

INDIAN CHRONICLE

10 March, 2026 | Tuesday | Volume No:1 | Issue No:40 | Pages: 12+8

www.indianchronicle.com

Published from : Krishna (Andhra Pradesh)

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Allegations of corruption against SI creates stir in Mahabubabad

Mahabubabad: Allegations of corruption against a Sub-Inspector of police in Chinna Gudur mandal of Mahabubabad district have created a stir in the district on Monday.

It was alleged that the SI demanded Rs 1 lakh from a person in a sand ramp deal and he reportedly paid Rs 20,000 to the SI as advance through PhonePe. The screenshots related to the payment were shared on social media and went viral. In the screenshots shared on social media, the person who paid the amount stated that he would arrange the remaining Rs 80,000 in three days and requested the SI to cooperate in the sand ramp deal.

NRIs advise Indians to utilise Malaysia's migrant repatriation programme

Karimnagar: Indian NRI associations in Malaysia have advised Indians staying illegally in the country to utilise the Malaysian government's migrant repatriation scheme and leave the country without facing punishment.

Under the Migrant Repatriation Programme 2.0 (PRM 2.0), the Malaysian government is offering an opportunity for foreigners staying illegally to leave the country without facing investigations or imprisonment. The scheme will conclude on April 30 this year.

Need to scale up efforts to link edu with global economy: PM Modi at post-Budget webinar

New Delhi, March 9

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday called for scaling up efforts to link the country's educational sector with the global economy, while increasing focus on areas like automation, artificial intelligence and digital economy.

Addressing a post-Budget webinar, Modi said the new education policy provides the foundation for a curriculum that is aligned with market demands and the real-world economy, especially in fields like AI and automation.

Modi also called upon academic institutions to transform their campuses into hubs of industry collaboration and research-driven learning to provide students with essential real-world exposure.

The PM further highlighted the need for strengthening health infrastructure and promoting yoga and Ayurveda. He said medical colleges had been opened in hundreds of districts; and access to healthcare services had been expanded through the Ayushman Bharat scheme and Arogya Mandirs.

He also drew attention to the emerging 'care economy' and the rising demand for caregivers globally, urging experts to develop new training models to empower the youth.

"I urge health sector experts present in this webinar to give suggestions for developing new training models and partnerships to boost the training ecosystem in the country," Modi stated.

The Prime Minister also expressed pride in the increasing number of women in STEM (science, technol-



ogy, engineering, and mathematics) fields and reiterated the government's commitment to ensuring equal opportunities for daughters in futuristic technologies.

Calling for a robust research ecosystem that encourages young researchers to innovate and experiment without any barrier, Modi said: "We have to create such a research ecosystem where young researchers get full opportunity to experiment and work on new ideas."

On the potential of tourism and culture to drive employment, Modi said, "Developing new destinations beyond traditional spots boosts a city's branding and overall development." He also urged stakeholders to focus on a holistic approach involving skills, connectivity and community participation.



States free to fix minimum wages for workers: MoS Shobha Karandlaje in LS

New Delhi, March 9

The Centre on Monday said the state governments were free to fix, review and revise the minimum rate of wages for establishments falling under their respective jurisdiction. Speaking in the Lok Sabha, Shobha Karandlaje, Minister of State for Ministry of Labour and Employment, said provisions of the Minimum Wages Act, 1948, had been rationalised and subsumed under the Code on Wages-2019, which were made effective from November 21 last year.

She said the new Act aims to make the applicability of minimum wages universal across all sectors and ensure that there was no gender discrimination in workplace.

She said, "The Code on Wages, 2019, empowers both central and state governments as appropriate governments to fix, review and revise the minimum rate of wages for the establishments falling under their respec-

tive jurisdiction."

"With a view to reduce regional and sectoral wage disparities, the Code on Wages, 2019, makes the floor wage a statutory provision. It further stipulates that the minimum rates of wages fixed by the appropriate governments shall not be less than the floor wage," she added.

The minister further said the Centre had also enacted the Inter-state Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Condition of Service) Act, 1979, to safeguard the interests of migrant workers.

"This Act has now been subsumed in the Occupational Safety,

Health and Working Conditions (OSH) Code, 2020. The OSH Code provides for decent working conditions, minimum wages, grievance redressal mechanisms, protection from abuse and exploitation, enhancement of skills and social security to all categories of workers, including construction and mining sector workers," she added.

Mamata alleges BJP distributing leaflets at her rally

Kolkata, March 9

Alleging that the BJP and "its agencies" were distributing leaflets at the site of her sit-in protest in Kolkata, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday directed TMC workers to catch them and hand them over to the police.

Following Banerjee's direction from the dais of her sit-in demonstration, which has been continuing for the last three days at Dharmatala over the SIR exercise, police said they detained two people who were distributing leaflets publicising PM Narendra Modi's March 14 rally in Kolkata.

"BJP and its agencies are distributing leaflets at our meeting. They have no right to distribute such leaflets at the programme of another political party," Banerjee said.

"How can they campaign for their programme at our



meeting? This is not done. Catch them and hand them over to the police before they escape. I am asking minister Sashi Panja to lodge an FIR immediately," she added.

The TMC supremo said the BJP was resorting to such "unfair tricks" as their meetings were evoking a lukewarm response

"Only those having no base can stoop so low. They don't have people's support. They are 'vote chor'. They use agencies," she alleged.

Banerjee said such cowards "should hang themselves to death".

Dismissing the allegations, BJP leader Rahul Sinha said the party does not need to send its members to TMC's programmes as PM Modi's rally "will be historic".

Rythu Bandhu stopped, Rahul Bandhu launched in Telangana, says KTR

BRS working president KT Rama Rao accused the Congress government of failing to implement key election promises, delaying Rythu Bandhu payments and diverting funds to projects and party leadership. He said BRS would move a Private Member's Bill for legal backing to the Six Guarantees. Telangana Travel Guide

Rajanna-Sircilla: BRS working president KT Rama Rao on Monday targeted the Congress government over its failure to implement key election promises while diverting funds to large projects and publicity programmes. Pointing out that the Congress government did not release Rythu Bandhu assistance even as the ongoing Yasangi (Rabi) season was coming to an end, he said the government had however introduced a new scheme called "Rahul Bandhu", aimed at diverting funds intended for farmers to the party's high command in New Delhi.



Bandar will be developed as model constituency: Kollu

Machilipatnam: Minister for Mines & Geology and Excise Kollu Ravindra has asserted that he would transform the Machilipatnam (Bandar) constituency into a model constituency for the State through comprehensive development initiatives.

Ravindra, along with APSRTC Chairman Konakalla Narayana Rao, on Monday inaugurated several devel-



opment works at Chinnapuram village in Machilipatnam Rural mandal, including a Block Public Health building worth Rs 60 lakh, cremation ground development works of Rs 4.79 crore and five Anganwadi buildings worth Rs 20 lakh. Nearly 40 development works were launched as part of the programme. He also inspected the Primary Health Centre (PHC) and reviewed the construction quality of the Anganwadi centres during his visit.

Speaking on the occasion, Minister Ravindra said that priority would be given to strengthening infrastructure in rural areas along with improving education, healthcare and overall rural development. He said that the development of rural areas is key to the overall progress of the State. He alleged that development had slowed

during the previous government's tenure but added that progress had resumed after the coalition government assumed power. He expressed confidence that the newly constructed health facilities would provide better medical services to local residents and announced that another Primary Health Centre would soon be established at Tallapalem. He also said that two Urban Health Centres have already been set up in Machilipatnam town.

He further stated that under the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission, new PHCs are being established at Pedapatnam, Gokavaram, Polatitippa and Ariseppalem at a total cost of Rs 1.80 crore to improve rural healthcare services. Highlighting the government's focus on public health, Ravindra said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, and Health Minister Satyakumar Yadav are working tirelessly to strengthen healthcare systems. Ravindra said that efforts are being made to improve infrastructure in Machilipatnam's rural areas and recalled that the government had widened the road from Bandar to Chinnapuram. He also announced that works for bridge and drainage construction worth Rs 38 crore have been initiated and would be completed within five to six months.

He further suggested setting up an MSME park in the region to create employment opportunities for local youth. With the Machilipatnam Port nearing completion, industries suited to the region's needs would be established to generate jobs and promote economic growth, he added. Among those present at the event were DCMS Chairman Bandi Ramakrishna, Machilipatnam Market Committee Chairman Kunche Durga Prasad, TDP Krishna District General Secretary G Satyanarayana, Machilipatnam Rural President Kagitha Venkateswara Rao, Chinnapuram Sarpanch Kagitha Gopal Rao, cluster in-charge Talari Somasekhara Rao, and others.

Nara Lokesh alleges Rs 100 cr monthly kickbacks in Rs 3,500 cr 'liquor scam' under YSRCP rule



Andhra Pradesh IT Minister Nara Lokesh has accused former Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy of hypocrisy over his prohibition promise, alleging that the Rs 3,500-crore liquor scam under the YSRCP government involved monthly kickbacks of Rs 100 crore.

Amaravati: Andhra Pradesh IT Minister Nara Lokesh on Saturday said that the alleged Rs 3,500-crore 'liquor scam' during the previous YSRCP government involved monthly kickbacks of Rs 100 crore and over Rs 1,000-crore cash trail unearthed by the ED.

On Friday, the Enforcement Directorate said it had attached assets worth more than Rs 441 crore of various accused involved in the Andhra Pradesh liquor scam case.

The attached properties consist of bank balances, fixed deposits, land parcels and other immovable assets

belonging to the prime accused Kasireddy Rajasekhara Reddy, his family members and related entities, other accused like Booneti Chanakya and his related entities and relatives and entities of Donthireddy Vasudeva Reddy, apart from some others.

The IT minister accused former Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy of "preaching prohibition" and said illicit liquor allegedly destroyed thousands of families in the southern state.

"Rs 100 crore kickbacks every month. Rs 3,500 crore laundered. Rs 1,048 crore cash trail unearthed by ED. Is this the real story behind your 2019 'prohibition' promise, YS Jagan Mohan Reddy?" Lokesh said in a post on 'X'.

While Jagan preached prohibition, his cronies filled their pockets with thousands of crores of rupees, he alleged.

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

Critical digital stack made in India is need of the hour

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has recently emphasised on using Indian-made products. Seen as a push to 'Swadeshi' products and services, the Prime Minister has urged every Indian citizen to promote domestic products in their bid to reduce dependence on foreign ones.

While such call can be seen as part of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' push of the Government of India, present timing points towards a bigger scheme of things. And these are related to shifting geopolitical environment. As the US under Trump administration turns towards trade protectionism, established alliances are witnessing a shift. Old assumptions are being revisited. Global analysts have started talking about a new world order.

It is a known fact that India-US relations are not in best of health at this point of time. From punitive tariff of 50 per cent imposed on India by the US to increasing H1B visa fee, recent US actions can be seen as outrightly hostile to India. With new dynamics emerging in Indo-US relations, vulnerability of India as an economy has come to the fore. For instance, dependence of India as country on American technology giants is huge. Google, Microsoft, Meta to Apple, Indian users are completely dependent on American tech companies for doing their daily work. Enterprises' dependence on hyperscalers like AWS, Microsoft Azure & Google Cloud is very high. In a way, from enterprises to consumers, Indian system is wholly dependent on American technology firms. Such dependency exposes Indian economy to American whims in the future. Ironically, this phenomenon has been playing out for years though India is considered to be power house in IT services space. The country houses the largest tech talent of the world with many cutting-edge innovations emerging from Indian centres of foreign companies. Against this backdrop, the Indian PM's call to be self-reliant in critical areas is timely. Recently, Information Technology Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw gave a media presentation, employing Zoho, a domestic rival to Microsoft's PowerPoint. He also did without using Google Maps. Similarly, Zoho has launched its messaging app, Arattai, which has been India's top apps to be downloaded from Playstore.

Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal and Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan have advocated in favour of the new messaging app. Such steps can be seen as initial steps by the Indian tech firms to come up with credible alternatives to tech giants' multiple products. Despite India being a major user base of mobile phones, the country doesn't have its own operating system.

Similarly, OpenAI to Perplexity; most generative AI apps count India as a major user base. But India is yet to develop its own LLM. Contrast to India, China has gone way ahead of India in terms of technological innovations. The country has developed its own operating system, browser to sophisticated semiconductor ecosystem. This provides China a huge advantage over other countries in terms of new technological innovations. India has to learn from other countries like China and develop its own key technology platforms to be truly self-reliant. Though India doesn't subscribe to the idea of being an adversary to the US-led world order; it, however, doesn't want to be in a position to be dictated by Western powers.

Weekend Drunk-and-Drive Checks: 321 Offenders Caught by Malkajgiri Traffic Police

“NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, March 9, (Indian chronicle):“Malkajgiri Traffic Police conducted special drunk-and-drive enforcement drives over the weekend and apprehended 321 offenders. According to police, the vehicle-wise breakup of the cases includes 249 two-wheelers, 11 three-wheelers, 59 four-wheelers, and 2 heavy vehicles. Based on Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) levels, 284 offenders recorded BAC levels between 36 mg/100 ml and 200 mg/100 ml. Another 26 offenders had BAC levels between 201 mg/100 ml and 300 mg/100 ml, while 11 offenders recorded BAC levels ranging from 301 mg/100 ml to 550 mg/100 ml. All the offenders will be produced before the court. Traffic police stated that driving under the influence of alcohol is a serious offence. If a person drives in a drunken condition and causes a fatal accident, a case will be registered under Section 105 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023, which deals with culpable homicide not amounting to murder. The offence is punishable with imprisonment of up to 10 years along with a fine. Meanwhile, courts disposed of 228 drunk-and-drive cases during the period from March 1 to March 7, 2026. Among them, five persons were awarded fine and jail, ten persons were given fine along with social service, and 213 persons were penalized with fine only.



Keep environs clean: Collector Rajarshi Shah



“S. Harpal Singh, Adilabad, March 9” Adilabad Collector Rajarshi Shah on Monday instructed officials across the district to make respective office environs pleasant for visitors. He said all officials should carry out cleaning drives in the surroundings as well as in offices. “Participating in a special drive as part of the Praja Palana Pragathi Panalika 99 days in municipal ar number 42, the Collector issued relevant instructions to all concerned. He laid special emphasis on sanitation and clearance of files in

offices. “Inspecting the DPRO office, Treasury office, RDO office during the special drive, Mr. Shah said officials should clear all pending files in quick time. He also asked them to clean scrap and old broken furniture. “The Collector also instructed the officials to spare at least one or two hours everyday to take up cleaning of offices. Additional Collector Rajeshwar, RDO, Sravanthi, Municipal Commissioner Raju and other also participated.

Intermediate examinations conducted peacefully in the district

District Intermediate Education Officer Venkateshwarlu.

“Kukkadapu Naresh Kumar, Bhadradi Kothagudem Staff Reporter, March 09, Indian Chronicle: The intermediate public examinations conducted in the Bhadradi Kothagudem district on Monday proceeded smoothly without any untoward incident, said District Intermediate Education Officer Venkateshwarlu. He said that a total of 37 examination centers have been set up in the district for the Physics Paper 1 and Economics Paper 1 examinations conducted today. A total of 9,964 students were allotted for these examinations, including general and vocational sections,

out of whom 9,105 students attended and 859 students were absent. He said that no malpractice cases were registered during the examinations. He stated that all necessary arrangements have been made at the centers to conduct the examinations peacefully, and that additional arrangements have also been completed for the examinations scheduled for the following day. District Intermediate Education Officer Venkateshwarlu revealed that the examinations were conducted smoothly at all the examination centers in the district.

Annual Day Celebrations Held at Mother Meera High School in Mallapur

“Students entertain with dances and skits – Inspiring speeches deliver meaningful messages



“Nacharam, Indian Chronicle, March 9” “The Annual Day celebrations were held grandly at Mother Meera High School in Mallapur. On this occasion, the school premises turned vibrant and lively with the presence of students, parents, teachers, and invited guests. “The program was inaugurated by the school correspondent Sriram Timothy, who attended as the chief guest. Speaking on the occasion, he said that the main objective of Mother Meera High School is to provide quality education at affordable fees to children from poor and middle-class families. He encouraged students to excel not only in academics but also in sports and cultural activities. “The cul-

tural performances presented by the students were the highlight of the event. The young students performed various dances, dramas, and skits that entertained the audience and received loud applause from parents and guests. Many of the performances also carried social messages, encouraging students and the audience to think about important issues in society. “Representatives from the SAPS NGO—Sandeep, Radhika, and Kiran—attended the event as special guests. They spoke to the students about the importance of social service, responsibility, and moral values in life. “In addition, Ranjith, a special officer from the Indian Navy, delivered an inspiring speech that motivated the students. Addressing especially the Class 10 students, he emphasized that dedication, discipline, and hard work are key to achieving one's goals in life. He also highlighted the importance of youth participation in serving the nation. “Teachers, parents, and local residents attended the program in large numbers and appreciated the talents displayed by the students. The event concluded with the school management expressing gratitude to the guests and participants for making the celebration a memorable success.

District officials must attend the Prajavani program: Additional Collector of Local Bodies Pandu

41 complaints to Prajavani

“Sangareddy Indian Chronical corresponding March 9: “Additional Collector (In-Charge) of Local Bodies Pandu said that only district officials should attend the Prajavani program and should be punctual. “He clarified that he had noticed that instead of district officials, their assistants were attending, and such a situation should not happen again. He instructed to examine the applications received in Prajavani and work to resolve them in a timely manner. “He said that a total of 41 complaints were received in the Prajavani program organized at the Grievance Hall of the Collectorate on Monday. He said that people come to Prajavani from far away places to resolve their problems, and the officials should not only resolve their problems as soon as possible, but also show them appropriate solutions. He instructed the officials of the respective departments to respond to public problems and take appropriate action. Additional Collector (Revenue) Madhuri, Narayan



Khed Sub-Collector Umaharati, ZPCEO Janaki Reddy, RDOs, district officers of various departments, and the public participated in this program.

Chitra Mishra reviews Prajavani grievances as 352 petitions are received in Karimnagar.



Khaja Sikander Mohiuddin Staff Reporter, Indian Chronicle Karimnagar, Mar 09: District Collector Chitra Mishra on Monday directed officials to accord top priority to petitions received under the Prajavani grievance redressal programme and ensure their prompt resolution. Receiving applications from the public during the Prajavani programme held at the Collectorate auditorium, the Collector instructed the concerned officials to examine the petitions department-wise and take necessary steps for their early disposal. Ms. Mishra said officials should not keep applications pending at their level and must resolve the issues at the earliest after conducting field-level inquiries wherever necessary. Petitions that do not fall within the jurisdiction of a particular department should be immediately forwarded to the concerned department for appropriate action, she added. The Collector also stated that the status of pending petitions would be reviewed department-wise to ensure effective redressal of public grievances. A total of 352 applications were received during the programme on Monday. In a gesture of concern, the Collector personally approached elderly persons and persons with disabilities seated at the venue and received their petitions. Additional Collector Lakshmi Kiran, RDO Maheshwar, and other officials were present.

Students should be provided with quality food

District Collector Ankit.

“Kukkadapu Naresh Kumar, Bhadradi Kothagudem Staff Reporter, March 09, Indian Chronicle: District Collector Ankit has instructed the concerned officials to provide quality and nutritious food to the students in the residential schools of the district and to provide all the necessary infrastructure facilities comprehensively. On Monday, he visited Mulakalapalli mandal and made a surprise inspection of Mulakalapalli Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya and Ekalavya Model Residential School in Mookamamidi. On this occasion, the collector visited all the classrooms in the school and inspected the attendance and teaching conditions of the students. He also inspected the kitchen, dining hall, toilets, quality of food, and cleanliness of the school premises and made necessary suggestions to the concerned officials. He specifically inquired about the quality of food provided to the students. Later, the collector spoke to the students studying in the second year of intermediate. He asked them



what courses they plan to study after completing the intermediate exams and what their goals are in the future. The students were encouraged to set their goals clearly and move forward in higher education. On this occasion, the collector also inspected the pre-final examinations conducted for class 10 students at the KGVB school. Observing the calm manner in which the students were writing the exams at the examination center, he advised the class 10 students to prepare comprehensively for the upcoming exams and wished them well. He instructed the school staff to provide snacks to the class 10 students during the evening study hour. He also spoke to the students and learned about the facilities provided to the students in the school. The collector also inspected the books used by the students and examined their writing skills. He advised the students to study with discipline and achieve good results. The collector also inspected the RO water purification center set up for the drinking water facility for the students. He instructed the officials to continuously monitor the quality of drinking water and ensure that the students get clean drinking water. Speaking on this occasion, the collector said that it is of utmost importance to provide quality and nutritious meals to the students in schools. He advised that meals should be served as per the menu prescribed by the government and that hygiene standards should be followed while cooking. He also said that it is the responsibility of all teachers, staff, and students to always keep the school environment clean. The collector ordered that the authorities should continuously monitor the hostels to ensure that all the necessary infrastructure facilities are provided to the students effectively. The Collector was accompanied on this visit by KGBV School Principal Maheshwari, MEO Satyanarayana, MPDO Ekalavya School Principal Ashok, teaching and non-teaching staff of the schools, officials of the relevant departments, and others.



