremony of the Ekagra International Open Rapid Chess Tournament held at the second hall of Hitec Exhibition Centre in Hyderabad was conducted with great pomp. Iniyar from Chennai, who emerged as the winner of the tournament, was awarded the first prize with prize money of Rs 5 lakh. Mitroba Guha was awarded Rs 3 lakh as the second prize and Harikrishna received Rs 1 lakh as the third prize. The remaining amount, Rs 13 lakh 22 thousand 222, was distributed to the winners according to their various categories and rankings.

Speaking at the event as the chief guests, Varun Agarwal and tournament chairman Panasha Agarwal said that chess plays a very important role in developing concentration and intelligence in children. They said that to excel in this sport, one has to practice hard and continuous effort is the way to success. Congress leader Feroz Khan said it was a joy to organize such an international level chess tournament in Hyderabad.

## Indonesia's Gede Priandana becomes first bowler to take 5 wickets in an over in T20Is



GNS News Agency, Feb 8

Gede Priandana Indonesia Priandana has played 63 T20I matches for Indonesia and has scored 1040 runs with a high score of 65 not out. He has also taken 24 wickets in the 63 matches he has played with his 5/1 against Cambodia his best bowling figures. Indonesia's Gede Priandana made history on Tuesday when he became the first bowler to take 5 wickets in an over in a T20I match. Priandana notched up the feat in Indonesia's match vs Cambodia in the 1st T20I at Bali. Cambodia were 106-5 needing 168 for victory when Priandana was called on to bowl the 16th over and the 28-year-old absolutely ran through the middle and lower order in a seven-ball over, handing the Indonesians a 60 run win. The right-armers dismissed Shah Abrar

Hussain, Nirmaljit Singh and Chanthoeun Rathanak in successive deliveries to complete his hat-trick and followed up with a dot ball. Priandana then removed Mongdara Sok and Pel Vennak with the last two legitimate deliveries of his over, separated by a wide, to bundle out Cambodia for 107.

Earlier, Dharma Kesuma slammed 110 runs which helped Indonesia post 167 runs. Etienne Beukes and Shah Abrar Hussain had taken 2 wickets each for Cambodia. Priandana had scored 6 off 11 while opening the batting for Indonesia. Priandana has played 63 T20I matches for Indonesia and has scored 1040 runs with a high score of 65 not out. He has also taken 24 wickets in the 63 matches he has played with his 5/1 against Cambodia his best bowling figures. Bangladesh's Al-Amin Hossain and Indian Abhimanyu Mithun had claimed five wickets in an over in domestic T20 matches.

There are 14 instances of bowlers claiming four wickets in an over in international matches, including Sri Lankan Lasith Malinga's four in four balls against New Zealand in a T20 in 2019. West Indies bowler Jason Holder also picked 4 in an over in 2022 against England while Ireland's Curtis Campher also pulled off that feat against Netherlands in 2021. In the IPL, Yuzvendra Chahal and Andre Russell have also taken 4 wickets in an over for Punjab Kings and Kolkata Knight Riders against Kolkata Knight Riders and Gujarat Titans respectively. Both of them notched up this feat in IPL 2022.

## 'It's been a challenging time': Tahlia McGrath opens up on form struggles in Women's World Cup and why she didn't pick up her bat after WBBL

GNS News Agency, Feb 8

Australian vice-captain and allrounder Tahlia McGrath has admitted she underperformed at the 2025 Women's World Cup, adding that it was 'probably' the toughest period of her career. The 30-year-old said that she was trying her best to ensure her WBBL side, Adelaide Strikers, got to the finals, but one part of her mind also wished for a breather from the game. McGrath made a mere 69 runs in eight matches at an average of 13.75 in the World Cup and also captained Australia in Alyssa Healy's absence for a couple of matches late in the group stage of the tournament. Australia couldn't win a record-extending eighth title after a stunning defeat to eventual champions India in the semi-final. "Cricket's a pretty brutal game, and it's very much based around confidence. And when it's not going your way, the world gets pretty big on you. I definitely underperformed and felt the pressure a bit." "Probably (on whether it was the toughest period of her career). I think you add captaincy into that, you add time away from home, and, obviously, when you lose a World Cup, it's pretty hard to get over as well. It's been a challenging time." "As much as I was doing everything possible to get us playing some finals cricket [in the WBBL], I was hanging out for a bit of a break," McGrath



said. The allrounder opted against playing in the Women's Premier League in India in January, and once the Strikers were out of contention for a WBBL finals spot, decided against picking up a bat. "It's properly distancing myself at the moment. There's not much point in me picking up a bat." "I wouldn't achieve much. So, it's get away from the game, go for walks along the beach, play a bit of golf, see some friends and family. And just refresh, get that energy back and put in the work after Christmas," she said.

## Vidit Gujrathi, India's flagbearer in chess for the past decade, shifts focus to 'vibe coding' chess apps for elite players

GNS News Agency, Feb 8

When a 41-player contingent from India heads to Qatar next week to compete at the prestigious FIDE World Rapid and Blitz Championship, one player's name will be conspicuous by its absence: Vidit Santosh Gujrathi. Currently playing in the Global Chess League for Triveni Continental Kings, Vidit says he has taken a 'conscious decision' to ease up on his chess. Instead, the veteran says he's focussing on his next act in the sport, which includes pursuits like vibe coding chess websites for other professional players.

Vidit says that next year, besides playing in the Tata Steel Rapid and Blitz in Kolkata, his tournament calendar is bare. "This is a conscious decision I took last year that I will reduce playing chess. I did not play in all the serious events that I could have this year. Before some tournaments like the Grand Swiss, where I had confirmed my participation, I was even thinking till the last minute should I play or not? I did not feel like playing," Vidit says. Taking a step back

Vidit says the need to take a step back from the sport and ease up on tournaments came after an 'intense burnout' he felt while chasing his world championship dream in the last cycle. He made it all the way to the elite eight-player Candidates tournament last year, but that pursuit took a toll. "After the Candidates I felt a burnout. And then I felt lost: 'Okay, I've reached the Candidates, now what? What is the next thing?' After that, I just did not feel the motivation. I gave around three years from 2021 to 2024 to this dream. I got very intense. In 2023, for example, I was working 14-16 hours a day, like non-stop thinking about chess. I am not doing that now. I personally feel that difference, and it bothers me a bit. But it was not sustainable. That got me questioning: Do I really want to keep up this schedule? Or do I want to take a step back? And when I was doing other things, I was enjoying it." The 31-year-old says he doesn't quite know what he will end up doing once the tournaments reduce to a trickle. He says he is open to mentoring youngsters and maybe 'living the dream of becoming world champion through someone else'. But for now, the pursuit that has caught his fantasy in earnest over the last couple of months is creating training tools for professional chess players: he's birthed at least three chess websites for elite players by 'vibe coding' them himself. Vibe coding is a way of creating software, a website, or an app by using artificial intelligence, where a human gives a prompt while AI writes the background code for the website or app. He also points out that he's received positive feedback already from GMs like Anish Giri and Vasif Duryarbayli in the couple of months the sites have been up and running.

Website launches In the first website (memory.viditchess), you are shown a position on the board for 10 seconds, before you try to recreate the position on a blank board. The second site (tactics.viditchess) uses games from tournaments like the recent FIDE World Cup to ask users to find the best move in an actual match situation. Vidit also has at least one more chess website that he's vibe coded, but he says that one's for his private use. "The already existing training tools are for the masses. Not for the elite level chess players. But these ones that I have made are for elite players, and they're free to use." Vidit says that he's always looked to create similar learning tools



to get better, but back in those days, the technology couldn't keep up with his ambitions. "I was always a person who enjoyed tech, gadgets, all that stuff. When I was working with Anish Giri in 2016, I tried to create a tool which would help with our opening preparation, thus reducing our manual work. But those times were very different. It was not so easy to do it. But we still managed to do something. Back then, I had to work with a software engineer. He would do it manually and give me that tool after two-three weeks. Even then, it might still have bugs. But right now, I can do it myself. I feel like I can solve my own problems. Such an enabler the year 2025 has been." As he reflects on his career, there are some regrets and some moments that make him proud. "Somewhere in my heart, I feel like I still haven't reached my potential. One of the regrets I have is that if I could get better control over my nerves or handle my emotions better, I would have added at least 30-40 points more to my ELO rating. But there's also the feeling that when I give my best, as I did for three years in the last cycle, I can reach the Candidates."