Leaders Attend Wedding Ceremony at SNR Pushpa, Anthipally

“NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, March 9, (Indian chronicle):“At the invitation of Mallarapu Shiva (Laddu), Telangana State Youth Wing leader and Sai Mala Ayyappa Swamy Temple Chairman Regalla Satish Reddy attended the wedding ceremony of Maheshwari and Kranthi Kumar Goud held at SNR Pushpa in Anthipally. Maheshwari is the only daughter of Mallarapu Srihari and Manjula, and the niece of Mallarapu Lakshminarayana Goud, Founder and Chairman of the Chiryala Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy Temple. Former Minister Ch. Malla Reddy and former DCC President Singireddy Harivardhan Reddy also attended the ceremony and extended their blessings to the newly married couple. Former Medchal-Malkajgiri Zilla Parishad Vice Chairman Besta Venkatesh, Regalla Jagadeesh Reddy and others were present on the occasion.

Press Club (H-2843) Pays Grand Tribute to Women Power

“Role of Women in Nation Building is Priceless”
 – Velpula Vijetha, ICDS Officer “Women Should Come Forward Boldly in Journalism”
 – T. Santosh Chakravarthy, TWJF District President
“Homemakers are the Real Strength Behind Every Household”
 – Anthoti Srinivas, President, Press Club (H-2843)

“Arvapalli Nagesh Khammam Staff Reporter March 9, (Indian Chronicle):” On the occasion of International Women’s Day, grand celebrations were organized at the Press Club in Khammam city under the joint auspices of the Telangana Working Journalists Federation (TWJF – H 2843) and the Press Club. The event was presided over by Press Club President Anthoti Srinivas. Women who have rendered notable services in various fields of society were honored with shawls as a mark of respect. Speaking as the chief guest, ICDS Officer Velpula Vijetha stated that the role of women in building society is invaluable. She said that women are setting an example by excelling not only in family responsibilities but also in their professional lives. She emphasized that support from men is essential for women to succeed in all fields. Sharing her personal experience, Vijetha emotionally said that the support of her husband has been the secret behind her success. “If I am standing here today and speaking before you, it is because of the full support given by my husband,” she said. She expressed hope that when husbands stand as a strong support system, women can achieve remarkable success in life. “Congress Party OBC State Vice Chairman Harika Naidu said that women’s empowerment should not remain just in words but must be reflected in action. She appreciated the services of journalists who bring public issues to light and highlighted the challenges they face at the grassroots level. “District President and General Secretary Nanabala Ramakrishna



and Treasurer Arvapalli Nagesh called upon women reporters to come forward courageously in the field of journalism. The program was attended by Press Club Vice President Gauravarapu Jagadeesh, Telangana state activist Ramadevi, advocate Shruti, ASI P. Lakshmi, journalist Navajeevana Priya, Electronic Media City President Elugoti Venkata Rao, Press Club Treasurer Bhadrappa, Jillela Mahesh, anchors Nayini Swathi, Harshika, Reshma, Anthoti Nagamani, Gauravarapu Sunitha, along with Press Club vice presidents, members, and a large number of journalists.

Cyber Crime Police Station, Khammam Awareness is Key in the Digital World: Cyber Crime DSP



“Arvapalli Nagesh Khammam Staff Reporter March 9, (Indian Chronicle):” Cyber Crime DSP Phaninder said that constant awareness is essential to stay safe in the digital world. He emphasized that people must remain alert while using online platforms to avoid falling victim to cyber fraud. “An awareness program on cyber crimes was conducted for students at Kinera Nursing College. Speaking on the occasion, the DSP advised that if money is fraudulently withdrawn from a bank account, the victim should immediately inform the bank and get the account frozen. He stated that online fraud can be prevented by avoiding suspicious links, using strong passwords, and never sharing personal or banking information with anyone. In case of cyber fraud, victims should immediately report the incident by calling the 1930 helpline or by lodging a complaint on the www.cybercrime.gov.in portal. During the session, students were educated about various cyber crimes including cyber stalking, fake social media profile frauds, digital arrest scams, business investment scams, loan app frauds, betting apps, PM Kisan Yojana APK frauds, and other online safety issues. The importance of the 1930 helpline, the NCRP portal, and the “Golden Hour” concept in reporting cyber crimes was also explained. “On the occasion of International Women’s Day, a quiz competition on cyber crime awareness was conducted for students, and prizes were distributed to the winners.

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Ensure Complete HPV Vaccination for Eligible Girls: Additional Collector Srinivasa Reddy

Glaucoma Awareness Programs from March 8 to March 14



General Hospital and Community Health Centres (CHCs) in Nelakondapalli, Tirumalayapalem, Kalluru, Madhira, Penuballi, and Sathupalli, as well as at the Area Hospital in Wyra. “The Additional Collector instructed the District Education Officer (DEO) to ensure that girls studying in government and private schools who have completed 14 years and entered their 15th year visit nearby CHCs or the district government hospital along with their parents to receive the HPV vaccine. He clarified that the vaccine will be administered only with the consent of parents. After vaccination, beneficiaries will be observed for 30 minutes before being allowed to leave. He assured that the vaccine does not cause any complications. It is estimated that around 11,460 girls in the district fall within the eligible age group, and the goal is to provide vaccination to all of them. The Additional Collector also directed officials to extensively educate parents about the benefits of the HPV vaccine so that more girls can avail themselves of the vaccination. He further informed that Glaucoma Awareness Week is being observed from March 8 to March 14. Since glaucoma may develop without noticeable symptoms and can affect eyesight, people should seek medical examination immediately if they experience any eye-related issues or pressure. To spread awareness, he instructed the District Medical and Health Officer (DMHO) to prepare necessary IEC (Information, Education and Communication) material and distribute it to all Gram Panchayats and Anganwadi centres across the district. “District Revenue Officer A. Padmashri, District Medical and Health Officer Dr. Ramarao, district officials, and Collectorate AO Srinivasa Rao, along with others, attended the meeting.

“Avnreddy Khammam Bureau March 9, (Indian Chronicle):” Additional Collector P. Srinivasa Reddy directed officials to ensure that all eligible girls receive the HPV (Human Papillomavirus) vaccination. “At a review meeting held on Monday at the Collectorate conference hall, the Additional Collector issued several instructions to district officials regarding the implementation of the HPV vaccination program. “Speaking on the occasion, he said that as per government directions, the HPV vaccination program was launched at the Khammam District Government Hospital by District Collector Anudeep Durishetty on the occasion of International Women’s Day. He stated that administering the HPV vaccine to girls aged between 14 and 15 years can help prevent cervical cancer. “The vaccination is being provided daily from 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM at the Khammam Government

Awareness Program by MPO as Part of Praja Palana – Pragati Pranalika

“Grand Felicitation to Mandal Panchayat Officer Kondapalli Sridevi



“Avnreddy Khammam Bureau March 9 (Indian Chronicle):” On the occasion of International Women’s Day, Mandal Panchayat Officer Kondapalli Sridevi was felicitated in a grand manner in Arempula village of Khammam Rural Mandal. Along with her, ward members, Anganwadi workers, ASHA workers, village samakhya members, village deepikas, and sanitation workers were also honored. The felicitation was organized by Former Sarpanches Association President Bandi Jagadeesh, Sarpanch Bandi Satish, Deputy Sarpanch Sheikh Davood, Panchayat Secretary Kiran Kumar, ward members Chintamalla Sudheer, Kandula Bhaskar, Gunde Tirupayya, village elders Pappula Venkataramana, Bandi Ravi, and journalist Venugopal, along with others. “Later, MPO Sridevi conducted an awareness program in the village as part of the Praja Palana – Pragati Pranalika initiative. She educated villagers about waste segregation and personally joined them in cleaning the streets. She urged all villagers to actively participate in the 99-day Praja Palana – Pragati Pranalika program initiated by the government. “Officials and participants including RWS AE, ward members Vijaya, Tangellapalli Narayanamma, Arikatla Jyothi, village deepikas Vijaya, Kodirekka Vijetha, Anganwadi worker Bhagyalakshmi, ASHA workers Tirupamma and Sujatha, sanitation worker Dhanamma, and others took part in the program.

The goal is to provide quality education in government schools District Collector P. Praveenya

“sangareddy indian chronical corresponding March 9:--” District Collector P. Praveenya has ordered the authorities to pay special attention to improving the standards of education in government schools, as well as to sanitation and facilities provided to students. “As part of the Public Governance-Progress Plan program, District Collector Praveenya inspected the ZP High School and dumping yard in Isnapur on Monday. On this occasion, the mid-day meal provided to students in the school, sanitation, teacher attendance and other issues were examined. “Speaking on the occasion, the Collector said that the government is giving special priority to the development of the education sector and is working towards providing quality education to students by providing necessary infrastructure in government schools. In the context of the approaching class 10 exams, students should focus more on their studies. He asked the students whether they have received the hall tickets and whether the details in them are correct. He asked whether revision is being done for the exams and encouraged the students to write the exams bravely without any worries. “The Collector, who found that the mid-day meal schedule was not being implemented properly in the school, ordered notices to be issued to the concerned institution. He observed that eggs were not being served to the students and suggested that immediate action be taken to provide them. The Collector, who was angry over the absence of the school headmaster without permission, instructed the District Education Officer to issue show-cause notices to the HM, similarly, the MEO should give an explanation for the absence of some teachers, and the MEO should also be given a show-cause notice for lack of supervision. The Collector made it clear that negligence in duties will not be tolerated. “He suggested that the details of how many people are being engaged under the sanitation grant, their names, and the time till which payment



was made be provided. The Collector expressed dissatisfaction over the lack of proper sanitation management in the school and the improper cleaning of the dining hall. “Later, the Collector inspected the dumping yard under the Isnapur Municipality and ordered that the fire area there should be completely extinguished with the help of water tankers within 24 hours. It was suggested that the legacy waste in the segregation area should be completely removed within 48 hours and the area should be cleaned. “It was ordered that CCTV cameras be installed at the dumping yard and a worker should be appointed to ensure 24-hour surveillance to prevent illegal dumping of waste. It was also ordered that the concerned officials should submit a clear action plan on where the waste is being processed and where it is being transported by municipal autos and private vehicles that collect waste. It was suggested to the concerned Municipal Commissioner to take immediate action on these issues and submit an action taken report. “The Collector was accompanied by Municipal Chairperson Sumalatha, Municipal Commissioner, Tehsildar and concerned officials in this visit.

Missing Girl Rescued by Police, Placed in Orphanage for Protection

“Indian Chronicle (Taj Khan), March 9, “Police Seek Information on Unidentified Girl Found in Kagaznagar” Police rescued a young girl who was found wandering alone in Kagaznagar town of Komaram Bheem Asifabad district. Local residents noticed the girl moving around suspiciously and immediately informed the police. “Upon questioning, the girl was unable to provide proper details about herself or her family. As a precautionary measure, the police shifted her to the Sakhi Centre at the Asifabad district headquarters on Sunday to ensure her safety and protection. “Later, she was transferred and accommodated at the Kalvari Yuvasakti Orphanage in Mancherla for further care. “Police have requested that anyone who can identify the girl or provide



information about her family should contact 9701973636.

Round-the-Clock Police Guard and CCTV Surveillance for EVM Warehouse

“Indian Chronicle (Taj Khan), March 9, “Tight Security Measures for EVM Storage, Says District Collector” District Headquarters: “District Election Officer and Collector K. Haritha stated that strict security measures are being implemented at the warehouse where Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) used in elections are stored. “On Monday, the Collector visited the EVM storage warehouse located at the district headquarters along with Additional Collector (Revenue) M. David and representatives of recognized political parties to inspect the security arrangements. “Speaking on the occasion, the Collector said that 24-hour police security has been deployed at the warehouse and that the premises are under continuous CCTV surveillance to ensure the safety of the machines. “Election department officials Shyam Lal and Musafir Hussain, along with representatives of various political parties and other officials, participated in the inspection.



Free HPV Vaccine Drive Launched for Girls Aged 9–14

“Indian Chronicle (Taj Khan), March 9, “Collector Urges HPV Vaccination for Girls to Prevent Cervical Cancer” District Headquarters: “District Collector K. Haritha has urged that girls aged 9 to 14 years must receive the HPV (Human Papillomavirus) vaccine to prevent serious diseases such as cervical cancer in the future. “The Collector attended the launch of the HPV vaccination programme, which the State Government has decided to provide free of cost for girls, at the District Hospital premises. The programme was organized under the supervision of Hospital Superintendent Dr. Praveen Kumar and District Medical Officer Dr. Sitaram. “Speaking on the occasion, the Collector said there is no need for any misconceptions or fears regarding the vaccine. She emphasized that girls between the ages of 9 and 14 must take the vaccine, as it helps protect them from cervical cancer and related diseases. “She further stated that the HPV vaccine will be made available in all hospitals across the district, and appealed to parents and the public to make full use of this initiative. “Later, on the occasion of International Women’s Day, the women staff of the hospital felicitated the District Collector in recognition of her service.



Handloom Shawls Presented to Anganwadi and ASHA Leaders on International Working Women's Day

"NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, March 9, (Indian chronicle):"On the occasion of International Working Women's Day, Telangana Praja Samskruthika Kendram's Spurthi Group honored Anganwadi and ASHA workers' leaders, recognizing them as struggle fighters for workers' rights. They were felicitated with traditional handloom shawls. The program was coordinated by Spurthi Group representative Godugu Yadagiri Rao. Speaking on the occasion, Spurthi Group leader Padmavathi said that working women must continue their struggles to achieve more rights and equality in the future through collective movements. Dharani newspaper editor and women journalist Roja Rani also spoke at the event and stressed the need for continued struggles to secure rights for working women. During the event, ASHA Workers Union President D. Anitha was felicitated with a handloom shawl by Spurthi Group leaders Padmavathi and Anuradha. Union Secretary Revathi Kalyani was honored by Srimannarayana and Anuradha. Anganwadi Union President G. Sunitha was felicitated by Anuradha and Roja Rani. Anganwadi Union Secretary B. Shobharani was honored by Roja Rani and Padmavathi. Journalist Roja Rani, who has been serving in editorial responsibilities for more than 25 years in the media field, was also felicitated with handloom shawls



by AIDWA leaders Aruna Jyothi, Srujana, Vinoda, and CITU leader Rama. The participants conveyed greetings on International Women's Day and hailed the contributions of working women. Others who attended the program included Nava Telangana Ravi, Komati Ravi, Jayaraj, Gummadi Hari Prasad, Jenny from Jana Vignana Vedika, Anuradha, C.H. Leelavathi, Padmavathi, Roja Rani, and several others.

Women Play a Key Role in Building Society

Former Corporator Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy

"Nacharam, Indian Chronicle, March 9: "International Women's Day celebrations were organized grandly in Nacharam under the leadership of V.S. Ahalya Prakash Reddy. Former GHMC Corporator Mandumula Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy attended the programme as the chief guest."On the occasion of International Women's Day, sarees were distributed to women workers at Nacharam Chowrasta in recognition of their services. Chief guest Mandumula Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy inaugurated the programme and felicitated the women workers."Speaking on the occasion, she said that women play a key role in building society and assured that they would always stand in support of women and recognize their valuable services. As part of the programme, sarees were also distributed to Congress women leaders."On this occasion, V.S. Ahalya Prakash Reddy praised Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy for his efforts towards the development of Nacharam Division in Uppal constituency. He stated that Parameshwar Reddy has always been at the forefront in addressing public issues and working for the welfare of the people."Leaders and participants including V.S. Ahalya Prakash Reddy, G. Krishna Reddy, B. Srikanth Goud, State SC Cell H.R. Mohan, Vijayalatha Ashwathama Reddy, Santosh Reddy, Thunga Tirupathi, Sunil Reddy, Uma, Bhavani Goud, Sevadal Venkatesh, Faziuddin, Raghu, Mahesh Yadav, Prem Kumar Goud, Azeem, Narasing Rao, Sharif, Gadda Kranti, Shankar Goud, Balaraju, Naresh, CH Naresh, Ravi Yadav, MD Yusuf, Ashok Goud, Srimanth Goud, Balaraj Goud, Balu, Firoz, Revanth, Srinivas Reddy and others participated in the programme.



Grand Annual Day Celebrations of Uppal Sri Saraswati Shishu Mandir Primary School

"KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, March 9 (Indian Chronicle):"The Annual Day celebrations of Uppal Sri Saraswati Shishu Mandir Primary School were held grandly at Kommidhi Krishna Reddy Gardens.



On this occasion, several dignitaries expressed their views and appreciated the efforts of the institution."They stated that Sri Saraswati Shishu Mandir School nurtures students with strong values, respect towards elders, and a deep sense of appreciation for the nation's culture and traditions. They expressed hope that the thousands of students who studied at the school will move forward in the right path and grow into responsible and ideal citizens."The program was attended by Homeopathy College Principal Dr. Lingaraju, Saraswati Vidya Peetham Regional Co-Coordinator Ardhha Chandra Reddy, former corporator Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy, Naga Prashanthi, former Public Prosecutor

Dubba Lakshma Reddy, Gone Prabhakar Reddy, Jetta Sudhakar, School President Ankanna Gari Madhava Reddy, Honorary President Anji Reddy, Vice Presidents Narasimha Reddy and Malla Reddy, and Treasurer Upoji Balavantha Chari, among others."Students of the school performed beautifully in various costumes, presenting patriotic songs and dances that captivated the audience.

Grand International Women's Day Celebrations in Srinagar Colony

Women Felicitated Under the Leadership of Congress Senior Leader M.A. Jaleel Pasha

"Kishore Vaddepal li, Uppal, March 9 (Indian Chronicle):"International Women's Day celebrations were held in a grand manner on Sunday night at Srinagar Colony in Ramanthapur Division under the leadership of senior Congress leader M.A. Jaleel Pasha. The event took place at his residence, Jaleel Manzil, where women from the colony were warmly honored."On this occasion, the women of the colony were felicitated and a cake was cut as part of the celebrations. Speaking at the event, M.A. Jaleel Pasha said that women play a vital role in the development of families and society. He noted that women are progressing in every field and showcasing their talent. He also emphasized that everyone should respect women and extend support to them."Women including Satyamma, Swaroopa, Uma, Andalu, Padma, Suvarna, Lakshmi, Vijayam and others participated in the event. Local residents such as Venkateshwarlu Chenchul, Ashok Reddy, Narasimha, Nagaraju, Rabbani Bhai, and Ismail were also present along with several women from the colony.



Sports Minister Congratulates Powerlifter for World Cup Silver



"NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, March 9, (Indian chronicle):"Telangana Sports and Youth Services Minister Vakiti Srihari congratulated Perumalla Pradeep Kumar, a retired gazetted officer from Telangana, for winning a silver medal in the Masters category at the Powerlifting World Cup held last month in Cairo, Egypt. Pradeep Kumar, who retired as an Accounts Officer in the Malkajgiri Commissionerate, represented India in the international competition. Competing in the 82.5 kg weight category, he lifted a total of 400 kg to secure second place and win the silver medal, bringing international recognition to Telangana once again. Speaking on the occasion, the Minister appreciated his achievement and stated that such accomplishments inspire many aspiring sportspersons in the State. He also said the government would extend all necessary support to sportspersons and expressed hope that Pradeep Kumar would achieve many more successes in the future, bringing greater recognition to Telangana and the country.

Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy at Women's Day Celebrations in Uppal KKR Gardens



"KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, March 9 (Indian Chronicle):"On the occasion of International Women's Day, celebrations were held on Monday at KKR Gardens in Uppal Division under the leadership of the National Christian Council Telangana State Women's Wing, led by President Prasanna Bold Philips."Former Uppal Division Corporator Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy and Telangana Minority Finance Corporation Chairman Deepak John attended the event as chief guests. Speaking on the occasion, they said that International Women's Day is an annual global celebration that recognizes and honors the achievements of women in social, economic, cultural, and political fields. They emphasized that the day is dedicated to acknowledging women's accomplishments across various sectors and advocating for gender equality and empowerment."Several members and leaders including Philips, Bishop Sandhya Anand, Ganamma, Dayanand, Immanuel, and women members of the NNC participated in the program.

On the occasion of Women's Day, Sarvekal vaccination for girls under 14 years of age was started at the government area hospital:-

Bhuvanagiri MLA Kumbham Anil Kumar Reddy. Bhuvanagiri Municipal Chairman Tangallapalli Srivani Ravikumar



"(Mandava Srisailam..Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau.. Indian Chronicle..March 9):- On the occasion of Women's Day, Bhuvanagiri MLA Kumbham Anil Kumar Reddy and Bhuvanagiri Municipal Chairperson Tangallapalli Srivani Ravikumar participated as the chief guests at the Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Government Area Hospital and celebrated Women's Day for women and wished all women a happy Women's Day. The next step taken by the state government was the Sarvekal vaccination for girls under 14 years of age. Senior leaders and important leaders participated in this program and made it a success.

Bhuvanagiri MLA Kumbham Anil Kumar Reddy participated in Mallikarjuna's wedding

"(Mandava Srisailam.. Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle.. March 9):- Bhuvanagiri MLA Kumbham Anil Kumar Reddy participated in the wedding of Sri Mallanna in the local Taraka Rama Nagar in Bhuvanagiri town. Special pujas were performed on this occasion. Speaking on the occasion, MLA Kumbham Anil Kumar Reddy performed special pujas and prayed that the blessings of Lord Tu Swamy should be upon the people of Bhuvanagiri town. Municipal Chairman Thangallapalli Srivani Ravi Kumar, Market Committee Chairman Rekha Babu Rao, Municipal Vice Chairman Pothamsetty Manjula Venkateswarlu, Ward Councilor Tummati Pandu, Barre Sangavi Karnakar, people of Kukkadugu Somaiya ward and others participated in this program.