## India eye 12 golds on final day of BOXAM Elite International 2026

Hyderabad: Indians are in line to clinch 12 gold, eight in women's and four in men's section, on the final day of BOXAM Elite International 2026, following another session full of assured performances on Friday in Spain.

Leading the men's charge was Sachin (60kg), who extended his brilliant run with another dominant win over England's Jack Dryden. Over in the women's section, Olympic medallist Lovlina Borgohain (75kg) stormed through to the finals with a unanimous victory over Wales' Rosie Eccles. Held in La Nucia, Alicante, Spain, the BOXAM Elite 2026 has featured over 200 boxers from 20 nations. India (12) is the most well-represented nation in Saturday's finals—ahead of heavyweights Kazakhstan (11), Ukraine (5), and hosts Spain (4)—and is assured of at least one gold, with the Elite Women 54kg final being an all-Indian affair. India's women continued their strong showing with commanding semifinal wins across divisions, headlined by the confirmation of a gold in the 54kg category, where Preeti and Poonam will face off for the title. Elsewhere, Manju Rani (48kg),



## ‘I’ll play it drunk’: Vinod Khanna decided to get drunk on 99 sets, had a glass in his hand, reveal Raj and DK



The late legend Dharmendra continues to be remembered for his iconic turn in Sriram Raghavan’s Johnny Gaddar. Around the same time, another charismatic character left a lasting impression in a mad comic caper of that era, Raj and DK’s 99. The role was played by another yes-ter-year star, Vinod Khanna, who appeared in an extended cameo that remains immensely fun to watch even today. Recently, in an exclusive conversation with SCREEN, filmmaker duo Raj and DK revealed how Vinod Khanna was slightly tipsy during the shoot.

What Raj and DK said about shooting with Vinod Khanna

Recalling the experience, Raj said, “We just got two days with him to shoot, as he was in the middle of a lot of things. So I remember the first day, everybody was waiting, we were all scared. ‘Oh God, how do we direct?’ The fact that the word itself, you know, you have to go direct

Vinod Khanna, doesn’t sound easy. So we were waiting for Vinod ji. Then he called us inside. We went in and told him the scene. And I think he was tipsy.” Krishna DK then stepped in to explain exactly what had happened. “So, no, there were three scenes, and we were shooting them in sequence. So he played the first scene sober and we got done. And after the second scene, he called us to his van and said, ‘Listen, I’m going to play it tipsy. I’m going to be a little drunk.’ And we were like, ‘Oh sure, if that’s what you want to do. It doesn’t have to be.’ He said, ‘No, no, it’ll be good. I’ll play it drunk.’ But the thing is, he already had a glass in his hand. And when we came out, we decided that he had probably already made up his mind that he was going to have a few drinks. So we were like, let’s just take what we get, because we don’t know what will happen.”

Raj further added that the choice initially made them nervous, given how intoxicated performances are often portrayed in Hindi cinema. “We were very nervous because usually when actors get drunk, they do the same sort of typical acting that we have seen far too many times in Hindi movies. But Vinod ji played it really well, and that decision of him being a bit high also added some gravitas to the scene.” In the latter half of his career, Vinod Khanna appeared in very few films, but 99 continues to be remembered as a cult comedy. More recently, his second wife Kavita Khanna spoke to Loveena Tandon about the deeply personal phase of his life that drew him towards spirituality and Osho. She shared, “I think he started listening to Osho’s discourses as they went through a terrible period in their lives, with five deaths in the family, including people who were particularly close to him, like his mother. When his mother died, he went to the ashram and took sanyas. That’s how that journey began.”

## Dhurandhar actor takes a dig at Yashraj spy universe, Pathaan and Tiger: ‘ISI and RAW agents won’t dance together in Aditya Dhar film’

Aditya Dhar’s Dhurandhar is all anyone can talk about ever since its release. The film has put up behemoth numbers at the box office, and all of its characters are being talked about in depth. Fans are still trying to figure out the real-life inspirations behind the story, and in a recent interview, actor Ankit Sagar shed some light on the same. The actor, who played Javed Khanani in the film, also talked about what Dhurandhar’s success means for other film franchises. While talking to Siddharth Kannan, Sagar was first asked about whether Dhurandhar is based on the life of martyr Major Mohit Sharma AC SM. He denied any such connections and said, “People tend to latch onto similar things that they find in two people. They see the get-up or the story of where he went and think things like, ‘Oh, he must be Mohit Sharma,’ but I don’t think they (Dhar) took any inspiration from his life.”