Cheques Distributed to MBBS Students



"NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, March 9, (Indian chronicle):"Cheques were distributed to MBBS students from Uppal constituency to support their medical education fees under the initiative of Uppal MLA Bandari Laxma Reddy. The cheques were handed over to the students by Health Minister C. Damodar Raja Narasimha. A total of 15 MBBS students received cheques amounting to around ₹10 lakh. Speaking on the occasion, Damodar Raja Narasimha said that providing financial assistance to MBBS students through the BLR Charitable Trust is a commendable initiative. He stated that such support would greatly help students in pursuing their medical education. Former corporator Prabhudas, BRS state leader Gandham Nageshwar Rao, BRS Cherlapally Division president Nemuri Mahesh Goud, party leaders, activists and others participated in the program.

Bangladesh sending 1,200 tonnes of hilsa ahead of festive season as gesture of 'enduring friendship'



In a goodwill gesture, Bangladesh's interim government has announced that it will send 1,200 tonnes of hilsa fish to India ahead of Durga Puja later this month. An official notification issued on Monday (September 8, 2025) said that a decision had been taken in this regard "in principle", and called for fish exporters to submit applications by September 11. "Ilish (hilsa) is coming! The Bangladesh government just decided to export the quintessential fish to India

ahead of the festival season as a mark of enduring friendship," Bangladesh's High Commissioner to India Riaz Hamidullah said.

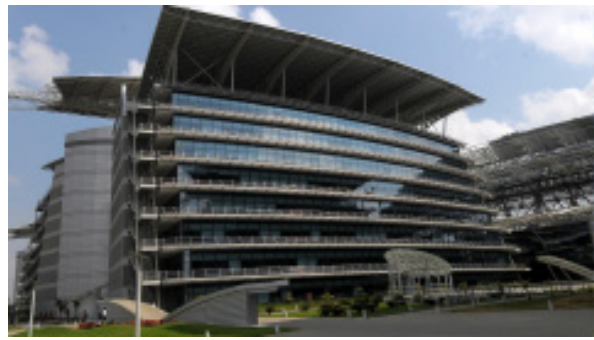
Bangladesh has determined that the hilsa, a prized fish during festivities in eastern Indian States, including West Bengal, Assam, and Tripura, will cost \$12.5 or around ₹1,100 per kg, which is significantly lower than the prevailing market rates for hilsa in India at present. Bangladesh has traditionally sent hilsa ahead of the Durga Puja and Dussera season. The consignment of 1,200 tonnes of hilsa is expected to reach West Bengal. Although diplomatic sources said Bangladesh had attempted to send some additional consignments for Assam and Tripura, that initiative did not receive a response from local importers within the given time frame. The 1,200 tonnes is less than previous consignments for the same season. In 2024, the interim government led by Muhammad Yunus sent 3,000 tonnes of hilsa ahead of the Durga Puja season. A similar quantity was maintained during the Sheikh Hasina years. The announcement coincided with the start of the Joint River Commission meeting that will take up river water sharing on Tuesday (September 9, 2025).

TCS second-highest beneficiary of approved H-1B visas after Amazon: USCIS data

GNS News Agency, March 9

Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) is the second-highest beneficiary with over 5,000 approved H-1B visas in 2025, after Amazon, according to federal data. According to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), Amazon had 10,044 workers using H-1B visas as of June, 2025. Coming in at the second spot was TCS with 5,505 H-1B visas approved. Other top beneficiaries include Microsoft (5,189), Meta (5,123), Apple (4,202), Google (4,181), Deloitte (2,353), Infosys (2,004), Wipro (1,523) and Tech Mahindra Americas (951). In a move that could significantly impact Indian IT and professional workers in the U.S., the Trump administration announced a staggering annual fee of \$1,00,000 on H-1B visas, a move it said aims to check the "systemic abuse" of the programme. In July, USCIS had said that it has received enough petitions to reach the congressionally mandated 65,000 H-1B visa regular cap and the 20,000 H-1B visa U.S. advanced degree exemption, known as the master's cap, for fiscal year 2026. U.S. President Donald Trump signed a proclamation 'Restriction on entry of certain non-immigrant workers' on Friday (September 19, 2025) that will restrict entry into the United States of individuals as non-immigrants unless their H-1B petitions are accompanied or supplemented by a payment of \$1,00,000. The proclamation said the restriction shall expire, absent extension, 12 months after the effective date of this proclamation of September 21, 2025.

The proclamation said that the number of foreign STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) workers in the United States has more than doubled between 2000 and 2019, increasing from 1.2 million to almost 2.5 million, while overall STEM employment has only increased 44.5% during that time. Among computer and math occupations, the foreign share of the workforce grew from 17.7% in 2000 to 26.1% in 2019. The key facilitator for this influx of foreign STEM labour has been the abuse of the H-1B visa, it said. The proclamation added that information technology firms have "prominently manipulated" the H-1B system,



significantly harming American workers in computer-related fields. The share of IT workers in the H-1B programme grew from 32% in Fiscal Year (FY) 2003 to an average of over 65 per cent in the last 5 fiscal years. In addition, some of the most prolific H-1B employers are now consistently IT outsourcing companies. Using these H-1B-reliant IT outsourcing companies provides significant savings for employers, it said, as it cited a study of tech workers that showed a 36% discount for H-1B "entry-level" positions as compared to full-time, traditional workers. To take advantage of artificially low labour costs incentivised by the programme, companies close their IT divisions, fire their American staff, and outsource IT jobs to lower-paid foreign workers, it said. The proclamation cited data that said many American tech companies have laid off their qualified and highly skilled American workers and simultaneously hired thousands of H-1B workers. One software company was approved for over 5,000 H-1B workers in FY 2025; around the same time, it announced a series of layoffs totalling more than 15,000 employees. Another IT firm was approved for nearly 1,700 H-1B workers in FY 2025; it announced it was laying off 2,400 American workers in Oregon in July. A third company has reduced its workforce by approximately 27,000 American workers since 2022, while being approved for over 25,000 H-1B workers since FY 2022.

The flavour imperative: why taste must lead India's nutrition evolution

Food in India goes beyond mere sustenance. It is rooted in memory, celebration and belonging. The sensory richness of Indian cuisine connects generations and communities, from rural kitchens to bustling cities. I have always believed that taste goes beyond personal preference. It serves as an effective lever to shape dietary behaviour. Healthy eating needs to taste and smell good. It needs to feel good and evoke a sense of home. Nutrition policy often treats taste as an afterthought. Packaged and processed foods are flooding the market. Evidence-based guidelines aimed at reducing fat, sugar and salt may lose relevance if the final bite disappoints.

India stands at a critical point in its nutrition journey. Non-communicable diseases are rising sharply. A coalition of 29 public health organisations has called for mandatory front-of-pack warning labels. These labels would apply to products high in fat, sugar or salt. The coalition hopes to curb obesity and metabolic disorders. Nearly 28% of Indian adults are overweight or obese. About 10% of adolescents already show early signs of these conditions. We need a shift in how we communicate about health. Messages that encourage people to eat less salt or sugar often fail because these ingredients define many foods that people crave. Reformulated versions of everyday foods such as biscuits, snacks, soups and noodles must preserve the flavour experience while reducing fat, sugar and salt. This approach reflects strategic public health thinking. Experience from other countries supports this



India stands at a critical point in its nutrition journey. Non-communicable diseases are rising sharply. A coalition of 29 public health organisations has called for mandatory front-of-pack warning labels.

view. Some countries have already introduced front-of-pack labels or levied taxes on foods high in fat, sugar or salt. India is also moving in this direction. The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India is adopting norms from the Indian Council of Medical Research and the National Institute of Nutrition. India's rich tradition of flavour-driven nutrition sets it apart. Generally, healthy food is perceived as bland or tasteless. However, in India, flavour and health have long been intertwined. Traditionally, seasonings such as spices and condiments have been used since ages as salt replacers or enhancers. Herbs have been used in many cultures, in Indian curries (turmeric, coriander, or cumin). Italian dishes (basil, oregano, thyme) and the addition of hot spices such as chili pepper, fresh ginger, mustard, ground horseradish and wasabi to rice or salad, are also used as salt reduction

strategies across cultures. Japan offers a model for thoughtful reformulation. Sodium reduction in foods, using ingredients rich in umami, such as seaweed, mushrooms and dried fish, improved flavour and delivered health gains at the same time. Indian reformulations can draw on regional sources of umami such as tomatoes, fermented lentils and vegetables, kokum and roasted spices to maintain taste and trim sodium. Indian consumers, especially members of Gen Z and millennials, are ready for this change. A recent survey found that 78% of Indian consumers consider themselves health conscious. Food businesses can meet this demand with products that taste good and support health. Collaborations across the food system are essential. Reformulation involves research and development. Nutritionists must set evidence-based benchmarks. Marketers must pre-

serve flavour authenticity. Policymakers must create thresholds that reward incremental reform. By working together, we can reimagine staples without eliminating them. India's new dietary guidelines emphasise the reduction of ultra-processed foods. They stress limiting foods with added sugar and salt, and reading labels carefully. Reformulated foods designed with flavour in mind can become powerful vehicles for health without demanding cultural sacrifices. Taste does not stand as a barrier to nutrition. It serves as a bridge. To nourish its future, India needs healthy food that is comforting, familiar and delicious. Reformulations must focus on redesigning our diet in ways that honour both our heritage and our health. The best nutrition occurs when taste and wellbeing unite. Food can power the next chapter of India's health story as sustenance, joy, culture and change.

'Most disappointed with students': Delhi HC expresses displeasure over use of luxury cars in DUSU poll campaigns



The Delhi High Court on Friday expressed displeasure over the use of luxury cars such as Bentley, Rolls Royce — and even JCBs — during the Delhi University Students' Union (DUSU) election campaigns. A Bench of Chief Justice Devendra Kumar Upadhyaya and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela remarked that neither the candidates nor organisers had learnt from last year's judicial order, which had withheld poll results over defacement of public property. "It is very tragic, a sad commentary on the state of affairs, a sad commentary on our democratic functioning of the society, a sad commentary on the democratic functioning of the institutions here."

"What can be worse than such kind of campaigns in students union elections. The use of JCBs, big and luxury cars, four wheelers, this is unknown. From where do they get such big cars — Bentley, Rolls Royce and Ferraris? How are the students getting this? We haven't even heard of these cars," a Bench of Chief Justice Devendra Kumar Upadhyaya and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela said. According to sources, the High Court issued notices to newly-elected DUSU president Aryan Mann of the ABVP and vice-president Rahul Jhansla of NSUI. Others include secretary Kunal Chaudhary and joint secretary Deepika Jha. Both belong to ABVP. The High Court said elections of students union — be it students union of Delhi University or its other affiliated colleges — had become a yearly feature and the way these polls had shaped over the years was a "cause of concern for every responsible institution and citizen". The Bench

added, "It appears that students have not learnt a lesson from last year's order.... Sabse zyada niraash to hum students se hai [We are most disappointed with students]," the Bench said. It also lauded Delhi Police for its cooperation with the university. In 2024, the High Court had even deferred vote counting and declaration of results of the September 2024 DUSU and college elections until all posters, hoardings, and graffiti were removed and public property restored. During the hearing, the Bench was informed that the results of elections, which were held on September 18, have been declared. The Court referred to its September 17 order by which it had barred candidates and student organisations of Delhi University from taking out victory processions anywhere in the national capital after the declaration of results of DUSU polls. Advocate Prashant Manchanda, the petitioner, shared several photographs and news reports and claimed violations despite the judicial order and the Lyngdoh Committee recommendations.

The Court directed that seven students who were the candidates in the elections and were served with showcause notices by the university be impleaded as parties to the proceedings. The Court issued notices to these student candidates and asked them to respond while fixing the matter on November 6. It further impleaded as parties two news channels and directed them to furnish the video footage of coverage of university elections done by their correspondents. The Court also asked the channels to preserve the video footage of election coverage. The Bench also took strong exception to the candidates replies given to the university on the showcause notices in which they denied any defacement to public property. "Not even a single admission by these candidates. It seems as if the petitioner has photoshopped the photographs and placed before us," it said. The Court had earlier said steps were needed to be taken to stop use of muscle and money power in DUSU elections. Mr. Manchanda raised concerns over the violation of guidelines and rules to ensure that the DUSU elections were held in an orderly manner. After examining the photos and videos, the Bench prima facie found several violations during the ongoing student campaigns on campus. While polling was held on September 18, the vote counting was done on Friday. The plea sought action against the prospective DUSU candidates and student outfits involved in allegedly damaging, defacing, soiling and destroying public walls.

A climate-health vision with lessons from India

On July 29-31, 2025, Brazil hosted the 2025 Global Conference on Climate and Health, with delegates from 90 countries shaping the Belém Health Action Plan. Set to be launched at COP30 to be held in November 2025, this plan will define the global agenda on climate and health. India was not officially represented — a significant missed opportunity to emerge as a global exemplar, given its developmental approach offers lessons for implementing the Belém Plan.

Insights from India's welfare programmes For countries in the Global South seeking synergistic policies that advance multiple developmental goals, India's intersectoral welfare programmes offer valuable insights. Consider the Pradhan Mantri Poshan Shakti Nirman (PM POSHAN), India's flagship nutrition scheme covering over 11 crore children across nearly 11 lakh schools. Its accomplishment lies in also connecting the dots between health, education, agriculture and food procurement systems. By promoting millets and traditional grains, it addresses malnutrition and also builds climate-resilient food systems.

Similarly, the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan has tackled sanitation, public health, human dignity and environmental sustainability, while MNREGA's environmental works have improved rural livelihoods while restoring degraded ecosystems. And with Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY), the switch to clean cooking fuel has reduced household air pollution, a major cause of respiratory illness, while cutting carbon emissions. None of these initiatives was designed explicitly as "climate policies", yet they have had significant health and climate co-benefits. These policies demonstrate a critical insight: non-health interventions can generate substantial health co-benefits while addressing climate challenges. Each intervention has also proved that intentional, intersectoral action can multiply impact. India's experience has takeaways for operationalising an integrated climate-health vision. First, strong political leadership makes a difference. PMUY and Swachh Bharat gained benefits from direct Prime Ministerial involvement, ensuring cooperation across Ministries. When political leaders frame climate action as a health emergency rather than just an environmental issue, it commands attention across government departments and receives wider public support. Second, community engagement is a vital ingredient. Swachh Bharat leveraged cultural symbolism, invoking Mahatma Gandhi's vision of cleanliness. PM POSHAN built grass-root support through parent-teacher associations and school committees. Similarly, climate action needs cultural anchoring, linking environmental protection to societal values of health and prosperity. Third, past policies succeeded by building on existing institutions rather than creating parallel structures. Climate action must be embedded in existing social and institutional frameworks. Accredited Social Health Activists, self-help group members, municipal bodies and panchayat representatives can become powerful advocates, especially when they internalise the interlinks between environmental changes and community well-being. Some challenges

However, experience also reveals fundamental constraints in implementing intersectoral policy through siloed administrative machineries. As policies progress from providing proximal outputs to delivering associated outcomes, divergent responsibilities and institutional mandates of various sectors begin to reassert themselves. For instance, high LPG refill costs under PMUY persist, partly due to oil marketing business interests outweighing beneficiary needs. Further, social and cultural barriers will continue to hinder utilisation and equitable access in the absence of sustained reinforcing mechanisms. These challenges show that climate solutions must also address structural inequities through institutionalised mechanisms that measure outcomes, not just outputs. India's experience points toward a framework for institutionalised, health-anchored climate governance, built on three pillars. The first is strategic prioritisation by political leaders through framing climate policies in terms of immediate health rather than abstract future risks. Just as PMUY succeeded by positioning clean



cooking as women's empowerment, climate action needs a similar high-level framing that connects environmental policies to health outcomes that people experience directly. The second is procedural integration across government departments by embedding health impact assessments into all climate-relevant policies. Just as environmental clearances are now standard for major projects, health considerations should be mandatory for policies affecting energy, transport, agriculture and urban planning. Third, participatory implementation that leverages health as a mobilising force. Communities understand the health benefits of cleaner air, safer water and nutritious food more intuitively than carbon accounting. Local health workers can become climate advocates when they see direct connections between environmental changes and health outcomes in their practice. A clear choice The choice is clear. India can continue fighting climate change and health challenges separately, with limited success and mounting costs. Or, it can leverage the institutional wisdom embedded in its welfare policies and deepen its international engagement to create a new model of governance that treats these challenges as interconnected problems requiring coordinated solutions. The stakes are high, the costs of inaction devastating, and the potential for transformative impact immense. India and the world cannot afford anything less than a bold, intersectoral, whole-of-society approach.

Zoom unveils AI Companion 3.0 at Zoomtopia 2026



Hyderabad: Zoom Communications, Inc. (NASDAQ: ZM) unveiled AI Companion 3.0 at Zoomtopia 2025, introducing advanced agentic AI to enhance productivity and collaboration across Zoom Workplace and Business Services. "AI Companion 3.0 understands users' context, priorities, and goals to help them focus on what matters most and drive business outcomes," said CEO Eric S. Yuan.

The AI assistant integrates across Zoom and third-party tools to turn conversations into action, manage tasks, and deliver deeper insights. Key features include AI-powered note-taking, meeting preparation, proactive task management, and research and writing assistance. It also offers a unified work surface across browsers and the Zoom desktop app. Zoom introduced lifelike avatars, real-time voice translation, and Model Context Protocol (MCP) for developers. Custom AI Companion allows businesses to deploy tailored AI agents with pre-built templates and third-party integrations.

The Saudi-Pakistan pact is a dodgy insurance policy



The signing of the Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement (SMDA) in Riyadh, on September 17, 2025, by the Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and Pakistani Premier Shahbaz Sharif, with Field Marshal Asim Munir in attendance, is a victory of future hope over past experience. Sunni majority Saudi Arabia and Pakistan share several commonalities. But they also have significant differences, restricting their past defence cooperation. Moreover, they have mutually dissenting threat perceptions. All this prompts questions about whether the recent agreement would be effective and sustainable, and its granular impact on South West Asia. The bilateral defence links date back to 1951, and their golden period was during 1979-89 when a nearly 20,000-strong Pakistani military contingent was deployed in Saudi Arabia to protect the Holy Harams and Al-Saud in addition to acting as the bulwark against Iran and Yemen. However, mutual differences soon clouded the equation. At the perceptual level, while the Saudi leadership treated the Pakistani contingent as paid Praetorian Guards, Pakistani top brass, used to commanding back home, bristled at being ordered around. Saudi insistence against the exclusion of Shia troops among the Pakistan contingent was often a deal breaker. By 1990, the entire contingent was sent back. During the subsequent threats faced by the Kingdom — from the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 to the Yemeni civil war in 2015 — Pakistan declined Saudi call for deployment, much to the Saudi chagrin. Pakistan avowedly limited their military involvement to defending the kingdom's two Holy Harams against foreign invasion.

The Pentagon has traditionally underpinned the Saudi-Pakistani defence alliance, albeit in an over-the-horizon manner. In the current case, too, the chronology suggests United States involvement. On June 7, Mr. Sharif and Field Marshal Munir met the Saudi Crown Prince in Riyadh to announce the bilateral "strategic cooperation". On June 22, with the Israel-Iran air war raging, U.S. President Trump hosted a "private lunch" at the White House for Field Marshal Munir, without any previous acquaintance. Circumstantial evidence suggests that the Saudi Crown Prince used his proximity to Mr. Trump to arrange a brainstorming of Pakistan's role in defending Saudi Arabia and other pro-Western regional countries. Subsequent bromance between the Trump administration and General Headquarters Rawalpindi was presumably under the conviction that Pakistan had the smart keys to the western geostrategic piquancy in West Asia, ranging from a backdoor to Iran to anchoring Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) security through "boots on the ground." The SMDA was a Hobson's choice for the Saudi Crown Prince. He is known to have demanded that the U.S. fulfil three prerequisites for Saudi recognition of Israel: a binding bilateral Defence Agreement, access to nuclear technology and state-of-the-art American weapon systems. The U.S., in turn, wanted Saudi Arabia to recognise Israel first to enable the passage of the proposed pact through the Congress. However, this delicate choreography was upended by the Hamas blitz on Israel, on October 7, 2023, and the subsequent Israeli invasion of Gaza. The death and destruction in Gaza has caused massive opprobrium and vitiated the political ambience in the Arab Islamic Ummah, forcing the Kingdom, which hosts Islam's two holiest shrines, to postpone the move indefinitely. Thus, the SMDA became a distant consolation prize for Riyadh. The September 9 Israeli air attack on Hamas's office in Doha added an air of urgency to the SMDA process: it was the first Israeli military attack on a

GCC member, viz., Qatar, which hosts the largest U.S. military base in West Asia and has a defence agreement with the U.S. While Washington conceded to having been pre-informed by Israel, it did not defend the country, as obligated, and lamely offered assurance that such attacks would not be repeated. The episode dented the credibility of the U.S.'s security assurances to the GCC States, including Saudi Arabia.