He was also asked about Ranveer Singh’s real name in the film, which is later revealed to be Jaskirat Singh Ranghi. Hinting towards a similarly named character in Dhar’s film URI, Sagar was asked whether this similarity meant something or if it was just something to throw the audience off. Sagar replied, “Even I am confused about this connection. I don’t know exactly what the name signifies, and even I thought, ‘Oh, this name was in Uri as well.’ Nothing about this was in the script, and I don’t really know what they are doing. But they have to do something new and big. Like make people wonder who exactly Bade Sahab is.” He addressed R Madhavan’s character as well and said, “I haven’t discussed all this with the makers of the film. But everyone knows that Madhavan’s character is based on Ajit Doval. When I saw Maddy in the get-up, you could tell in one instant that he was playing Doval, and I almost didn’t recognise him.”

Political narrative in Dhurandhar Sagar was then asked whether Dhar was trying to make a political statement with the film, and he quickly said that he was never briefed about something like that. While he distanced himself from the idea, he also said that the film was based on real-life events, not any kind of propaganda. “I don’t have much to do with any political party or politician. Whatever has been portrayed actually took place in real life, for example, the scene about



fake notes. These things have happened in our country, and films like this are a lesson that all these mistakes should not be repeated.”

YRF Spy Universe Vs Dhurandhar The next question was about the spy universe on the other side of the road, YRF’s Spy Universe, and whether they will be able to hold their own against Dhurandhar. Without naming them, Sagar lauded Dhar for making a much more realistic film and said, “I want to work with everyone. Even they (YRF) have given hit films, but Dhurandhar is a film based on reality. At the same time, it is also a commercial film. It has everything that a good film should have. That is why Dhurandhar reached so many people. ISI and RAW agents won’t dance with each other in real life, but maybe they want to please all sides with their film. In order to make money from all sides.” The actor meant YRF films trying to please people both in India and Pakistan. Deepika Padukone and Shah Rukh Khan Deepika Padukone and Shah Rukh Khan in a still from Pathaan. The dancing comments are presumably digs on the characters of Katrina Kaif and Deepika Padukone, who both play ISI agents in Tiger and Pathaan, respectively. Directed by Aditya Dhar, the cast of Dhurandhar includes Ranveer Singh, Arjun Rampal, Sara Arjun, Akshaye Khanna, Sanjay Dutt, R Madhavan and Ankit Sagar.

## Mumtaz recalls visiting late Dharmendra at the hospital, was told ‘He’s on ventilator, aap kya dekhengi unko?’, recalls not attending his last rites



The veteran actor then said that she couldn’t attend his funeral as she wasn’t prepared to see his mortal remains. Recalling Dev Anand’s demise, she reasoned, “I didn’t go for the last rites. I wouldn’t have been able to see his mortal remains.

Veteran actor Mumtaz and late legend Dharmendra were a hit on-screen couple in Bollywood, in the 1960s-70s. They showcased their strong chemistry in several popular films, including, Loafer, Jheel Ke Us Paar, and many others. In fact, before Dharmendra passed away

last month, Mumtaz went to meet him at the hospital during his final days. In a recent interview, she opened up about her emotional visit and revealed that she couldn’t attend his funeral. During a chat with Vickey Lalwani, Mumtaz shared, “Yes, I went to the hospital. When I went there, I was told that doctors have said that he is on a ventilator – ‘Aap kya dekhengi unko?’ I just said that I would just like to see his glimpse. So, I went inside, saw him, he was looking good at that time as well, while lying down. After seeing him, I went out and some of his known people were standing there. I asked them to tell his family that I came to visit at the hospital, just to see him. Then, I left and went home.”

The veteran actor then said that she couldn’t attend his funeral as she wasn’t prepared to see his mortal remains. Recalling Dev Anand’s demise, she reasoned, “I didn’t go for the last rites. I wouldn’t have been able to see his mortal remains. When Dev sahab passed away... his hotel was near my house and many people rang the bell to call me to meet him, but I said no. He was such a chirpy and lively person, he taught me everything.” The host then asked about her visit to Dharmendra and his wife Prakash Kaur’s Mumbai house, a few years ago. “Yes, I met his wife. She was sitting with us. She met me very nicely and treated me well – asked properly to eat, drink, everything. My sister and Dharmendra ji were also sitting there,” she replied. While talking to ETimes earlier, Mumtaz had revealed in an interview that she went to visit the late star in the hospital, but wasn’t allowed to meet him. “I went to see him at the hospital, but the staff told me he was on the ventilator and no one was allowed to meet him.