Historically, Riyadh has avoided stationing any Arab military contingents on its soil to avoid a political pollination of its masses. It has also chosen not to have troops from Türkiye, the former colonial master. The deployment of non-Muslim U.S. and North Atlantic Treaty Organization troops in the Kingdom to defend Islam's holy shrines during the 1990-91 Kuwait war caused a serious religious rift in the powerful Saudi clergy. Thus, past reservations notwithstanding, Riyadh has narrowed down to the SMDA with Pakistan. Four points need to be mentioned. First, the Kingdom has got along reasonably well without foreign forces on its soil since 1991, having survived al-Qaeda terrorism, the second Iraqi war and the Yemeni civil war. Riyadh has ordered nearly \$100 billion worth of advanced American weapons during Mr. Trump's visit earlier this year, further bolstering its defences. Second, Pakistan is now a declared nuclear weapons state, and the SMDA could come in handy in case Iran becomes one. Third, Pakistan's strategic tie-up with China, its "all-weather friend", may be an obstacle in the way of an unmitigated military camaraderie. Last but not least, while a transfer of Pakistani nuclear weapons to Saudi Arabia under the SMDA is possible, it would be highly improbable, given Israeli red lines. It would be recalled that during the June 2025 war, Pakistani generals reportedly promised to extend a nuclear umbrella to Iran against Israel, only to swiftly recant. However, given A.Q. Khan's precedent, a surreptitious transfer of technology for developing nuclear weapons and delivery systems cannot be ruled out. For these reasons, the SMDA is likely to presage smaller Pakistani footprints in Saudi Arabia than the past involvements. Islamabad's calculations from the SMDA are likely to be quite asymmetrical to Riyadh's. It has no intention to fight Iran, Yemen or Israel at Saudi behest any more than Saudi would take an active adversarial military role against India or Afghanistan in a South Asian conflict. It would rather exploit the Saudi insecurity to its multiple advantages, keenly monetising the IOUs ("I owe you") from Riyadh and Washington to get defence hardware, train on Saudi equipment and personal aggrandisement of its top brass. They would also hope that this trilateral axis would underwrite its intrinsic strategic disadvantage against India. Pakistan would also expect large dollops of Saudi funds and oil supplies to salvage its moribund economy. Thus, on balance, unless the worst-case scenario pans out — when all bets are off — the SMDA is essentially for the optics and to ensure that Islamabad stays away from Tehran. What it means for India? Where does the SMDA leave India? Here, India has few cards. India is the world's third-largest oil importer and the only large economy with rising oil consumption. It is traditionally Saudi Arabia's second-largest trading partner and crude buyer. Its diaspora, the Kingdom's largest, is preferred for competence and non-interference. Energetic diplomacy since 2014 has enabled India to bond well with Saudi Arabia, creating bilateral defence and intelligence-sharing ecosystems. Saudi Arabia plans to invest \$100 billion in India, although actual delivery is far short. Significantly, while announcing the SMDA, Reuters quoted an unnamed senior Saudi official as acknowledging the need to balance relations with Pakistan and India, "also a nuclear power". He added, "Our relationship with India is more robust than it has ever been. We will continue to grow this relationship and seek to contribute to regional peace in whichever way we can." An official Indian spokesman has also hinted that Riyadh took New Delhi into confidence over the SMDA negotiations. This not only shows that Riyadh needs all the friends it can get on board but also that India's strategic geo-economic heft seems enough for the moment to "balance" tactical manoeuvring by Pakistan. The SMDA, nevertheless, enjoins India to be vigilant and create greater synergies across the Arabian Sea.

Severe nausea in pregnancy linked to 50% higher risk of mental health issues



New Delhi: Women with excessive nausea and vomiting (hyperemesis gravidarum) during pregnancy may be at a 50 per cent high risk of mental health conditions such as post-partum psychosis, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder, according to a study. Hyperemesis gravidarum (HG) affects up to 3.6 per cent of all pregnancies. HG is the most common cause of hospitalisation in the first trimester of pregnancy, and the majority of HG cases (but not all) resolve in the second trimester.

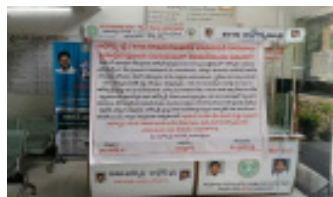
Women with HG experience prolonged and severe nausea and vomiting, leading to dehydration and weight loss. In the study, published in The Lancet Obstetrics, Gynaecology, & Women's Health, UK researchers examined 24 neuropsychiatric and mental health-related outcomes reported within a year of diagnosis in 476,857 pregnant women. Whilst previous research had shown that women with HG are at an increased risk of anxiety, depression, and PTSD, the new study found over 50 per cent increased risk in 13 conditions, including post-partum psychosis and post-traumatic stress disorder. The risks were doubled for Wernicke's encephalopathy (a neurological condition due to vitamin B1 deficiency), refeeding syndrome (complications arising when food is introduced too quickly to someone who has been malnourished), eating disorders, and depression, particularly post-partum depression, which was 2.7 times more likely. "Many pregnant women experience nausea and vomiting, but for women with HG, this occurs at a level which is far from 'normal' and as such it can be profoundly debilitating. Many of these conditions would warrant urgent referral to specialist services for urgent assessment and treatment to ensure the safety of mother and child," said Dr Hamilton Morrin, Doctoral Fellow at the Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology and Neuroscience at King's College London. In the ICD-11, the latest Interna-

tional Classification of Diseases by the World Health Organisation, HG is subcategorised into "mild HG" and "HG with metabolic disturbance". The latter is characterised by carbohydrate depletion, dehydration, or electrolyte imbalance. The researchers also examined whether this categorisation is correlated with mental health outcomes. Importantly, cases of HG with metabolic disturbance (perceived as more severe) showed significantly reduced risk of depression compared to mild HG. This finding highlights the importance of adequate mental health screening and support for all women with HG, regardless of perceived severity.

Pvt hospitals resume Aarogyasri services after Telangana minister's assurance

Hyderabad: The Telangana Aarogyasri Network Hospitals Association (TANHA) on Friday night decided to call off protests and immediately resume Aarogyasri healthcare services, following successful talks with Health Minister Damodar Raja Narasimha and senior health officials. The Health Minister, in the presence of senior health officials including the CEO of the Aarogyasri Health Care Trust, P. Uday Kumar, held talks with TANHA members on Friday night.

"The Health Minister personally assured us of resolving all the issues, both financial and non-financial, and with immediate effect, directions were given. In view of the positive progress in our discussions and respecting the wishes of our Health Minister, we are resuming all our services, Aarogyasri, EHS, and JHS, across the State of Telangana," the TANHA members said on Friday night. "We immensely apologise to our patients for the inconvenience caused to them during the protests," the TANHA members added.



Turmoil, tragedy, and tenacity in Nepal



On the afternoon of September 8, Riddhima Sanba, 23, and her friends scurried to a cafe, some 200 metres from the Parliament building in Kathmandu, when clashes erupted between young protesters and security forces in Nepal. Tear gas filled the cafe, and the police fired gunshots. "We could hear shouting and screaming and clamour outside," Sanba recalled, about the first day of Nepal's youth-led protests against corruption, the lavish lifestyles of political elites, and misgovernance. The Himalayan country abolished the centuries-old monarchy and became a constitutional republic in 2008. Its current Constitution came into effect in 2015.

Sanba had been part of the protests since that morning, following weeks-long discussions online among Nepali youths, largely clustered under the umbrella of Gen Z, those born roughly between 1997 and 2012. "The call was for peaceful protests, but things spiralled out of control quickly," she said. The youth, in their school and college uniforms, gathered at Maitighar Mandala in the heart of Kathmandu. Maitighar is synonymous with protests. It is just metres away from the Supreme Court, the pinnacle of justice. Slowly, the crowd swelled into thousands. The protesters gradually started to march towards the Parliament building, about a kilometre away, said Sanba.

"We were minding our friends and supplying water," recalled the BBA final-year marketing student who works as a marketing head and content creator for a private company. "We had no plans to clash with the police. But as security forces charged, demonstrations flared up." By the evening of September 8, official figures were out — at least 19 young lives had been lost, allegedly due to excessive force used by security forces on the demonstrators. The next day, defying the government's curfew, demonstrators not only filled the streets, but also turned violent — attacking politicians and their homes, government infrastructure, and business properties.

"They were not only Gen Z; there were a lot of other people. The second day was chaotic. None of us could comprehend what exactly was going on," Sanba said. But the events of September 8 and 9 did not erupt out of the blue. Online, a storm had already been brewing in Nepal. From a spark to a storm On September 4, the government, led by K.P. Sharma Oli, a leader of the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist), imposed a sweeping ban on 26 social media sites, including X, Facebook, and Instagram, citing their failure to meet the deadline to comply with registration requirements. The youth, who had used social media to band together, took this not just as an affront, but also as a brutal attack on their civic space. "The digital space we were using just went dark suddenly," said Sanba. "It was like being robbed of our agency, our right to speak and express ourselves." Protesters at the Singha Durbar, the seat of the Nepal government's various ministries and offices, after it was set on fire. There was already a lot of anger against corruption and nepotism. Videos and clips about "nepo kids" and "nepo babies" were already circulating in the digital sphere. They showed politicians' children flaunting lavish lifestyles — travelling in luxury cars, going on foreign vacations, and throwing extravagant parties.

Anmol Ghimire, 19, who participated in the discussions online in the lead-up to the protests, said Gen Z were definitely not protesting only the social media ban. "But the government's sudden prohibition on social media sites did light a fuse," said the student of cybersecurity and digital forensics at the British College in Kathmandu. "All we wanted was to call for an end to corruption, and a leadership that could fix the economy, unemployment, and a system that ensured a good future for us young people." Transparency International, which aims "to end the injustice of corruption", published a report earlier this year, ranking Nepal 107th among 180 countries, with a score of 34, on the Corruption Perceptions Index. According to the World Bank, one in five Nepalis aged 15-24 is unemployed. With a high unemployment rate at home, and GDP per capita just a little over \$1,400, millions of Nepalis look for jobs abroad. The people believe that this demonstrates the failure of Nepal's ruling class. Deaths and devastation Multiple Gen Z protesters said they were taken aback by the degree of devastation on September 9, as the demonstrations descended into chaos. Several protesters burned down the Parliament and set the Supreme Court on fire. They set ablaze Singha Durbar, the main government complex, which was once a palace dating back over 100 years. They also attacked hotels and business enterprises. For several days after, the smell of charred papers and smoke filled the air. Blackened buildings and piles of soot were a common sight, and burnt vehicles could be seen across parking areas. Court personnel gather under makeshift tents beside heaps of charred vehicles at the torched Supreme Court premises in Kathmandu on September 14. Two senior officials, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, said that security forces were in no position to contain the crowds, as protesters stormed the buildings from all sides. On September 8, the Home Minister, Ramesh Lekhak, stepped down. On the following day, Oli resigned as Prime Minister, leaving a political vacuum. With no administration in effect, anarchy ensued. The demonstrators beat up Sher Bahadur Deuba, a five-time Prime Minister, and his wife, Arzu Deuba, a Minister in the Oli Cabinet. They set on fire former Prime Minister Jhala Nath Khanal's home. His wife, Rajyalaxmi Chitrakar, suffered severe burn injuries. The official casualty figure stood at 73, with the majority being protesters. The rest included police officials and others who died from burns sustained when buildings were set on fire during the protests, according to information compiled by the government and police. The tense situation forced the Nepal Army to step in to take charge of security. The Army airlifted Oli and other senior leaders to one of its barracks on the northern rim of Kathmandu for their safety. Two major hospitals — the National Trauma Centre and the Civil Service Hospital — were filled with the injured, who had bullets lodged in their head, neck, arms, and legs. Doctors and nurses said they worked extra hours. "We did not expect youngsters to be brought here with bullets even in their chests," said a doctor at the Civil Service Hospital, a stone's throw from the Parliament building. "Tear gas shells were fired even within the hospital premises." More than 100 people are still receiving treatment. The dead were cremated on September 16 with state honours. On September 17, the government declared a public holiday in their memory, with flags flying at half-mast. It declared all those killed "martyrs". Most of the demonstrators who lost their lives were between the ages of 19 and 24, according to hospitals. Some were in Kathmandu to study

and work, while others were preparing for foreign employment or higher education abroad, family members outside the hospitals said.

Discontent turns to dissent Analysts said a public eruption on the streets was long overdue. "It was not a matter of if, but when," said Krishna Khanal, a professor of political science at Tribhuvan University in Kathmandu. "It was for everyone to see that the political class was failing on all fronts. Their promises of reform were turning hollow by the years." A picture of former Nepali Prime Minister, K.P. Sharma Oli, lies on the floor in the Singha Durbar office complex. Since the new Constitution came into effect in 2015, Nepal has seen multiple government changes with the same three faces at the helm on a rotational basis: Oli, Deuba, and Pushpa Kamal Dahal "Prachanda". Their role in past democratic struggles is publicly acknowledged, but the perception had been growing that they were no longer fit to run the country. Khanal said frustration at Nepal's political parties had been growing, and "what we are calling Gen Z decided to take matters into their own hands." Oli began centralising power by consolidating several powerful departments under the Prime Minister's Office. His government issued a policy, making it difficult for NGOs in Nepal to register and operate. Ajaya Bhadra Khanal, research director at the Centre for Social Innovation and Foreign Policy, said Oli's authoritarian tendencies became evident from his first stint in 2018. "He tried to control the legislative process, policy making, and governance," he said. "The way he bulldozed the party statute amendment to secure a third term as party chair also showed he was inclined to rule with an iron fist." Last July, Oli inked a midnight power-sharing deal with Deuba to form a new "national consensus government" to replace the coalition government led by "Prachanda." Further, media exposés on land grabs, corruption, gold smuggling, and the Bhutanese refugee scam, among others, were not pursued. Remembrance of calm As the Army stepped in, President Ram Chandra Poudel called for restraint and invited the protesting groups for talks. Army Chief General Ashok Sigdel was tasked with negotiating with Gen Z protesters. But who could he talk to? The protests had started spontaneously after discussions among various groups and sub-groups, especially on the digital platform Discord. "We are not a political party, we are not an organised group. Yes, we did lack structural leadership," said Uujan Rajbhandari, 23, one of the youth representatives who met Gen. Sigdel.

Negotiations began late on September 9 and continued, as the representatives demanded a leader with wider acceptance, who they believed was honest to head the government. "After hours of discussions among ourselves, a majority agreed on Sushila Karki's name," said Rajbhandari, a civil engineering student. "Her support for our protest, her integrity, and her anti-corruption stance made us think she was the right candidate."

Ms. Karki, a former Chief Justice, who often speaks out against corruption from various public forums, was the first public figure to visit hospitals and meet the injured. She passionately supported Gen Z's protest. She was at Kathmandu's Civil Hospital, near the Parliament building on September 9, and said, "The way the state has responded to this youth protest is unacceptable. The protesters' demand is justified." After marathon meetings, on the night of September 12, President Poudel appointed Karki, 73, as head of the interim government. Hours later, he dissolved Parliament and called for elections on March 5. While calm has returned to Kathmandu and elsewhere, uncertainty still hangs in the air. The road ahead In her first public statement after assuming office on September 14, Ms. Karki said she would follow through on the protesters' demands to end corruption. "I had no desire to come here. My name was brought from the streets," she said. "We will not stay beyond six months under any circumstance. We will fulfil our responsibilities and hand over power to the next Parliament and elected ministers." Ms. Karki's Cabinet includes Ramesh Khanal, an economist who has long advocated economic reforms; Kulman Ghising, an electrical engineer credited with ending power cuts; and Om Prakash Aryal, a lawyer known for his anti-corruption and social justice work.

Rajbhandari, the Gen Z representative, said the Cabinet may not be an ideal one, but it is fit to steer the country towards elections and restore democratic order. "We were definitely not for a system change or the overturning of the Constitution. Our groups that led the protests were not demanding the return of the monarchy," he said. "We are for a democratic government that works for the welfare of the people and the country. We need corruption rooted out; we want clean people to lead the country, who can inspire hope." Professor Khanal said this government's main challenge is to hold elections on time by winning the confidence of the major stakeholders — the youth representatives as well as the political parties. "This interim government has the uphill task of bringing political players to the elections while not undermining the spirit of Gen Z," he said. For Sanba, the marketing student, and many like her, hope now rests on the promise that their voices will lead to change, and that the sacrifice of so many young lives will not be in vain. They are hopeful about the current government. They also insist that the violence against young protesters be investigated and that those behind the arson, attacks on government buildings, and other criminal acts be held accountable. Sanba maintains that Gen Z was not involved in the violence. "We strongly believe that our protest was infiltrated, and our movement was taken advantage of," she said. "Almost like using our shoulders to aim and fire."

ED raids multiple States in Rs 3,500 crore Andhra Pradesh liquor 'scam' case

Hyderabad/Amaravati: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Thursday conducted searches in multiple States as part of its money laundering investigation into an alleged Rs 3,500 crore liquor scam in Andhra Pradesh that is claimed to have taken place during the previous YSRCP regime, officials said.

At least 20 locations across Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Delhi-NCR linked to entities and individuals who allegedly facilitated payment of kickbacks through bogus/inflated invoices were searched under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

Premises related to some accused persons are also being searched, they said. Those covered include Arete Institute of Medical Sciences, Shree Jewellers Eximp, N R Udhayog LLP, The India Fruits Pvt Ltd (Chennai), Venkateshwara Packaging, Suvarna Durga Bottles, Rao Saheb Boorugu Mahadev Jewellers, Ushodaya Enterprises and Mohan Lal Jewellers (Chennai), as per the officials.

Is age catching up with India's dams?



"At Independence, the new Government of India ... made the building of big dams a central part of its strategy for transforming India, a commitment to which it adhered for decades," historian Daniel Klingensmith wrote in his 2007 book 'One Valley and a Thousand'.

The Damodar Valley Corporation, the Bhakra Nangal, and the Hirakud in the 1940s were followed by dams on the Rihand, Koyna, Tungabhadra, Chambal, and Krishna rivers in the decade after. In fact, in the two decades from 1951, India had started work on 418 large dams and by 2000 had completed around 4,000. In Klingensmith's telling, building dams had become "a way by which the modernity and worth of the nation could be enhanced, tested, and displayed." Today, however, India faces the challenge of large parts of its hydrological infrastructure ageing en masse. According to the National Register of Large (Specified) Dams, some 1,065 were 50-100 years old and 224 were more than a century old in 2023. Many major dams of the post-1950 period are now in the last stages of their originally intended lifespan, raising safety and performance concerns that transcend problems of engineering alone.

In practice, India's dam projects have typically assumed a useful life on the order of a few decades. The Bhakra Dam completed in 1963 was expected to serve for at least 100 years as a reservoir but its builders underestimated sedimentation rates, so much so that the reservoir's capacity had dropped by nearly 25% in the first 35 years of its use. Likewise, the Lower Bhavani Dam in Tamil Nadu had lost 28% of its capacity between 1956 and 2005 and the Nizam Sagar Dam had lost roughly half its capacity just in the first three decades of use since 1931. These examples illustrate one fact clearly: the initial design life of many dams isn't equal to the actual life. The cost of running a dam at its original performance levels can shoot up as it ages — and this is before the additional 'climate load' is factored in. Dams more than 50 years old today have outdated spillway capacities and structural safety factors and require urgent attention to ensure they can continue to function safely.

This photograph shows buildings near the Arbaat Dam, 40 km north of Port Sudan, after it collapsed following heavy rains and torrential floods on August 25, 2024. Dams' multiple failure modes can be split into three types: structural, hydraulic, and geotechnical. These modes are hard to pry apart in practice but it's useful to treat them separately if only to identify specific ways to surmount them. A structural failure is when a dam ruptures or collapses due to weaknesses implicit to its structure. Common causes include poor design and/or construction, material degradation, and structural components being forced to withstand forces they weren't equipped to. For example, progressive concrete deterioration can weaken a concrete dam over time. One way this happens is when silica in rocky aggregates in the structure reacts with alkali compounds in the cement to form a water-absorbing substance. As the substance expands, the concrete starts to crack from within. This category also includes structural cracks, slope instability in earth embankments, and gate and sluice failures. Worldwide, about 42% of concrete dam failures have been attributed to foundational and structural issues. Structural failures in Indian dams have been traced to seepage, corroded piping, and/or weak foundations. A hydraulic failure occurs when the dam can no longer safely store water. The best known cause of this mode, especially in the era of climate change, is overtopping: when flood waters pass over the dam's pinnacle, potentially breaching the structure en route. When inflow exceeds the dam's capacity, insufficient spillway capacity or blocked spillways can also lead to overtopping. Similarly, when a dam's outflow is very fast, it can erode the structure's downstream face, also resulting in hydraulic failure. In earth and rock-filled dam failures worldwide, overtopping has been the single most common cause (about a third of the time). India's first recorded dam failure, of the Tigris Dam in 1917, was also due to overtopping, and overall this cause has been the main one in most of the 36 recorded dam failures in the country.