## Mammootty urges people to trust one another beyond boundaries: ‘Let religions take their own course; we must...’



After a brief hiatus due to a health scare, Malayalam megastar Mammooty is back in the public eye and is also revelling in the success of his most recent movie, Kalamkaval, which has reportedly grossed over Rs 80 crore worldwide so far and earned acclaim for his performance as the antagonist. He recently inaugurated the valedictory session of the Indian Cultural Congress 2025, organised by the Department of Cultural Affairs, Government of Kerala, where he spoke at length about the importance of mutual trust among people that transcends religious boundaries. At a time when bigotry is becoming increasingly common, the megastar called upon the masses to prioritise humanity above everything else. He said, “Let religions take their own course. We must trust human beings. We are the ones who see one another, live together, breathe the same air and live

under the same sunlight. The sun, rain and water have no religion, caste or borders. Yet we constantly try to find differences in everything. My belief is that the attempt to create divisions is driven by selfish interests.”

Don’t Miss | ‘With Rs 400 from a Christian and money given by Muslim Mammooty, I tied a golden tali around my Hindu wife’: Sreenivasan on his marriage The actor added, “Culture is about recognising the presence of others. It is only when we acknowledge that we are not the only beings in this world, that billions of people and other living creatures also exist and have their rightful claim to this earth and its air, that we become truly culturally enriched.”

Maintaining that education does not, by default, ensure culture, Mammooty said, “Education is merely a part of culture. We have nurtured our own unique culture, and I think this event is meant to remind us of that. The most important thing is that humans trust one another.” ICYMI | Mohanlal and Priyadarshan’s most expensive film won 3 National Awards before release, but grossed less than half its budget The Malayalam megastar is currently busy with the production of the highly anticipated multi-starrer movie Patriot, helmed by Mahesh Narayanan. The movie also stars his fellow superstar Mohanlal, marking their on-screen reunion as central characters after a gap of 18 years since Twenty:20 (2008). Patriot’s production spans multiple locations, including Sri Lanka, London, Abu Dhabi, Azerbaijan, Thailand, Visakhapatnam, Hyderabad, Delhi, and Kochi. The movie also stars Nayanthara, Fahadh Faasil, Kunchacko Boban, Revathi, Darshana Rajendran, Zarin Shihab, Renji Panicker, Rajiv Menon, Prakash Belawadi, Danish Husain, Shaheen Siddique, and Sanal Aman in significant roles.

## Gulshan Devaiah says people should ‘move on’ from Ranveer Singh’s Kantara controversy: ‘We all make mistakes’

Ranveer Singh has been making headlines for his latest hit Dhurandhar, directed by Aditya Dhar. However, a week before the film’s release, the actor’s mimicry of Rishab Shetty’s Daiva in Kantara: A Legend – Chapter 1 at a public event led to widespread outrage. Now, Gulshan Devaiah, who played the role of King Kulashekhar in Kantara, has reacted to the controversy, calling it Ranveer’s ‘mistake’. The actor also opened up about his experience of working with the Kannada star in Kantara.

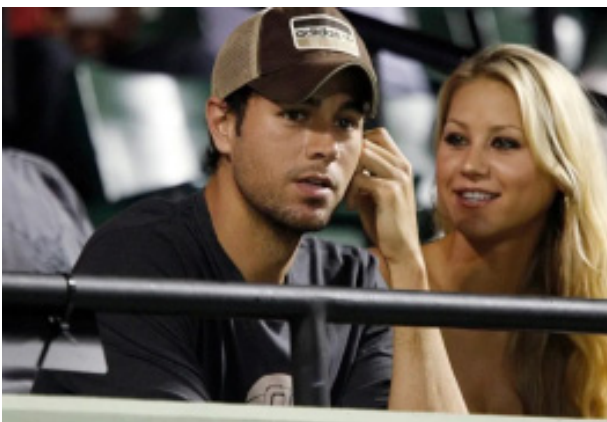
What Gulshan Devaiah said about Kantara controversy

During a recent interview with NDTV, Gulshan weighed in on the backlash Ranveer Singh faced after his mimicry and said, “My personal views are not popular views. I really don’t get affected by such things so much. But if somebody feels disrespected or something, I understand. Ranveer apologised as well. Let’s take it with that. I don’t know what his intent was – only he knows. We all make mistakes when we get excited, and that scene in the film was so integral and really affected us. It was very ‘romanchak’.” He continued, “I think it is part of certain people’s identity – those who belong to the Tulu community and live in that land. It’s part of their identity. They feel it is disrespectful to their culture, and that’s fine. From their perspective, it is correct. These things don’t affect me that much. But at the same time, since he apologised, we should just accept it and move on.” At the closing ceremony of IFFI (International Film Festival of India), Ranveer’s video of referring to Chamundi daiva as a female ghost and then mimicking the character on stage, went viral. The actor drew a lot of flak for his imitation. After the incident, he even issued an official apology and wrote a long note on social media. “My intention was to highlight Rishab’s incredible performance in the film. Actor to actor, I know how much it takes to perform that particular scene the way he did, for which he has my utmost admiration. I



have always deeply respected every culture, tradition, and belief in our country. If I’ve hurt anyone’s sentiments, I sincerely apologise,” he wrote in the post. On the work front, Gulshan Devaiah has a few projects in the pipeline, including Legacy with R Madhavan and Maa Inti Bangaram alongside Samantha Ruth Prabhu. On the other hand, Ranveer Singh is currently enjoying the success of Aditya Dhar’s Dhurandhar, which has crossed Rs 500 crore at the domestic box office. He will next be seen in the movie’s sequel, set to release in 2026.

## Enrique Iglesias welcomes fourth child with Anna Kournikova: ‘My sunshine’



Singer Enrique Iglesias has announced the birth of his fourth child. Enrique and his partner Anna Kournikova posted a picture of their newborn on social media, and the comments sections were flooded with congratulatory messages within minutes. The couple are already parents to twins Lucy and Nicholas and daughter Mary. The photo’s caption had the birth date of their child, “12/17/2025”, and the words “My

sunshine”. They are yet to reveal additional details such as the sex and name of the child. Fans and friends congratulated the duo on social media for starting this new chapter of their life. One fan wrote, “Wow. So happy for the two of you. The family just keeps growing,” while another commented, “Welcoming a new child into the world is one of life’s most profound blessings.” Columnist Perez Hilton wrote, “Congratulations. What a blessing!” Cuban model and host Lillie Estefan posted, “May God bless you,” while Puerto Rican actor Giselle Blondet just commented with a lot of heart emojis. According to a report by People magazine, a source close to the couple talked about the birth of their child and said, “They have proven to be great parents to their three children, and both of them love the process. They enjoy the activities and all that goes along with raising children.” Enrique Iglesias and Anna Kournikova first met in 2001, while Enrique was shooting the music video for his song “Escape.” Anna was a part of the shoot, and their chemistry translated off screen as well. They started dating soon after and have since then welcomed three children but never tied the knot. While Enrique has sold over 100 million records during his multi-decade career, Anna is a former professional tennis player, model and television personality.

## Amitabh Bachchan lauds Agastya Nanda’s performance in ‘Ikkis’

New Delhi: Bollywood superstar Amitabh Bachchan penned a heartfelt note for his grandson Agastya Nanda, praising his performance in “Ikkis” and said its nothing but the perfection in every shot.

In “Ikkis”, the 24-year-old actor essays the role of Khetarpal, who was martyred at the age of 21 during the Battle of Basantar in the 1971 Indo-Pak war. For his courage and sacrifice, he was posthumously awarded the Param Vir Chakra, making him the youngest recipient of India’s highest military honour at the time. Bachchan, who attended the

screening of the film on Monday in Mumbai, shared a note on his personal blog, lauding Nanda’s maturity and unfiltered honesty in his performance. “Tonight to see him in frame, unable to take my eyes off each time he fills the frames of the film .. his maturity, his unfiltered honesty in his performance, his presence justifying the character he portrays .. nothing frith or froth .. just the Arun Khetarpal soldier .. who fought in his bravery as the 21-year-old .. defending the nation during the India -Pak war of 1971 .. nothing excessive .. just the perfection in every shot,” he wrote.