Finally, a geotechnical failure occurs when the dam's foundations, abutments or the materials within the dam are unstable. Internal erosion in the foundation has accounted for about 29% of masonry dam failures worldwide. Earth-fill dams are particularly susceptible to flawed piping in the dam's body, where water can seep through the dam or its foundation and eventually cause a breach. Earthquakes and landslides can also trigger structural as well as geotechnical failures. Dams in seismically active zones are particularly vulnerable to quake-induced cracking or slope failures. When the magnitude-6.6 Koyanagar earthquake in Maharashtra shook the Koyana Dam in 1967, the structure developed cracks and began to accumulate hydrostatic pressure, raising fears of a breach. Real-world failures are a combination of these modes. An initial structural deficiency could lead to excessive leaks (geotechnical failure) that weaken the dam. Thus when the part of the river upstream of the dam receives heavy rainfall or when there's a glacial lake outburst flood (like the one that roiled Sikkim in 2023), the waters overtop the dam and results in a catastrophic breach. The world's history of dams indicates more than 70% of failures occur in the first decade of operations as this is when flaws in the design or construction are most likely to become evident. But as dams age, delayed maintenance, material ageing, and unanticipated flooding or seismic events can dramatically increase failure risk. After all, as climate change intensifies, it increases the risk of natural disasters of unprecedented magnitude — and to not have precedent means to lose history as a guide. Caring for older dams India's Central and State governments have developed an evolving framework of policies, laws, and projects to ensure dam safety, led by the safety regime established by the Dam Safety Act 2021. The instrument provides a framework to surveil, inspect, operate, and maintain all specified large dams, and requires institutional mechanisms at both the Central and the State levels to uphold it. At the Act's heart is the National Committee on Dam Safety, the apex body with the responsibility of evolving dam safety policies and reviewing the work of State-level agencies. The Committee is joined by the National Dam Safety Authority (NDSA), a regulatory body under the Union Jal Shakti Ministry tasked with enforcing policy and resolving interstate disputes. In this scenario, every State with large dams is required to establish a State Dam Safety Organisation (SDSO) headed by qualified engineers to oversee dams in its jurisdiction. (If a dam is located in one State but operated by another, the NDSA supplants the relevant SDSO.) The 2021 Act also specifies regular inspection schedules. Dam owners — of

ten a State's irrigation department or power utility — are required to conduct pre-monsoon and post-monsoon checks every year, among others. The law also requires each dam to have an emergency action plan and an alarm system, and provides for remedial actions that SDSOs can order if a dam is found to be falling short. Before the Act, the Central Water Commission (CWC) had set guidelines for dam owners on regular maintenance and safety reviews. To this end, many States have had Dam Safety Review Panels: expert groups typically populated by experienced dam engineers, hydrologists, and geologists and which audit ageing dams and recommend rehabilitation measures. The Dam Safety Organisation within the CWC also maintains a database of dam incidents and assists States in investigative studies. After any major natural disaster, a dam is also subjected to special inspections. In 2012, the Indian government mooted the flagship Dam Rehabilitation and Improvement Project (DRIP) to upgrade ageing dams. DRIP places particular emphasis on capacity building, including training State dam engineers in contemporary safety practices and developing an emergency action plan. Upgraded dams as a result have piezometers, inclinometers, and seismic monitors on site watching for signs of distress. These in turn also require dam health monitoring software to be integrated with dams' operations and for each dam to maintain a log, like its report card.

From 2012 to 2021, DRIP I rehabilitated 198 dams in Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, and Uttarakhand. Work included grouting cracks, strengthening spillway piers, improving drainage and filtration systems in earth dams, replacing gates and valves, installing modern sensors and instruments, and improving operational processes. The government approved DRIP phases II and III in 2020 to cover 736 dams in 19 States, with financial assistance from the World Bank and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank for physical rehabilitation and to undertake comprehensive safety evaluations. As of early 2024, reviews for more than 400 dams had reportedly been completed. Dovetailing on DRIP are guidelines to deal with the consequences of natural events rendered more intense and/or frequent by climate change. This includes rechecking the probable maximum flood for spillway designs, improving spillway capacity, and adding auxiliary channels. Older masonry and concrete dams are also evaluated against current earthquake codes and strengthened if required by anchoring, buttressing or adding reinforced concrete overlays. The National Hydrology Project and flood forecasting initiatives have also been working to improve flood management upstream. On the flip side, DRIP doesn't make room for dams to be decommissioned; instead it focuses on extending the lifespan of dams at all costs. India in fact lacks an official dam decommissioning policy. The Dam Safety Act empowers authorities to declare a dam unsafe and potentially stop its operation, but there's no procedure to decommission it altogether. Experts have recommended India develop a risk-based framework, i.e. when a dam's failure risk exceeds acceptable limits and it's no longer feasible to strengthen it. Calls by experts to decommission specific dams, such as the Mullaperiyar, have thus far only been dealt with in courts.

Economics of ageing As a dam ages, the cost of its upkeep rises. Older dams often require structural strengthening, e.g. by retrofitting their spillways or reinforcing concrete; upgrading gates and mechanical equipment; and continuously dredging and managing sediment. Second, the loss of reservoir capacity thanks to siltation diminishes water supply, irrigation potential, and hydroelectric power generation capacity. Addressing sedimentation by dredging and restoring catchment areas, among other measures, is also expensive. At one point, the Government of India had deemed the Bhakra reservoir's large-scale dredging to be "cost-prohibitive".

To evaluate the potential cost of a complete failure, analysts use risk assessment models that consider the probability of failure together with its consequences. In practice, a dam's hazard classification (low, significant or high) is based on the worst consequences should it fail. Consequence analysis frameworks, such as the one the US's Department of Homeland Security uses to assess dam safety, enumerate the consequences in three categories: human (populations at risk, potential loss of life), economic (property damage, infrastructure loss, cost of replacement and remediation), and critical services (loss of water supply, power, irrigation). Thus, a comprehensive failure scenario analysis might estimate the asset replacement cost of the dam and its associated structures, the remediation cost for downstream cleanup, and the lost power generation or water supply as part of business losses. Depending on the relevant rules, the analysis may also include intangible costs like environmental damage and long-term economic setback to the region. India currently makes limited formal demands of economic analyses of dam failures. Before the government approves a dam, the project proponent is required to submit an environmental impact assessment (EIA) that includes a dam failure analysis. Since 2021, the Dam Safety Act has required certain dams to have emergency action plans and inundation maps on file. But the government has also been progressively weakening EIA governance, including approving projects sans EIAs and allowing defaulters to pay a fine and continue offending ones. Perhaps the worst failure in India's history was the collapse of the Machchu-II Dam in Morbi in Gujarat in 1979. This earthen dam was built in the 1970s and was breached after extreme rainfall. Water spilled from the dam in a flash flood that killed more than 2,000 people (although some estimates go up to 20,000). The failure also demolished most of Morbi town. More recently, the Tiware Dam in Ratnagiri district of Maharashtra failed in 2019, wiping out entire villages and killing 19 people. Following tropical cyclone Daniel, the Derna and the Abu Mansour Dams in Libya collapsed in September 2023 and killed more than 3,800. The incident prompted countries worldwide to double-check their own dams — and thus the Himachal Pradesh government found 21 dams in the State had violated their safety norms, including possessing inadequate spillways. The discovery drew calls for older dams to have their safety margins reviewed by independent experts. Dam failures also impose long-term costs as local governments have to restore damaged transport links, compensate and rehabilitate the affected families, and reverse losses in agricultural productivity. Even near-miss events can exact high costs. While the 2018 floods strained but didn't breach several dams in Kerala, the State's economy was hit by the emergency reservoir drawdowns and controlled downstream spilling it had to effect. This said, economic evaluations of dam safety are now moving towards risk-based decision-making, which means vouchsafing investments for dams that pose the highest risk, which in turn is a function of the likelihood of failure and the magnitude of downstream consequences. Such an approach helps ensure limited funds are directed to averting the most severe potential disasters, even if the limitedness is arguably artificial and not inevitable. Perhaps the best way to contextualise these measures and policies is to read them in the context of three of India's great old dams (subjectively speaking): the Mullaperiyar, the Hirakud, and the Bhakra Nangal.

Small farms are more productive than large farms, finds study



Researchers at the Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay (IIT Bombay) and the University of Hyderabad conducted a study and found that productivity in India's semi-arid tropics depends less on farm size and more on access to inputs, credit, and markets. The study involved analysing data from 1975 to 2014 and examining changes through three waves over 40 years. The researchers found that small farms were indeed more productive, especially in the early years (1975-84), citing more intensive family labour, higher attention, and adding more fertilisers per unit compared to larger landholders. The 1960s have shown that smaller farms are generally more productive than large farms in terms of yield per acre. However, the new study proves that even during those early years, the productivity scale was not as tilted towards small farms as previously thought.

The findings suggest that the inverse farm size-productivity relationship, where the productivity decreases as the farm size increases, was never as pronounced in the semi-arid regions of India. As agrarian distress dragged on

in these regions, the productivity advantage of small farms faded in the later years (2009-2014). "The smallholders still matter greatly for food security and rural stability, but they are increasingly vulnerable due to monocropping and high input costs. To strengthen the capacity of smallholders, the need is to improve their access to appropriate technologies, affordable credit, and reliable extension services," says Prof. Sarthak Gaurav from Shailesh J. Mehta School of Management, IIT Bombay and a co-author of the study. The findings prove that the farm size-productivity relationship is complex, context-dependent, and much weaker than previously thought. The researchers relied on village-level studies from the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) datasets spanning over four decades from 1975 to 2014. According to the researchers, this database is considered one of the world's longest-running agricultural panel studies from semi-arid tropics, a region that missed out on the early benefits of the Green Revolution, as it tracks farming households across multiple decades.

The ICRISAT data is mainly from three representative zones: Akola, Solapur, and Mahabubnagar. The researchers explain that the unique agroecological and institutional conditions here make it an ideal setting to understand how productivity patterns changed in response to delayed but significant transitions in agriculture. According to researchers, they merged household and cultivation data across survey waves and also used external sources, including the India Meteorology Department's (IMD) gridded data, to fill the gaps. The researchers recommend prioritising the improvements in smallholders' collective capacity to access markets and inputs. The other recommendation is to help smallholders organise into collectives or producer groups to enable them to pool resources, adopt agroecological practices, and negotiate better prices.

The best defense against deepfakes and misinformation



tent meets intent and correctness. This synergy between automation and human reasoning ensures against missteps and abuse. Educating students on Human In The Loop closes the gap between AI theory and real-world digital accountability. It emphasises that AI does not excuse us from responsibility; it complements our decision-making if used responsibly.

The frontlines of AI education Schools and colleges are best placed to establish foundational AI literacy. School and college curriculum inclusion of AI education is no longer a choice but a necessity. A multi-faceted approach is necessary: Practical workshops: Hands-on sessions where students are trained to detect deepfakes through readily available AI tools and fact-checking websites. AI Ethics: Educating students on the ethical considerations of using and developing AI material, highlighting the necessity for Secure GenAI and Sovereign AI to ensure user information protection and responsible innovation. AI literacy modules: Clear descriptions of terms such as Composite AI and Lifecycle-based Approach, Voice First Interfaces, and AI Agents that illustrate how AI affects everyday life, from virtual assistants to recommendation systems. When students realise that AI technologies are constructed by human beings to benefit human beings, they will be more inclined to engage with content in a critical and ethical manner. Practical applications, such as how Accessible AI makes technology accessible to differently-abled people, need to be taught in the curriculum so that the ability and responsibility of utilising AI tools will be celebrated. Towards easier, safer digital living

In a world in which AI is changing the way we communicate, interact, and access information at unprecedented speed, deepfakes have emerged as one of the most insidious threats of the day. Deepfakes, compelling but faked audio, video, or pictures produced through advanced AI methodology, threaten trust, privacy, and democratic debate on a catastrophic scale. With misinformation spreading like wildfire, one needs AI literacy to protect people and society in general. A deepening threat

Deepfakes use advanced AI technologies like Conversational GenAI and Domain Specific LLMs (Large Language Models) to produce very realistic but completely artificial content. From manipulated political orations to simulated celebrity endorsements, the uses are only limited by one's imagination. What is so insidious about them is that they can evade the human eye, rendering it difficult to distinguish between real and created media. AI literacy enables individuals to critically analyse digital information instead of passively receiving what they hear or observe. One of the approaches is a Human-Centric model for addressing misinformation where AI is merely an aid to augment human judgment, not substitute it. AI literacy enables individuals to grasp the strengths and weaknesses of technologies like Secure GenAI and Sovereign AI, promoting an educated digital citizenry. AI literacy isn't about knowing how algorithms operate; it's about understanding how to effectively use verification tools. With some knowledge of the principles of AI, individuals can utilise tools that identify deepfakes and verify facts, which ultimately lead to a healthier information ecosystem. Breaking down complicated AI terminology, such as Human In The Loop (HITL), to students requires relating it to their daily lives. HITL simply denotes that while AI will handle many of the processes, human intervention is still necessary in decision-making and correcting errors. As an example, whereas AI Assist can generate emails or set reminders, a human makes sure the end-con-

The convergence of AI Assistants and Conversational AI can be used as everyday tools that assist users in confirming facts or reporting suspicious content. By enabling students to engage with AI responsibly, we set the stage for an Ease of Living where technology is a trusted countermeasure against misinformation. Deepfakes with the right consent and the right purpose can go a long way, but we need to use them responsibly. Teaching AI literacy early on, we empower the next generation with critical thinking skills, responsible action, and the use of AI as a force for good. As deepfakes become more advanced, so does our response. AI literacy is the best defence against disinformation, allowing students, professionals, and citizens alike to use digital content more responsibly. It is the combined effort of educators, technology companies, media, and policymakers that will be protecting democracy in this age of technology. With informed intellects and moral practices, we can be assured that technology is a force for good, where innovation never comes at the expense of truth, and where education serves as the beacon.

BC reservations, both Congress and BJP caught on a slippery ground

HYDERABAD: The national parties — Congress and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) are caught on a slippery ground over 42 percent reservations to BCs in the local body elections and employment and education sectors in the State. Ahead of the local body elections, both the parties had drawn up grand plans to win the confidence of BCs. Much to their dismay, all the plans went awry, triggering unrest among the BCs and exposing their "commitment".

The Congress on its front has been reiterating its commitment towards the community by stressing that two bills were passed in the Assembly and council on March 17 and 18 this year. The same were sent to the President of India's assent. However, as there was no approval from the President's Office, the Congress government issued an ordinance but even that was not approved. Finally, the Panchayat Raj Act 2018 and



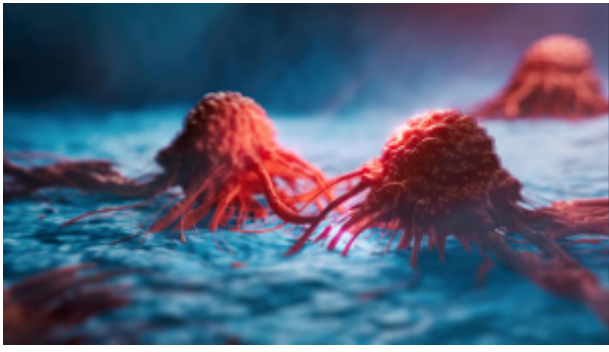
Municipalities Act, 2019 were also amended.

But all these efforts did not fructify. Though the Congress government was well aware of all these challenges, it has been stressing that 42 reservations would be extended to the BCs. It had even planned to hold a public meeting in Kamareddy on September 15 but postponed it citing rains. Eventually Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy on Friday said the State government would wait till the

Supreme Court's orders over the issue. The entire episode reflected the Congress government's "commitment". Amidst all these developments, it is unclear if the State government would conduct the local body elections before September 30 — the deadline set by the High Court. On the other hand, the State BJP has been facing challenging times and is defenseless over the BC reservations issue. The party has been trying to blame the Congress government, charging that in

the guise of extending 42 percent to BC reservations, it was actually facilitating more reservations to the backward Muslims. But this campaign did not strike a chord with the people as expected by the party. It is learnt that the Telangana BJP leaders had raised the issue with the central leadership in New Delhi during the Vice Presidential elections. However, as there was no clear indication from the party central leadership, the State leaders were left disappointed.

Childhood cancers account for over 2% of new cases in Karnataka annually



Childhood cancers continue to remain a significant, yet often under-recognised health burden in Karnataka, contributing to more than 2% of all new cancer cases detected annually. Doctors stress that with timely diagnosis and uninterrupted treatment, more than 70% of childhood cancers are curable — a message being reinforced during September, globally observed as Childhood Cancer Awareness Month. To mark the month, the State-run Kidwai Institute of Oncology (KMIO) is organising an awareness programme with activities and a fun fiesta for children at the institute on September 20, Saturday. According to data provided by T. Naveen, Director In charge of Kidwai institute, as many as 87,855 new cancer cases are detected every year in Karnataka, of which 1,882 (2.1%) are in children. Childhood cancers account for 1.4% of cancer deaths in the State. In Bengaluru alone, 15,812 new cases are detected annually, with children making up 339 (2.1%) of the total. Childhood cancers contribute to 1.5% of cancer deaths in the city. Specialised diagnosis

At Kidwai institute, the State's apex Regional Cancer Centre, 601 childhood cancer cases (0–14 years) were registered in 2024, representing 4.6% of its total cancer caseload. "This reflects the significant paediatric oncology workload at KMIO and underlines the importance of strengthening specialised diagnostic and treatment services for children," said Dr. Naveen. In India, of the 14 lakh new cancer cases reported annually, 35,240 (2.5%) are in children, con-

tributing to nearly 1.8% of cancer-related deaths. Experts point out that while the absolute numbers may seem smaller compared to adult cancers, the impact is profound as it affects children at their most vulnerable ages and places a heavy social and emotional toll on families. Most common cancers

An analysis of childhood cancer patterns in Bengaluru by doctors at Kidwai shows that leukaemia remains the leading cancer type among children, contributing to over 40% of cases in boys and more than one-third in girls. This is followed by lymphomas, brain and nervous system tumours, bone cancers, and kidney cancers. Brain tumours, doctors observed, were slightly more common among girls compared to boys. "These patterns show the urgent need to expand paediatric oncology facilities, especially for blood-related and neurological cancers," said Arun Kumar A.R., professor and Head of Paediatric Oncology at Kidwai. Over the past few years, doctors at Kidwai have been witnessing more girls registering for cancer treatment than in the past. "With more awareness, the sex ratio for cancer registration has improved now compared to previous years when there were gender disparities in cancer treatment for girls," said Dr. Kumar. Early detection and advances in treatment, delays in diagnosis and interruptions in cancer therapy remain major challenges in India. "Persistent unexplained fever, swellings or lumps, a white reflex in the eye, vision changes, prolonged bone or joint pain, and unexplained weight losses are red-flag symptoms that parents and caregivers should never ignore."

Dr. Kumar said. He stressed that early detection, timely treatment, and adequate family support can make childhood cancers curable in majority of the cases. "The diagnosis of cancer in a child is the beginning of a demanding journey, which often turns out to be life-changing for the entire family. People should avoid alternative systems of medicine for cancer treatment as it only delays the initiation of proper treatment. Early diagnosis and early intervention is better as it improves the chances of successful treatment and reduces mortality," he added.

Why are deaths occurring despite rabies vaccine? Doctors stress strict adherence to prevention and treatment steps



The death of a 50-year-old man in Chennai due to rabies, despite reportedly receiving both immunoglobulin and a complete course of the vaccine after a dog bite, has raised questions about vaccine failure and gaps in post-exposure care. Experts underline that while rabies is almost always fatal once symptoms develop, it is also fully preventable if the correct steps are taken promptly. "The very first step after a bite is washing the wound thoroughly with soap and running water for at least 15 minutes. This alone can wash away most of the virus," said C. Ananthkrishnan, senior consultant in internal medicine, Prashanth Hospitals, Chennai. He described wound cleaning as "as golden as the vaccine itself," emphasising that the first hour after a bite is critical. Sindhuja L., neuro-physician, VS Hospitals, Chennai added that many failures occur because people either miss or delay this step. "If the virus enters the nerves before the vaccine starts working, the outcome can be fatal," she said. The location and depth of the wound play a decisive role in determining outcomes. "Bites on the head, face, neck and upper limbs allow the virus to travel quickly to the brain. These require an aggressive approach," explained Surendran R., consultant, infectious diseases & hospital infection control, SIMS Hospital, Chennai. Category 3 wounds -- deep bites with bleeding, contamination of mucous membranes, or multiple injuries require immunoglobulin in addition to the vaccine, he said. Dr. Sindhuja recalled treating a child bitten on the face who developed rabies despite receiving the vaccine, underscoring how the proximity of the bite to the brain accelerates disease progression.

The post-exposure rabies vaccine (PEP) regimen in-

cludes five doses given on days 0, 3, 7, 14, and 28 following a potential exposure. For high-risk Category 3 bites, rabies immunoglobulin is also given, ideally infiltrated into and around the wound to neutralise the virus locally. Errors in vaccine or immunoglobulin administration remain a significant concern. "Immunoglobulin should be infiltrated thoroughly into and around the wound, not just given intramuscularly. Missing areas, especially on the face and neck, increase the risk," said Dr. Ananthkrishnan. Completing the vaccine schedule is equally critical, doctors noted. "Getting just two shots is not enough. If the full course is not completed as per schedule, protection drops significantly," he said. Ajay Christopher, associate consultant in Emergency Medicine, Rela Hospital, Chennai, pointed out that starting the vaccine or immunoglobulin late, more than a day or two after the bite can also render the intervention ineffective. Timely initiation, proper administration site (usually the deltoid), adherence to the full schedule, and maintenance of cold chain are critical to ensure full protection. Experts pointed to cold chain maintenance as a weak link in the system. "Rabies vaccines are sensitive biological products. If they are frozen, or not stored between 2°C and 8°C, their effectiveness drops drastically," said Dr. Christopher. Dr. Surendran added that improper handling during transport and storage failures at hospitals could result in ineffective doses being administered.

Underlying health conditions may also affect vaccine response. "Patients who are immunocompromised, those with diabetes, on transplant medications or heavy alcohol use, may not respond as well to vaccines," said Dr. Ananthkrishnan. Systemic issues also persist. "In smaller towns, immunoglobulin is not always available, and public awareness about immediate wound washing is still very low," noted Dr. Sindhuja. Dr. Surendran stressed the need for strict protocols on vaccine storage and handling, regular monitoring and training of healthcare staff. Despite these gaps, experts emphasised that rabies remains one of the most preventable diseases. "Rabies has no cure once symptoms start, but if dealt with properly, it is 100% preventable," said Dr. Ananthkrishnan. Doctors also said that no animal bite should ever be ignored. "Even a scratch from a stray dog or cat can be dangerous. Wash immediately, seek medical care and never skip or delay vaccine doses," said Dr. Sindhuja. For those at high risk, such as people frequently handling animals -- pre-exposure vaccination can also be considered, Dr. Surendran added. "The take-home message according to experts: rabies deaths can be avoided if wound care, vaccine, and immunoglobulin are administered correctly and on time."

Amoebic meningoencephalitis: Ten things you need to know



Amoebic encephalitis is a rare yet potentially fatal infection of the central nervous system caused by free-living amoebae commonly found in freshwater environments like lakes and rivers. As many as 19 deaths and about 70 cases of amoebic meningoencephalitis have been reported this year alone in Kerala, even as several continue to be in treatment as of September 17, 2025. Here are ten things to know about amoebic meningoencephalitis:

1. There are two types of amoebic encephalitis, namely primary amoebic meningoencephalitis (PAM) and granulomatous amoebic encephalitis (GAE).
2. Primary amoebic meningoencephalitis or PAM is caused by *Naegleria fowleri*, an amoeba that thrives in warm freshwater lakes, ponds, and rivers. It can also survive in poorly maintained swimming pools in rare cases.
3. As it can infect the brain and destroy the tissues there, this one-celled organism is also called 'brain-eating amoeba'. These infections, though rare, are fatal, and 97% of the patients don't survive.
4. The amoeba enters the body through the nose and

reaches the brain. It destroys brain tissues and causes swelling. In recent cases, children have been found to be more vulnerable to it. The infection does not spread from person to person. Swallowing water containing the amoeba does not lead to it either.

5. PAM is rare and usually occurs in otherwise healthy children, teens, and young adults, and has a high fatality rate because of rapid onset and delayed diagnosis.

6. The initial symptoms of PAM are indistinguishable from bacterial meningitis, while the symptoms of GAE can mimic a brain abscess, encephalitis, or meningitis. Both PAM and GAE can be fatal, with only a few reported survivors. The Kerala government now has a protocol in place for treatment and is attempting to diagnose and treat early.

7. Patients typically have a history of swimming, diving, bathing, or playing in warm, generally stagnant, freshwater during the previous one to nine days. Some cases have been reported with no such known history, however.

8. The deadly *Naegleria* species are ubiquitous in soil and fresh or brackish water (lakes, rivers, ponds). In general, they are sensitive to environmental conditions such as aridity and pH extremes and cannot survive in seawater.

9. The infection can be diagnosed through PCR tests of the cerebrospinal fluid. However, as PAM is a rare condition, detection can sometimes be hard.

10. Holding the nose or wearing a nose clip while jumping or diving into fresh water are some of the steps suggested to avoid the infection. The head should be kept high while entering warm water. Steer clear of digging in shallow waters, say experts. Distilled or boiled water should be used for clearing nasal passages. Chlorination and regular cleaning of wells, tanks and swimming pools is also being recommended.

Peyronie's Disease: breaking myths and embracing modern treatments

When it comes to men's health, there are still conditions that are rarely spoken about, even within families. One such condition is Peyronie's disease — a disorder that can significantly affect both physical health and emotional well-being but often goes unrecognised due to embarrassment or lack of awareness. As a urologist, I often meet men who have silently lived with the symptoms for months, sometimes years, before finally seeking help. By this time, the disease has often progressed, impacting not only their sexual health but also their confidence, relationships, and quality of life.

What is Peyronie's Disease?

Peyronie's disease occurs when fibrous scar tissue (plaques) develops inside the penis, leading to an abnormal bend or curvature during erection. This can cause pain, difficulty with sexual intercourse, and in some cases, erectile dysfunction. Global studies estimate that between 3% and 9% of men may be affected, with prevalence rising among those between 40 and 70 years of age. In some populations, surveys suggest the number could be as high as 1 in 10 men. Despite this, many cases remain undiagnosed, as men often avoid seeking medical care for sexual health issues. In India, we suspect similar prevalence, but cultural barriers and stigma around discussing men's health mean a large number of cases likely go unreported. The biggest challenge in India is silence. Many men dismiss symptoms as a normal part of ageing or avoid seeking care due to embarrassment. Some turn to unverified home remedies or delay medical consultation until the disease becomes severe. This is a critical concern because Peyronie's disease is a medical condition, not a reflection of masculinity or virility. The longer one waits, the fewer the minimally invasive options available. Advances in treatment Over the past decade, treatment for Peyronie's disease has advanced significantly across the world, and India is now adopting many of these innovations. Medical therapies: Oral medications provide limited benefits, but intralesional injections are increasingly being introduced in India with encouraging results in reducing curvature. Minimally invasive approaches: Penile traction therapy devices, now available in India, are proving effective when used in the early stages of the disease.



Surgical excellence: For severe curvature, surgery remains the most effective solution. Techniques such as plication, grafting, and penile prosthesis implantation are being performed in Indian centres with successful outcomes. Holistic care: Treatment in India increasingly includes psychological support, couple counseling, and sexual health education, acknowledging the emotional impact of the disease. Research shows that men often wait over a year before seeking medical advice for Peyronie's disease. This delay can lead to worsening curvature and the need for more invasive treatments. In India, where men's health discussions are even more restricted, undiagnosed cases may be far higher. It is important to understand that Peyronie's disease is not rare, and is certainly not something to be ashamed of. It is a recognised medical condition with effective treatment options available. For men who experience penile curvature, pain during erections, or difficulties with sexual activity, consulting a qualified urologist early, can make a significant difference. Families and partners can also play an important role by offering emotional support and encouraging timely medical care. Improving awareness With modern therapies and advanced surgical expertise now available in India, men no longer need to silently endure the burden of Peyronie's disease. Awareness, early action, and open conversations are the keys to better outcomes, preserved sexual health, and improved quality of life. The key is to act early — timely consultation with a urologist and early treatment in these patients ensures better outcomes and overall well-being.

Not merely puffy feet: what pedal oedema can signify about your health

Pedal oedema, pedal from the Latin pedalis, meaning "pertaining to the foot" and oedema from the Greek oidema, meaning "to swell" literally means swelling of the feet. This is a fairly common symptom, but one that generally has physicians delving deep, to identify the underlying cause. It can be caused by a variety of diseases: these can be systemic, due to cardiac, renal or liver disease, or may be local, caused by trauma. Understanding pedal oedema

Pedal oedema is considered a premonitory symptom for many diseases. Understanding it involves firstly, classifying it. The first major classification is whether it is unilateral or bilateral, or, present on one or both feet. In case of single-sided pedal oedema, a local cause needs to be considered. This can range from trauma to the leg, lymphatic obstruction or even deep vein thrombosis or a mass compressing the leg's venous supply, which needs expert consultation and radiological investigations. Bilateral pedal oedema could portend something bigger. A famous quote of medical professors is: "Bilateral pedal oedema means all failures — cardiac, renal, liver, respiratory". This grim line highlights the importance of detailed investigations into the cause of pedal oedema involving both limbs.

How does swelling happen?

Water makes up about 60% of an adult human body by weight. This water is divided: two-thirds of it is located within our cells (intracellular) while one-third of it is outside the cells (extracellular), and part of this extracellular water is in the vascular chamber. The vascular chamber is governed by the Starling equations of hydrostatic and oncotic pressure. When the hydrostatic pressure increases, as in the case of heart failure, water from the vascular chamber is pushed out, into the interstitium (supporting or connective tissues) causing oedema. Likewise, when the oncotic pressure decreases, as in low albumin states of chronic kidney disease and chronic liver disease, the fluid is pulled out into the interstitium. There are also two other causes of oedema. One is endothelial injury (damage to the inner lining of blood vessels), as seen in trauma and other gravely sick conditions needing ICU admissions. The other is lymphatic stasis as is seen in Wuchereriosis or filariasis, colloquially known as elephantiasis. Apart from these two conditions, a gross deficit in calories and protein over a prolonged period causing a nutritional deficiency condition known as beriberi,



can cause pedal oedema. It can also be caused by the ingestion of food that is rich in sodium, leading to a sodium overload. Other causes A middle-aged woman had recently been diagnosed with hypertension, and was duly instructed by her doctor to take antihypertensives daily. The doctor warned her that if she developed pedal oedema, it was a sign of "heart damage due to uncontrolled hypertension". The patient returned after four weeks of being on medication, tormented with pedal oedema. She said she had taken all her medications as prescribed, but even then, had developed pedal oedema. This turned out to be a case of drug-induced oedema, caused by one of her medications. A large number of drugs can cause oedema by renal vasoconstriction or arterial dilation or by augmented renal sodium reabsorption. Irrespective of the cause, patients must tell their doctors about what medications they are on. A few rarer causes of oedema include hypothyroidism, endocrine cortisolism (abnormally high or low levels of cortisol) and taking steroid tablets. Pregnancy is a common cause of pedal oedema, especially towards the later trimesters; however, it is best to consult your doctor about it, to ensure it is not indicative of the potentially dangerous condition of preeclampsia. Thus, pedal oedema, or foot swelling, is a symptom — not a disease — that can be caused by a range of systemic or local conditions. Do not ignore it or try home remedies. A thorough evaluation by a healthcare professional is essential to determine its cause and treat it.

Here's why obesity affects people differently

New Delhi: Ever wondered why some people with obesity remain relatively healthy while others develop serious conditions like diabetes and heart disease? Genetic differences may be the reason, according to a new study. An international team of researchers led by the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai and the University of Copenhagen analysed genetic data from 452,768 people and discovered variants in 205 regions of the genome linked to higher body fat but better metabolic health.

Using these findings, they developed a genetic risk score that accounts for the impact of these variants. Individuals with higher scores were more likely to develop obesity — but were less likely to suffer complications such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, or heart disease. This is partly due to the way fat cells behave in different people. Importantly, these protective genetic effects were already visible in children. Kids carrying the protective variants were more likely to develop obesity but did not show the usual warning signs of metabolic disease, the study revealed. The research was published in Nature Medicine. "Our

study shows that obesity is not a single condition — it is made up of different subtypes, each with its own risks," said Nathalie Chami, Instructor of Environmental Medicine and Artificial Intelligence and Human Health, at the Icahn School. "By uncovering these genetic differences, we can start to understand why obesity leads to different health outcomes in different individuals. This could eventually change how we predict, prevent, and treat obesity and its complications," Chami added. The research identified eight distinct obesity subtypes, each linked to unique health risks. "These insights could eventually help doctors predict which patients are most vulnerable to complications and inform new treatments that mimic the protective genetic effects found in some people," Chami said. The team cautioned, however, that the findings do not mean obesity is harmless. "Most people with obesity still face health challenges, and lifestyle factors such as diet and exercise remain critical for overall health," said Zhe Wang, Assistant Professor at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. The study was conducted using individuals from the UK Biobank, comprising people of European ancestry.

Ada Lovelace: the Enchantress of Numbers



Women in STEM is a popular term you would have heard, and it is well-celebrated in the modern age. However, what about the women who laid the stepping stones for the term? Women who not only broke gender barriers but also played an important role in laying the foundation in several modern fields. One such icon was Ada Lovelace. Augusta Ada King, Countess of Lovelace, more commonly known as Ada Lovelace, was the daughter of the poet Lord Byron and his wife, Anne Isabella Milbanke. She did something most women deemed impossible then. She became the world's first computer programmer. Even though recognised much later, her visionary notes on Charles Babbage's Analytical Engine included what is recognised as the first computer algorithm, earning her that title.

Being a single mother, Lady Byron was sceptical of several skills thought to be irrational — specifically subjects like the arts — which she associated with Lord Byron. In order to prevent Ada from having any poetic tendencies, Lady Byron made sure that her daughter received a rigorous education in science and mathematics, which were very uncommon for girls in her era. Ada had a natural aptitude for numbers and reasoning from a young age. Among her tutors were renowned mathematicians like Augustus De Morgan, a well-known logician, and Mary Somerville, one of the first female members of the Royal Astronomical

Society. Ada's life changed dramatically when she met Charles Babbage, the inventor and mathematician who is frequently referred to as the "father of the computer", when she was just 17 years old. Babbage was then developing the Difference Engine, a mechanical device used to perform mathematical calculations. Ada was fascinated by his ideas and demonstrated a thorough understanding of his work.

They developed a strong intellectual bond, and Babbage was impressed by her perceptions and critical abilities. He affectionately referred to her as "The Enchantress of Numbers". Babbage and Lovelace's friendship and collaboration would become one of the most significant intellectual partnerships of the 19th Century. Babbage later started working on the Analytical Engine, a general-purpose computing machine. It contained many features that we see and use in modern computers, including an arithmetic logic unit and integrated memory. In 1842, based on a lecture Babbage gave in Turin, Italian engineer Luigi Federico Menabrea wrote a paper in French about the Analytical Engine. Lovelace was commissioned to translate this paper into English. But she went far beyond a mere translation.

Her notes were three times longer than the original text and offered profound insights into the potential of the machine. She described how the engine could be programmed to perform tasks beyond pure number-crunching—such as composing music—highlighting her prescient understanding of computing as a universal machine. Lovelace most famously included a technique for using the Analytical Engine to calculate a series of Bernoulli numbers. This is widely regarded as the first algorithm ever intended to be executed by a machine, making her the first computer programmer in history. Ada Lovelace Day, celebrated annually in October, promotes the achievements of women in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). The U.S. Department of Defence named a programming language "Ada" in her honour in the 1980s. She was also aware of machines' limitations and emphasised the difference between human creativity and machine processing, which is still relevant in discussions about automation and artificial intelligence today. But in the late 1840s, her health began to decline, and in 1852, she passed away from uterine cancer. She was buried next to her father, Lord Byron, in Nottinghamshire's Church of St Mary Magdalene, as she requested. For many years after her death, Ada Lovelace's contributions were largely forgotten. It wasn't until the mid-20th Century, with the rise of computer science as a discipline, that her work was rediscovered and properly recognised. In a field where women have been traditionally

Endocrine disruptors in plastic waste: a new public health threat



Plastics have revolutionised modern living with their convenience and affordability, but this same ubiquity is spawning an invisible, long-term health crisis. Beyond choking oceans and clogging landfills, plastics are now infiltrating our bodies through microplastic particles and a cocktail of endocrine-disrupting chemicals (EDCs). The evidence is clear and deeply concerning: these substances are interfering with our hormonal systems, damaging reproductive health and increasing our susceptibility to chronic diseases, including cancer. India, now the world's largest generator of plastic waste, stands at the epicenter of this escalating public health emergency. Microplastics in the human body: from the environment to the bloodstream. Once considered inert pollutants, microplastics—plastic particles smaller than 5 mm—are now recognised as biologically active. A 2022 study by Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam detected microplastics in the blood of 80% of human participants. Further, a 2024 study published in Nature Scientific Reports reported the presence of microplastics in nearly 89% of blood samples in India, with an average concentration of 4.2 particles per milliliter. These particles have also been found in human lungs, hearts, placentas, breast milk, ovarian follicular fluid, and semen. Alarmingly, testicular tissue in Indian men was found to contain three times more microplastics than that in dogs.

The plastics in our lives are not chemically neutral. They often contain EDCs such as: Bisphenol A (BPA) and BPS: Used in water bottles, food containers, and thermal paper. - Phthalates (e.g., DEHP, DBP): Used to soften plastics and found in cosmetics, toys and IV tubing. - PFAS (Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances): Found in food packaging and non-stick cookware. These chemicals mimic or block natural hormones such as estrogen, testosterone, thyroid hormones, and cortisol. They interfere with receptor binding, disrupt gene expression in reproductive organs, and induce oxidative stress, inflammation, and apoptosis (cell death). Animal studies published in Food and Chemical Toxicology (2023) showed that even low doses of polystyrene microplastics (20 µg/L) disrupted testosterone levels, impaired sperm production, and damaged the blood-testis barrier. Similar effects were observed in ovaries, where microplastics reduced anti-Müllerian hormone levels, triggered oxidative stress pathways, and induced cell death. Recent clinical studies from China and India have linked the presence of microplastics in semen to reduced sperm count, concentration and motility. Exposure to BPA and phthalates has been associated with lower testosterone levels and elevated luteinizing hormone (LH) levels—both indicators of endocrine disruption. A global review published in Science of the Total Environment further supports the connection between microplastics and male subfertility. Notably, a 2023 study in Environmental Science & Technology Letters reported a strong correlation between microplastic levels in semen and decreased sperm count, motility, and abnormal morphology in Chinese men. In India, studies have documented a 30% decline in average sperm count over the past two decades.

A study published in Ecotoxicology and Environmental Safety (2025) found microplastics in 14 out of 18 follicular fluid samples collected from women undergoing fertility treatment in Italy. These particles, along with their associated endocrine-disrupting chemicals (EDCs), were found to compromise egg quality and were linked to menstrual irregularities, reduced estradiol levels, and an increased risk

of miscarriage. Epidemiological studies have also linked exposure to phthalates and BPA with conditions such as polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), endometriosis, and spontaneous abortions. These associations have been further supported by findings published in Advances in Pharmacology (2021) and Frontiers in Cell and Developmental Biology (2023). The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) now classifies several plastic additives as probable human carcinogens. Case-control studies from India have shown that women with elevated levels of DEHP in their urine face nearly a threefold increased risk of breast cancer (odds ratio = 2.97). Exposure to BPA and phthalates has also been linked to higher incidences of prostate, uterine, and testicular cancers.

In addition to their carcinogenic potential, these endocrine-disrupting chemicals (EDCs) have been implicated in metabolic disorders. By mimicking cortisol, altering insulin sensitivity, and promoting fat storage, EDCs contribute to the development of obesity and type 2 diabetes. Moreover, PFAS exposure has been associated with metabolic syndrome, cardiovascular disease, and thyroid dysfunction, as reported in a 2024 study published in Frontiers in Public Health. India generates over 9.3 million tonnes of plastic waste each year. Of this, approximately 5.8 million tonnes are incinerated, releasing toxic gases, while 3.5 million tonnes end up polluting the environment. Studies have shown that residents in cities like Mumbai are exposed to between 382 and 2,012 microplastic particles daily through air, food, and water. In Nagpur, doctors are reporting an increase in cases of early puberty, respiratory problems, obesity, and learning disorders in children—conditions increasingly linked to plastic pollution. Recent testing by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) detected phthalate concentrations in drinking water samples from Delhi, Jabalpur, and Chennai that exceeded European Union safety limits. Despite progressive policies like the Plastic Waste Management Rules (2016, updated in 2022 and 2024), enforcement remains inconsistent. Current regulations do not account for low-dose effects or the complex interactions of EDCs, nor do they address the specific vulnerabilities of children and pregnant women.

The health burden associated with EDCs in India is staggering, costing over ₹25,000 crore annually due to increased healthcare spending and lost productivity. The poorest populations, often living near waste dumps or working in the informal recycling sector, bear the brunt of this crisis. Globally, the U.S. reports healthcare costs of \$250 billion annually linked to plastic-related chemicals, according to the Endocrine Society. Biomonitoring and surveillance are crucial for establishing national programmes that measure endocrine-disrupting chemical (EDC) levels in blood, urine, and breast milk. Longitudinal studies must be funded to assess the health impacts of EDC exposure on fertility, neurodevelopment, and chronic diseases. In addition, public awareness needs to be improved, and behaviour changes should be encouraged, such as educating people on the risks of microwaving food in plastic containers and promoting the use of glass, stainless steel, and EDC-free alternatives. It is also important to advocate for antioxidant-rich diets to help counteract oxidative stress.

Further actions should include enforcing plastic segregation, recycling, and safe disposal, while investing in microplastic filtration systems for water treatment plants. Additionally, incentivising the development of biodegradable, non-toxic materials is essential to reduce EDC exposure. Plastic pollution is no longer a distant environmental concern; it is a biological invasion with profound implications for human health. The infiltration of microplastics and plastic-derived EDCs into our bodies is triggering hormonal disruption, reproductive dysfunction and chronic diseases. The science is undeniable, and the time for action is now. For India, the world's most exposed population, this is more than a policy issue—it is a generational imperative. We must address this silent epidemic through science-driven regulation, robust monitoring, public education, and systemic change. The health of our people, especially our children, depends on it.

'Disclose PEDs to insurers'

For now, hiding a pre-existing disease (PED) from an insurer before buying a health policy might seem to be an advantage with a lower cost premium. However, the reality is that it can lead to rejection of the claim or even policy cancellation. In both cases, the policyholder must pay exorbitant medical bills from his/her pocket. When one buys cover, he/she is entering into a contract with the insurer. All the medical insurance policies are developed on a legally-binding principle — 'utmost good faith' so the insurer and the policyholder must be transparent and honest. While buying the policy, the policyholder has an obligation to disclose all relevant details regarding his/her health conditions, including PEDs. If even a small piece of information on PEDs is not disclosed, it means the policyholder has violated the fundamental legal principle, thereby forcing the insurer to reject claim or even cancel the policy itself. The premium the policyholder has paid till then will go down the drain.

What are PEDs?

A PED is a disease/medical condition existing in an individual even before buying a policy. Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) guidelines say illness/disease is treated as a PED if it was diagnosed within three years (36 months) prior to the purchase of the policy by a recognised doctor. (Previously it was 48 months but IRDAI brought it down to 36 months, effective from April 1, 2024.) In common insurance parlance, if an individual knows he has a health issue before buying the policy, it is considered a PED and must be disclosed. V. Mangala, senior subject-matter executive, Anion Insurance Marketing Pvt. Ltd., says, "It must be noted not every visit to a doctor is treated as a PED. For instance, if you consult a doctor for normal fever, cold, cough, etc. you need not reveal these details. PEDs are those ailments that have a major impact on your general health in the long run. Say, for instance, BP, cholesterol, thyroid, asthma, piles, diabetes, lumbar issues, previous surgery or heart attacks, epilepsy etc., these must necessarily be divulged to the insurer." Waiting period Another concept while buying health



insurance policy is the waiting period. Most insurers in India cover pre-existing diseases but only after the waiting period gets over. If any medical emergency occurs during the waiting period, especially related to the PED, then in almost all cases, the claim would naturally be rejected by the insurer. Though the concept of wait period is there in all insurers, the wait time might differ across insurers. Generally, majority of the insurance companies provide coverage to PEDs after a waiting period of two to three years.

Ms. Mangala says, "In some insurance companies, riders are sold separately at an additional premium. These riders reduce the waiting period, and some insurance companies also cover PEDs from Day 1 with or without a rider, of course, the premium will be high. Therefore, before buying a policy, whether an individual health insurance policy or a family floater policy, the policyholder must choose a policy that has no/lower waiting period." Co-payment clause Some insurers might offer PED coverage with a 'co-payment' clause. Based on the co-payment agreement, the policyholder must pay an agreed portion of the total claim amount; only then will the insurance company settle the remaining claim amount. Ms. Mangala says that it is always advisable and cost-effective to choose a policy without the 'co-payment' condition so that the entire claim amount would be settled by the insurance company."

Global warming changing cloud patterns. That means more global warming

Melbourne: At any given time, about two-thirds of Earth's surface is covered by clouds. Overall, they make the planet much cooler than it would be without them. But as Earth gets warmer, mostly due to the rise in greenhouse gases in the atmosphere from humans burning fossil fuels, clouds are changing too.

And that might already be causing more warming — adding to the greenhouse heat boost, and changing clouds even more. Over the past few years, the world's average temperature has increased more than climate scientists were expecting. In our latest research, led by NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies, we show that changes in clouds have made a significant contribution to turning up the thermostat. Clouds and climate Clouds help to keep Earth cool by reflecting sunlight back out to space before it can reach the ground. But not all clouds are equal. Shiny, white clouds reflect away more sunlight — especially when they are closer to the equator, in the parts of Earth that receive the most sun. Grey, broken clouds reflect less sunlight, as do clouds closer to the poles where less light falls.

Research published last year showed that Earth has been absorbing more sunlight than the greenhouse effect alone can explain. Clouds were involved, but it wasn't clear exactly how. Bright cloud zones are shrinking. A new study shows what is happening. The areas covered by highly reflective clouds are shrinking. At the same time, the areas containing broken, less reflective clouds are growing. The net effect is that additional energy from sunlight is reaching Earth's surface. Here it is absorbed, leading to extra heating. The effect of changes in the properties of the highly reflective clouds, caused by things such as changes in the amount of aerosol pollution in the atmosphere, were found much smaller than the effect of the change in area.



In the big picture, Earth's wind patterns are driven by hot air rising near the equator and the rotation of the planet. This creates huge, looping currents of atmospheric circulation around the globe. Local weather systems — the kind that determine the location and type of clouds — depend on these major, large-scale wind systems. The major circulation patterns in the atmosphere are changing as a result of global warming. We found much of the cloud action is taking place at the edges of these major wind systems. Highly reflective clouds are on the decline in a region near the equator called the intertropical convergence zone, and also two other bands called the storm tracks, which lie between 30 and 40 degrees of latitude. At the same time the subtropical trade-wind regions, home to ever-present but less reflective broken clouds, are expanding. A feedback loop In short, the global warming induced by increased greenhouse gases changes the major wind systems on Earth. This in turn reduces the area of highly reflective clouds, leading to additional warming. Warming changes wind patterns, which changes cloud patterns, which results in more warming.

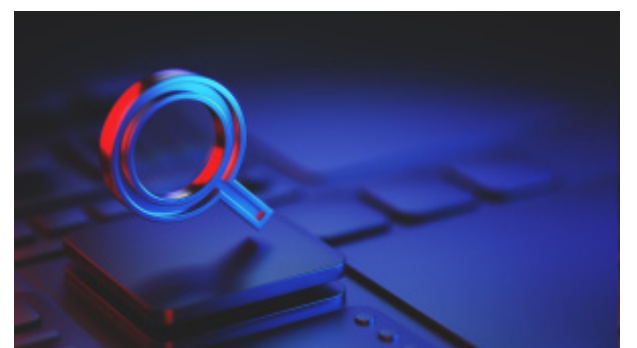
Revisit digital search powers under the I-T Bill 2025

The Finance Minister recently introduced a proposal in Parliament to allow tax authorities to access, under the Income-Tax Bill, 2025, an individual's "virtual digital space" during search and seizure operations. The justification is straightforward: as financial activity moves online, so must enforcement. However, this glosses over the far-reaching implications of such a shift, which raises significant concerns about privacy, overreach, and surveillance.

A blurring, open-ended Currently, India's tax law already provides for search and seizure under Section 132 of the Income-Tax Act, 1961. But those powers are limited to physical space such as a house, office, and locker. Since such operations are based on suspicion of undisclosed income or assets, there is a connection between the objective, which is finding undisclosed income and getting access to physical assets.

The new Bill, however, blurs this link by including an individual's digital presence which is not only vast but often contains much more than what is relevant to a tax investigation. Without clear limits, such access can lead to disproportionate intrusion. For example, under the existing regime, what could be searched was what concerned only the individual under investigation. In contrast, digital spaces involve multiple stakeholders. Accessing a social media account also exposes friends, family, and professional contacts, through photographs and posts.

The proposed definition of 'virtual digital space' includes access to emails, personal cloud drives, social media accounts, digital application platforms, and more. Crucially, the phrase "any other space of similar nature" makes the list open-ended, potentially covering a wide range of digital platforms. Additionally, the proposed provision empowers tax authorities to override access codes to gain entry into electronic devices or virtual digital spaces. It still remains unclear though how this power will be operationalised in practice particularly in cases involving encrypted messaging apps such as WhatsApp, as explicitly cited by the Finance Minister in Parliament. The problem becomes even more of a concern when the individual involved is a professional whose work requires confidentiality. For instance, journalists whose devices and emails hold sensitive information, including confidential sources, unpublished material, and protected communications. If a search is conducted on flimsy or overly broad grounds, it not only violates their privacy but also endangers their ability to undertake reporting. Recognising the risks, the Supreme Court of India, in 2023, circulated interim guidelines on the seizure of digital devices and directed the Union Government to contemplate formulating necessary protocols. Moreover, the judicial interpre-



tation of "reason to believe" emphasises the need for tangible material beyond mere suspicion. Even under existing law, courts have construed that the provision ought to be exercised strictly, acknowledging that search and seizure is a serious invasion of privacy. A violation of transparency, accountability Yet, the proposed provision goes against these principles and is devoid of guardrails, judicial oversight, and has a lack of understanding of the stakes. It fails to acknowledge, let alone address, the sheer breadth and layered sensitivity of information stored on electronic devices. In line with the current law, the proposed provision prohibits disclosure of the "reason to believe" clearly violating principles of transparency and accountability. Globally, privacy and transparency standards in search and seizure, especially where digital devices are involved, are grounded in statutory protections and procedural safeguards. In Canada, Section 8 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees the right to be secure against "unreasonable search or seizure". It is designed to prevent unjustified searches and sets a three-part default standard: prior authorisation; approval by a neutral and impartial judicial authority; and reasonable and probable grounds. In the United States, the Taxpayer Bill of Rights, adopted by the Internal Revenue Service, affirms that taxpayers have the right to expect that any inquiry or enforcement action will be legally compliant and will not be more intrusive than necessary following due process rights, including search and seizure protections. The U.S. Supreme Court's decision in Riley vs California also necessitated a warrant before accessing digital data, given the deeply personal nature of information stored on phones and devices. Contradiction of proportionality test In contrast, India's proposed Income Tax provision grants sweeping access to digital personal data without warrants, relevance thresholds, or any distinction between financial and non-financial information.

Nazara Technologies shares crash 26.65% in 8 sessions



On Monday, the company's shares fell by 8 per cent to Rs 1,088.40, down 5.83 per cent, in the opening session on the BSE. On Monday, the company's shares fell by 8 per cent to Rs 1,088.40, down 5.83 per cent, in the opening session on the BSE. Shares of gaming company Nazara Technologies have plummeted by over 26.65 per cent to Rs 1,063.45 from Rs 1,450 in the last eight sessions in the wake of the government's move to ban gaming through a bill passed in the parliament. Rekha Jhunjhunwala, who previously held a 7 per cent plus stake in the company, had fully exited her investment in Nazara by June 2025, well before the ban was announced. On Monday, the company's shares fell by 8 per cent to Rs 1,088.40, down 5.83 per cent, in the opening session on the BSE. Meanwhile, in a stock exchange filing, Nazara Tech said it has no direct exposure to real money gaming (RMG) businesses. As per its latest reported financials (Q1 FY26), the contribution to revenues and EBITDA by RMG business is nil. The company's only indirect exposure to RMG is through its 46.07 per cent stake in Moonshine Technologies Private Ltd.

As Nazara does not hold a majority stake or exercise control, Moonshine's revenue is not consolidated in the company's financial statements and has no impact on the

Resumption of direct flights imminent, Indian, Chinese airlines prepare to reclaim market

ChinaLack of direct air connectivity between India and mainland China, along with stringent visa restrictions, led to airlines from both countries losing out on potential passenger loads. With Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi's recent visit to New Delhi, India and China appear to be one step closer to resuming direct flight connectivity between the two most populous countries in the world. With the exception of the Chinese special administrative region of Hong Kong, India and China have had no direct flights since early 2020, just before COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic.

"Both sides agreed to resume direct flight connectivity between Chinese mainland and India at the earliest, and finalize an updated Air Services Agreement. They also agreed on the facilitation of visas to tourists, businesses, media and other visitors in both directions," the Ministry of External Affairs had said in a release. Although the two countries have not given a timeline yet on resumption of direct services, the evident signs of a thaw in the India-China relationship — notably at a time when New Delhi's relationship with Washington has hit a few roadblocks — has built the hope that normalisation of air connectivity between India and China is imminent. Direct flight connectivity between India and China was initially suspended due to the pandemic. As the India-China bilateral relationship soured following the standoff in Eastern Ladakh in 2020 and remained frigid over the subsequent years, direct flights between the two nations did not resume despite air connectivity returning to pre-pandemic levels globally.

Resumption of direct flights and normalisation of visa issuances — demands China has been making over the past couple of years — had come up in Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri's discussions with Beijing during his China visit in January. At the time, the two countries had agreed "in principle" to resume direct flights. In the preceding months, the matter featured in talks between foreign and aviation ministers of the two countries.

company's reported revenue or EBITDA, it said. The company has invested Rs 805 crore towards equity shares in Moonshine through a combination of cash and stock and, in addition, holds compulsory convertible shares amounting to Rs 255 crore, it said. In another exchange filing, the company said Moonshine Technologies has ceased offering real money online gaming operations. The Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Act, 2025 imposes a nationwide ban on all real-money online games, while actively encouraging the growth of e-sports and educational or socially beneficial gaming. The law introduces strict regulatory controls and harsh penalties for violations, with the goal of tackling addiction, financial abuse, and criminal activity within the digital gaming space. Rekha Jhunjhunwala completely offloaded her stake in Nazara Technologies by June 2025, well ahead of the government ban on online gaming. As of March 2025, she held a 7.06 per cent stake — about 61.8 lakh shares. By June, she had sold her entire holding at an average price of around Rs 1,225 per share, netting around Rs 334 crore.

Her late husband, investor Rakesh Jhunjhunwala, once owned 10.82 per cent in the company. Rekha remains a big investor in Indian markets, with investments in 25 listed firms worth around Rs 40,000 crore, according to market estimates. Other prominent investors still holding stakes in Nazara include Madhusudan Kela, who owns 10.96 lakh shares (1.18 per cent), and Nikhil Kamath, co-founder of Zerodha, who holds 15.04 lakh shares (1.62 per cent) through Kamath Associates. With regulatory scrutiny mounting, all eyes are now on whether these influential investors will hold their ground, or begin cutting exposure. Nazara Technologies was founded in 1999 and listed in 2021. It is among India's first gaming companies to make a global mark, with presence in markets such as Africa and North America. The company has a market capitalisation of around Rs 10,000 crore.



Chinese and Indian airlines have been keenly watching the developments, and are now preparing for direct flights. Just last week, IndiGo's CEO Pieter Elbers had said that the carrier stands ready to resume direct flights to China as soon as the bilateral arrangements between the two countries allow. Chinese carriers, too, are eager to resume direct services, it is learnt. Lack of direct flights have led to high airfares and long travel times for those flying between India and China. According to industry insiders, airlines — Chinese as well as Indian — have been looking to restart direct flights, as there is high demand for travel between the two countries. Lack of direct air connectivity between India and mainland China, along with stringent visa restrictions, led to airlines from both countries losing out on potential passenger loads, and airlines operating from other Southeast Asian countries cashing in on the opportunity. Passenger traffic between India and China — currently solely through connecting hubs in South and Southeast Asia — is less than half of what it was in 2019. All of it is being catered to by airlines from regions like Singapore, Hong Kong, Thailand, Malaysia, and Vietnam. To be sure, the Hong Kong airport is not exactly considered a Chinese airport due to Hong Kong's special autonomous status and a different visa regime than mainland China. It continues to be the leading connecting hub between India and mainland China.

IIT-Bombay to smaller institutions, students make most of flexible entry, exit policy



At IIT Bombay, a student who had dropped out midway through his course, returned last year to complete his degree over a cumulative span of 12 years. Taking advantage of a provision to impart a certain degree of flexibility in learning outcomes, the student, who left his degree midway to launch his own start-up, came back to the engineering college to wrap up his degree. There are more such students, particularly from the rural and economically weaker backgrounds who are now doing this, including a large number of those who opted to take an early exit to support their families financially during challenging times. The key enabler here is the NEP-2020's Multiple Entry and Multiple Exit (MEME) framework, which was aimed at promoting academic flexibility and reducing dropout rates by empowering students to pause and resume education based on their personal and professional needs. Currently, some 153 universities offer multiple entry options, benefiting thousands of undergraduate and postgraduate students.

"Indeed, the flexibility offered under the MEME provision is being increasingly embraced by students across the country. A case of an IIT student returning to complete his degree after 12 years is a remarkable example. Similar stories are emerging from various other institutions, reflecting how transformative this policy truly is," T G Sitharam, Chairman, AICTE, told The Indian Express. He said that this provision, in particular, is proving to be beneficial for students from rural and economically weaker backgrounds, "(They) are benefiting significantly. Many of them opt to take an early exit with a recognised certificate or diploma, enabling them to support their families financially during chal-

lenging times. Once their situation stabilises, they are able to rejoin their academic journey seamlessly — thanks to the Academic Bank of Credits (ABC), which allows them to store and retrieve previously earned credits across institutions," Prof Sitharam said. He said that in effect, MEME eliminates the fear of losing an educational career due to unforeseen circumstances. "Students no longer feel compelled to drop out permanently due to emergencies like financial instability, health issues, or personal responsibilities. The system gives them the freedom to take a pause, explore job opportunities or skill development, attend to urgent matters, and return to the same or even a different institution to resume and complete their degree. This level of flexibility was previously unheard of in Indian higher education... AICTE continues to monitor and document such cases across the country as evidence of the maturing and student-centric direction Indian higher education is now heading towards," he added.

Benchmark indices rebound as IT stocks lead gains amid US Fed rate cut hopes

Hyderabad: Benchmark indices rebounded in early trade on Monday in line with a rally in global equity markets on hopes of a potential US Federal Reserve rate cut. Buying in IT stocks also drove the markets higher during the initial trade. The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 285.62 points to 81,592.47 in early trade. The 50-share NSE Nifty went up by 91.25 points to 24,961.35. From the Sensex firms, Infosys, Tata Consultancy Services, HCL Tech, Tech Mahindra, Bajaj Finance, and Tata Steel were among the major gainers. However, Bharti Airtel, ICICI Bank, Eternal, and ITC were among the laggards. In Asian markets, South Korea's Kospi, Japan's Nikkei 225 index, Shanghai's SSE Composite index, and Hong Kong's Hang Seng traded in positive territory. The US markets ended sharply higher on Friday.

Genetic testing of IVF embryos can help women over 35 conceive faster: Study



New Delhi: Genetic testing of IVF-created embryos could help women over 35 have a baby in less time, according to a study released on Monday. Researchers from King's College London, UK, led the first randomised controlled trial worldwide to focus exclusively on women aged 35–42, a group at higher risk of producing embryos with chromosomal abnormalities. The trial studied the use of pre-implantation genetic testing for aneuploidy (PGT-A), a method that checks embryos for chromosomal abnormalities before transfer. Older women are more likely to produce embryos with the wrong number of chromosomes, which can make conception difficult and increase the risk of miscarriage.

The results, published in the Journal of Clinical Medicine, showed a higher cumulative live birth rate after up to three embryo transfers — 72 per cent in the PGT-A group compared to 52 per cent in the control group. Women in the PGT-A group also achieved pregnancy in fewer transfers, reducing the time to conception, a critical factor for women of advanced reproductive age. "The number of women starting their family above the age of 35 is increasing, and women in this age group are more likely to create embryos with the wrong number of chromosomes. This increases the risk of unsuccessful implantation and miscarriages," said Dr Yusuf Beebejaun from King's College London. "Our findings suggest that targeted use of PGT-A in this age group could help more women have a baby sooner, while also reducing the emotional toll of repeated unsuccessful cycles," he added. The pilot study included 100 women undergoing fertility treatment at King's Fertility, with 50 patients in the PGT-A group and 50 in the control group. It aimed to fill the evidence gap by focusing on older patients and assessing the feasibility of a multi-centre trial that explores the test's impact on pregnancy and live birth rates in women aged 35–42. "While larger multi-centre trials are needed to confirm these findings, improving treatment efficiency with a shorter time to achieving pregnancy and live birth could reduce the physical and emotional burden of IVF for women of advanced reproductive age," said lead author Dr Sesh Sunkara from King's College London.

Can 36-hour fasting work for weight loss? A 25-year old drops 5 kg but had bloating, acidity and sleep issues

A young woman, aged 25, chose an intermittent fasting schedule of 36 hours to drop her weight. She weighed 95 kg, had a BMI (body mass index) of 34 and thought this was the best way to get off the weight cliff. "At the end of a month, she lost 5 kg but she had extreme fatigue, lack of concentration, bloating, acidity and sleep issues," says Dr Richa Chaturvedi, endocrinologist at Indraprastha Apollo Hospital, Delhi. Although many celebrities — the latest one being Bollywood actor Akshay Kumar — follow this diet, it is double-edged?

What is a 36-hour fasting routine?

A 36-hour fast is considered an "extended fast" — for example, stopping after early dinner on Sunday and eating again at breakfast on Tuesday. In between one can have water, tea and calorie-free drinks to keep the weight off. During this time of calorie-deficit, the body switches from using food for energy to burning up stored fat for energy, resulting in weight loss. This is also called the 5:2 diet which involves eating normally for five days per week, then restricting calorie intake to just 300–500 calories on the other two days.

What changes happen in the body?

After about 12 hours of not eating, your body uses up most of its stored sugar (called glycogen). "When this happens, your insulin levels fall. This is important because high insulin can lead to fat storage. Lower insulin helps your body start burning fat for energy instead," says Dr Sudeep Khanna, gastroenterologist. Once glycogen stores are low (usually after 18–24 hours), your body starts breaking down stored fat into molecules called fatty acids and ketones. "Now ketones can fuel the brain and body when no food is available. This is called ketosis," explains Dr Khanna. This is followed by autophagy, which is your body's way of cleaning out old, damaged cells and recycling parts to make new ones. Research suggests that autophagy may start increasing after about 24 to 36 hours of fasting, though this depends on the person. "It's thought to help protect against diseases like cancer and Alzheimer's but more human studies are needed," adds Dr Khanna. Some people report feeling more focussed during a fast. This may be due to stable blood sugar, fewer digestive demands and ketones providing steady energy for the brain. However, others may feel tired or irritable, especially early on. "You might feel hungry at the



usual times you eat but it often fades after 18–24 hours. This is because the hormone ghrelin, which causes hunger, rises and falls in waves," says Dr Khanna.

Is this fasting format safe?

He finds this format safe for most healthy adults, provided one is well-hydrated and not overdoing physical activity. However, he does not recommend it for people with diabetes, eating disorders, pregnant women or those taking certain medications — unless under medical guidance.

What are side effects?

Dr Chaturvedi has seen too many risks of prolonged fasting among her patients. "Prolonged or excessive fasting can lead to the body burning fat for energy. This produces an excess of ketone bodies, water-soluble molecules produced by the liver when glucose is scarce. These tend to be acidic. Lack of hydration may lead to electrolyte or mineral imbalances. That's why most people experience dizziness and headaches during the initial period of fasting. Fatigue, insomnia, lethargy and sluggishness are frequent," she says. But it is the loss of muscle mass, digestive issues, mood disorders and inflammation that she finds as more concerning.

What are checks and balances?

Fasting should not be followed by bingeing, warns Dr Chaturvedi. Dr Khanna suggests watching out for metabolism. "Going for extended periods without eating might actually encourage your body to start storing more fat in response to starvation," he says. In fact, other forms of fasting with a wider eating window can be easier to follow.

At 85, this pioneer of breast conservation surgery still spends long hours in the OT: 'If you lust for life, you will keep going'

At 85, Dr SM Bose, former HOD of surgery, PGI, Chandigarh, specialising in breast cancer and conservation surgery, is busy with online and video patient consultations from as far as Bihar, Odisha, even the US. Sometimes, he sees and examines patients at clinics both in Chandigarh and Gurugram. At other times, he is on a lecture tour, attends conferences on the latest developments in breast cancer surgery and writes books and research papers. "Age is only years; it is perspective and your lust for life that keep you alive," says the superager.

Never stop working Dr Bose retired from PGI at 62 and ever since, has not taken a day off from work, doing surgeries regularly. Having won the Dr BC Roy National Award twice, he says his passion for work, eagerness to learn, experiment and innovate keep him mentally, physically and emotionally active. "Ageing is a natural process, it is on us to accept it and keep going with gusto," adds Dr Bose, who pioneered breast conservation surgery, laparoscopic and staple surgery. He recalls how he operated upon a woman with breast tumour under local anaesthesia as she was not fit for general anaesthesia. "She recovered and is healthy 10 years post-surgery. That keeps me going," he says.

Physical exercise and diet mantras Dr Bose, who has been a sportsman in his younger years, says his early commitment to physical fitness is holding him in good stead now. Still, he is very regimental about his daily walks and physical activity levels. Apart from walking every morning and evening, he does not sit in the house but keeps moving. "I work on my legs because I have to stand for long hours during surgery. I do stretch on a regular basis to keep my joints flexible," he says. While he loves his food, Dr Bose refrains from eating out and prefers regular home-cooked meals. He avoids late night meals. "I have cultivated a habit of not worrying, and being present in the moment, and this I believe is paramount for peace in every aspect of your life, as stress can be very detrimental. I had faith in my work, and that comes from focused practice, constant research and learning every day. That keeps me on my toes," he says. Other than that, there is music. "My interest in art, music, theatre and sports has given my life colour. Now I keep organising cultural shows at festivals in PGI so that others can see that life is much more than what we strait-jacket it into," he says. Spending time in his library is his biggest joy as that's where he reads, writes, speaks to peers



across the world over Zoom and researches daily. Give and you will get back Dr Bose says he values patient care above all else. "No amount of money can give you that satisfaction. Along our journeys, we can never undermine the values of friendship, love and support of family, encouragement of mentors and colleagues and giving back what you have got and learnt in the process. These are pillars to help you age with grace," he says.

Woman unearths 2-carat diamond at Arkansas State park

Murfreesboro: A New York woman has unearthed a 2-carat white diamond at an Arkansas State park, a gem she says will be used in her engagement ring. Micherre Fox of Manhattan spent several weeks at the State park in July after deciding to forage for a diamond, according to a news release from Waymon Cox, an assistant superintendent at Crater of Diamonds State Park.

The 31-year-old woman searched for diamonds during much of July in a 37-acre field that is part of the eroded surface of an ancient volcanic crater.

It wasn't until her last day at the park, while walking, that she spotted something glistening at her feet. Park staff confirmed that the sparkly gem about the size of a person's canine tooth was a 2.3-carat diamond.

'Nothing went wrong when Gautam Gambhir remained Delhi captain': Former India skipper claims DDCA politics ended his career



GNS News Agency, March 9

Former India U-19 captain Unmukt Chand heaped praise on Gautam Gambhir's leadership during his tenure as the Delhi cricket team captain and claimed the selection politics in the association eventually harmed his career in Indian cricket. The 32-year-old Chand, who currently plays in the United States, said several players' career was hampered after Gambhir's retirement from Delhi cricket.

"Until 2017, when Gautam Gambhir remained Delhi captain, nothing went wrong in the team because he was a very strong leader. He fought for players and backed them. But when he retired, Delhi cricket went through plenty of

upheaval. Nitish (Rana) was dropped, Dhruv (Shorey) was doing well, and he was dropped too. And everyone knows what's happening," Chand told Lallantop. Chand opened up on being dropped by the Delhi side seven years after his First-Class debut and slammed the Delhi selectors for their decision that eventually put his career at a crossroads. Chand moved to Uttarakhand in 2019 before calling it quits from all forms of Indian cricket in 2021 and moving to the United States.

"You can call it politics because they threw me out. It has never happened that you remove the captain of India A from your state team. I can't put the blame on one person, but in a way, the selectors of DDCA are the ones taking such decisions. I felt bad that I served the Delhi team for such a long time and did reasonably well too, and then they made me the scapegoat," he added. Chand shot to the limelight after leading India to victory in the 2012 Under-19 World Cup with a century in the final against Australia. However, despite his promising start, he never broke into the Indian national team. Meanwhile, Gambhir who had a brief stint in Delhi politics post his playing career, turned to coaching last year. The former India opener first mentored Kolkata Knight Riders to victory in the IPL 2024 season before taking over from Rahul Dravid as India's head coach, propelling them to the Champions Trophy win earlier this year.

'Innovative thinker': Sunil Gavaskar hails Suryakumar Yadav for not batting in Oman Asia Cup match, son Rohan disagrees



India captain Suryakumar Yadav once again courted mixed opinions among experts and on social media after not walking out to bat during India's final league stage match against Oman in Abu Dhabi on Friday evening. Having secured qualification for the Asia Cup 2025 Super 4 stage comfortably, India opted to rotate their batting order to give more game time to the lower-order players, with Suryakumar surprisingly demoting himself all the way to No. 11. India finished on 188 for eight batting first, with the captain deciding to remain seated on the sidelines as Kuldeep Yadav and Harshit Rana shared the last partnership on the field. Despite the criticisms, batting legend Sunil Gavaskar lauded Suryakumar for his unconventional and pragmatic captaincy after the game that India held onto by a margin of only 12

runs. "If he had batted for even one over, he could have hit a few fours and sixes and that would have been good for him. But the way he batted against Pakistan, may be does not need batting practice. He may have thought that Kuldeep Yadav's batting could come in handy if India lose quick wickets in one of the matches. Perhaps that's why he may have sent Kuldeep in to bat," Gavaskar said in a chat with former India pacer Irfan Pathan on Sony Sports.

"He is a very unorthodox thinker. We saw in Sri Lanka that he himself bowled and also gave Rinku Singh the ball. He turned the game, which seemed to have slipped away, on its head and won India the match. He is an innovative thinker. May be that's why he did not bat and sent in Kuldeep and Arshdeep Singh," the 76-year-old went on to add.

"Why not Rinku then?"

However, the 76-year-old Gavaskar's son, Rohan, belonged to the club of pundits who did not seem too pleased with the Indian skipper's approach during the game. Rohan said the team management could have opted to hand lower-order batter Rinku Singh some time out in the middle if Suryakumar had decided not to bat. "What doesn't register with me is, if Suryakumar Yadav isn't going to bat clearly because he's sent Arshdeep, Harshit, and Kuldeep all ahead of him, then he might as well take a rest," Rohan told on Cricbuzz. "Give Rinku a go. You're not going to bat; you're not going to contribute with the ball. If that's the whole thought process, then let Rinku have a game."

'Pakistan has no class at all': Former India cricketer Madan Lal blasts Pakistan amid Asia Cup row

GNS News Agency, March 9

Pakistan's Shaheen Shah Afridi, second right, celebrates the dismissal of United Arab Emirates' Alishan Sharafu with teammates during the Asia Cup cricket match between Pakistan and United Arab Emirates at Dubai International Cricket Stadium, United Arab Emirates, Wednesday, Sept. 17, 2025. (AP Photo/Altarf Qadri) Pakistan's Shaheen Shah Afridi, second right, celebrates the dismissal of United Arab Emirates' Alishan Sharafu with teammates during the Asia Cup cricket match between Pakistan and United Arab Emirates at Dubai International Cricket Stadium, United Arab Emirates. Arch-rivals India and Pakistan are set to clash for the second time in the Asia Cup 2025, this time in a Super Four match in Dubai on Sunday. However, the tournament has been marred by controversy after the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) demanded the removal of match referee Andy Pycroft. This development followed the Indian team's refusal to shake hands with the Pakistani players after their previous match. Even skipper Suryakumar Yadav refrained from any customary interaction with his counterpart, Salman Ali Agha, during the toss.

After the ICC rejected the PCB's request to remove Pycroft, they threatened to boycott their match against the UAE, a move that would have ended their journey in the Asia Cup. Ultimately, however, they played the match after a one-hour delay and won by 41 runs. Former India cricketer Madan Lal slammed the PCB for its poor management and for making demands he considered unjustified. "Pakistan have surrendered because their demand was not genuine. First of all, why should we shake hands with them? It is not mentioned in any rulebook. Secondly, why should match referee Andy Pycroft be sacked?" Madan Lal was quoted as saying by India Today. He added, "Pakistan have so



many people interfering in one matter, and if you see the condition of the PCB, there's no board. They take a decision just like that, and that's not right because at the international level, you have to be extremely sure whenever you take any decision." Against the UAE, Pak had come to the ground an hour late, with the PCB and ICC engaged in negotiations through a back channel. PCB agreed to play the game only after receiving an apology from match referee Pycroft. On Pakistan threatening to boycott the UAE clash, Madan Lal said, "If you are not going to play, then who will suffer? You are going to suffer. If Pakistan would have boycotted the match against UAE, they would have caused an irreparable damage to their cricket." He also criticised Pakistan's cricket, which has disappointed them time and again. "Look at the condition of their country. They are suffering from everything now. They had such talented cricketers but look at their team for the last five-six years. The current team which is playing now has no class at all. The way they have batted, I have never seen any Pakistan team batting like that," he said.

'Idiots don't understand anything': Cristiano Ronaldo slams Portuguese podcast for questioning teammate's Saudi switch



GNS News Agency, March 9

Cristiano Ronaldo slammed the critics of his Al-Nassr and Portugal teammate Joao Felix through social media. (Reuters/Instagram) Cristiano Ronaldo slammed the critics of his Al-Nassr and Portugal teammate Joao Felix through social media. (Reuters/Instagram) Portugal superstar Cristiano Ronaldo did not mince words when he took to social media and slammed critics of his national teammate, Joao Felix, who recently switched from the Premier League to the Saudi Pro League in Saudi Arabia.

Ronaldo's reaction on Instagram was fuelled by a Portuguese podcast clip which slammed the 25-year-old Felix's decision to move out of European football. After his summer move from Chelsea, Felix joined Al-Nassr for a reported £45 million on a two-year contract. In a recent episode of the "Chuveirinho" podcast, a host questioned Felix's choices, a clip that has since been shared on the podcast's official Instagram account. Miffed by the video content, the 40-year-old Ronaldo expressed his displeasure through the comments section. "Idiots don't understand anything about football, yet they still give their opinions," the five-time Ballon d'Or winner wrote in a caption that was later removed. The Ronaldo effect

Since joining the club, Felix has been a major contributor, scoring four goals in just five appearances, including a

hat-trick in his league debut against Al Taawoun. "Ronaldo? You can see he's building something here and doing his part in developing the project," Felix had told on his arrival in Saudi. "He was one of the first to talk to me about coming here, and when he talked to me, I felt a wonderful moment and a beautiful feeling, and that helped convince me." Since joining Al-Nassr in 2023 following his second stint with Manchester United, Ronaldo has smashed over a hundred goals for the side while bagging successive SPL Golden Boots, and also inked a two-year contract extension in June. After a strong start in Saudi Arabia, Felix's fine form earned him a place back in the starting lineup for Portugal during the recent World Cup qualifier fixtures. Felix and Ronaldo both netted a brace during Portugal's thumping 5-0 victory over Armenia earlier this month.

Andhra Cricket Association appoints Donkers as fast bowling consultant for Ranji seniors team



Hyderabad: Andhra Cricket Association appointed Brendon Peter Donkers of New Zealand, a former High Performance Development Coach (men) of Canterbury Cricket who also worked with the Lancashire County, as fast bowling and fielding consultant for the Andhra Ranji seniors team for the coming season.

This move comes after the ACA named former New Zealand cricketer Gary Stead as the head coach last week. "We hope Andhra cricket will be given a new direction and help create history in the coming season with these two gentlemen at the helm," said ACA President Kesineni Sivanath and the ACA Secretary Sana Sathesh Babu in a joint statement on Friday.

No handshake could have been Suryakumar Yadav's compulsion but that's where it should have ended

Suryakumar Yadav is congenial and also chatty. A man of pleasant disposition, he can't resist sharing a joke or flashing a beaming smile as a way of greeting friends, acquaintances or even an arch-rival. Those who know him joke: "He can even make a stranger feel like his soul mate". So for him to avoid shaking hands with the Pakistan skipper Salman Agha at the toss the other day needed a conscious effort. Go back to the tapes, watch him closely. After the coin-flip, India's T20 captain folds his hands tightly, ensuring that they remain that way, glueing them to his chest. Through the game, he was unusually stoic and after hitting the winning six, he scooted to the dressing room. He didn't want to bump into a Pakistan player and be in an awkward position. There are reasons why Surya curbed his natural cordial instincts. But before the 'why he did it', first the 'what more he did.'

Later at the award presentation and press conference, the Indian skipper would say things that cricketers generally avoid. There is a time and place to mention terror attacks and wars and a sporting arena certainly isn't one. Stadiums are where fans turn up to escape the ugliness of the world, they don't need to be reminded of guns, missiles and killings. Surya's out-of-place comments — made months after the unfortunate events — triggered reactions and over-reactions. Pakistan negotiates most matters of diplomacy with a gun on their own heads, it has been said. They threatened a pull-out. A cricket tournament, put in place after months of delicate negotiations, had been pushed to the edge of the cliff. Indo-Pak bilateral games are a thing of the past, reduced mostly to just nostalgic value. Now even the periodic Asia and World Cups were getting problematic. So why did Surya rock the boat when the waves had finally seemed to have settled? Why didn't he just stick to the good-old post-match clichés after he made his point at the toss and made his bat make a thundering statement about India's overwhelming superiority over Pakistan? It's while searching for the answers to these difficult questions that the matter gets complex. It's when you get Surya's perspective. There are reasons why the ultimate friendly foe and affable opponent like Suryakumar, turned cold.

Those who have followed Surya from his early days slot him as an archetypal Mumbai boy. Funky, flamboyant and truly apolitical. Back in the day he would dye his hair — his choice of colours ruled by 'the brighter, the better' principle. He has had his face-offs with officials and fall outs with players. The virtual rangoli of tattoos on his body, a lasting memory of those wild days. But with age he mellowed down and it was his maturity that made him a consensus captaincy candidate when India started having second thoughts about the leadership of the other heavily-inked star of Indian cricket — Hardik Pandya.

Pressure and responsibilities didn't change Surya's persona. He still retains his sense of humour and there is still a lot of Mumbai in him. A Bollywood buff, he loves being filmy — not theatrical. His casual conversations are littered with references from Hindi comedy capers and for any situation — grave or mundane — he has an apt funny line from the movies. He is an Andaz Apna Apna, and a Hera Pheri kind of guy — the situations from these iconic laugh-a-minute riots he often picks for the memes he puts out with his teammates. India's captain Suryakumar Yadav, left, and batting partner Shivam Dube, leave the field after their win against Pakistan. (AP) India's captain Suryakumar Yadav, left, and batting partner Shivam Dube, leave the field after their win against Pakistan. Surya grew up in a happy home where the children weren't forced to take the beaten path.



And if they wished to take the less-travelled road, the parents would hold their little fingers and walk with them. And thus emerged an exceptional batsman from Anushakti Nagar — a rare, quiet and leafy Mumbai colony for employees of Bhabha Atomic Research Centre.

His father Ashok, a chief engineer, would cook him breakfast and take him for cricket training. At his recent retirement from BARC, a clip of that farewell would go viral, the dutiful son would speak of those days and thank his father. But trust Surya to lighten the mood of his father's emotional last day at office. "So many of you have turned here for my father's farewell ... so I am sure my father would have done something good here ...". Surya had his father's colleagues in splits. The Indian captain would be his same cheerful self at the pre-Asia Cup all-captain's conference. He would be chatting with his counterparts, joking with reporters and answering questions with his trademark sense of humour. But there was a storm within him. He would confide to those close to him that he worried over the narrative being built after the India-Pakistan game, the first after Operation Sindoor and the latest border skirmish. The Asia Cup clash between India and Pakistan ended in controversy after India's players refused the post-match handshakes. On Indian news channels, hyperventilating anchors were goading Sachin Tendulkar, Rahul Dravid, Sourav Ganguly to make statements about boycotting Pakistan. Indian players in Dubai were brutally trolled, #BoycottPak would trend. Many complained that they were being judged on their family and building whatsapp groups — How can you play Pakistan? Surya acknowledged this "outside noise", and said the team did talk about it in the dressing room. The players knew they would be under scrutiny and targeted in case there was even a hint of smile on their faces with any Pakistan player in the proximity. They were all alone. None of the BCCI officials — so keen to have the camera on them on match day — were at the stadium. They couldn't be seen watching this game. Finding himself under the forced spotlight, Surya didn't extend his hand. It is easy to guess the consequences if he had. Later he gave his reasons. "I feel a few things in life are ahead of a sportsman's spirit also," he said. By saying that he was setting a precedent. Sports has under its umbrella those with different political persuasions and leanings. Everyone has "few things" that matter more to them than sports. Those "few things" might be hurtful or objectionable to others. That's why stadia have an unwritten code, they need to stay sporting. There has been this long-standing complaint against the Indian cricketers. They get harpooned for skirting issues of national importance and for not taking stands on them. This episode shows why they don't, and probably shouldn't, if they haven't thought it through or lack the nuance of expression.

World Athletics Championships 2025: Rai Benjamin survives 24 minutes of disqualification drama to win first world title

It was roller coaster 24 minutes for the three-times Olympic champion and now World champion Hurdler Rai Benjamin of the United States. Rai stormed a victory in the 400 metres hurdles in 46.52 seconds to finally clinch his first world championship gold medal on Friday after two silvers and a bronze. However, he was disqualified for crashing into the final hurdle and affecting other athletes. Within minutes, he appealed and it was upheld by the meet director restoring him as the world champion. Summing up the whole moment, Benjamin told World Athletics. "We were sitting down near the elimination chairs, ironically, and (Alison) dos Santos said the referees are reviewing the race, and that it was about me being disqualified. I asked, 'Did I step on the line or what?' It might have been because of that last hurdle I knocked down. But it was all fine in the end." The three times Olympic champion has never won gold at the World Championships with two silver and one bronze in previous editions. "It feels great. I am glad I finally got the job done. I got another individual medal under my belt, for which I am extremely proud. I think I did a good job. Unfortunately, I got really greedy in the end and that's why I hit the last hurdle." The 400m hurdles race was being pitted to be one of

the toughest with former World champion Alison Dos Santos of Brazil, World record holder Karsten Warholm, and Benjamin in the fray. But it turned out to be Benjamin's race who had his title secured from the word go. Benjamin had a clear lead as they came around the final bend with Warholm starting to fade and the American looked to be cruising to victory until his foot made contact with the final hurdle. Brazil's Alison Dos Santos briefly held another world title to go with his 2022 triumph after finishing second in 46.84, but was satisfied with silver. "If nothing irregular happened, that's not how I want to win gold," he said. "I want to conquer the race. So I am not sad with silver, I am happy." Nathaniel said he had been told to stand by while the disqualification and appeal were sorted out but had no complaints about how it all washed out, even if he did not end up on the podium. "It's a fair call," said the Nigerian. "He put in a lot of work to get that medal and if they are trying to rip off from that, I don't think that's fair. He didn't deliberately knock over the hurdle, that could happen to anyone." Warholm also had no problems with the reversal of the disqualification but was very unhappy with his race. "I had something happen when I got out of the block, like a little strain in my left thigh," he said. "I don't know if it's a hamstring or knee."

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



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

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

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

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

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



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

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



When Zubeen Garg began his music career in the 1990s, he moved to Mumbai to explore some opportunities in Bollywood. There, he lent his voice to songs like 'Ya Ali' from *Gangster*, 'Dilruba' from *Namaste London*, 'Dil Tu Hi Bata' from *Krrish 3* among others. But despite his success, the singer-actor eventually returned to Assam, citing disillusionment with the attitude of the mainstream Hindi film

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

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



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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

Asked about Murugadoss' comments about Salman coming to the *Sikandar* set at 8 pm, Abhinav said, "He was a little better during *Dabangg*. He would show up at 5 pm, leaving us with about 30 minutes of sunlight to get our shot. That was the only difference. *Sikandar* was shot indoors, so it's easy to recreate daytime. He likes making people wait on him, in the hot sun, tired." Abhinav said that his crew would often wait for Salman to show up, and when he did, he would spend over an hour having coffee outside his vanity van, wasting more time. "We would scramble to get a couple of shots in the can, and that would be it for the day," Abhinav said, recalling one instance where hundreds of crew members were left waiting for Salman to come shoot the film's climax in Panchgani. Abhinav recalled, "This one time, we were shooting in Panchgani, which is over four hours away from Mumbai. We knew that Salman is coming from Mumbai, so it could be a long wait. We assumed that he would not show up by at least 2 or 3 pm. Initially, his people kept lying. They kept saying he's left and is on his way. Then they said that he is coming in his vanity van, and is sleeping. At around 1 or 2 pm, they said that Salman hasn't left yet, but will come by helicopter. At around 3 or 4 pm, I was



told that he has finally left *Galaxy*." Abhinav said that after 5 pm, he was contemplating cancelling the shoot for the day, when he heard a helicopter approaching. There was no place for the helicopter to land on set, so he assumed that it would land somewhere else, and Salman would be driven to the set. But the helicopter came right above the set, descended to within 15 metres of the ground. "Then, Salman stuck his head out, made a gesture with his hand, and left," Abhinav said, explaining that the actor simply decided that he would shoot the next day, and had gone off to his hotel. There were easily over 200 people on set that day, as we were shooting the climax," he said, adding, "The day-players had to be paid. It costs money."